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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

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REVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE FAO/RECOFI REGIONAL WORKSHOP TO COMBAT ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING (MUSCAT, OMAN, 30 MARCH- 2 APRIL 2009) AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE WORK OF THE THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO/RECOFI Regional Workshop to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from from 30 March to 2 April 2009.¹ It was attended by 14 participants from six RECOFI Members (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates).

2. The workshop, undertaken at the request of the fourth session of the Commission, was tailored specifically to meet the needs of its Members. The workshop was comprehensive in its coverage, addressing the following issues:

- IUU fishing: its nature, scope and the role of RECOFI in combating it;
- the international legal and policy framework to combat IUU fishing;
- the IPOA-IUU, FAO Fisheries Technical Guidelines No 9 on IUU fishing and national plans of action to combat IUU fishing;
- the main IUU fishing problems in the RECOFI area, possible solutions and the role of the Commission;
- the role of port State measures in combating IUU fishing;
- flag State performance to combat IUU fishing;
- fisheries legislation in RECOFI countries, and
- regional cooperation to defeat IUU fishing;

¹ FAO. 2009. Report of the FAO/RECOFI Regional Workshop to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report. No. 903. FAO. Rome.30p.

3. In addition to the provision of up-to-date information on the above topics, working groups were formed to enhance the workshop's participatory nature. A problem-solving exercise on how to deal with IUU fishing at the national and regional levels was undertaken. This exercise was followed by a brainstorming session that focussed on IUU fishing issues that impact small-scale and industrial fisheries in the region.

NATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE PRE-WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE ON IUU FISHING

4. Prior to the workshop participants were invited to complete a questionnaire and return it to the Secretariat. The questionnaire sought to gather information about the main IUU fishing problems in the region, solutions to the problems and possible actions that might be taken by RECOFI to prevent, deter and eliminate them.

5. Table 1 summarizes the information provided to the Secretariat by participants from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman.

Table 1: Summary of national responses to the questionnaire

Countries	IUU fishing problem	Possible solutions	Possible RECOFI measures and action
Kuwait	Using illegal fishing gear	Require stricter regulations and rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apply strong and new regulations and rules for fishing activities ▪ Apply strict punishment against law breakers ▪ Inform RECOFI members of any updates in regulations or rules regarding fishing ▪ Members are obliged to provide the organization with information about fishing status on a regular basis and report any incidents concerning fishing of shrimps and <i>P. argentius</i> ▪ Emphasize the importance of monitoring and surveillance equipment
	Fishing in forbidden area (Kuwait bay and three nm zone)	Require remote monitoring system on the fishing boats	
	Communication problems with foreign fishers	Providing proper regulation manuals in different languages	
	Catching shrimp during breeding season with some neighbouring countries	Unify the breeding seasons among the countries	
	Catching the Zubaidy (<i>Pampus argentius</i>) problems	Active communication between Kuwait – Iraq – Iran	
	Fishing for Zubaidy during the breeding period	There should be stricter regulations and punishment	
Saudi Arabia	IUU fishing of Bahraini boats	Regulating season between neighbouring countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doing with all previous studies and suggestion
	IUU fishing of pleasure boats	Determination of the quantities	
	Bycatch dumping	Using methods that lead to a decrease of bycatch as well as studies on mesh size	
Bahrain	Illegal fishing: 1.Unauthorized gears 2.Fishing without licence 3.Catch in closed season	Political will to implement the fisheries law no. 20 of 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Closing seasons for commercial species (i.e. groupers, kingfish) in GCC countries or ROPME sea area ▪ Uniformity of fisheries regulations in GCC countries and if possible in ROPME sea area ▪ Improve communication between member States regarding shared stocks
	Unreported fishing from recreational sector	Provide logistics and resources to enable the officials to collect data	
	Unregulated fishing: 1.Catch of fingerling 2.Catch in protected	Implementation of laws, provide resources and enhance fisheries management	

