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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

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GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES: A FOLLOW-UP TO RIO+20

Executive Summary

The 2012 COFI paper “Ocean Governance and the Outcomes of Rio+20”¹ examined the existing institutional and legal frameworks for fisheries management, including global initiatives and processes. The aim of this COFI paper is to update the 2012 document by reviewing FAO's response to the shifting, multi-disciplinary paradigms which have characterized the post Rio + 20 period.

To meet the objectives of Rio + 20,² FAO has formulated the Blue Growth Initiative (BGI). The goal of the BGI is to address food security and poverty alleviation by producing quality capture and aquaculture fish through processes which are integrated, sustainable, and socio-economically sensitive. To achieve its integrated approach to Blue Growth, FAO is collaborating with a wide array of other UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations and other initiatives or processes where synergies exist with the work of FAO.

This paper describes the FAO collaborative processes, and analyses how these activities address the integrated, sustainable, and socio-economically sensitive aspects of the BGI through Global and Regional processes. The paper concludes with a summary response to the Committee's 2012 request for a performance review of the Regional Fishery Bodies which are under the auspices of FAO.

The Committee is invited to:

- review FAO's Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) as an integration mechanism for building synergies across the UN system and with other current regional and global processes;
- consider and provide guidance related to the findings of FAO's performance review of the FAO Regional Fisheries Bodies;
- consider and provide guidance on the measures that need to be taken at the regional and global levels to ensure that the BGI provides a better representation of fisheries stakeholder interests, and any support that FAO can provide in this regard through further development of policy assistance and capacity development.

¹ COFI/2012/6/Rev.1

² A/RES/66/288 “The Future We Want”

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/476/10/PDF/N1147610.pdf?OpenElement>

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INTRODUCTION

1. The global and regional regime for fisheries management constitutes one of the most significant areas of contemporary international law and relations. It encompasses principle global treaties such as the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (LOSC)³ and its subsidiary agreements such as the UN Fish Stocks Agreement.⁴ It also includes an array of soft and hard law instruments formulated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)⁵ and other UN agencies. At the regional and national levels, the processes for fisheries management include numerous multilateral⁶/bilateral⁷ regional agreements and arrangements, plus individual state practices and customs. Global and regional processes for fisheries management are becoming more elaborate as broad subject areas expand in range and detail and now interrelate with other mainstream areas of international law and relations including the environment, human rights and areas beyond national jurisdiction. In these contexts, it is becoming necessary for the global and regional processes of fisheries management to be multidisciplinary and take an integrated approach.

2. The 2012 COFI paper “Ocean Governance and the Outcomes of Rio+20”⁸ examined the existing institutional and legal frameworks and the challenges posed by the global and regional processes of fisheries management. Also in 2012, Rio + 20 stressed the urgency of new global priorities. The aims of this COFI paper are twofold. It will respond to the requests made by COFI’s discussion of the 2012 COFI paper, and additionally it aims to update the 2012 paper by reviewing FAO’s response to the shifting, multi-disciplinary paradigms which have characterized fisheries management in the post 2012 Rio + 20 period.

3. The outcomes of Rio+20 have proven to be a catalyst for driving new efforts toward implementation in many areas of international law and relations. This is particularly so in the processes of global and regional fisheries management. UN General Assembly Resolution 66/288 “The Future We Want” articulates the common vision of the representatives who met at Rio + 20 in 2012.⁹

*We are committed to freeing humanity from poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency.*¹⁰

4. In response to this call, UN agencies such as FAO and its members have turned their collective minds to new and innovative processes and initiatives that will best and most promptly achieve the future we want. In order to meet the objectives of Rio + 20,¹¹ FAO has formulated the BGI.¹²

³ The 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention:

www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

⁴ Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks:

www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/fish_stocks_agreement/CONF164_37.htm

⁵ For example: the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries:

www.fao.org/docrep/005/v9878e/v9878e00.htm

⁶ For example: the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

www.iccat.es/Documents/Commission/BasicTexts.pdf currently with 49 state members.

⁷ Eg. Comisión Técnica Mixta del Frente Marítimo

⁸ Supra n.1

⁹ Supra n.2

¹⁰ Ibid, Annex, paragraph 2.

¹¹ A/RES/66/288 “The Future We Want” <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/476/10/PDF/N1147610.pdf?OpenElement>

¹² In November 2013, the FAO Corporate Programmes Monitoring Board (CPMB) endorsed the Blue Growth Initiative in Support of Food Security, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Management of Aquatic Resources (BGI).

