ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

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Report of the Twenty-sixth Session

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REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
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PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

This is the edited version of the report approved by the Twenty-sixth Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission.

ABSTRACT

This is the final report of the Twenty-sixth Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC), held in Beijing, People's Republic of China, from 24-30 September 1998. Major topics discussed were: fish utilization in the Asia-Pacific region; current issues on capture fisheries in Asia and the Pacific; issues related to the development of sustainable aquaculture; achievements of APFIC and its future direction; merger of BOBC and APFIC; the restructuring of APFIC subsidiary bodies and regional fishery cooperative projects.

Distribution:

Participants in the Session
Members of the Commission
Other interested nations and international organizations
FAO Fisheries Department
Fishery Officers in FAO Regional Offices

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OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) held its Twenty-sixth Session and a Symposium on Fish Utilization in the Asia-Pacific Region from 24 to 30 September 1998 at the Beijing Continental Grand Hotel, Beijing, People's Republic of China. The Session was attended by the representatives of sixteen Members of the Commission and by observers from the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC). A list of the delegates and observers is attached as Appendix A.

2. At the official opening of the Session, the Commission was welcomed by the Chairman of APFIC, Mr. Zhuo Youzhan, Director-General of the Bureau of Fisheries, People's Republic of China. He informed the Commission that China attached great importance to the restructuring of the fishery sector; priority was assigned to aquaculture and to a new fishery development policy, based on the principle of market economy. This had contributed to a rapid growth of the sector. China now ranks first in world fishery production, with a total of 36 million tons in 1997. Inspite of these achievements, China has experienced many problems such as the depletion of coastal fishery resources, water pollution, fish diseases and wastage of bycatch. The Director-General was convinced that the FAO/DFID Expert Consultation on Bycatch Utilization in Tropical Fisheries and the Symposium on Fish Utilization in the Asia-Pacific Region organized in conjunction with this Session had provided useful strategies for addressing these problems. He recommended that the pressing issues of marine fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region be addressed by APFIC in its future workplan. In closing, he expressed the hope that all delegates of the region would continue to support APFIC to enable it to promote effective regional fisheries development.

3. In his opening remarks, Mr. Moritaka Hayashi, Assistant Director-General (Fisheries) of FAO, expressed FAO's sincere appreciation to the People's Republic of China, on behalf of Dr. Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of FAO, for hosting the Session and for its generous hospitality.

4. Mr. Hayashi pointed out the critical role played by fisheries in the food security and economies of the Asia-Pacific region. He underlined, however, that many fish stocks are overexploited and that there are already signs of depletion. In order to promote responsible and sustainable fisheries, regional fishery bodies such as APFIC should play a significant role in regional cooperation among the Members.

5. Implementation of international instruments such as UNCLOS and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries requires close cooperation among the countries that utilize the same fishery resources. APFIC, with a long history of operation, is a mechanism that Members could utilize effectively for their mutual benefit in conserving and managing their fisheries resources, thus reinforcing individual and collective self-reliance. Mr. Hayashi urged the Members to participate actively in the work of the Commission and emphasized that the effectiveness of the Commission depends on a clear political commitment by its Members. He confirmed that FAO will continue to assist regional fishery bodies, particularly APFIC, while they are being restructured and strengthened.

6. Inaugurating the Session, His Excellency Qi Jingfa, Vice-Minister of Agriculture, on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, welcomed all the delegates and observers attending the Session. He stated that fisheries in the Asia-Pacific region had played a great role in world fishery development and emphasized that the strengthening of international fishery cooperation must go forward. APFIC should, therefore, extend its role to promote fishery cooperation and development in the region. He congratulated APFIC on completing its outstanding fifty years of service and confirmed China's willingness to play an active role in all future APFIC activities. The Vice-Minister concluded his address by inviting delegates to participate actively in the discussion in order to achieve the goals of the Session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. The Commission adopted the Agenda as shown in Appendix B. The documents placed before the Commission are listed in Appendix C.

