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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Twenty-eighth Session

Rome, Italy, 2 – 6 March 2009

SECURING SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES: BRINGING TOGETHER RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. The contents of this document are largely based on the presentations, panel statements and working group discussions of the Global Conference on Small-Scale Fisheries - Securing sustainable small-scale fisheries: Bringing together responsible fisheries and social development, 13-17 October 2008. The Conference was held in response to a request by the 27th session of the Committee of Fisheries (COFI) that FAO convene a broad-based international conference focussing specifically on small-scale fisheries.
2. The Conference was co-organized by FAO and the Royal Government of Thailand and convened in collaboration with the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC) and The WorldFish Center. It was financially supported by several donor agencies.
3. The Conference was attended by more than 280 participants from 65 countries representing fishworkers, fisheries managers, academics, government officials, representatives of professional associations, NGOs and other civil society organisations, the private sector, and international and regional development partners and agencies.
4. The Conference covered a wide range of issues including wider social and economic development and human rights issues. A special focus of the Conference was on securing access and user rights by small-scale fishers and fishing communities and indigenous peoples to coastal and inland fishery resources that sustain their livelihoods.

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The main Conference themes were:

- Securing sustainable resource use and access rights
- Securing post-harvest benefits
- Securing social, economic and human rights

5. Each theme was introduced by three plenary presentations and panel statements by participants from different stakeholder categories. Subsequently, specific aspects of each theme were discussed in-depth in working groups.

6. A Civil Society Preparatory Workshop was held on 11-13 October 2008 by civil society organisations and fishworkers representatives. It produced a comprehensive statement that was introduced to the Conference and is reproduced in the full Conference Report.

OVERVIEW

7. The Conference re-enforced the claim that small-scale fisheries have yet to fully realize their potential to significantly contribute to sustainable development and the attaining of the UN millennium development goals (MDGs). In many developing countries small-scale fisheries contribute directly to food and livelihood security, balanced nutrition, poverty reduction and wealth creation, foreign exchange earnings and rural development.

8. The latest estimates indicate that small-scale fisheries contribute over half of the world's marine and inland fish catch, nearly all of which is used for direct human consumption. They employ over 90% of the world's about 28 million capture fishers and support another approximate 84 million people employed in jobs associated with fish processing, distribution and marketing. At least half of the people employed in small-scale fisheries are women. The importance of the small-scale fisheries sector is of global reach and its diversity in culture and traditions are part of humankind's heritage.

9. In spite of their economic, social and nutritional benefits and societal and cultural values, small-scale fishing communities often face precarious and vulnerable living and working conditions. There are various factors contributing to these conditions, including insecure rights to land and fishery resources, inadequate or absent health and educational services and social safety nets, vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change and exclusion from wider development processes due to weak organizational structures and representation and participation in decision-making.

10. Small-scale producers, processors and marketers face various constraints in realizing benefits from globalization including expanding trade in fish and fishery products. These include inadequate access to markets, financial services, know-how and capacity to make better use of and add value to their catches and meet increasingly demanding sanitary requirements. This situation is aggravated by fishery resource declines, coastal habitats loss, and by user conflicts both within and outside the fishery sector.

11. The Conference was informed of several **regional initiatives and programmes** that aim to build human capacity to introduce co-management and promote participation of small-scale fishers in decision making and management of their resources.

12. The Conference did not produce a unanimous statement but identified several critical ways forward in securing sustainable small-scale fisheries that integrate social, cultural and economic development, address resource access and use rights issues guided by human rights principles, and recognize the rights of indigenous peoples. It reaffirmed that human rights are critical to achieving sustainable development.