BLUE GROWTH

5. FAO's response has been the BGI. Blue Growth refers to the integrated, sustainable, socio-economic sensitive, management of aquatic ecosystems – from oceans and coastal systems to seas, lakes, and rivers. Blue Growth recognizes that the aquatic eco-system is under stress from over-exploitation, pollution, declining biodiversity, the expansion of invasive species, climate change and ocean acidification. It also recognizes the plight of those who work in the fisheries sectors. Fishing continues to be one of, if not the most hazardous of occupations in the world, particularly on board small scale fishing vessels. There is an urgent need to ensure the safety of these fishers as well as their livelihoods, and this includes recognizing their human rights and their living and working conditions. It is also necessary to give greater recognition to the role of women in fishing industries, and to address the ongoing problem of child labour in fishing. These subjects can no longer be compartmentalized and Blue Growth supports an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to addressing the environmental, socio-economic and jurisdictional issues that underpin the current processes of fisheries management.

6. As part of the BGI's integrated, multidisciplinary approach to fisheries management there is a need for FAO to integrate with initiatives and networks of the many agencies, partners, organizations, and groups, that have proliferated in recent years and which are attempting to address actual and perceived weaknesses in the current global and regional fisheries management regimes. The diversity of subjects being dealt with by these entities and initiatives is involving FAO in a wide scope of fishery and aquaculture food security related issues ranging from piracy to pollution and a host of other disciplines and subject areas. Such collaborative work was encouraged by the Committee at both the 29th session of COFI (2010) and the 30th Session of COFI (2012) when it was agreed that FAO should develop better coordination with other UN organizations and agencies and the Committee encouraged FAO to improve interagency coordination by looking for stronger synergies.¹³ The following global and regional sections of this paper examine FAO's collaborative relationships with such entities as FAO strives to apply Blue Growth to global and regional processes.

Blue Growth and the aquatic environment

7. If capture and aquaculture fisheries are to be a source of healthy and nutritious food for our increasing global population, and a viable product for trade and wealth creation, there is a vital need for the aquatic ecosystems to be environmentally sound and sustainable. Through the BGI, FAO is collaborating with partners to improve the health, productivity and sustainability of aquatic ecosystems. Such initiatives include:

Collaboration with global institutions and agencies:

8. **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):** FAO and UNEP continue to collaborate in numerous areas including the application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries and aquaculture. UNEP also coordinates a number of regional seas programmes. These programmes aim to address the accelerating degradation of the world's oceans and coastal areas through the sustainable management and use of the marine and coastal environment by engaging neighbouring countries in comprehensive and specific actions to protect their shared marine environment. While originally mainly related to pollution, Members of Conventions that underpin some of these programmes have indicated their intention to engage in fisheries management and conservation, which would result in conflicts with the mandates of RFBs and RFMOs. FAO closely follows these developments and has informed Members and RFBs of these developments.

9. **The Large Marine Ecosystem (LME)** projects are supported through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) as a mechanism for the integrated management of marine ecosystems. FAO is currently implementing two LME projects: (the Bay of Bengal LME and the Canary Current LME, the latter in collaboration with UNEP) and these provide a framework for implementing the

¹³ Paragraph 41 of the COFI29 Report.

Ecosystem Approach to fisheries. In the context of some LME projects, regional management organizations have been established. FAO follows these developments closely to ensure synergies between the mandates of LMEs and Regional Fisheries Bodies and to avoid duplication of efforts.

10. **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** FAO continues to collaborate with the twenty-seven other international agencies, organizations and conventions which have signed the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) with the Secretariat of the CBD on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020¹⁴ and to achieve the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets.¹⁵ FAO and CBD, along with the World Bank, UNEP, and UNDP, collaborate under the framework of Post 2015 for the preparation of papers, side events and other awareness material on the opportunities to develop a Sustainable Development Goal on Biodiversity and on how to integrate specific biodiversity targets within the Sustainable Development Goals for addressing food security and nutrition.

11. **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** gives attention to climate change adaptation and has assisted the world's 48 least developed countries to develop National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) to identify priority activities that will respond to their urgent and immediate needs with regard to adaptation to climate change. The UNFCCC is now supporting the countries in their development of longer term National Adaptation Plans which will define implementing strategies and programmes for years to come. The implications for fisheries and aquaculture, in terms of opportunities and threats, will only increase over time as, for example, water temperatures increase, storm and wave surges strengthen, and precipitation and flood patterns change. FAO is assisting in the implementation of NAPA and other national strategies to help the adaptation process within national fisheries and aquaculture agencies.