REPORT OF THE SYMPOSIUM ON FISH UTILIZATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

8. An APFIC Symposium on Fish Utilization in the Asia-Pacific Region was held from 24 to 26 September 1998 in Beijing, People's Republic of China, in conjunction with the Twenty-sixth Session of APFIC. The report of the Symposium (Appendix D) was presented to the Commission by the Convenor, Mr. David James, Senior Fishery Industry Officer of FAO's Fisheries Department.

9. The Symposium addressed important issues related to fish utilization in the region. Particular attention was given to the utilization of bycatch and low-value species for the benefit of low-income consumers and the growing importance of safety and quality assurance, both to sustain export income and protect the health of domestic consumers.

10. The Symposium observed that many APFIC Members were missing the opportunity to participate in the work of the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, as the Codex guidelines will be used by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the settlement of disputes on food safety issues. It also noted the need to pursue development of products from low-value resources and the search for technologies to ensure the safety and quality of traditional fish products.

11. The Symposium recommended that: a) APFIC Members participate actively in the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius process; b) importance be given to the responsible use of low-value resources and the search for technologies to ensure the safety and quality of traditional fish products; and c) fish inspection be extended to cover the safety of domestic consumers.

12. In reaching its conclusions, the Symposium identified emerging food safety issues (in particular, products from aquaculture) as the major issue to be addressed. It also prepared a programme of action which recommended to the Commission the creation of an *Ad hoc* Working Group of Experts in Food Safety to coordinate research efforts in this area.

13. The Eleventh Session of the APFIC Joint Working Party on Fish Technology and Marketing, which was held after the Symposium, reviewed the recommendations and agreed that the food safety issue be given high priority.

14. The Commission approved the conclusions and recommendations presented in the report of the Symposium and endorsed the proposal to create an ***Ad hoc* Working Group of Experts in Food Safety** to coordinate and guide research programme on emerging food safety aspects of fisheries in the region.

INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF APFIC AND MATTERS REFERRED FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMISSION

15. The Commission was informed of the activities undertaken during the inter-sessional period (November 1996 to August 1998). These activities included, *inter alia*, the entry into force of the amendments to the Agreement in June 1997 after the concurrence of the FAO Council at its 112th Session, the 67th Session of the APFIC Executive Committee and two sessions of the APFIC Working Parties. The amended Agreement and the reports of the subsidiary bodies were submitted to the Commission for consideration.

16. The Secretariat also informed the Commission that preparations had been made to convene the Tenth Session of the APFIC Committee on Marine Fisheries (COMAF) and the First Session of the Aquaculture and Inland Fisheries Committee (AIFIC) in Bangkok. Unfortunately, these sessions had to be postponed twice due to low participation by its Members. All Members were requested to cooperate by participating in the Committees' scheduled meetings in the future in order that technical issues be fully discussed and recommendations on action required might be formulated for submission to the Commission.

17. The Commission noted that collaboration with FAO Headquarters and other fishery organizations had continued. APFIC collaborated with FAO in organizing the Bangkok Technical Consultation on Policies for Sustainable Shrimp Culture (Bangkok, 8-11 December 1997), the FAO/NACA Workshop on Aquaculture Information Systems (Bangkok, 17-20 July 1998) and the FAO/DANIDA Expert Consultation and Regional Workshop on Routine Capture Fishery Data Collection (Bangkok, 19-29 May 1998). The Secretariats of APFIC and SEAFDEC collaborated in convening the Regional Workshop on Fishery Statistics in Asia (Bangkok, 19-21 August 1997), in connection with the First Session of the APFIC Joint Working Party on Fishery Statistics and Economics (Bangkok, 19-23 August 1997). The Commission was also informed that preparation was underway for the AFS/FAO Regional Workshop on Foreign-assisted Fishery Projects in Asia, to be convened at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, 16-18 November 1998) in cooperation with the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS).

18. The Commission noted that the Twenty-fourth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (Yangon, Myanmar, 20-24 April 1998) highlighted management and conservation of fishery resources in the Asia-Pacific region. It noted further that the Conference recognized that APFIC offered one of the best mechanisms for regional cooperation and coordination in fisheries conservation and management in the region. It recalled that the

Conference had recommended that APFIC should work to harmonize national fishery policies, to accelerate the transfer of technology and capacity building in the fishery sector and to transform research results into effective management options for the region.