CONFERENCE THEMES

Theme 1: Securing sustainable resource use and access rights

13. There are significant **challenges of sustainable resource use** in small-scale fisheries which often cannot be adequately addressed by the standard methods of management applied to large commercial fisheries. The difficulties often include, for example, widely dispersed landing sites; the multi-species nature of resources; fishery resources shared with other communities and sectors; and others. In inland and coastal fisheries external impacts on resources are also often more significant than those from the fisheries themselves. In these circumstances, proactive management for optimal resource use is generally unattainable. Instead current approaches propose focussing simply on maintenance of the viability of resources and strengthening the resilience of dependent communities through an adaptive management approach with an important contribution from traditional knowledge and practices of the resource users. However, the level of precaution required by such an approach means that potential benefits may be lost. Therefore this approach should be seen as a minimum necessary level of management. The long-term solution should be to reduce uncertainties as much as practically possible to enable proactive, rigorous co-management with the goal of optimal, sustainable benefit. Full participation of the fishers and other stake-holders is essential in both approaches.

14. Considering that small-scale fisheries continue to be an employer of last resort in many instances, access and use rights need to be considered within a wider development context. For many fishing communities, livelihood priorities are access to clean water, basic health and education services and social safety measures. Better stewardship of fisheries resources is often secondary to meeting these immediate livelihood needs.

15. Economic diversification is vital for reducing the pressure on limited fishery resources, **sustaining livelihoods** and reducing vulnerability and poverty. Fishing rights need to benefit the right people including migratory fishers who, as temporary or new residents in an area, are often marginalised from democratic decision-making structures.

16. It was recognized that it was necessary to address **fisheries governance** in the context of governance in general. Principles of good governance, including consultation and participation, transparency and accountability, were needed in order to ensure that stakeholders are informed and policies and management measures supported. Policies needed to be underpinned by clear, specific and consistent objectives which had to be shared, agreed on and understood.

17. In establishing the institutions that promote good governance the role of the different actors needed to be defined. For example, it was suggested that governments should primarily concentrate on creating an enabling environment and should delegate power of policy implementation to the local stakeholders, based upon the recognition that effective management cannot usually be delivered at a national level scale.

18. Customary **access rights** are often based on social and cultural norms and have their specific legal and ethical bases within each region or country. There is a major concern about the various factors that are leading to loss of access to traditional fishing areas, including the establishment of protected areas, tourism and development of aquaculture and infrastructure.

19. Concern was also expressed about current management policies that commonly favour large scale industrial production over small-scale fisheries. Specific reference was made to the various instances where individual transferable quota (ITQ) schemes negatively affected the fishing opportunities of small-scale fishers. In this connection, the importance was noted of observing the provisions of Article 6.18 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

20. Customary access rights and entitlements do not always equitably apply to women. Thus long held traditional practices may have to be changed to remove gender discrimination. Where poorly enforced, even equitably allocated fishing rights may not deliver any benefits to small-scale fishers.

21. **Fisheries livelihoods and culture** were reported to be inadequately recognized and valued. Small-scale fishing communities are not inherently poor, but the modernization process has tended to erode traditional values and livelihoods including customary practices of allocation and sharing of resource benefits. Traditional cultural values and holistic governance practices including concepts such as resource sacredness are not easily translated into monetary value and adapted into modern management policies.

22. **Sustainable local management** of small-scale fisheries resources requires legal, practical and community based prerequisites in support of decentralized and shared management. It was proposed that legislation and policies should support (i) empowerment of fisherfolk to formulate bylaws and regulations, (ii) judicial recognition of local institutions and structures, (iii) devolution of enforcement authority to community structures, (iv) legal protection of landing sites and delineated fishing grounds, and (v) legal recognition of the role of women and other shore based workers. A major challenge is to provide fishing communities and fishery institutions with the capacity to actively and on equal terms participate in the partnership with government.

23. There are generally **high interdependencies** of small-scale fisheries with other sectors including tourism, agriculture, energy, industry and infrastructure. Tourism can lead to displacement of small-scale fisheries. Large hydropower projects alter river hydrology and can cause negative effects on fisheries productivity and sustainability. The use of chemicals in agriculture can adversely impact small-scale fisheries and curtail, for example, rice-fish cultivation.