12. **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES):** At the CoP16 in 2013 CITES resolved the issues related to the application of the listing criteria for commercially exploited aquatic species and took a decision which will allow the FAO Expert Advisory Panel for CITES to continue working in a manner established by FAO experts and adopted by COFI. The CITES CoP16 also agreed to list seven marine elasmobranchs in Appendix II: oceanic whitetip shark, scalloped, great, and smooth hammerhead sharks, porbeagle shark and two manta rays. Currently FAO and CITES are closely collaborating with regard to the implementation of the CITES requirements for these recently listed sharks and rays by shark-fishing and/or trading in developing countries. As a first step, consultative workshops are being held in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The workshop in Morocco (February 2014) resulted in the Casablanca Declaration affirming the determination of participating fisheries and CITES agencies from 10 African States to improve the regional collaboration for the conservation and sustainable use of sharks.

Collaboration with global initiatives:

13. **UNEP-FAO-IMO Global Partnership for Marine Litter:** Within this inter-agency initiative, seed funding from UNEP has been provided to initiate actions of particular relevance to FAO. These include: promotion and awareness raising on the issues of Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gears (ALDFG) among the fishing sector, national authorities and Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFB), studies on the extent to which RFB Conservation and Management Measures address ghost fishing impacts, case studies to review relevant fisheries policy, laws and practices associated with ALDFG, and technical assistance to support development of funding proposals for the removal of ALDFG from the marine environment.

14. **The Global Partnership for Oceans (GPO)** is an alliance of over 140 governments, international organizations (including FAO), civil society groups, and private sector interests committed to addressing the threats to the health, productivity and resilience of the world's oceans. It aims to tackle the widely documented problems of overfishing, pollution, and habitat loss which jointly contribute to the depletion of a natural resource that provides nutrition, livelihoods and

¹⁴ www.cbd.int/sp/implementation/default.shtml

¹⁵ www.cbd.int/sp/targets/

vital ecosystem services. The GPO plans to work on ocean-related issues including marine-protected areas, rights-based approaches in fisheries, wealth accounting, governance, aquaculture, seafood certification and pollution.

Blue Growth and people

15. A cornerstone of the BGI is its recognition and inclusion of socio economic factors which underpin fisheries and aquaculture. The aims of the BGI are predominantly anthropocentric. Thus healthy aquatic ecosystems are needed for the primary purpose of addressing food security, and to produce a commodity that is ripe for trade and wealth creation. FAO is engaged in a number of collaborative activities and processes that focus on improving the well-being of those who work in the fisheries and aquaculture industries. These include the labour laws which are applicable to fishers, fisher user rights, gender mainstreaming, the human rights of those who live in small island developing States (SIDS), and the criminal law aspects of both piracy and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

16. The BGI recognizes that IUU fishing is one of the major threats facing responsible marine and inland capture fisheries management and in response to the severity of the problem FAO has developed synergies with a number of intergovernmental agencies and initiatives. Perhaps more than any other subject confronting global and regional management processes, IUU fishing has strong multidisciplinary repercussions and its impacts are experienced at the environmental, sociological and jurisdictional levels. By placing IUU fishing in the Social category of FAO collaborations, the Organization is giving particular recognition to the anthropocentric impacts of IUU fishing which include unsustainable fisher catches, the criminology of illegal fishing, labour law infringements on fishing vessels, and the trans-boundary criminal law activities that frequently accompany IUU fishing (such as people or drug smuggling).

17. **International Labour Organisation:** The 2007 ILO Work in Fishing Convention¹⁶ will put into place a system of flag and port State control inspection which will be an essential element of establishing decent working and living conditions for fishers and will also contribute to addressing other issues such as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, forced labour, human trafficking and child labour. The 2013 Global Dialogue Forum recommended expanding the strategic partnerships between the ILO and other UN agencies (including FAO) in order to foster policy and programme coherence in the fishing sector for the purpose of promoting the implementation and ratification of Convention No. 188.

18. **International Maritime Organization:** In December 2013, the IMO Assembly agreed to a proposal, cosponsored by FAO, to include fishing vessels in the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme applying to vessels of 100 gr tonnage and above, on a voluntary basis. Consequently, the preconditions of using the IMO Number as the Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI) for the Global Record of Fishing Vessels have now been met. FAO and IMO are currently organizing regional seminars, which are planned to be held in 2014, on the implementation of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement, which, in addition to improving safety at sea in the fisheries sector, is also expected to become a useful tool in combating IUU fishing. In addition, a joint undertaking between FAO and IMO to combat piracy and address IUU fishing in and off Somalia has been signed and a technical workshop is planned. A joint FAO/IMO ad hoc Working Group on IUU Fishing and Related Matters has been established.

