

THE 2005 ROME DECLARATION ON FISHERIES AND THE TSUNAMI

Adopted by the

FAO Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries

Rome, 12 March 2005

We, the Ministers and Ministers' representatives, meeting in Rome at the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries on 12 March 2005,

Appreciating the initiative taken by the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to organize the Meeting, thus providing an opportunity to address the issue of rehabilitation in relation to the Tsunami disaster,

Recalling that the massive earthquake and subsequent Tsunami waves that originated off the west coast of northern Sumatra has caused extensive loss of lives and damage to coastal communities throughout the southern Bay of Bengal and East Africa,

Acknowledging that the effects of the Tsunami have been particularly devastating for fishers and fish farmers, with heavy loss of lives and homes, damage to fisheries and aquaculture infrastructure and facilities estimated at over 500 million USD, the destruction or damage of more than 100,000 fishing vessels, and the loss of more than 1.5 million gear units,

Expressing deep concern that the scale of the damage to coastal areas and communities is threatening the livelihoods of millions of people, many of whom depend on fisheries and aquaculture for income and food,

Commending the swift and dedicated response of the peoples and governments in the affected areas, as well as the unprecedented level of assistance being offered for relief and rehabilitation from the international community, including national Governments, United Nations organizations, international financial institutions, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and recognizing the importance of coordination of these efforts for effective rehabilitation,

Recognizing the role of FAO in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the affected areas and commending the efforts led by FAO in the aftermath of the disaster in advising and supporting the Governments of the affected nations,

Expressing concern over the medium- and long-term social, economic and environmental impact of the disaster, as well as the risk of negative impacts from rehabilitation efforts if not appropriately designed and duly coordinated,

Committed to assist with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the damage inflicted by the Tsunami disaster and to duly account for the specific needs and requirements of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and related coastal communities, in accordance with the three pillars of sustainable development recognized by the World Summit on Sustainable Development: environmental, social, and economic.

We declare that:

1. We are determined to ensure that the efforts, led by the international community to provide assistance to rehabilitate the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the nations affected by the December 2004 earthquake and Tsunami, develop in synergy so that, through coordinated action, we provide an effective response to the needs of the affected fishing communities, in particular their poorest members.
2. We therefore encourage the international community, including donor countries, international financial institutions and relevant international organizations, as well as the private sector and civil society organizations, to deliver such assistance in a coordinated manner under the leadership of the countries affected.
3. We call upon donor nations and international financial institutions to fulfill the pledges that they have made in this regard so that relief and rehabilitation efforts can be sustained.
4. We emphasize the need for fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation to focus on rebuilding the livelihoods of fishers and fish farmers, providing adequate protection from this and other environmental threats, and improving sectoral efficiency, sustainability and governance.
5. We recognize that environmental degradation of critical habitats caused by the Tsunami in affected coastal areas, such as coral reefs and mangroves, may continue to affect the productivity of inshore fishing grounds and the potential for aquaculture rehabilitation for some time.
6. We emphasize the need to protect the rights of fishers and fishworkers, particularly those involved in subsistence and small-scale and artisanal fisheries, to a secure and just livelihood, as well as preferential access, where appropriate, to fishing grounds and resources of affected areas.
7. We also emphasize the need for fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation to be in line with the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Rehabilitation efforts, including transfers of vessels, must proceed under the leadership and control of the affected nations and must ensure that the fishing capacity that is being rebuilt is commensurate with the productive capacity of the fisheries resources and their sustainable utilization. We recognize the benefits associated with re-establishment, within affected nations, of the capacity that is required to rebuild infrastructure, including vessel building, fish processing and fishing port facilities.
8. We support the provision of greater assistance toward a coordinated assessment of fisheries resources in the affected region so that relief and rehabilitation efforts can proceed in a sustainable way, recognizing that the assessment must not delay the progress of relief and rehabilitation efforts.
9. We emphasize the need to rebuild and strengthen the capacity of the affected fisheries sectors, including in the areas of fishing abilities, data collection, scientific analysis, assessments of fisheries resources and effective fisheries management, as well as to enhance the capacity of relevant communities and stakeholders to engage in this process, to achieve sustainable livelihoods.
10. We welcome the steps taken by FAO, jointly with development and research partners from the region, for the development of a strategic framework and the creation of collaborative arrangements for fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation and the restoration of marine habitat.
11. We support the need for FAO to play a leading role in advising and supporting the international community in matters relevant to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation and the restoration of marine habitat.