24. In order to maximize inter-sectoral synergies and mitigate negative impacts, actions are needed to: (i) improve valuation of the social, economic and cultural contribution of small-scale fisheries and create greater awareness among policy makers and other stakeholders on their importance; (ii) formulate coherent policy for integrated multi-sectoral investments and development, considering existing interdependencies, (iii) build capacity of stakeholders to engage in policy debates, and (v) enable appropriate communication strategies at all levels.

25. **Marine protected areas** (MPAs) are tools for both biodiversity conservation and for fisheries management. Many protected areas are located in inshore areas that overlap with the fishing grounds of small-scale fishers. At one end of the spectrum, MPAs may be initiated and managed by fishing communities. In these instances, the participatory procedures can be time consuming but such MPAs are seen as tools by the communities to secure their resource use rights also vis-à-vis detrimental impacts by large-scale fisheries and aquaculture. At the other end of spectrum, MPAs may be established through a top-down process by governments and large international environmental NGOs without community consultation. In these latter instances, MPAs are often not beneficial for local fishing communities even though they may benefit tourism. It was recalled that the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop called for binding involvement of local and indigenous communities and small-scale fishers in the designation, establishment and management of MPAs.

26. The promotion of appropriate and **energy-saving technologies and practices** can be achieved through increased fuel efficiency of engines, use of renewable resources (e.g. solar power, wind turbine, wave power) and alternative fuels. Energy savings can also be achieved by optimizing the catch per effort through rebuilding of over-exploited stocks; better identification of fish stocks in space and time; improved gear selectivity to reduce bycatch; modern navigation equipment (i.e. GPS); and the use of carrier boats.

Theme 2: Securing post-harvest benefits

27. **Post-harvest benefits** arise in a variety of ways including increased incomes, improved health, better food security, sustainable resource use, reduced vulnerability to poverty and improved sustainable livelihoods in fishing communities. The areas where greater post-harvest benefits could be sought include the **reduction of post-harvest fish loss** through improved post-harvest technologies and practices, infrastructure development, production of value-added products and increased access to rewarding markets and trade. The growing sanitary demands to access international markets were of concern to many small-scale processors and traders.

28. Women constitute a high percentage of those active in the post-harvest sector. **Empowering women** and increasing their income is a recognized best practice to address poverty within households. Women and young girls continue to face marginalization and discrimination in their work place. They urgently need better alternatives to exploitative and degrading practices and the risks of HIV/AIDS.

29. There is concern that post-harvest developments that expand external markets and trade can have negative repercussions on local life and customs including cultural diversity, social development and biodiversity. Measures that foster economic growth should not become a cause for economic and social disparities as these carry the risk to destroy the social fabric of local communities and their traditional activities. While **international trade** generally contributes to economic growth, there is a risk of inequitable and unsustainable trade leading to higher levels of poverty and reduced food security. There was recognition that **effective fisheries management** was needed for sustained benefits from expanding markets and trade.

30. **Regional trade** could be expanded and yield large benefits to producers and consumers alike if the impediments are removed that still prevail in many regions including poor roads, frequent check points, cumbersome custom documentations and corrupt practices.

31. An example from Lake Victoria showed how small-scale fishers were able to secure greater post-harvest benefits. While all fishing is undertaken by small-scale fishers, large commercial interests engage in fish processing that targets export markets. The concerned governments have invested in sanitary infrastructure especially at fish landing sites and testing laboratories to meet stringent requirement of sanitary standards to guarantee quality and safety of fishery products.

32. The **working group discussions** on the post-harvest theme addressed various critical issues for ensuring that benefits accrue equitably and sustainably to small-scale fishing communities and help empower women.

