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## REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

### Seventh Session

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 14–16 May 2013

### Review of Intersessional Activities

#### Executive Summary

This document provides a summary of the intersessional work of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) and its subsidiary bodies: the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) and the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA). Activities conducted and main outcomes are briefly included.

#### The Commission is invited to:

Review the activities performed by the WGFM and the WGA over the intersessional period and to provide guidance on issues of particular relevance expressed by the subsidiary bodies, including any follow-up actions that might be deemed appropriate and necessary.

## INTRODUCTION

1. This document is a summary of the work of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) and its subsidiary bodies: the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) and the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA). Activities conducted and progress achieved are included.

### FIFTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

2. The Fifth meeting of the RECOFI WGFM was held in Tehran, Iran (Islamic Republic of), from 9 to 12 October 2011. The meeting was attended by 16 delegates from five Members of Commission and 12 observers in addition to five members of the FAO Secretariat. Three RECOFI Members (Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia) were absent.

3. The WGFM agreed on the details of a number of regional projects including their anticipated implementation location and dates, specifically the following activities: a workshop on the social and economic aspects of small-scale fisheries (February 2012); a workshop to develop regional management plans with agreed operational objectives for fisheries management (June 2012); and the pilot joint assessment of narrow-barred Spanish mackerel and workshop on the utilization of fishery dependent data (February 2013). Moreover, Members agreed that they should carry out a survey on the status and extent of illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing in their respective countries.

4. At its Sixth session, the Commission considered the potential benefits of a scientific expert group that would review and analyse the fisheries situation in the Region to provide advice to the Commission in order to create a solid scientific base for its decisions in fulfilment of RECOFI's mandate. The WGFM and WGA were requested to discuss the effective merit to establish such scientific expert groups. The participants in the Fifth meeting of the WGFM deemed the creation of a scientific, technical and economic committee to be appropriate. The delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran agreed to draft the ToRs for a multidisciplinary scientific expert group to be submitted for consideration at the Sixth meeting of the WGFM.

5. The WGFM approved a road map towards the expected decision of RECOFI to apply as a full member of Fishery Resources Monitoring System FIRMS at its Thirteen session in 2013 and that two RECOFI representatives will attend the Seventh meeting of the FIRMS Steering Committee in December 2011 as observers and will present the status of the fisheries inventory work in the RECOFI Region. WGFM will make recommendations to the 2013 Commission meeting regarding a possible application to FIRMS as a full member.

### SIXTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

6. The Sixth meeting of the WGFM was held in Doha, Qatar, from 5 to 8 November 2012. The meeting was attended by 15 delegates from six Members of the Commission in addition to the FAO Secretariat. Two RECOFI Members (Iran IR and Iraq) were absent.

7. The WGFM addressed and made decisions on matters concerning relevant follow-up to the Fifth meeting of the RECOFI WGFM and to the Sixth Session of RECOFI (May 2011). The status of the implementation of the fisheries management recommendation on minimum data reporting in recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 that entered into force on 1 January 2012 was discussed, and on the basis of the data submitted by the Members, relevant management measures to be implemented in the RECOFI Region were cooperatively formulated.

8. The Report on the RECOFI Workshop on Social and Economic Aspects of Fisheries in the RECOFI Region as well as the progress of the Task Group for this work were presented and discussed. The development of regional fisheries management plans with agreed operational objectives for fisheries management was outlined. The main outcomes of the Near-East and North Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries and their relevance to RECOFI

were discussed. RECOFI participation in the FIRMS Steering Committee meeting and national inventories of fisheries in RECOFI Members were considered. Finally, the status of RECOFI's financial situation and its implications for implementing the approved WGFM workplan was presented and the workplan revised accordingly, including the revision of priorities. Additionally, an update of the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2013–2014 was outlined. The next meeting of the WGFM will possibly be held in Kuwait in 2013.

9. The WGFM was able to formulate fisheries management measures for key fisheries of regional relevance. Moreover, the meeting agreed on the importance of including socio-economic considerations in management decisions. The workshop on regional fisheries management plans, convened under agenda item 5, established the foundation for the development of a comprehensive regional management framework based on fishing effort control through agreed management measures and monitored by a set of indicators.

10. The meeting reviewed and updated the list of fisheries species of common interest and expanded it. The WGFM addressed the problem of IUU fishing in the Region and noted international developments and initiatives to combat IUU fishing, including the benefits of implementing the 2009 FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA). The WGFM agreed that the consolidated inventory of RECOFI fisheries was comprehensive and could be published in FIRMS, following the formal endorsement by the Commission.

11. The WGFM noted that some decisions taken at its Fifth session could not be implemented either due to lack of action by the Members or insufficient funds. The WGFM reviewed the status of RECOFI's financial situation and its implications for implementing its workplan. The WGFM noted that without an increase in the contribution of Member countries to the agreed amount of USD15 000, activities in the WGFM work plan would have to be drastically reduced, undermining the efforts and progress made so far.

12. Mr Abdul Karim H. Al-Radhi, was re-elected as chairperson to serve until the Seventh meeting of the WGFM. Mr Nabil Ibrahim Fita (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) was elected as Vice-chairperson.

## **ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON AQUACULTURE (WGA)**

### **SIXTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON AQUACULTURE**

13. At the Sixth session of RECOFI in May 2011 all Member countries deliberated to hold the Sixth meeting of the Working Group on Aquaculture in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The meeting was planned to take place in Isfahan (Iran IR), from 18 to 20 September 2012, kindly hosted by the Iranian Fisheries Organization.