19. The Commission was informed that the APFIC Executive Committee, at its Sixty-seventh Session, had reviewed the achievements and future direction of APFIC and agreed unanimously that it was time for the Members to take a clear decision on the future of APFIC in order to ensure that the Commission be an effective regional fishery body in the next millennium. The Commission agreed to defer the discussion on this issue to Agenda item 6.

20. In order to commemorate its Fiftieth Anniversary on 9 November 1998, a study on APFIC's evolution, achievements and future direction had been commissioned by the Secretariat. The report of the study was published and distributed to the Members at this Session.

CURRENT ISSUES ON CAPTURE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

21. The Commission reviewed current issues on capture fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region. It commended the Secretariat for the lucid explanation of the situation. It noted that marine fishery production had continued to rise from 1984, reaching a total of 35.6 million mt in 1996, with the annual growth rate registered at 2.3 percent during 1984-1996. China and Japan had the largest shares in the total marine fishery production. However, if China were excluded, the total marine production would show only a small growth rate of 0.1 percent.

22. The Commission noted with concern that habitat degradation, over-exploitation of inshore and coastal fishery resources, pollution from industrial and agricultural development and an excess number of fishermen were common problems in fisheries of several Members. A great number of countries also faced problems related to research and management, including the lack of reliable fishery information and statistical data as well as a lack of trained manpower for research and management institutions.

23. The Commission was informed that, in order to help alleviate these crucial issues affecting sustainable fisheries development, FAO had cooperated with a number of donors (including the Governments of Norway, Japan and the United States) in organizing seminars and technical consultations with a view to helping the Members resolve some of the management issues impeding fishery research and management. The Commission expressed appreciation to FAO for having developed a regional project proposal on the environmental management of the Bay of Bengal, to be financed by GEF/World Bank and SIDA.

24. It was noted that the total inland capture fisheries from the rivers, flood plains, lakes and reservoirs of Asia totaled 4.5 million mt in 1996. Thus, there was an overall growth rate of 3.8 percent in the period 1984-1996. The Commission also noted that there were a number of issues affecting the sustainability of inland capture fisheries: these included habitat degradation and the impact of the introduction of exotic species, inter-sectoral conflicts in land and water use as well as the lack of trained manpower and management institutions.

25. A number of delegations expressed concern about the status of certain coastal stocks in particular areas, such as shad (*Hilsa* spp.) stocks in the northern part of the Bay of Bengal; it requested that special attention be given by APFIC to these stocks in its future activities.

26. The Commission noted that aquaculture had developed rapidly during the past decade with eight out of the top ten global producers located in Asia. The general impression was that the potential for further growth and development of aquaculture is good and that increased production could reduce the shortfall created by the decrease in supply from capture fisheries. The Commission fully agreed that the strategic issue for aquaculture development is sustainability. Sustainability in aquaculture could be achieved only by resolving the issues of immediate concern; these included improved resource use and input supply, strengthening of the aquaculture information system, improved health management of cultivable species, accelerated research and improved training. In addition, there were requirements for extension services, integration of rural aquaculture with the agriculture and livestock sectors, improved quality and safety of aquaculture products, integrated planning for aquaculture development and promotion of small-scale aquaculture for rural food security.

27. Several Members were of the view that the future role of APFIC should include the promotion of technical cooperation amongst countries in the region in the acceleration of sustainable aquaculture development. A number of examples of the positive impacts of appropriate technology transfer from one country to another were cited; these included converting wastelands for aquaculture, cage culture and fish disease control through proper farm management as well as small-scale backyard hatcheries for fish and shrimp.

28. The Commission agreed that good extension work played an essential role in sustainable aquaculture development and noted that several Members were still in need of assistance in the strengthening of their aquaculture extension systems. The technologies for breeding, fry/fingerling rearing and grow-out were available; however, what was lacking was the effective transfer of these technologies from research laboratories to the farmers. It was pointed out that technical cooperation among the Members could help in transferring successful extension experience from one country to another.

