

PRESS RELEASE

Regional Fishery Bodies sign Agreement to Improve Coordination for Sustainable Fisheries in the Western Central Atlantic Region



Cartagena, Colombia, 27 January 2016

Three Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs): the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism ([CRFM](#)); the Organization of the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector ([OSPESCA](#)); and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations - Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission ([FAO-WECAFC](#)) on Wednesday 27 January signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** (MOU) to facilitate, support and strengthen the coordination of actions among the three RFBs to increase the

sustainability of fisheries.

This initiative to improve coordination for sustainable fisheries is supported through the *UNDP/GEF-Catalysing 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+)* Project. This 5-year regional project seeks to support the implementation of a 10-year politically endorsed *Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Shared Living Marine Resources of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+ SAP)*; through the full implementation of ecosystem based management/an ecosystem approach to fisheries (EBM/EAF) within the CLME+ region.

The 3 RFBs agreed to work on a number of priority areas such as the provision of advice in support of management of fisheries of spiny lobster, queen conch, shrimp and ground fish, recreational fisheries, flying fish, FADs fisheries, sharks, Spawning Aggregations, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fisheries. Joint Working Groups on these species and fisheries have been established in recent years and are now better coordinated. The 3 RFBs have also agreed to work on areas and actions identified in the CLME+ Project and CLME+ Strategic Action Programme that are of relevance to the scope of work. The 3 RFBs have also committed to working towards the harmonization of their respective fisheries policy and legal frameworks.

The Interim Coordination Mechanism, to be tested through this MOU, will increase the uptake of information and fisheries management advice generated at national and sub-regional level to the regional level. This will support dissemination of best practices, harmonization and boost the impact of measures, decrees and regulations adopted within the frameworks of these RFBs. It will provide a pilot structure that may lead at some point to the establishment of one or more Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in the Western Central Atlantic Ocean.



The Executive Director of the CRFM, Milton Haughton, said, ‘this is a strategically significant development that should produce significant tangible benefits for our countries, coastal communities and other stakeholders in the fisheries sector. It will ensure that our policies, programmes and plans for sustainable use, management and conservation of the living marine resources are more coherent, integrated and holistic, and hence more appropriate for addressing the challenges we face in the Caribbean Sea and adjacent Atlantic Ocean.’

“I am very happy with this MOU which formalizes collaboration between OSPESCA, CRFM and WECAFC that started some 4 years ago through joint working groups. This is good for the region’s fisheries. The members of the three RFBs will benefit hugely from this development”, said Raymon

van Anrooy, Secretary of WECAFC.

The Executive Director of SICA / OSPESCA, Mario González Recinos said, ‘the signing of this MOU responds to the objectives of the new Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Integration Policy (2015-2025), and the Central American region’s commitment to promote better coordination frameworks at both national and regional levels, with the idea of harmonizing management strategies, especially for species of high commercial value that are characterized by their migratory nature in the Caribbean Sea.’

The MOU between the 3 RFBs was signed during the First Steering Committee Meeting of the Project which took place in Cartagena, Colombia 26-28 January 2016.

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