Countries	IUU fishing problem	Possible solutions	Possible RECOFI measures and action
	areas 3. Catch without a permit		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage marine protected areas in all countries ▪ Provide human resources budget and training to control illegal fisheries ▪ Financial compensation to solve the overfishing problem in the Gulf region ▪ All countries in the Gulf should implement the same guidelines in their countries for the benefit of the public
	Target species: groupers; coral fishes; kingfish	Closing seasons and areas	
	Overfishing	Reduce number of licenses through compensation	
	Sand mining in fisheries grounds	Find other alternatives for sand filling and reduce pressure on dredging activities	
	Reclamation of shallow waters	Eliminate reclamation activities to allow marine resources to recover	
	Limited unauthorized fishing in territorial waters	Increase marine control through satellite images	
Qatar	Recreational fishing is the only activity not reported in Qatar, which can affect fish statistics data	Regulation to manage and control recreational fishing and to collect fish catch data of recreational fishing boats in all fishing ports of Qatar	The implementation of VMS by all RECOFI Members for all fishing boats, including speed boat (recreational fishing) to strengthen control of fishing vessel and to combat IUU fishing
Oman	Using unauthorized fishing boats in territory waters	Improve law enforcement activities and implement high penalties and punishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved co-operation between members of RECOFI ▪ Strategic programming, tactical targeting and sampling strategy ▪ Extend use of modern technologies and comprehensive data validation system ▪ Standardized and coordination inspection activities and procedures at sea and on land (transport and market) ▪ Action plan for RECOFI Members to improve their implementation to combat IUU fishing ▪ Improve framework for port control system ▪ Sharing information about IUU fishing activities between RECOFI Members.
	Using prohibited fishing gears	Control markets and import boarders and cease all prohibited gears used by fishing boats and vessels	
	Fishing unauthorized species (seasonal species)	Improve law enforcement activities by control locale markets and exports and implement high penalties and punishments	
	Fishing without licences	Improve law enforcement activities	
	IUU fishing in EEZ and territorial waters	Improve MCS by cooperation between national agents and implement high penalties and punishments	
	Re-export of unauthorized species		

6. An analysis of the information provided indicates that there is a degree of commonality in the IUU fishing problems across the region. This is not surprising given that some fisheries are shared and those that are not shared have similar exploitation modes. A recurring theme in countries underpinning the fisheries sector was a general weakness in management. In summary, some of these problems highlighted by participants included:

IUU fishing:

- violation of closed fishing seasons and areas;
- fishing without authorizations, and
- use of prohibited fishing gear.

Unregulated fishing:

- recreational fisheries;
- fishing capacity in some fisheries;
- bycatch handling, and
- minimum species sizes and other basis management measures.

Unreported fishing:

- limited bycatch reporting;
- limited recreational fish catch reporting, and
- catches from foreign fishing vessels violating national waters.

7. The information submitted in the questionnaires was consolidated in the workshop. It gave a good snapshot of the nature and extent of IUU fishing in the region. The information ensured that there was a solid and informed base for discussions and, in the brainstorming session, for the elaboration of realistic measures to respond to IUU fishing.

SUMMARY OF THE BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON IUU FISHING

8. Taking account of the information provided by participants and building on discussion during the workshop, the brainstorming session addressed the major IUU fishing problems facing small-scale and large-scale fisheries in the RECOFI region. The problems were classified as national, regional and international. To ameliorate the effects of these problems the workshop proposed action to combat them, some of which were quite specific indicating that participants had a good understanding of the issues and their impacts and consequences.

9. The outcomes of the brainstorming session constitute the workshop's recommendations. They are likely to remain valid for sometime. Major changes in conditions in the region vis-à-vis IUU fishing are not anticipated. However, the outcomes should be reviewed and updated from time to time to ensure that they reflect the situation in the region.