29. The Commission agreed that small-scale rural aquaculture should be considered as an effective vehicle for rural development by making a sustainable contribution to rural food security through the production of fish for food and the generation of employment and income. It was pointed out that the major constraints, such as lack of seed and extension services, had to be dealt with.

30. Several Members suggested that, for landlocked countries and countries whose capture fisheries were overexploited, special emphasis should be given to the development of aquaculture. It was also pointed out that some cold water species (*Tor putitora* (Mahseer) and *Tor tor*) in the Himalayan range are overexploited and thus in danger of extinction. It was suggested that special efforts be made for artificial breeding and culturing of these species.

31. The Commission agreed that the measures for assurance of quality and safety of aquaculture products should be applied not only to products for export but also to products for

local consumption. In this connection, however, special care should be taken in integrating aquaculture with livestock rearing (for example, integrating fish culture with pig rearing).

32. Some Members underlined that aquaculture might cause some pollution and negative ecological impact and suggested that, to minimize this impact, aquaculture farm design and operation should be standardized. It was also pointed out that the introduction of exotic species for culture may create an undesirable impact on local ecosystems. Consequently, such introductions should be carried out with extreme care and following the international rules, regulations and procedures related to the transfer of live animals and quarantine guidelines.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF APFIC AND ITS FUTURE DIRECTION

33. The Commission reviewed the activities and achievements of APFIC during its half century of existence (1948-1998). In the formative years (1948-1962), APFIC promoted growth and development of fishery research and administration of its Members. In the second period (1962-1980), the Commission undertook an action-oriented role, with increased attention directed to practical features of the rapidly changing fishing industries of the region and fisheries development planning. The third period (1980-1990) witnessed the Commission's increased efforts towards developing regional and inter-regional programmes aimed at assisting the Members to achieve self-reliance in the management and rational development of their fisheries. During the last decade, the Commission extended assistance to its Members in order that they achieve sustainable fisheries development and rational management of fishery resources both in the exclusive economic zones and in the high seas.

34. The Commission agreed that APFIC's activities had contributed significantly to accelerated development of fisheries of the Members. It concurred with the view of the Executive Committee at its Sixty-seventh Session (Bangkok, June 1998) that the outstanding success was due mainly to the sustained cooperation of the Members, donors support, technical and financial support from FAO and the untiring services and devotion of the Secretariat staff. It was agreed unanimously that APFIC should continue into the next millennium assisting its Members to move closer towards self-reliance in sustainable fisheries development and management. It was recognized that, in moving into the twenty-first century, APFIC should have a new mandate and enhanced responsibilities to attain the aforementioned objective.

35. The Commission noted a number of constraints affecting the work of APFIC during its service to the region, the most significant being the persistent lack of adequate funding support, especially during the past two decades. Furthermore, Resolution 13/97 adopted by the Twenty-ninth Session of the FAO Conference in 1997 will have far-reaching implications on the work of the Commission. The Resolution included the desire that statutory bodies with regional focus should be increasingly self-financing and at the same time be more responsive to the needs of their Members. It was felt that there was a need to minimize these constraints, thus enabling the Commission to function more effectively in the years to come.

36. The future direction of APFIC was discussed by the Commission. It was agreed that the programmes of action should be more specific and pragmatic with clear objectives, taking into consideration sub-regional needs. It was recommended that there be close coordination between

APFIC and other international and regional organizations or programmes concerned with fisheries and marine affairs, in order to avoid the duplication of effort and wastage of development assistance funds.

37. The need for adequate funding for an enhanced role of APFIC was generally recognized. Whilst some delegations felt that APFIC's role should be strengthened, others recalled that this would depend on the availability of funds. The Commission referred to its discussion at the Twenty-fifth Session in 1996 on three possible options for financial contributions by its Members. Several delegations were not prepared at the present Session to support Option 1: mandatory annual contributions from the Members. However, many expressed their support in principle for Option 2: voluntary contributions to a trust fund for implementing specific projects, and Option 3: provision of travel expenses by the Members for their representatives at sessions of APFIC Committees and working parties/groups.

