

Recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Commission

Recommendations:

WECAFC/XVII/2019/5+6+7 “on the conservation and management of sharks and rays in the WECAFC Area”

WECAFC/XVII/2019/9 “on the management of Caribbean Spiny Lobster in the WECAFC Area”

WECAFC/XVII/2019/10 “on the regional data access and sharing policies”

WECAFC/XVII/2019/11 “on the management of shrimp and groundfish resources of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf in the WECAFC Area”

WECAFC/XVII/2019/12 “on improved compliance with trade measures for Queen conch”

WECAFC/XVII/2019/13 “on Queen conch conversion factor”

WECAFC/17/2019/15 “on the monitoring and control of transshipment at sea”

WECAFC/17/2019/16 “on the application in the region of the technical guidelines on methodologies and indicators for the estimation of the magnitude and impact of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing”

WECAFC/17/2019/17 “on the marking of fishing gear”

WECAFC/17/2019/21 Amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/15/2014/2 “on the sustainability of fisheries using moored fish aggregating devices in the WECAFC area”

WECAFC/17/2019/22 “on WECAFC interim data collection reference framework”

WECAFC/17/2019/23 “on the list of main species for data collection in the WECAFC area”

WECAFC/17/2019/24 “on the sustainable management of spawning aggregations and aggregating species”.

Resolutions:

WECAFC/XVII/2019/8 “on the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership”

WECAFC/17/2019/18 “on the CLME+ SAP Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) and status of marine environment and associated economies (SOME) reporting mechanism within WECAFC”

WECAFC/17/2019/19 “on the proposed permanent coordination mechanism (PCM) and associated sustainable financing plan for enhanced integrated ocean governance in the CLME+/WECAFC/Wider Caribbean region”

WECAFC/17/2019/20 “on interim coordination mechanism for the sustainable management, use and protection of shared living marine resources in the CLME+ region (CLME+ SAP ICM)”

Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/5+6+7

“ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS AND RAYS IN THE WECAFC AREA”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

RECALLING that the FAO Committee on Fisheries in 1999 adopted an International Plan of Action for the Conservation and the Management of Sharks, which calls on States, within the framework of their respective competencies and consistent with international law, to cooperate through regional fisheries organizations with a view to ensuring the sustainability of shark stocks as well as to adopt and implement National Plans of Action for the conservation and management of sharks;

MINDFUL of the fact that fish belonging to the taxon Elasmobranchii, which includes sharks, skates, rays and similar species, are generally very vulnerable to overexploitation due to their life-cycle characteristics, and that scientific knowledge indicates that some stocks of sharks and rays in the Atlantic Ocean are declining.

RECOGNIZING the important contribution of the shark fisheries to food and nutrition security and the economic and social well-being of the people of the region, and the need therefore to implement appropriate conservation and management measures to ensure long-term sustainable use of the shark resources;

ACKNOWLEDGING the sharks and rays management and conservation measures taken already by other regional fisheries bodies with a mandate in the Atlantic Ocean, such as the International Commission For The Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), and the major efforts made by a range of WECAFC MEMBERS towards sharks and rays conservation;

NOTING the listing of various species in the CITES Appendices, as well as in those of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW Protocol), and the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS);

FURTHER NOTING the importance of harmonizing conservation and management measures with other international and regional conventions for the sustainable management and conservation of these shark and ray species;

NOTING that shark finning has been prohibited by several Regional Fisheries Bodies and that on-board shark fin removal has been banned by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), OSPESCA, as well as several WECAFC MEMBERS individually, and that it is important to harmonize shark conservation measures and employ best practices to achieve an impact for these often pelagic, highly migratory species;

STRESSING that prohibiting the removal of shark fins on-board vessels and requiring that all sharks are landed with fins still naturally attached has long been widely recognized by MCS experts, as the most reliable and cost-effective method for enforcing finning bans;

RECALLING the outcomes of the 1st meeting of the WECAFC /CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management, which was held in Barbados on 17-19 October 2017;

PENDING the finalisation and endorsement of the final Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays in the WECAFC Area;

ADOPTS in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

1. WECAFC MEMBERS develop their NPOAs-Sharks in line with the IPOA-Sharks, in support of more effective conservation and management of sharks and rays in general .
2. WECAFC MEMBERS prohibit vessels flying their flag from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, trading shark and ray species, consistent with measures adopted, as appropriate, by ICCAT, and/or listed on Annex II of the Cartagena Convention Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW Protocol) and Appendix I of the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS).
3. WECAFC MEMBERS ensure that incidental catches of the species covered by paragraph 2 as well as, other sharks and rays caught in association with WECAFC fisheries and are not used for commercial purposes or food and/or subsistence, are promptly released unharmed and alive and without removing the species from the water , to the extent possible, while ensuring safety of the crew. The species, number of specimens and status (alive, dead, uncertain) upon release should be reported.
4. WECAFC MEMBERS requests the SAG to liaise with SCRS of ICCAT in view to compiling available guidelines for handling and safe release of prohibited and unwanted sharks and rays caught in association with WECAFC fisheries.
5. WECAFC MEMBERS prohibit the removal of shark fins at sea and require that all sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached through the point of first landing of the sharks.
6. WECAFC MEMBERS prohibit the retention on board, transshipment, landing and selling of shark fins harvested in contravention of this measure.
7. Without prejudice to paragraph 5 of this Recommendation, in order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially cut from the body and folded against the carcass, but shall not be removed from the carcass before the first landing.
8. WECAFC MEMBERS that are non-contracting parties to ICCAT are strongly encouraged to provide their estimates of landings and of live and dead discards of sharks, caught by vessels flying their flag and all other available data including observer data, annually to WECAFC and ICCAT, as appropriate, to support the stock assessment process. The Members are encouraged to report catches of sharks by species, or to the lowest taxonomic level if species identification is not possible.
9. WECAFC MEMBERS, where possible, undertake research to identify ways to make fishing gears more selective with the aim to reducing by-catches or by-catch mortality of sharks.
10. WECAFC MEMBERS, where possible, conduct research on key biological, ecological, economic and trade parameters, life history and behavioural traits, migration patterns, as well as on the identification of potential mating, pupping and nursery grounds of the most common sharks species in the WECAFC area.
11. The WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management continues to collect, generate and share data and information on shark and rays caught in association with their fisheries, for the bi-annual meeting. The Working Group will include in its workplan the review of the stock status of the main commercially targeted sharks and rays stocks, and report on these matters to the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG).

Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/9

“ON THE MANAGEMENT OF CARIBBEAN SPINY LOBSTER IN THE WECAFC AREA”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

NOTING with concern the ongoing challenges in ensuring sustained harvests of the Spiny Lobster (*Panulirus argus*), while recognizing the ecosystem value of these stocks and the increased need for further development of regional collaboration and harmonization of the management of this important regional resource;

MINDFUL of the high socio-economic importance of the spiny lobster fisheries for the WECAFC area, their contribution to export earnings, employment and coastal livelihoods;

RECALLING the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous People Rights, as in several countries of the region indigenous people conduct lobster fishing;

RECOGNIZING the important step taken by OSPESCA in updating the Regional Management and Conservation Plan of Caribbean Spiny Lobster, within the framework of the OSPESCA Ecolobster+ sub-project.

RECOGNIZING the St. George’s Declaration on Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster (*Panulirus argus*) adopted by the CRFM Ministerial Council in 2015, which harmonizes lobster fisheries management measures within the CRFM membership;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the continued efforts by the CRFM members and other major lobster fisheries countries in the WECAFC region to manage lobster fisheries sustainably in their waters;

APPRECIATING the agreement on a Joint Action Plan of CRFM and OSPESCA, concluded in

September 2012, which emphasizes the need for joint work on, inter alia, spiny lobster research and sustainable management, and the ongoing work by the CLME+ project, CFMC and WECAFC towards sustainable utilization of the resource;

DEEPLY APPRECIATING the OSPESCA initiative on common assessment methodologies for stock assessment to the entire Caribbean region;

RECALLING the outcomes of the first meeting of this newly established working group

FURTHER RECALLING that most WECAFC members have endorsed the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME+) Strategic Action Programme (SAP), including SAP Sub-Strategy 4A, which aims at facilitating the adoption and implementation of an ecosystem approach to the Caribbean spiny lobster fisheries, and RECALLING the inclusion under the UNDP/GEF CLME+Project of dedicated financing to support the implementation of the aforementioned SAP Sub-Strategy;

FURTHER RECALLING Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/2 “On spiny lobster management and conservation in the WECAFC area”;

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the **RECOMMENDATION** that:

1. WECAFC members and partners implement the elements made available and discussed, in terms of scientific knowledge, methods and relevant measures, management measures that were collectively agreed by the Caribbean spiny Lobster working group and actions under the Strategic Actions Program (SAP) of the CLME+ region;
2. WECAFC Members consider scaling-up the OSPESCA initiative on common assessment methodologies for stock assessment to the entire Caribbean region or wherever relevant in sub-regions with stocks of Caribbean Spiny Lobster.
3. WECAFC members adopt and implement the updated Regional Management and Conservation Plan of Caribbean Spiny Lobster (the MARPLESCA Plan) and presented at the recent 2nd meeting of the Joint WG (March 2018).
4. WECAFC Members are encouraged to develop and implement Catch Documentation Schemes in accordance with voluntary guidelines adopted or traceability systems for fishery products, in order to improve the traceability of Caribbean spiny lobster products through the value chain and to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, ensure food safety and data generation in support of decision making for fishery management.

Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/10

“ON THE REGIONAL DATA ACCESS AND SHARING POLICIES”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

NOTING that the 16th session of WECAFC held in Guadeloupe, France, 20-24 June 2016, agreed to establish the Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDSWG);

CONSIDERING the identified minimum steps needed to improve evidence-based decision-making regarding conservation, management and sustainable use of fisheries by WECAFC members and the sub-regional fisheries bodies, including ~~for decision making regarding conservation and sustainable use of fisheries in the WECAFC region, including~~ efforts to: (i) Increase and improve fisheries data and statistics, (ii) Increase accuracy of data and statistics via utilizing agreed practices in data collection, (iii) Develop and implement agreed practices for data sharing and (iv) Identify feasible stock assessment models for the region

RECOGNISING the need for confidentiality in data submitted to the WECAFC;

ADOPTS in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

1. Data and statistics submitted by WECAFC members are consistent with the principle of data confidentiality as defined in the WECAFC Regional Data Access and Sharing Policies.
2. The implementation of the regional database proceeds in line with the Regional Data Access and Sharing Policies endorsed by the FDS-WG with the aim that data access and sharing in the region is to *“facilitate regional fisheries data and information exchange to support evidence based fisheries policy making at national and regional levels, while ensuring non-disclosure of sensitive fisheries data and information.”*

Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/11

“ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SHRIMP AND GROUND FISH RESOURCES OF THE NORTH BRAZIL-GUIANAS SHELF IN THE WECAFC AREA”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

RECALLING that most WECAFC members have endorsed the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME+) Strategic Action Programme (SAP) and that under its Strategy 6 “Implement EBM/EAF of the Guianas-Brazil continental shelf with special reference to the shrimp and groundfish fishery” the same members are required to “Strengthen the FAO-WECAFC-CRFM sub-regional arrangement for the management of the shrimp and groundfish fisheries, and establish a decision-making capacity for policy formulation and management”;

NOTING the long history of work of WECAFC (since 1975) on shrimp and groundfish resource assessment and biological and economic modeling of shrimp fisheries, that guided the management of these resources by the members, as well as the more recent CLME project ‘Trans boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA)’, which demonstrated the current challenges to the sector, including habitat damage and destruction of mangroves, land-based water pollution, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, overexploitation of some resources, piracy, and conflicts between stakeholders within the sector and with other sectors;

REAFFIRMING its commitments, made at the 16th session of WECAFC, to coordinate efforts through the WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf to improve sustainability of these fisheries;

MINDFUL of the discussions and outcomes of the 2nd meeting of the Working Group held in Barbados on 17 and 18 May 2018, financed by the REBYC-II LAC and CLME+ projects;

RECOGNIZING the significant contribution of the shrimp and groundfish fisheries to food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation, income generation, export earnings and employment for present and future generations in WECAFC area;

REAFFIRMING the need for continued action by all stakeholders to ensure the long-term sustainable use and management of the shared shrimp and groundfish fisheries resources in the region based on the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF);

NOTING the concerns of the WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf that available and shared information to inform fisheries management and decision-making processes at the sub-regional level has been reduced over the last 15 years such that researchers and fisheries officers have not received the necessary capacity building to carry out such assessments, most management plans are in draft form only and enforcement capacity and collaboration in fisheries management is weak;

NOTING that the lack of recent stock assessments of commercially important species in the North Brazil Shelf contributes significant impediment to the sustainable management of shrimp and groundfish fisheries;

ACNOWLEDGING that this capacity building should be contingent on the availability of resources and the means to use the knowledge, abilities, and approaches to stock assessment, bioeconomic analysis and management of fisheries of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf ecosystem.