Table 2: Outcome of the brainstorming session in relation to IUU fishing in the RECOFI area

SMALL SCALE FISHERIES		
LEVEL	PRIORITY ISSUES	PROPOSED ACTION
NATIONAL	Economic gain from IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthening legislation to provide sufficiently high penalties to deter and punish the activities
	Catch during the closed season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthened control of landings, including inspection ▪ Deterrent penalties ▪ Improved laws
	Overlap of responsibilities and insufficient coordination among competent authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National planning on coordination priorities and budget to combat IUU fishing, with a view to the centralization of responsibilities
	Use of illegal fishing gear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved laws ▪ Improved training for inspectors ▪ Research on improved gear
	Excess capacity leading to IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stock assessment ▪ Assessment of fishing capacity, with the view of reduction as appropriate ▪ Reduction of licences

	Use of unlicensed vessels for IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintaining a register of fishing vessels with sufficient information ▪ Designate authorized inspection officers
	Lack of awareness of all stakeholders about the consequences of IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a communications strategy, including awareness raising through all types of media
	Catch during the closed season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Harmonized legislation, including penalty levels ▪ Improve inspection capacity and training for the marine control team ▪ Cooperation in harmonizing marketing measures to prohibit trade, including through customs
REGIONAL	Use of illegal fishing gear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved coordination and regulation through RECOFI and GCC States
	Use of unlicensed vessels for IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop minimum standards, a regional database for vessel registers and catch
	Insufficient reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a regional database for catch with cooperation of RECOFI
	Illegal fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish an information centre within RECOFI
	Export of IUU caught fish and fish products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Require catch certification and other documents required by the importing countries
INTERNATIONAL		
INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES	PRIORITY ISSUES	PROPOSED ACTION
LEVEL	Lack of awareness of all stakeholders about the consequences of IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a communications strategy, including awareness raising through all types of media
NATIONAL	Bycatch (taking prohibited, undersized or endangered species, unreported and misreported catch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proper implementation of the laws ▪ Development of capacity for implementation; ▪ Use of bycatch reduction devices, including in the shrimp trawl fishery
	Market incentives to engage in IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce opportunities for the marketing of IUU caught fish, including through laws and trade measures
	Lack of awareness of all stakeholders about the consequences of IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a communications strategy through RECOFI
REGIONAL	Bycatch (taking prohibited, undersized or endangered species, unreported and misreported catch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination of the use of by-catch reduction devices ▪ Development of regional capacity for the control and reduction of bycatch
	Need for strengthened cooperation and coordination in the region to combat IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen RECOFI
	Unlicensed fishing in the RECOFI area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint and harmonized enforcement
	Destruction of coral reefs by IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote closer cooperation between RECOFI and ROPME
	Market incentives to engage in IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce opportunities for the marketing of IUU caught fish, including through laws and trade measures
	Lack of acceptance of international instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage acceptance of international instruments through RECOFI

INTERNATIONAL	Market incentives to engage in IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce opportunities for the marketing of IUU caught fish, including through laws and trade measures
	Lack of international coordination to combat IUU fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination between RECOFI and other RFBs or organizations (such as the GFCM, IOTC and proposed Red Sea Fisheries Commission)

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK OF THE WORKING GROUP

10. IUU fishing is a major fisheries issue worldwide and the international community is addressing it on a range of fronts including through the United Nations General Assembly, FAO and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements. IUU fishing is inconsistent with sound resource management because it undermines national and regional efforts to promote greater responsibly and sustainability in fisheries. This point was recognized by RECOFI at its fourth session in 2005 when it requested the Secretariat and the Working Group to address IUU fishing.

11. It would be prudent for the Working Group to keep IUU fishing under review and report, as appropriate, to the Commission on a regular basis so that it is briefed on the matter. The information compiled in the workshop could serve as a reference point for future initiatives by the Working Group. Moreover, within the Work Programme for capture fisheries it may be appropriate to recommend to the Commission at its sixth session that Members consider undertaking certain harmonized activities at the national and regional levels to combat IUU fishing. Such activities could include, for example, the implementation of an awareness building campaign in small-scale and industrial fisheries about the impacts of IUU fishing. In this way the output of the workshop would have a practical effect by feeding directly into policy formulation RECOFI. More proactive and ambitious proposals could also be considered if this was the will of the Working Group.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE WORKING GROUP

12. The Working Group is invited to:

- review the report of the workshop and comment, as appropriate;
- provide guidance to the Secretariat on follow up action on IUU fishing, and
- recommend further and concrete steps to combat IUU fishing, as appropriate, to the sixth session of RECOFI.