33. There were different views on the desirability and benefits of **certification and ecolabelling** schemes. They were seen as an opportunity by some and as a threat by others to securing sustainable small-scale fisheries. The merits of different types of certification and labelling schemes needed to be carefully examined in relation to the specific small-scale fishery and its potential to reap benefits from international market access. In relation to the statement developed by the Civil Society Organizations to the Conference rejecting ecolabelling schemes, it

was underlined that many fishworkers and their organizations are not against area-specific labelling or branding schemes that identify socially and ecologically sustainable fisheries. It was recognized that while not all small-scale fisheries wish to access international markets, those wishing to become certified and enter an ecolabelling scheme face a range of challenges. These include the complexities in complying with the schemes' standards, meeting certification costs, getting organized to acquire market access to large retail chains and capture economies of scale, and ensuring that expanding markets and better prices do not incite unsustainable levels of fish harvest.

34. The **women's roles in post-harvest activities** and their socio-economic contribution needed to be better recognized and their status better defined (as fishmongers, fish processors, etc). The need was stressed for gender segregated data and statistics. As small-scale fisheries have become increasingly commercialized and cash oriented, the role, duties and contributions of women have significantly expanded in many regions. Women fish traders constitute an important source of credit and often pre-finance fishing trips. Moreover, they are often partners in fishing operations, a responsibility that often remains invisible. Income of women earned in post-harvest activities generally contributes a major share to household income (e.g. a study in Guinea indicates a figure of up to 80 percent). The role of women as workers in processing plants has become increasingly important and they should be encouraged to ascertain their trade union rights. Women's working conditions in these factories need to be better documented and abuses prosecuted.

35. Women's post-harvest work and contribution to family well-being, local food supplies and national economic growth should be appropriately reflected in government policies. For instance, they need to get, as a minimum, the same access to credit and microfinance services as men do. They also need equitable allocations of use rights to fishery and other natural resources such as agricultural land.

36. While for historical reasons the term "**cooperatives**" can have a negative connotation, it is generally accepted that cooperatives could improve the resilience and stability of fishing communities. They could increase the price negotiation power of fishers vis-à-vis middlemen, help stabilize markets, improve post-harvest practices and facilities, and help with marketing logistics and market information. Cooperatives can encourage higher levels of market competition by setting up auctioning systems, helping with market information and purchasing of supplies and where appropriate, investment in joint cooperative structures such as ice plants and fish processing facilities.

37. As the scale of fish harvest determines the scale of post-harvest activities, there are strong **links between the management of fisheries and the post-harvest sector**. It is therefore essential to integrate post-harvest policy into fisheries management plans. Value addition and enhanced returns on fishing should become an incentive to comply with fisheries management measures and not act as an incentive to overfish. In some cases, markets recognized more selective fishing gear and techniques which could lead to better compliance with fisheries management measures.

Theme 3 Securing social, economic and human rights

38. Given the international consensus to achieve **human rights** for all, the adoption of a human rights approach to improving the life and livelihood of fishing communities should not be seen as a matter of choice but as an obligation. It would provide a strong basis for citizens to make claims on their States, and for holding States to account for their duties. At a fundamental level, it requires strengthening the capacity of rights holders—fishing communities in this case—to be aware of, and to claim and exercise their rights effectively, and of duty-bearers to fulfil their human rights obligations.

39. **Securing social, economic and cultural rights of small-scale fishing** communities, in the main, seeks the implementation of provisions that already exist in international legislation and agreements, especially the 1986 United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, and also including customary law. For small-scale fisheries collective, community based access and management regimes are commonly more appropriate than private rights, which are often the goal of more prevalent “rights-based” fisheries management approaches. A wide range of rights, including securing the rights of women to participate fully in the fisheries are needed. Securing participation in fisheries and coastal management was seen as a critical step.

40. Using the existing legal framework that supports the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** provides a potentially effective means of guiding investment and development action in securing sustainable small-scale fisheries. In doing so, it aligns what fishery sector analysts call the ‘rights based approach’ with the same terminology used by those involved in economic and social development.