RECOGNIZING the need to improve data and information to reduce uncertainties to stock assessment methodologies currently used, to investigate whether stocks are shared or not and to monitor the long-term impacts of the trawl and gillnet fisheries on the stocks;

RECOGNIZING that while certain shrimp and groundfish stocks may not be shared by all countries on the Brazil-Guianas Shelf, substantial linkages exist between the fisheries fleets from the different countries and the ecosystems where these stocks are exploited.

CONSIDERING the opportunities offered by the UNDP/ projects on Sustainable management of bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean trawl fisheries (REBYC II LAC) and on Catalyzing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of Shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+), for introducing and testing shrimp fisheries bycatch reduction technologies and fisheries co-management and for increasing regional collaboration in management of the common and transboundary resources, as well as for combating IUU fishing and building of national capacities;

RECOGNIZING the efforts of the CRFM through its Annual Scientific Meetings and intersessional activities, in facilitating assessment of the commercial seabob fisheries in Guyana and Suriname, the red snapper fishery in Guyana, as well as the shrimp fisheries, including two species of groundfish – the lane snapper and white mouth croaker, in Trinidad and Tobago, to provide information in support of fisheries management decision making;

RECOGNIZING historical efforts made by France, the IFREMER in French Guiana, and in Brazil to carry out genetic analysis of peneaid shrimps and red snapper;

HIGHLIGHTING the continued certification of the Seabob fishery in Suriname and the improvements made by Guyana to seek certification of its seabob fishery;

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the Working Group, CRFM Continental Shelf Fisheries Working Group meetings;

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the **RECOMMENDATION** that:

1. WECAFC members and partners should ensure Shrimp and Groundfish priority species of the North Brazil-Guianas shelf are included in the Regional WECAFC-FIRMS database¹.

¹ The database should contain raw data of the collected biological and physical/environmental parameters and the required fishery data (catch, effort, length frequencies, etc.), to support outcomes achieved through stock assessments, bio-economic modeling and other relevant information on shrimp and groundfish fisheries for decision making process for the management of these resources in the sub-region. The database outputs concerning state of stocks and fishery management status would be made available through the FIRMS website, applying well-established and agreed protocols for data and information sharing compliant with data policies of the participating countries.

2. WECAFC, in close collaboration with FAO, CRFM NOAA and IFREMER build capacity² in the Brazil-Guianas region for relevant and periodic stock assessment and bioeconomic analysis of priority fisheries to overcome significant knowledge gaps on the status of stocks.
3. WECAFC, in close coordination with CRFM and IFREMER should facilitate the provision of samples and mobilize necessary resources to complete population genetic studies required to properly manage stocks of critical shrimp and groundfish species of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf.
4. WECAFC members develop and enforce national level shrimp and groundfish fishery management plans, and put in place appropriate legislation in support of a sustainable shrimp and groundfish fishery.
5. The Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish to assist the Regional Working Group on IUU to develop a regional plan of action to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing (RPOA-IUU).
6. The Working Group on shrimp and Groundfish to collaborate with the Regional Working Group on Fisheries Data and Statistics to identify training opportunities for initializing the WECAFC-FIRMS regional database and developing FIRMS inventories.
7. WECAFC, in close collaboration with partners and Members to evaluate the impact of sargassum on the shrimp and groundfish fisheries and include these fisheries in regional sargassum prediction model and mitigation initiatives.
8. WECAFC to collaborate with OSPESCA and CRFM to develop a regional strategy for management of bycatch in shrimp/bottom trawl fisheries to be completed in a consultative process with the support of REBYC-II LAC project and presented to the 18th Session of WECAFC for its review and endorsement.

² Specifically, capacity should be built to undertake: (i) robust stock assessments (ii) costs and earnings studies of different fisheries of interest in the country/region, (iii) bioeconomic modelling and analysis of technologically interdependent fisheries (e.g. shrimp and snapper fisheries), (iv) bioeconomic modelling of sequential fisheries with fleets harvesting different components of the population structure (e.g. shrimp fisheries targeted by small-scale and industrial fleets in different stages of their life cycle), and (v) alternative bioeconomic models for different species being targeted (i.e. species with different degrees of mobility) and multi-species fisheries, e.g. groundfish and small-scale fisheries.

Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/12

“ON IMPROVED COMPLIANCE WITH TRADE MEASURES FOR QUEEN CONCH”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

RECALLING the establishment of the WECAFC Working Group on Queen Conch by WECAFC 14 in 2012;

REAFFIRMING the commitments made by Queen Conch range States at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP16, Bangkok, 3 – 14 March 2013) to implement the Decisions on “ Regional cooperation on the management of and trade in the Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*)” agreed at CoP16;

FURTHER REAFFIRMING Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/1 and the Decisions 17.285 – 17.290 related to queen conch adopted at 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES(CoP17, Johannesburg, 24 September – 4 October 2016),³ calling upon WECAFC members to implement the *Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan*;

COGNIZANT of the fact that National CITES Management Authorities are required to make a “Legal Acquisition Finding” before issuing an export permit for queen conch and noting that there will be a proposal to adopt a resolution that will provide guidance to CITES Parties on making Legal Acquisition Findings considered at CoP18 (Geneva, Switzerland 17-28 August 2019).

RECALLING the outcomes of the Third meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch, held in Panama, 30th October- 1st November 2018 supported by the European Union, NOAA Fisheries and FAO;

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the RWG-IUU;

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

1. WECAFC members should adopt the January 2017 Harmonized System Codes⁴ and provide suitable training to customs officers to facilitate a greater control of trade in conch and identification of the conch product.
2. Countries are encouraged to incorporate suitable technology (such as custom related technology that will focus attention to importation/exportation of specific products) to enable the detection and enhance control of trade in conch products.

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7818e.pdf>

⁴ Harmonized System (Chapter 3) on Fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates (English): http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/nomenclature/instruments-and-tools/hs-nomenclature-2017/2017/0103_2017e.pdf?la=en; also available in French at:

http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/fr/pdf/topics/nomenclature/instruments-and-tools/hs-nomenclature-2017/2017/0103_2017f.pdf?la=fr

3. Member States be cognizant that CITES Management Authorities are required to make a “Legal Acquisition Finding” before issuing an export permit for queen conch and note that there will be a proposal to adopt a resolution that will provide guidance to CITES Parties on making Legal Acquisition Findings considered at CoP18 (Geneva, Switzerland 17-28 August 2019).

Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/13

“ON QUEEN CONCH CONVERSION FACTOR”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

RECALLING the establishment of the WECAFC Working Group on Queen Conch by WECAFC 14 in 2012;

REAFFIRMING the commitments made by Queen Conch range States at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP16, Bangkok, 3-14 March 2013) to implement the Decisions on “ Regional cooperation on the management of and trade in the Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*)” agreed at CoP16;

FURTHER REAFFIRMING Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/1 and the Decisions 17.285 – 17.290 related to queen conch adopted at 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES(CoP17, Johannesburg, 24 September – 4 October 2016),⁵ calling upon WECAFC members to implement the *Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan*;

RECALLING the outcomes of the Third meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch, held in Panama, 30th October- 1st November 2018 supported by the European Union, NOAA Fisheries and FAO;

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the RWG-IUU;

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

1. Each WECAFC member country, determines the number of individual queen conch harvested, in order to support stock assessments.
2. The conversion factor (for the different processing levels within a country) should be used to back calculate the whole animal weight extracted from the shell, (i.e. shell not included in the weight) for the purpose of supporting stock assessments.
3. WECAFC members are urged to report their total conch production and exports as the whole animal weight extracted from the shell to FAO and CITES.
4. A compendium of processing levels, their definitions and associated conversion factors should be prepared for all countries.

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7818e.pdf>

Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/15

“ON THE MONITORING AND CONTROL OF TRANSSHIPMENT AT SEA”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

NOTING with concern that Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the WECAFC area is estimated between 20 and 30 percent of total reported harvests, representing a value of 450 to 750 million USD annually, that IUU fishing has dire implications for millions of peoples' livelihoods and brings about among others, adverse impact on national economies, food security, and the environment, and on labour standards, given the linkage of some IUU vessels with slavery and other labour and human rights abuses, drug trafficking, etc.⁶

RECALLING that The FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on its Thirty-Second Session from 11-15 July 2016, expressed the need to “initiate work on transshipments”, believed to be a major issue in IUU fishing;

ACKNOWLEDGING the increased interest of the international community to improve regulatory control over transshipment operations to support sound fisheries management and prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

RECOGNIZING that transshipment operations particularly those undertaken at sea are frequently critical to the economic viability of some fisheries, and that if properly monitored and controlled, they should not pose a threat to sound fisheries management

ACKNOWLEDGING that drivers of transshipment at sea are not exclusively economics/logistics in nature, given the fact that operators involved in IUU activities may seek the best opportunity for transshipment to avoid official scrutiny/regulatory controls, thus enabling eventual detrimental impact on economic development, the marine environment and sustainability of stocks

MINDFUL of the commitment by the WECAFC members to improve their legal and institutional framework required for the exercise of responsible fisheries and in the formulation and implementation of appropriate measures, consistently with the global efforts through the UN, its specialized organizations as well as Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO);

DEDICATED to support the continued efforts by the members to increase Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) in their EEZs and beyond;

COMMITTED to implementing the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU);

RECALLING the outcomes of the third meeting of the Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing

(RWG-IUU), held in Barbados in September 2018, supported by the European Union, UNDP/GEF/CLME project and FAO;

⁶ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0004570> . Consulted 24 07 2019

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the RWG-IUU;

ADOPTS in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

- WECAFC Members with common interests meet to initiate development of arrangements, including binding agreements if possible, among these countries for an effective system for enhanced surveillance of transshipment operations and enforcement of relevant legislation, which may include among other things, obtaining, exchanging and transmitting information between WECAFC members, with other States and international organizations. To promote that all WECAFC members to be part of the “International Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) Network for Fisheries-related Activities”.

Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/16

“ON THE APPLICATION IN THE REGION OF THE TECHNICAL GUIDELINES ON METHODOLOGIES AND INDICATORS FOR THE ESTIMATION OF THE MAGNITUDE AND IMPACT OF ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

NOTING with concern that Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the WECAFC area is estimated between 20 and 30 percent of total reported harvests, representing a value of 450 to 750 million USD annually, that IUU fishing has dire implications for millions of peoples' livelihoods and entails among others, adverse impact on national economies, food security, and the environment and on labour standards, given the linkage of some IUU vessels with slavery and other labour and human rights abuses, drug trafficking, etc.⁷ .

RECALLING that The FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on its Thirty-Second Session from 11-15 July 2016 supported the development of technical guidelines on methodologies and indicators by FAO for the estimation of the magnitude and impact of IUU fishing and called for the reliable periodic estimates of IUU fishing, including at the regional level.

MINDFUL of Resolution WECAFC/15/2014/6 “on region-wide support to the implementation of the CRFM “Castries, St Lucia, (2010) Declaration on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing”.

RECOGNIZING the need to strengthen the quality and consistency of IUU estimation studies and generate information, on a regular basis, of the magnitude and impact of IUU activities and progress in combatting IUU fishing globally.

ACKNOWLEDGING that there are very substantial benefits in attempting to quantify the nature and scale of IUU fishing, some of the most common benefits such as gauging potential losses suffered by coastal States, addressing uncertainties in stock assessments and planning effective monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) investments for evidence-based policy advice and improvements in socioeconomic conditions of legitimate fishers

COMMITTED to implementing the International Plan of action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU);

DEDICATED to supporting the continued efforts by the members to increase Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) in their EEZs and beyond;

NOTING the challenges in defining IUU fishing;

COGNIZANT of the guiding principles set out in the technical guidelines on methodologies and indicators for the estimation of the magnitude and impact of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which should be incorporated into study design and implementation;

⁷ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0004570> . Consulted 24 07 2019

RECALLING Resolution WECAFC/15/2014/9 “on the implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance in the Region”, and particularly the application of the Voluntary Guidelines in areas beyond national jurisdiction;

FURTHER RECALLING the outcomes of the third meeting of the Regional Working Group on IUU

Fishing (RWG-IUU), held in Barbados in September 2018, supported by the European Union, UNDP/GEF/CLME project and FAO;

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the RWG-IUU;

ADOPTS in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

The WECAFC undertake periodic estimations of possible IUU fishing activities in the WECAFC area and identify indicators to assess the efficacy of actions to combat these activities. These estimations and indicators should be undertaken in line with existing guidelines on methodologies and indicators for the estimation of the magnitude and impact of IUU fishing to strengthen their overall credibility and practical usefulness to WECAFC members and stakeholders.

Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/17

“ON THE MARKING OF FISHING GEAR”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

CONSIDERING that gear marking fit within the context of broader fisheries management measures which support sustainable fisheries and healthy oceans, including the reduction, minimization and elimination of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG)

MINDFUL of the Recommendations made by the FAO Expert Consultation on the Marking of Fishing Gear Rome, 4-7 April 2016

COMMITTED to meeting obligations under international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (1982 UN Convention), as well as contributing to improved safety at sea by reducing the navigation hazard caused by ALDFG and helping to identify Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing activities

ACKNOWLEDGING the established initiatives, measures and procedures in the region on the marking, tracing and recovery of fishing gears

RECALLING the outcomes of the third meeting of the Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing (RWG-IUU), held in Barbados in September 2018, supported by the European Union, UNDP/GEF/CLME project and FAO;

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the RWG-IUU;

ADOPTS in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

- WECAFC Members implement the Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear.

Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/21

Amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/15/2014/2 “ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FISHERIES USING MOORED FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES IN THE WECAFC AREA”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by WECAFC members;

RECALLING the conclusions and proposals of the first and second meetings of the WECAFC ad hoc working group on the development of sustainable moored⁸ fish aggregating device (MFAD) fishing in the Lesser Antilles (Martinique, 8-11 October 2001 and Guadeloupe, 5–10 July 2004); as well as with those of the recent ICCAT-IATTC-IOTC joint Tuna-RFMO Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Working Group meeting (Madrid April 2017) providing new and significant technological and scientific insights regarding the use of FADs in tuna fisheries;

REAFFIRMING its commitments, made at the 14th session of WECAFC, through establishing the IFREMER/WECAFC Working Group on Development of Sustainable MFAD Fishing in the Lesser Antilles. In this respect the 15th session agreed to expand the Working Group into a joint Working Group on (MFADs) in which WECAFC, JICA, IFREMER and CRFM participated;

RECOGNIZING the conclusions and recommendations of the CRFM-JICA CARIFICO/ WECAFC-IFREMER MAGDELESA Workshop on MFAD fishery Management, which was held in St Vincent and the Grenadines, 9-11 December 2013;

RECOGNIZING the important scientific research results pertaining behavior of target and bycatch species associated with FADS and capacity building carried out on FADs by the EU funded MAGDELESA project, as well as the pilot activities on FADs conducted under the CRFM-JICA project on the "Formulation of a Master Plan on sustainable use of fisheries resources for coastal community development in the Caribbean";

RECOGNIZING also the potential contribution that offshore pelagic fisheries may contribute to food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation, income, and employment for present and future generations in the Caribbean;

CONSIDERING that the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) issued at its 23rd regular meeting, held in South Africa, November 18-25, 2013, a recommendation (13-01) amending the recommendation on a multi-annual Conservation and Management Program for Bigeye and Yellowfin tunas, which binds a number of WECAFC and CRFM members in terms of FAD fisheries by industrial fleets catching these tunas;

WHILE CONCERNED for the status of significant levels of exploitation of large pelagic resources exerted by several nations and the deficiencies in enforcement and communications recently (April 2017) expressed by Joint ICCAT-IATTC-IOTC FAD Working Group regarding 21 regulatory protocols on FADs;

⁸ For purposes of this document, moored FAD is the same as anchored FAD.

NOTING the ongoing effort of the CRFM through its pelagics fisheries Working Group meetings and in collaboration with the CLME, to improve conservation and management of the offshore pelagic resources;

RECOGNIZING the significant contribution of the CRFM 2015 Sub-regional Management Plan for FAD Fisheries in the Eastern Caribbean emphasizing on objectives and works necessary to improve MFAD fisheries management in the Caribbean;

RECOGNIZING the need of implementing CRFM 2015 Sub-regional Management Plan for FAD Fisheries in the Eastern Caribbean with critical considerations on the status of exploitation of the targeted resources as dictated by ICCAT and CRFM resource assessments;

REAFFIRMING the need for further action by all interested parties to ensure the long-term sustainable use and management of the offshore pelagic fisheries resources in the region based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries that considers proper dimension of regional MFAD fisheries development under conditions of fully utilized resources availability in the WECAFC region;

REAFFIRMING also its commitment to promote the use of co-management and other participatory approaches involving all affected parties in the development and implementation of relevant policies and programmes;

NOTING the concerns of the WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries about the billfish stocks in the Caribbean and the untapped value of this resource in terms of catch-and-release fisheries; and considering the noticeable dominance of blue marlin as the most impacted species in MFAD fisheries in the region;

NOTING that the MFAD fishery in the Lesser Antilles has grown substantially in the last ten years, apparently increasing catches of pelagic species but also catches of vulnerable and already overexploited stocks of species; and adding the need to regulate MFAD numbers and MFAD density to avoid adverse economic consequences;

REAFFIRMING its commitment to the application of the precautionary approach, which establishes that lack of scientific evidence should not be used as a reason for not taking management measures for the conservation of fishery resources and securing sustainable fisheries;

ACKNOWLEDGING the good efforts of various WECAFC and CRFM members to license MFADs fishers, prepare legislation for MFAD fishery, ensure disaggregated data collection and analysis in terms of MFAD fishery, encourage best-practice design and training in MFAD construction and use, promote safety-at-sea when fishing with MFADs, reduce conflicts over the use of MFAD, notify maritime authorities of MFADs locations, establish co-management regimes for MFAD fishery and promoting the proper maintenance of MFADs;

NOTING that the exchange of information between researchers, fisheries managers and fishers on MFADs fishery has improved in recent years and needs to be strengthened;

RECOGNIZING that the ongoing development of MFAD fisheries in the WECAFC area provides new opportunities for income generation, livelihoods and contributes to food security, as well as may reduce the pressure on coastal and reef fish stocks;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the need to improve data and information to reduce uncertainties to stock assessment methodologies currently used and to monitor the long term impacts of these fisheries on the stocks especially recognizing that MFAD catch rates (CPUE) are indicators of biomass aggregation by MFADs, which may not reflect relative abundance of the wild stocks; CONSIDERING the need to conduct more research related to the potential impact of MFADs on the migration patterns,

size/age/sex structures and compositions of stocks, change in yields per recruit and other biological effects due to the conspicuous presence of juvenile tuna species in MFADs, as well as on the currently used concept of CPUE for stock assessment and management purposes, co-management options, social and economic aspects, environmental and climate change, fishing techniques and technologies;

NOTING the issues on access to resources via MFADs fisheries, and property rights claims and disagreements on MFAD aggregated resources;

NOTING the economic impact of natural phenomena, such as strong hurricanes, on the destruction of MFADs and the lack of reporting of MFAD numbers, locations, lifespan and replacement;

CONSIDERING IFREMER conclusions that species diversity associated with MFADs varies according with regions within the WECAFC area as well as seasonality of the catch rates of target and bycatch species;

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the **RECOMMENDATION** that:

1. WECAFC Members prepare (if relevant) national level MFAD fisheries development and MFAD management plans that consider status of exploitation of targeted and bycatch species as determined by ICCAT and CRFM stock assessment results.
2. WECAFC Members adopt appropriate legislation in support of a sustainable MFAD fishery adhering to the FAO Code of Conduct if insufficient technical and scientific data are available for proper management of MFADs at this time.
3. WECAFC Members standardize as far as possible MFAD protocols that could generate compatible MFAD fishery statistics using standard terminology (as determined by the Working Group on MFADs) for the different varieties of MFAD fisheries in the WECAFC area and report in an agreed format on their total catch (i.e. landings and discards) and effort data in FAO Area 31 to the Working Group on MFADs in support of ongoing research, decision making and management processes at national and regional level.
4. WECAFC Members aim to:
 - a) Prevent the unauthorized transshipment at sea of MFAD caught fish in the WECAFC area.
 - b) Collect and analyze biological, ecological, social and economic data and other scientific literature and information to inform decision making processes on MFAD Fisheries.
5. WECAFC secretariat, CRFM, and OSPESCA, support the regional harmonization of national MFAD technologies and fishing protocols that will secure compatible fishery regulations contained in national fishery management plans and related legislation, in accordance with the best available information (including scientific evidence and local and traditional knowledge) and consistent with international best practices, and present the progress made to the respective regular sessions of these RFBs.
6. WECAFC secretariat, CRFM, and OSPESCA, support a regional MFAD characterization of the impacts and impacts mitigation measures of MFAD fishing in the different regions (within the WECAFC area), and building that regional knowledge into the management decision-making.

7. WECAFC members be encouraged to improve MFAD designs, use non-entangling materials, and adhere to minimum standards to increase durability in order to reduce marine debris, the entanglement of marine animals, and the impact on ecosystems.

8. WECAFC Members communicate to the Working Group on MFADs the measures taken to adhere to the above paragraphs.

9. WECAFC support its Members, in the establishment of stakeholder- and public outreach and communication campaigns, in the area including addressing the need to enhance and increase communication of research findings and best practices on MFAD to the fishers and facilitate inputs from stakeholders.

Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/22

“ON WECAFC INTERIM DATA COLLECTION REFERENCE FRAMEWORK”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

NOTING that the 16th session of WECAFC held in Guadeloupe, France, 20-24 June 2016, agreed to establish the Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS WG);

CONSIDERING the identified minimum steps needed to improve evidence-based decision-making regarding conservation, management and sustainable use of fisheries by WECAFC members and the sub-regional fisheries bodies, including efforts to (i) Increase and improve fisheries data and statistics (including socio-economic data), (ii) Increase accuracy of data and statistics via utilizing agreed practices in data collection, (iii) Develop and implement agreed practices for data sharing and (iv) Identify feasible stock assessment models for the region;

MINDFUL that qualitative and quantitative improvement of regional data and statistics requires harmonization and standardization at national and regional level with the definition of minimum data requirements in support of evidence based decision-making;

MINDFUL of the global Reference Harmonization standard being developed by the Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics under which WECAFC, ICCAT, FAO and other RFBs collaborate for harmonizing and streamlining data collection and reporting frameworks including consideration of multiple reporting burdens;

REAFFIRMING the commitment of CARICOM States to improving evidence based decision-making through regional cooperation as expressed in multiple regional policy documents including the “Strategic Action Programme for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem”, the CARICOM Strategic Plan, 2015 -2019, the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP) and the CRFM Strategic Plan, 2013-2021;

RECOGNIZING the important steps taken by the OSPESCA and CRFM members in terms of building capacity for reliable and timely statistics in the past years;

ACKNOWLEDGING the WECAFC-FIRMS (Fisheries and Resource Monitoring System) project as a collaborative platform for collation and sharing of scientific information, leveraging on-going regional projects, and prioritizing national data needs;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the continued efforts by the WECAFC members to increase their capacities to collect, analyze and report fisheries data and statistics;

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the FDS-WG;

ADOPTS in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

1. WECAFC, CRFM, and OSPESCA, through the regional and subregional focal points continue to support and to validate national inventories and their publishing through FIRMS as part of the global monitoring framework requested under SDG14.4.1, ‘Proportion of fish stocks within biological levels’,
2. WECAFC endorses the Interim Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF), as a foundation for fisheries data and statistics collection and collation to feed the needs of developing, monitoring, assessing and reviewing regional fisheries policies, taking into account the need for adaptive review.,
3. WECAFC facilitates its member’s data collection relevant for existing international management bodies.
4. WECAFC promotes provision of national data and statistics to the WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA Regional DataBase (RDB) according to Interim Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF),
5. WECAFC members promote continued participation in the FDS WG and specifically to support the intersessional work plan as relates interactions with thematic working groups relating to national vessel mappings to regional fleet segment classifications, promotion of species for priority reporting, and associated identification of sub-areas for species reporting,
6. WECAFC members encourage strengthened collaboration between the FDS-WG and thematic working groups to refine and keep updated the DCRF and associated data sharing polices, taking into account the input from all members,
7. WECAFC Secretariat and WECAFC members provide technical support, as appropriate to the SIDS to strengthen national capacities to collect data according to the DCRF, and to manage and submit statistical data and report to the WECAFC.

Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/23

“ON THE LIST OF MAIN SPECIES FOR DATA COLLECTION IN THE WECAFC AREA”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

NOTING that the 16th session of WECAFC held in Guadeloupe, France, 20-24 June 2016, agreed to establish the Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDSWG);

CONSIDERING the identified minimum steps needed to improve evidence-based decision-making regarding conservation, management and sustainable use of fisheries by WECAFC members and the sub-regional fisheries bodies including efforts to (i) Increase and improve fisheries data and statistics (including socio-economic data), (ii) Increase accuracy of data and statistics via utilizing agreed practices in data collection, (iii) Develop and implement agreed practices for data sharing and (iv) Identify feasible stock assessment models for the region;

MINDFUL that qualitative and quantitative improvement of regional data and statistics requires harmonization and standardization at national and regional level with the definition of minimum data requirements in support of evidence based decision-making;

REAFFIRMING the commitment of CARICOM States to improving evidence based decision-making through regional cooperation as expressed in several regional policy documents including the “Strategic Action Programme for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem”, the CARICOM Strategic Plan, 2015–2019, the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP) and the CRFM Strategic Plan, 2013-2021;

RECOGNIZING the important steps taken by the OSPESCA and CRFM members in terms of building capacity for reliable and timely statistics in the past years;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the continued efforts by the WECAFC members to increase their capacities to collect, analyze and report fisheries data and statistics;

RECALLING that The WECAFC shall cover all living marine resources, without prejudice to the management responsibilities and authority of other competent fisheries bodies and other living marine resources management organizations or arrangements in the area;

ACKNOWLEDGING the WECAFC members challenges to collect data and produce statistics on all living marine resources.