38. To facilitate its further consideration of this important matter, the Commission agreed that an ***Ad hoc* Legal and Financial Working Group** be established. It agreed further that the Working Group should develop a self-sustaining financial mechanism under which APFIC would operate and manage its affairs more effectively, taking into account the economic conditions of the Members. The Working Group should recommend the possible scheme and scale of contributions, legal and institutional arrangements, financial regulations of APFIC and priority programmes that respond to the needs of the Members and do not duplicate the work of other fishery bodies in the region.

39. The Commission was advised by the FAO Fisheries Department that the Organization would endeavor to provide support to ensure the continuation of APFIC. However, a specific amount could not be committed. The Commission was reminded that APFIC belonged to the Members and that FAO's role was that of a facilator and coordinator. It was hoped that the Members would increase their efforts to support the work of APFIC and thus demonstrate their confidence in the Commission.

40. The Commission concurred with the proposal of the Assistant Director-General for Fisheries of FAO concerning the schedule of work of the *Ad hoc* Working Group. The Secretariat will prepare a questionnaire for circulation to the Members by the end of October 1998; responses should be returned to the Secretariat before 15 December 1998. The Secretariat will prepare a preliminary report based on the analysis of the questionnaire by January 1999. An informal meeting of the APFIC Members who attend the 23rd Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) will be held in Rome in February 1999 to prepare for the first meeting of the *Ad hoc* Working Group, tentatively scheduled to be held at the FAO Regional Office in Bangkok about five months after the COFI session. It was agreed that this *Ad hoc* Working Group should be open-ended, with all Members of APFIC invited to participate.

MERGER OF BOBC AND APFIC

41. The Commission was informed that the Committee for the Development and Management of Fisheries in the Bay of Bengal (BOBC) of the Indian Ocean Fishery Commission (IOFC), at its Tenth Session (New Delhi, India, 24-25 September 1997), had discussed options

for its future role in view of the forthcoming abolition of the IOFC. The Bay of Bengal Committee agreed by consensus that it should be merged into APFIC. IOFC therefore requested the Commission to consider the merging of BOBC into APFIC, which was also recommended by the Executive Committee at its Sixty-seventh Session.

42. As the Members of BOBC, except the Maldives, are also Members of APFIC, there would be no fundamental change in the structure or the programme of activities of APFIC when BOBC is merged into APFIC. The issues, specific to the Bay of Bengal area, could be addressed by establishing an *ad hoc* working group, if and when needed.

43. The Commission considered this request and endorsed the recommendation of the Executive Committee to merge BOBC into APFIC. It requested the Secretariat to take the necessary action to ensure that the Director-General of FAO be informed of the Commission's endorsement with a view to submission thereof to the FAO Governing Bodies for approval.

44. All Members commended BOBC for its valuable contribution to fisheries development and management in the Bay of Bengal.

APFIC SUBSIDIARY BODIES

45. The Commission recalled that over the fifty years of its existence APFIC had relied very much on a number of technical committees and working parties. These bodies had evolved over the years to meet the new challenges which arose with time as fisheries grew in importance with the growth of world population.

46. The Commission noted that Resolution 13/97 of the Twenty-ninth Session of the Conference of FAO (Rome, 7-18 November 1997), "Review of FAO Statutory Bodies", recommended that APFIC should abolish its four existing Working Parties. The Commission noted further that this directive was also addressed to a great number of global and regional bodies listed in Annex B of the Resolution.

47. The Commission recognized, however, that the Resolution allowed the establishment of *ad hoc* working groups of experts with well-defined terms of reference and a definite time frame.

48. The Commission abolished its four Working Parties.

49. The Commission identified emerging issues in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the region. These included:

- collection, dissemination and exchange of fishery information and statistics;
- sustainable development of inland capture fisheries and aquaculture;
- assessment of fish stocks and trends in production;
- development of suitable fishing gear and methods that are not harmful to aquatic habitats and minimize by-catch and wastage;
- cooperative programmes on management of transboundary fish stocks, fishery monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), and prevention of marine pollution; and

- improvement of quality assurance of fish products and harmonizing of fish trade policy.