14. Regrettably and in close consultation with the Iranian Fisheries Organization, the WGA Technical Secretary, in agreement with the RECOFI Chairperson and the RECOFI-WGA Chairperson, the WGA Sixth meeting had to be postponed to a date to be defined, due the low response from RECOFI Members and lack of sufficient time to guarantee the entry visa. This meeting would most probably not take place during the current intersession unless otherwise requested by the Members.

15. The main items that had been included in the provisional agenda of the Sixth meeting of the WGA, and hence still pending due to the postponement of the meeting, included: (i) the update of the WGA programme of work and budget for the biennium 2011–2012 including a review of regional aquaculture development priorities; (ii) follow-up on the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS); (iii) aquaculture production statistics reporting in the Region; (iv) an appraisal of the WGA's work including options to make it more useful to the needs of the RECOFI Members; (v) the establishment of a RECOFI Aquaculture Scientific Committee; and finally (vi)

preliminary consideration on the WGA programme of work and budget for the biennium 2013–2014 including a review of regional aquaculture development priorities.

#### **FAO/RECOFI JOINT WGA AND WGFM WORKSHOP ON SPATIAL PLANNING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR MARINE CAPTURE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**

16. The workshop on Spatial Planning Development Programme for Marine Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture was held in Cairo, the Arab Republic of Egypt, from 25 to 27 November 2012, hosted by the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa. Twelve delegates participated representing six RECOFI Member countries; Kuwait and Iran IR did not attend. FAO provided the workshop secretariat.

17. The workshop was a follow-on activity to the Regional Technical Workshop on Spatial Planning for Marine Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture which took place in Doha, the State of Qatar (24–28 October 2010). The purpose of this workshop was to complete a “Spatial Planning Development Programme” in as much detail as possible, including preliminary budget estimates for the development of the capacity to use spatial tools in fisheries and aquaculture management and planning.

18. The Workshop produced the following outcomes: Awareness and Capacity Building on Spatial Planning for Marine Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture; RECOFI Regional Spatial Planning Development Programme for Marine Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture Questionnaire Survey Analysis Report; Proposal for a Regional Spatial Planning Development Programme for Marine Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture in RECOFI Member countries including the preliminary identification of “pilot projects” of regional and national interest and importance; and interim activities were identified for completion of the Spatial Planning Development Programme along with associated agency responsibilities.

#### **WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF FISHERIES IN THE RECOFI REGION**

19. The RECOFI Workshop on Social and Economic Aspects of Fisheries in the RECOFI Region was held in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain from 22 to 24 April 2012. The meeting was attended by 18 delegates from four Member countries and two observers, as well as the FAO/RECOFI Secretariat. Kuwait and Qatar were absent and Iran IR and Iraq could not attend. The workshop discussed the social and economic aspects of fisheries in RECOFI, reviewed the availability of data on the socio-economic statistics, analysis work and other relevant research activities in member countries and formulated a RECOFI action plan for regional cooperation in the assessment of socio-economic aspects through identifying regional socio-economic indicators to be used at both national and regional levels.

20. The integration of the human dimension, including the social and economic aspects, is essential in the context of the ecosystem approach of fisheries management. For this purpose, it was recognized that key issues in social and economic aspects in the management of fisheries and of the people fishing in the region must be identified together with necessary information indicators to monitor their status.

21. The workshop concluded, among other things, that there is a need to enhance the collection of socio-economic information with a matter of priority by the member countries, and recommended that an applicable, practical and useful work plan on socio-economic work should be formulated to support technical capacity development to advance knowledge and that social and economic aspects must be integrated and incorporated into the RECOFI fisheries management framework to ensure a more holistic approach in line with the ecosystem approach. A Task Group was established for further follow-up to the collection of socio-economic information in RECOFI Member countries, as well as to implement the workplan.

## **RECOFI-FIRMS WORKSHOP ON RESOURCES AND FISHERIES INVENTORIES**

22. The RECOFI–FIRMS Workshop on Resources and Fisheries Inventories was held in Cairo, Egypt, from 12 to 14 July 2011. The workshop was attended by 11 experts from seven Member countries. The United Arab Emirates was absent. The goal of this workshop was to formalize an inventory of marine resources/stocks and fisheries for the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) area (at both the national and regional levels) for its eventual publication through the Fishery Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS [<http://firms.fao.org/>]). This inventory will be used as the backbone for regular reporting of status and trends of stocks and fisheries under the RECOFI mandate, using the web-based framework and approaches established by FIRMS.

23. The Workshop was successful in developing the structure for a regional marine resources and fisheries inventory. The configuration of the regional fisheries inventory was elaborated based on the “three-dimensional diagram” approach. The regional marine resources inventory was initiated building from the 17 RECOFI priority species/groups, and will require further expert inputs from research institutes of the Region. The participants appraised the potential benefits of the inventory approach in support of a regional review of management measures at the national level, which will eventually support fisheries management in the RECOFI area.

## **WORKSHOP ON BYCATCH MANAGEMENT AND LOW IMPACT FISHING**

24. A regional Workshop on Bycatch Management and Low Impact Fishing was held in Kuwait City from 9 to 12 December 2012. The Workshop was attended by 27 representatives from all RECOFI Member countries and the FAO Secretariat. During the last day, representatives from the Kuwait fishing industry attended the meeting. The main goal of the workshop was to develop a regional action plan on how bycatch can be more effectively managed and how to reduce impacts of fishing on the environment.

25. The workshop synthesized the current knowledge on bycatch in the RECOFI Region and considered priority follow up actions in the form of a Regional Action Plan for managing the environmental impacts of fishing in the RECOFI Region.