41. Development investments focussed narrowly on aquatic tenure reform will not gain effective support of fisherfolk who live insecure lives and do not perceive the decline or possible collapse of fish stocks as the most immediate threat to their well-being. A broader social development agenda is needed that is based on a human rights framework and supported by cross-sectoral partnerships with government agencies, non-governmental organisations and international and bilateral agencies.

42. An example was presented to the Conference how the indigenous coastal Samis of northern Norway, for more than one hundred years, have been in a constant struggle to safeguard their traditional and customary fishing areas, and right to fish. It was not until 2008 that this issue was adequately addressed, when a high-ranking coastal fishery commission stated that historical utilization and international law concerning minorities and indigenous peoples had to be taken into account in Norway’s fisheries management regime. A change in law is expected soon establishing that everybody in the Sami region will have the right to fish enough to make a decent living for a household, without having to buy a quota.

43. The multi-stakeholder panel on this theme re-iterated the need to abolish all kinds of gender discrimination and give special attention to securing the rights of women who make up one half of those working in fisheries and contribute largely to household well-being.

44. The notion was dispelled that there was nothing to be worried about regarding the fate and rights of small-scale fishing communities in the western world. Given the global dimension of rights issues faced by these communities, there was a call for an international declaration similar to the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As this may take many years or even decades to achieve, full use needed to be made of the provisions of existing international treaties that are binding on States. In this regard, reference was made, for example, to Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which both provide that “All peoples have the right of self-determination, including the right to determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” It was also suggested that UN agencies such as FAO had a special responsibility to ensure that States met their international obligations.

45. The main conclusion from the panel was that by putting human rights on the fisheries agenda, the Conference was certainly a step in the right direction. In particular, reconciling human rights and natural resources management should be a major area of future work in fisheries.

46. The **working group discussions** focussed on critical aspects of securing social and economic rights and applying the human rights approach in small-scale fisheries. A fundamental concern was ignorance about human rights principles at various levels and inadequate information flow between government and fishing communities. The links between poverty and abuses of human rights were noted as in the case of child labour. While the principles of human rights are universal, the implementation approaches needed to reflect the specificities of countries. The interrelationship between individual and community rights was noted as was the special importance of collective rights to fishery resources.

47. A matter of priority is the protection of the **economic, social and human rights of women**—women as community members, self-employed, or paid or unpaid workers. The importance was stressed of mobilizing and organizing women into groups. Organization and mobilization are key to enabling women to make claims on the State and secure their full freedoms and rights. Having a strong organizational structure can facilitate the recognition of women's organizations by governments and enable women to demand the right to participate in decision making. Organizations generally benefit greatly from being legally constituted.

48. Women's groups need to have a clear vision or mission and a good understanding of their goals and targets for advocacy and lobbying. Women's groups in fisheries could benefit from networking and building alliances with and learn from other women's groups in a variety of sectors to identify key strategies such as reporting on compliance with especially the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Work in Fishing Convention.

49. There is a need to look at women's rights in the broader context of their roles in the community and community needs. Women often need training and awareness-raising about their rights. However, in many contexts, more basic educational needs have to be addressed first. Illiteracy can constitute a key obstacle to women realizing their rights. Women's lack of access to basic infrastructure and services in general, including health services, adds to the difficulties of asserting their rights. NGOs can often play an important role in addressing such needs.

50. In other situations, the possibility to effectively implement women's rights, even when commitments have been made at the political level, is compromised by religious and customary practices. Women should not be organised in isolation; women and men need to work together to achieve women's rights and change gender relations and men may also need support and training.

51. Data collection on the roles, type of work women do and on access to and control over resources can be used as an empowering tool to educate women and advocate for rights. The use of the media to highlight women's roles – for example women's role in key harvest processes such as fish smoking – is another strategy that can make important contributions in the field of women's rights.

52. The **working conditions** in fishing and post-harvest activities are often harsh and mentally difficult, also often because of a situation of geographical and social isolation from the rest of society. Formal work contracts and social security systems are not usually found in small-scale fishing and post-harvest activities. This causes high levels of insecurity and economic hardship in times of illness, accidents and old age. Where pension schemes exist, incomes are often far too low for a decent life.