50. The Commission agreed to establish three *ad hoc* working groups of experts to address the following issues:

a) ***Ad hoc* Working Group of Experts in Food Safety**;

b) ***Ad hoc* Working Group of Experts in Capture Fishery Data Collection**; and

c) ***Ad hoc* Working Group of Experts in Rural Aquaculture**.

The terms of reference for these Working Groups are set forth in Appendix E.

51. The Commission encouraged its Members to participate actively in the work of the *ad hoc* working groups of experts. It also urged the Members to provide resources, which might be supplemented by FAO, for these activities.

OTHER MATTERS

(a) APFIC Regional Fishery Cooperative Programme

52. In regard to the need to promote regional cooperation, the Commission was informed that the Secretariat had followed up the directive of the last Session and had prepared three regional cooperative projects for consideration. For the implementation of these projects, APFIC would provide the regional inputs and the participating countries would contribute through their national activities. These projects are:

- APFIC Information Network
- Fisheries Management Frameworks in the Bay of Bengal
- Status of Fishery Resources and their Exploitation in the Yellow Sea

53. As previously agreed, the Secretariat prepared a project proposal for the Information Network as set forth in Appendix F. The proposal was endorsed by the Commission, with a request that the Secretariat contact APFIC Members to determine their interest in participation.

54. Although it was not possible at this stage to agree on national financing for the project, the Commission endorsed the project proposal for the study on fisheries management frameworks in the Bay of Bengal (Appendix G). With respect to activities in the Yellow Sea (Appendix H), it was agreed that the coastal states would consider possible areas of cooperation and would communicate their suggestions to the APFIC Secretariat for further action.

(b) Consultation on the Management of Fishing Capacity, Shark Fisheries and the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries

55. The Commission was informed that, pursuant to initiatives taken at the 22nd Session of COFI, FAO followed up the organization of a Consultation on the Management of Fishing Capacity, Shark Fisheries and the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries. It had been agreed that the Management of Fishing Capacity would be covered by an international instrument while draft plans of action were being prepared for the other issues. All three issues would be discussed at a Consultation to be held in Rome from 26-30 October 1998. The Commission was further informed that, as a follow-up to the COFI discussions on the issue of eco-labeling, the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, at its Sixth Session held in Bremen, Germany, 3-6 June 1998, had proposed the holding of a Technical Consultation on the Feasibility of Developing Non-discriminatory Technical Guidelines for Eco-labeling of Products from Marine Capture Fisheries. The Consultation will be held in Rome from 21-23 October 1998. APFIC Members were encouraged to participate actively in both consultations.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

56. The Republic of the Philippines and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were unanimously elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission respectively.

57. Sri Lanka and Japan were unanimously elected to serve as members of the Executive Committee, in addition to the outgoing Chairman (People's Republic of China).

DATE AND PLACE OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION

58. The Commission accepted with great pleasure the offer of the Republic of the Philippines to host the Twenty-seventh Session in 2000. The exact date and place of the Session will be decided by the Director-General of FAO in consultation with the Chairman and the authorities of the host country.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

59. The report of the Session was adopted on 30 September 1998.

60. Closing the Session, Mr. Zhuo Youzhan, the outgoing Chairman of APFIC, expressed his appreciation to Mr. Moritaka Hayashi, Assistant Director-General for Fisheries of FAO and Mr. N. Rama Rao, Vice-Chairman, as well as the distinguished delegates for their active participation and support to the Session. He also thanked the members of the Secretariat for their contributions to the successful conclusion of the Session.

61. The Chairman stressed that, whilst the APFIC Members had different political, cultural, economic and technical backgrounds, they shared the same goal of promoting sustainable fisheries development and management. The present Session had provided an excellent opportunity to discuss common fishery concerns and exchange views among the Members. He emphasized that APFIC could continue to play a significant role in strengthening regional cooperation in fishery management.

62. The incoming Chairman, Dr. Arsenio Camacho of the Philippines, thanked the APFIC Members for their unanimous support of his election. He emphasized that the Republic of the Philippines is proud to be a Member of APFIC and assured the Commission of the Philippines' commitment and confirmed support to APFIC as it moved into the next century. Recalling that APFIC was formulated in the Philippines, he thanked the Commission for its decision to hold the next session in the Philippines.