19. **INTERPOL:** A new initiative for dealing with illegal fishing and associated criminal activities at the global, regional and national levels has been developed by INTERPOL's Environmental Crime unit. Titled "Project Scale" FAO has collaborated with INTERPOL to raise awareness of this initiative at the Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) level, and in

¹⁶ Convention No. 188

2013 several INTERPOL Purple Notices¹⁷ were published relating to IUU fishing vessels, crew abuse, and a particular *modus operandi* for a method of shark finning.

20. **Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia** (the Kampala Process) promotes an integrated approach to the development of a safe and secure maritime and fisheries sector in Somalia and FAO participates in, and contributes to, the process. In addition FAO has a number of projects in Somalia to improve fisheries management, diversify livelihoods, develop landing facilities and address IUU fishing. FAO also supports the Somali Seafarers initiative to improve dialogues between fishers and the international navies (EUNAVFOR and NATO), is developing a fisher ID card and vessel registration system for Somalia (Italy and UNTF), supports coordination with RFBs, and provides policy and legal advice to the government of Somalia and Federal member States

21. **Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication Small scale fisheries (SSF Guidelines):** The draft SSF Guidelines are currently being discussed by COFI Members (see agenda item 4). The development process of the SSF Guidelines seeks to bring together responsible fisheries a social development in coastal and inland small-scale fishing communities. The consultative process underpinning the development of the SSF Guidelines has been carried out since 2010, and is estimated to have directly engaged more than 4 000 stakeholders across all regions of the world. The SSF Guidelines process has been developed as a complement to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and in line with other relevant instruments such as the Rio +20 outcome Document 'The Future We Want' as well as the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forests and Fisheries in the Context of National Food Security and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Progressive Realization of the Right to adequate Food in the Context o National Food Security.

22. **Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS):** 2014 is the International Year of Small Island Developing States and FAO (a partner organization in the initiative) is working to enhance the contribution of agriculture, forestry and fisheries to the SIDS development agenda and an improved quality of life for the people who live in SIDS.

23. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Rio + 20 began a new set of processes to define the future international development framework that will succeed the UN Millennium Development Goals. Member States have agreed to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to establish an Open Working Group (OWG) comprised of 30 representatives from the five UN regional groups to work on a SDG proposal for submission to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2014. The OWG has held 8 thematic discussion sessions through to February 2014, the last of which addressed oceans and seas, forests and mountains, and biodiversity. FAO is contributing as a part of the Technical Support Team (TST) which co-led the preparation of an issues brief on Oceans and Seas and which was distributed to the OWG. FAO is also contributing to the statistical annex.

24. **User Rights in Fisheries:** FAO's ongoing work on the issue of the governance of tenure continues with the forthcoming conference on User Rights in Fisheries to be held in cooperation with the Kingdom of Cambodia in March 2015. The conference will review experiences with rights-based approaches for managing fisheries and will focus on analyzing how the many different types of user rights systems influence or become the drivers behind changes in the social, economic and biological pillars of sustainability. Sessions will analyze how different user rights choices give different consequences, and discussions will address the concerns about, and barriers to, fair and equitable application of user rights in capture fisheries. Efforts will be made to gather practical guidance for implementing the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests and for supporting efforts to secure sustainable fisheries.

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Blue Growth and the management regime for fisheries

25. Many forums are increasingly questioning the relevance and effectiveness of our existing legal regime for fisheries management: its ability to encourage development, to ensure sustainability, to deal with human (social) interaction, and to coordinate the areas beyond national jurisdiction. The BGI's integrated approach to global and regional processes sees FAO collaborating with a range of framework initiatives that will explore and enhance development.

26. **The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** addresses fisheries and marine conservation issues through its two annual resolutions on (i) Oceans and the Law of the Sea, and (ii) Sustainable Fisheries. In 2013, the UNGA requested the Ad Hoc Working Group which looks at conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (the BBNJ working group) to make recommendations to the Assembly on the scope, parameters and feasibility of a new international instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including in relation to marine genetic resources, marine protected areas, technology transfer and environmental impact assessment.¹⁸ FAO is continuing to follow the Working Group including through technical presentations at the informal workshops .