53. Education and health care facilities, even when available in a country, are not always accessible by geographically remote fishing communities. Additionally children may be taken away from school to assist in fishing during peak seasons.

54. The entry of inexperienced workers displaced from other sectors including agriculture pose special risks as fishing and navigation needed special skills. Further, as coastal resources are depleted, fishers increasingly operate in offshore waters, at times in small and unsafe vessels. Thus, safety at sea needed to be addressed at all levels including the international level.

55. The plight of immigrants, often illegal workers, is of great concern. These workers commonly form a large part of a low-paid workforce and are not covered by social welfare support and their human rights are frequently grossly violated.

56. The group recommended that FAO and ILO should give priority to ensure decent working and living conditions in small-scale fisheries and seek that the relevant ILO conventions are applied, especially the 2007 Work in Fishing Convention (ILO Convention No. 188). It was also suggested that the working conditions in each country be analyzed and minimum goals be established that can be subject to regular monitoring and reporting.

57. In general terms, the recognition of **rights of indigenous peoples** has made progress, in particular in terms of international legal instruments. Among international instruments, most important are the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 1989 Convention concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries (ILO Convention No. 169).

58. The progress made in international legal instruments has not been matched in practice by effective recognition of indigenous rights by governments and society in many countries of the world. In reviewing the situation, it is necessary to distinguish indigenous peoples issues from those affecting ethnical minorities. While recognising that they may have many problems in common, their status differs in international legal instruments and therefore different strategies of action apply in securing their rights.

59. Indigenous people who depend on fishing for their livelihood are more vulnerable to outside intrusion because of their special cultural, social and religious dependence on their traditional (ancestral) land and resource base. These indigenous peoples are often threatened, inter alia, by other fishers, especially of last resort, trying to obtain their livelihoods from indigenous fishing grounds.

60. A two-fold approach was recommended by the working group: (i) a firm and ongoing fight for the recognition of indigenous fishing communities rights to their territories, land and waters (and their fishing rights) in the judiciary system; and (ii) an on-going political mobilisation to raise social awareness and to influence political decisions at all levels. In these processes, the working group recommended that indigenous people should be in the drivers' seat and NGOs, academics and other interested groups should play supporting roles.

61. *Creating and enhancing democratic governance* and policy spaces for fisher community representation (including women) would usually require a policy decision leading to the relevant legislation and appropriate implementation structures such as fishery policy advisory committees or beach management units. The process should be bottom-up rather than top-down.

62. The importance of transparency and accountability in governance was highlighted. To be heard is not sufficient, if the voices raised by a representative are not reflected appropriately in the decision-making process. The importance of capacity building of the community, their leaders and representatives was underscored. In this context, the significant role of civil society organizations was highlighted in, for example, providing information to the government on what is happening in reality on the ground. The role of the media in generating awareness about the situation prevailing in small-scale fisheries was also underscored.

63. There are **growing problems with the arrest and detention of small-scale fishers when undertaking trans-border fishing**. Numerous examples were mentioned from Africa, Asia and Central America. Events leading to detention of small-scale fishers are of varied nature. Unintended border crossings can occur because of adverse weather conditions, engine failure or ignorance about the geographical coordinates of the border. However, encroachments are often intended and undertaken for various reasons including following the fish stocks on their migration, seeking to access historical fishing grounds, search for better fishing grounds in view of locally depleted resources, seeking to benefit from better fish markets or cheaper inputs, and also various illegal activities (smuggling, illegal migration, etc.).

64. UNCLOS Article 73 addresses the enforcement of fisheries laws and regulations of the coastal State in its EEZ. While law enforcement requires deterrence, Article 73 (2) and (3) require States to promptly release arrested vessels and their crews upon the posting of reasonable bond or other security. Penalties for violations of fisheries laws and regulations in the EEZ may not include imprisonment and, in the absence of agreements to the contrary, no form of corporal punishment. Prompt information shall be sent to flag State about vessel and penalties. The working group noted that these UNCLOS provisions were rarely complied with. Fishing crews are imprisoned and the flag State and family members are often only informed after a long delay.