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the FDS WG and Species-specific WGs;

ADOPTS in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

1. WECAFC endorses the structure and concept of developing a list of main species, according to guidance provided through the Interim DCRF on harmonization of collection of data and statistics, including socio-economic data, based on several selection supporting criteria by the FDS WG, **in particular to support collection of data and statistics for:**
 - Species for which there is an established a WECAFC working group, and/or where fisheries specific regional and sub-regional management plans exist (e.g., conch, lobster, flying fish, billfish), moored Fishery Aggregation Device (mFADs), deep sea, relevant recreational species and fish spawning aggregations (FSAs),
 - Species/stocks on the high seas, straddling/migratory/deep seas, and in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ANBJ) that would correspond to the establishment of a regional fisheries management arrangement or entity,
 - Species with existing mandatory reporting requirements,
 - Relevant commercially targeted and threatened sharks and rays,
 - Other Reference species identified to other importance to the WECAFC members (e.g., shrimps, groupers, acoupas, snappers, etc.).

2. WECAFC requests the FDS WG to continue to seek guidance and final approval of the species priority list taking into account inputs from all WECAFC members.

Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/24

“ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SPAWNING AGGREGATIONS AND AGGREGATING SPECIES”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

REAFFIRMING its commitment to support management and implementation of regional strategies and regulations to protect spawning aggregations and aggregating species through the establishment of the WECAFC Working Group on Spawning Aggregations (SAWG) at the 14th session of WECAFC in 2012.

NOTING that stocks of many species of groupers and snappers in the Caribbean have declined significantly in the last three decades, some of their fish spawning aggregations (FSAs) have declined or disappeared and that immediate action is required to stop further reductions.

MINDFUL that many fishers' livelihoods are dependent on harvest from spawning aggregations and the fisheries that they support, but also that these fishers have experience and expertise that could be invaluable in the conservation, management, and possible tourism at such sites and that the development of economic alternatives for affected fishers should accompany efforts to halt fishing during spawning periods or close areas where spawning occurs.

REAFFIRMING the recommendations of the Declaration of Miami (2013) issued at the 1st CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations.

REAFFIRMING and supporting the recommendations and the workplan from the 2nd meeting of the CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations.

NOTING members' commitment to the 2018 SAWG workplan, various planned actions and that activities are well underway,

COMMITTED to individually and collectively taking measures and actions to further improve the management and conservation of fish spawning aggregations and species that aggregate to spawn in the Wider Caribbean Region

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the **RECOMMENDATION** that:

1. WECAFC members strongly encourage Working group members to identify and determine the status and timing of all known Fish Spawning Aggregation (FSA) sites (particularly for snapper and grouper).
2. WECAFC, CFMC, and as appropriate CRFM, OSPESCA, and CEP-SPAW support the development of a regional Fisheries Management Plan (for national adoption throughout the region) for species forming FSAs, with a focus on Nassau grouper and mutton snapper, in accordance with the best available science, for presentation to the WECAFC Spawning Aggregations Working Group in 2019-2020.

3. WECAFC Secretariat and Members invest resources and support the standardization of existing FSA monitoring programmes ensuring harmonization with the Regional Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) to share data designed to track the status and trends of aggregations and the species that form them and thus contribute to local, national and regional management efforts.
4. WECAFC members call for international action to protect Fish Spawning Aggregations (FSAs), including strengthening enforcement of closed seasons, closed areas, and species-specific sales bans during the closed season.
5. WECAFC members agree upon and adopt a regional seasonal closure for all commercial and recreational fishing of Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*), *at least* for the period 1 December – 31 March and that Members will not permit export or commercial sale of Nassau grouper or its products (e.g. roe, fillets) for the duration of the seasonal closure.
6. WECAFC Secretariat support an assessment of the economic value of FSAs and the socio-economic impact of proposed management measures to inform future management decision-making.
7. Members offer training to fishers (displaced due to FSA closures) in monitoring, research, assessment, and suitable economic alternatives. Fishers and other stakeholders to be involved in cooperative research and FSA management.
8. The WECAFC Secretariat support a regional outreach and communication strategy on conservation and management of FSAs.
9. WECAFC members prioritize FSAs by species and areas or monitoring, conservation, and management based on status, vulnerability and Members' institutional capacity.
10. The WECAFC Secretariat, together with the Members of WECAFC, seek to mobilize resources to assist the Members in the implementation of priority research, monitoring, enforcement, management and conservation of FSAs and the species that form them.

Resolution WECAFC/XVII/2019/8

“ON THE WECAFC-FIRMS PARTNERSHIP”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING the endorsement of the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership by WECAFC 15 in 2014;

NOTING the achievements of the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership in the preparation of species and fisheries fact sheets for the region, fisheries logbook guidelines, indicators for measuring fisheries management performance, development of regional databases, progress made towards stock assessment capacity building, and effective collaboration with CRFM and OSPESCA under the partnership;

RECALLING the request for and endorsement of the WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group by WECAFC 16 in 2016;

ACKNOWLEDGING the support of the World Bank funded, WECAFC executed Caribbean Billfish Project to the development of the project on Fisheries information technology innovations for resource management and climate change adaptation in the Caribbean (FIT4CC), and its aim to increase resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts in the Caribbean fisheries sector, through increased decision-support knowledge generated through inclusive, modern and sustained fisheries information systems in the CARIFORUM fisheries sector; a project which is expected to significantly increase the capacity to respond to national and regional challenges on data and statistics required for decision making;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING the SDG 2030 Agenda and FAOs custodianship role to inform SDG14.4.1;

ADOPTS in conformity with Article 6 (a) of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RESOLUTION that:

1. WECAFC members support and promote the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership as a collaborative platform for:
 - a. Collating and sharing scientific information throughout the region
 - b. Leveraging of ongoing regional projects (CLME+ project, Caribbean Billfish Project)
2. WECAFC members contribute to the Regional Data Base established by the WECAFC-FIRMS Partnership through:
 - a. Participation in the Fishery Data and Statistics Working Group
 - b. Provision of national data and statistics to the Regional Data Base according to the draft Data Collection Regional Framework (DCRF) and building on the logbook guidelines and best practices
 - c. Developing and updating national inventories of fisheries and resources
3. WECAFC members support the FIT4CC project, with implementation arrangements in accordance with agreements with the resource partner, the EU DG DevCo, and the Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries.
4. WECAFC members recognize the role of WECAFC, CRFM, and OSPESCA to support and validate, including with participation of fishers organizations, national inventories of resources and fisheries and their publishing through FIRMS as part of the global reporting framework requested under SDG14.4.1 and contribution to the regional SOMEE.