27. **UN-Oceans** is an interagency mechanism established to strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of activities in the United Nations system that are related to ocean and coastal areas. FAO has always been an active participant in UN-Oceans, working closely with other UN-Oceans members by regularly sharing relevant information on activities for collaboration. Most recently FAO contributed to the revision of the UN-Oceans TOR, approved by the UN General Assembly at its 68th session. As Secretariat of the UN Atlas of the Oceans website, which includes the UN-Oceans site, FAO facilitates interagency information exchange, including best practices and experiences, in ocean-related matters.

28. **International Seabed Authority (ISA):** The International Seabed Authority is an autonomous international organization set up in 1994. FAO has been involved with ISA both in its role as a member of UN-Oceans and as a partner of the UN Atlas of the Oceans. FAO also plans to work with ISA in the capacity strengthening project of the FAO-led "Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Program ."

29. **Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ):**¹⁹ The Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Program (ABNJ Program) aims to promote efficient and sustainable management of fisheries resources and biodiversity conservation in ABNJ to achieve the global targets agreed in international fora. The GEF funded programme is led by FAO working in close collaboration with two other GEF agencies, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Bank, as well as WWF, the Tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, the Deep Seas Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and several other partners. The five-year Program, whose implementation started in 2014, is an innovative, unique and comprehensive initiative working with a wide range of partners. It is made of four Projects which bring together governments, regional management bodies, civil society, the private sector, academia and industry to work towards ensuring the sustainable use and conservation of ABNJ biodiversity and ecosystem services.

30. **Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth (Hague Summit)** co-organized by the Netherlands, World Bank and FAO will demonstrate measurable steps towards critical internationally agreed targets for fisheries, aquaculture, habitat protection and pollution reduction. The Summit will also highlight the need to address the next frontiers of successful integrated approaches that include public-private partners, secure financing and catalyze good ocean governance while reconciling tensions and balancing priorities between (i) growth and conservation, (ii) private sector interests and equitable benefits for communities and (iii) ABNJ (Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction) and EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zones within the 200-mile limit from the coast).

¹⁸ A/RES/68/70, paragraph 198

¹⁹ www.commonoceans.org

Blue Growth and regional fisheries bodies (RFBs)

31. FAO liaises with fifty Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) around the world. These bodies include the RFMOs which have mandates for management measures, plus advisory bodies, scientific advisory bodies, aquaculture networks, and management bodies for related species such as whales and seabirds. Through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN), FAO is compiling data on RFB activities, publishing this research, and raising awareness on the range and diversity of RFB activities.²⁰ At the time of writing this paper, RFBs around the world are examining the relevance and application of FAOs BGI to their own mandates and activities.

32. Over half of the non-FAO RFBs with which FAO is currently liaising have undertaken comprehensive independent performance reviews. These reviews aim to ensure that the RFB is performing at the highest possible level and to evaluate how effectively each RFB is addressing its mandates. Three RFBs have already conducted (or are preparing to conduct) a second performance review. Through their demonstrated commitment to the Performance Review process, and as evidenced by the increasing number of reviews which are taking place, RFBs are clearly acknowledging the need for their mandates to be sound and their procedures and advice to be best practice.

33. Paragraph 72 of the 2012 COFI30 report requested FAO to initiate performance reviews of the eleven RFBs which are under its auspices (the FAO RFBs).²¹ To address the request of the Committee, the current state of all FAO RFB Performance Reviews was examined and found to be so diverse that it was difficult to assess and compare overall performance of the bodies. To ensure a consistent and current analysis of FAO RFBs, a general overview research paper of the bodies was commissioned.

34. Three benchmarks guided the research:

- The relevance of the RFBs activities to the needs of the region;
- The degree of ownership of the RFB by its members; and
- The financial viability of the RFB.

35. The detailed findings of this research are to be published in a FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular "*Review and Analysis of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Article VI and XIV Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs)*." A summary discussion is provided in the COFI Information Paper: "Regional Fishery Bodies Established Within the FAO Framework".

36. The FAO RFB performance review found that:

- All Article VI bodies and some Article XIV bodies are significantly restricted by lack of funds. Many of the bodies have noted that their budget is insufficient to conduct their agreed programmes of work.
- Most FAO RFBs have a lack of human resources (two of the FAO bodies have no Secretary, nor Secretariat staff, another two of the bodies share the same Secretary).