65. It was acknowledged that it sometimes could be difficult for the enforcement personnel to know what had been the actual reason for the small-scale fisherman violating the border, but a generally more differentiated approach to violations was encouraged. States subject to frequent border violations by small-scale fishers are encouraged to set up more informal interstate bodies from both States, which would be able to handle violations more reasonably and quicker. There were examples of consultative workshops among coastguards from different countries that subsequently resulted in bilateral agreements and a communication “hotline”. These have proven beneficial for all parties concerned. Informal arrangements set up by NGOs or fishworkers’ organizations on both sides of the border are known to have been quite successful in obtaining the release of arrested fishers.

66. The working group recommended that the provisions of UNCLOS Article 73 are followed by governments in letter and spirit, mechanisms be set up to provide timely information on arrests and detention to affected families; structures be set up at lower levels for direct communication between countries and measures to build rapport between relevant offices/officials across borders to reduce chances of unjust treatment; and longer-term measures be taken to address the root causes of border encroachments including sensitization of policy makers, better fisheries management, bilateral and multilateral agreements that allow for regulated cross-border crossings; and facilitation of regional and multilateral mechanisms by agencies such as FAO and the regional fisheries bodies.

THE WAY FORWARD

67. A multi-stakeholder panel provided an overview of the Conference and presented views on the way forward. A common tenor of the panelists was that small-scale fisheries had been neglected for too long and that more national and international efforts were needed to recognize and protect their traditions, values and societal roles and support their rightful place in development as it was them that contributed most directly to achieving the UN MDGs.

68. Various areas were identified for priority action at **national level** including the adoption of a human rights framework for social development; the empowerment of community organizations, giving more decision-making power to women; support to adaptive co-management that accounts for traditional knowledge and customary rights; protection and legislation of the rights of small-scale fishing communities to fishery resources and land;

promotion of market access through improved post harvest handling and marketing and better access to credit; support to diversified if not alternative sustainable livelihoods; access to basic social services; and overarching capacity building and networking.

69. At the **international level**, there was a call for an international instrument on small-scale fisheries. This could be a special chapter on small-scale fisheries in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries or an international plan of action (IPOA) or international guidelines. There was also the call for a dedicated global programme on small-scale fisheries under the purview of FAO which would be guided by COFI or if members so wish a special Sub-Committee on Small-Scale Fisheries.

OTHER RELATED FAO ACTIVITIES

70. In addition to the Global Conference, there were several other important activities that FAO undertook in support of sustainable small-scale fisheries. These included the development of a global programme and an Africa regional programme on fisheries and aquaculture for external funding. Both programmes prioritize support to small-scale fisheries to enhance their contribution to food security and poverty alleviation and achieving sustainable practices within an ecosystem approach. FAO is further expanding its cooperation with regional and international partners in securing sustainable small-scale fisheries. It is collaborating with World Fish Center and the World Bank's PROFISH Program in a number of activities including the development of integrated assessment guidelines for small-scale fisheries and a global review of the respective contributions of small-scale and large-scale fisheries to a range of socio-economic indicators including employment by men and women. FAO has a longstanding cooperation with ILO on working conditions in fishing including safety at sea and has commenced cooperation in the development of guidance materials on policy and practice in respect to child labour in fisheries and aquaculture. FAO has also setup a special topic area on small-scale fisheries in its Fisheries and Aquaculture Internet site.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE

71. The Committee is invited to review the outcomes of the Global Conference on Small-Scale Fisheries and to offer its guidance on the actions that should be taken at national and international levels to securing sustainable small-scale fisheries and enhancing their contribution to attaining the UN Millennium Development Goals.