Resolution WECAFC/17/2019/18

“ON THE CLME+ SAP MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M & E) AND STATUS OF MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND ASSOCIATED ECONOMIES (SOMEE) REPORTING MECHANISM WITHIN WECAFC”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

ACKNOWLEDGING that the officially-endorsed, CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (2015-2025) calls for the periodic reporting of the state of the environment and the state of fisheries in the CLME+ region;

NOTING that WECAFC-FAO is party to the Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM) for the sustainable management, use and protection of shared living resources in the CLME+ and thus shares responsibility for the SAP implementation;

ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of the “State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies in the CLME+ region” (SOMEE) report for providing a means to periodically evaluate and assess, in a holistic way, the marine environment, its living marine resources and their ecosystem goods and services, and links with key marine-based economic sectors, and links with key marine-based economic sectors;

NOTING that WECAFC has endorsed the annotated outline of the SOMEE report;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that institutionalizing the SOMEE reporting and SAP M&E mechanisms within the organizations of the CLME+ ICM will guarantee regular update of information and facilitate collaboration among the environment and fisheries sectors, thus contributing to the further development of a blue economy;;

MINDFUL of the importance of information collected, assessed and disseminated through the WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA Joint Working Groups for the development of the SOMEE;

RECOGNIZING the relevance of the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership platform for the development of SOMEE and SAP M&E;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the critical need for streamlined arrangements among national reporting on SDG14.4.1, regional reporting for the SOMEE, and FAO’s global “State of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA)”;

Adopts in conformity with Article 6 (a) of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RESOLUTION that:

1. WECAFC Secretariat participates, to the extent possible, within available resources and in the context of its mandate, to the development of the SOMEE collaborative reporting mechanism and the production of the “State of Fisheries and Aquaculture” (SOFIA) Report and other relevant processes at the national, regional, and global levels.
2. WECAFC contributes, to the extent possible, within available resources and in the context of its mandate, written content and data for the development of the CLME+ SOMEE report, related to WECAFC’s thematic area of competence and geographic scope of its mandate, through its WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA Joint Working Groups, the WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) and other mechanisms.
3. Recommend the WECAFC Members to consider providing feedback on draft SOMEE content related to the WECAFC’s area of competence, which will be made available to the WECAFC.

4. WECAFC assist, to the extent possible, within available resources and in the context of its mandate, in aspects (including technological) of M&E of the shared living marine resources related to WECAFC's thematic area of competence and geographic scope of its mandate, through its WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA Joint Working Groups, the WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) and other mechanisms.

Resolution WECAFC/17/2019/19

“ON THE PROPOSED PERMANENT COORDINATION MECHANISM (PCM) AND ASSOCIATED SUSTAINABLE FINANCING PLAN FOR ENHANCED INTEGRATED OCEAN GOVERNANCE IN THE CLME+/WECAFC/WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

ACKNOWLEDGING that the politically-endorsed, CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP) (2015-2025) seeks to contribute to human well-being, socio-economic development, food security and enhanced livelihoods from goods and services provided by the ecosystems within the CLME+ region;

NOTING that CLME+ SAP Strategy 3, Action 3.2 calls for the *“proposal of a Permanent Policy Coordination Mechanism (PPCM), with a clear mandate, which is financially sustainable, geographically inclusive and politically acceptable and which takes into account the principle of subsidiarity”*;

RECOGNISING that the Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM) for the Sustainable Management, Use and Protection of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems, which consists of the following eight Inter-Governmental Organisations: FAO, UNEP, UNESCO-IOC, CARICOM Secretariat, CRFM, CCAD, OSPESCA, and the OECS Commission, was signed by all eight agencies by December 2017;

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) **Adopts** in conformity with Article 6 (a) of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RESOLUTION that:

1. The WECAFC Secretariat continue to participate in the process towards identifying a Permanent Coordination Mechanism and a Sustainable Financing Plan for the consolidation of a regional framework for integrated ocean governance in the CLME+/WECAFC/Wider Caribbean region;
2. The WECAFC Secretariat keep WECAFC Members informed on the progress towards the establishment of a Permanent Coordination Mechanism and a Sustainable Financing Plan for the consolidation of a regional framework for integrated ocean governance in the CLME+/WECAFC/Wider Caribbean region
3. WECAFC Members consider undertaking consultations at the national level with all relevant stakeholders on the proposed options for a Permanent Coordination Mechanism and a Sustainable Financing Plan towards the consolidation of a regional framework for integrated ocean governance in the CLME+/WECAFC/Wider Caribbean region being further defined under Phase II of the work.

Resolution WECAFC/17/2019/20

“ON INTERIM COORDINATION MECHANISM FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT, USE AND PROTECTION OF SHARED LIVING MARINE RESOURCES IN THE CLME+ REGION (CLME+ SAP ICM)”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

ACKNOWLEDGING that the officially-endorsed, CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP) (2015–2025) seeks to contribute to human well-being, socio-economic development, food security and enhance livelihoods from goods and services provided by the ecosystems within the CLME+ region;

MINDFUL of the responsibilities assigned to WECAFC in this 10-year CLME+ SAP in terms of enhancing regional fisheries governance arrangements for sustainable fisheries in the CLME+ Region;

NOTING the significant contributions of the UNDP/GEF Project - *Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resource in the CLME+ region* towards the facilitation of EAF and EBM for the sustainable and climate-resilient provision of goods and services from shared living marine resources;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that the Interim Coordination Mechanism for the Sustainable Management, Use and Protection of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+ SAP ICM),, which consists of the following eight Inter-Governmental Organisations: FAO, UNEP, UNESCO-IOC, CARICOM Secretariat, CRFM, CCAD, OSPESCA, and the OECS Commission, was signed by all eight agencies by December 2017;

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) **Adopts** in conformity with Article 6 (a) of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RESOLUTION that:

1. WECAFC members continue to promote and support, as appropriate, the implementation of the CLME+ SAP and CLME+ Project in their respective countries
2. WECAFC members support, as appropriate, the work of the Interim Coordination Mechanism for the Sustainable Management, Use and Protection of Shared Living Marine Resources in the CLME+ region towards enhanced regional coordination and collaboration for sustainable fisheries and the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment. WECAFC secretariat continue coordinating on fisheries related issues between WECAFC Members, OSPESCA and CRFM.