²⁰ Issues and Trends of Importance to RFBs (2012); Snapshot of August – Exploring the Diversity of RFB activities (2013); Collaborative and Cooperative Activities being Conducted by RFBs (2013); Performance Review of FAO RFBs (2013); and Blue Growth Processes in RFBs (2014).

²¹ There are 6 Article VI FAO RFBs and 5 Article XIV FAO RFBs. The Article VI RFBs are: The FAO Article VI RFBs are: Commission for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Latin America and the Caribbean (COPESCAALC), Committee on Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA), European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC), Fishery Committee for Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF), South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC), and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC). The FAO Article XIV RFBs are: Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC), Central Asian and Caucasus Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish), General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI).

- Several FAO RFBs experience very low attendance at their sessional meetings. This weakens the support for decision and recommendations adopted by the session, particularly where a quorum cannot be reached.
- Some FAO RFBs have mandates or geographic areas of competence that overlap with those of non-FAO RFBs and this can lead to duplication of effort and unnecessary competition between bodies.
- Some FAO RFBs have outdated constituent instruments, such as Statutes or Rules of Procedure.
- Another concern relates to the lack of implementation of recommendations and decisions adopted by a RFB.
- Finally, many of the bodies are restrained both financially and administratively by political considerations (such as operating languages, or a reluctance to recognize certain Members), factors that do not directly relate to effective fisheries management.

37. Despite these weaknesses, it was acknowledged that FAO RFBs serve important roles in fisheries management whether through their advice or through their regulatory measures. They bring the countries in a region together and provide a unique forum for dialogue, coordination and exchange of experiences; their secretariats are respected as neutral brokers; and they initiate or implement numerous activities relating to sustainable fisheries, capacity development, and promoting cooperation with partner organisations.

38. FAO recognizes that there is a compelling urgency to address the abovementioned weaknesses of the FAO RFBs and FAO will continue to provide a framework and technical support for its Article VI and Article XIV regional fisheries bodies.

39. However, ultimately these bodies exist for, and by, their members. If changes need to be made to the existing regime of FAO RFBs, it is for the members of these bodies, not FAO, to drive this change.

40. FAO RFB member countries may wish to reconsider their membership of each FAO RFB. In particular, the members may consider:

- withdrawing from the RFB if it is not perceived as relevant or important;
- developing rules pertaining to decision making processes within the RFB with regard to members which do not attend RFB sessions;
- transforming the RFB into a virtual network of members;
- reviewing the RFB constituent instruments; and
- strengthening collaborative arrangements, including memoranda of understanding with relevant or overlapping bodies in order to better coordinate activities.

CONCLUSIONS

41. Fisheries and aquaculture can be vital in the transition towards blue growth due to their interconnectivity with, and reliance on, aquatic ecosystems and the potential for people employed in it to act not only as resource users but also as resource stewards. Hence, realizing the full potential of the oceans and wetlands will demand integrated and responsible approaches to its economic development. A more effective, socially and environmentally responsible seafood chain can contribute to sustainable growth, social cohesion and food security, reducing the pressure on marine and land resources. It can, in particular, influence the governance and management of these resources, the conservation of biodiversity and habitats, and the empowerment of concerned communities, including through better adaptation of vulnerable communities to climatic changes and improved resilience to natural disasters and crises.

42. This paper has traced the call for change at Rio + 20, the response by FAO in developing Blue Growth, and the integrated, collaborative approaches that FAO is pursuing with partner bodies and initiatives to realise Blue Growth. In the process, FAO is endeavouring to improve the efficiency and productivity of the Regional Fisheries Bodies which are established under its auspices. The aim is to

assist these bodies to meet the needs of their member countries, and to further Blue Growth in their respective regions.

43. The global and regional processes for fisheries management are entering a watershed period and the integrated values of Blue Growth are attempting to meet the many challenges of our time. It is both multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral. Its integrated approach includes the environment, humanitarian and socio-economic considerations, and the jurisdictional challenges facing our need to provide for food security. There is a need for all entities involved in the global and regional processes of fisheries management, and FAO member States, to find synergies and work together in order to reach the “future we want.”

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE COMMITTEE

44. The Committee is invited to:

- (a) review FAO’s Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) as an integration mechanism for building synergies across the UN system and with other current regional and global processes;
- (b) consider and provide guidance related to the findings of FAO’s performance review of the FAO Regional Fisheries Bodies;
- (c) consider and provide guidance on the measures that need to be taken at the regional and global levels to ensure that the BGI provides a better representation of fisheries stakeholder interests, and any support that FAO can provide in this regard through further development of policy assistance and capacity development.