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FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC

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Matters concerning the EAF-Nansen Programme

SUMMARY

This document provides a summary overview of the activities of the EAF-Nansen Programme in the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) region. The EAF-Nansen Programme started in 2017, marking a new phase of a programme that started in 1975. A new state-of-the-art research vessel – the third *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* is an integral part of the programme science plan that guides its scientific activities. The 21st session of CECAF agreed to act as a Regional Steering Committee for the Programme. The Committee is therefore invited to provide feedback on the overall implementation of the programme in the CECAF region based on this report and provide inputs for the workplan in 2020. The Committee is further asked to comment on possible inter-linkages between the EAF-Nansen Programme, and related projects and programmes in the CECAF region as well as pertinence from a national perspective.

INTRODUCTION

The **EAF-Nansen Programme started in 2017**, marking a new phase of a programme was initiated in 1975. The Programme, funded by the Norwegian agency for development cooperation (Norad), is implemented by FAO in close collaboration with the Institute of Marine Research, Bergen, Norway. A new state-of-the-art research vessel – the third *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* – was made available to the programme and started her work in May 2017 to continue the work of her two predecessors. Owned by Norad, it has been equipped with the latest technologies to further research that addresses new and emerging challenges in marine fisheries research and management.

The long-term objective or impact of the Programme is that “*Sustainable fisheries improve food and nutrition security for people in partner countries*”. To contribute to this long-term objective, the Programme works towards three mutually reinforcing Outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Fishery research institutions provide relevant and timely scientific advice for management (science and science-based advice).
- Outcome 2: Fisheries management institutions manage fisheries according to the EAF principles (fisheries management).
- Outcome 3: Fisheries research and management institutions have appropriate human and organizational capacity to manage fisheries sustainably (capacity development).

A science plan has been developed that outlines and organizes the research themes to be addressed by the Programme. This was developed in consultation with international, regional and national partners and includes three main topics: (i) sustainable fisheries, (ii) oil/gas/pollution impacts and habitat mapping, and (iii) climate change. A research theme, “Ecosystem Characterization”, pulls together ecosystem features and drivers of change to understand how these interact. The science plan is subdivided into 11 research themes.

During programme preparation, the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) at the twenty first session agreed to play the role of Regional Steering Committees (RSCs) for the EAF-Nansen Programme.

The RSC is intended as a mechanism to strengthen ownership of the Programme’s interventions at regional level and an opportunity to reinforce the inter-linkages between the EAF-Nansen Programme and the RFBs or multi-sectoral Commissions, as well as with related projects and programmes in the regions. It will be responsible for assessing progress in programme delivery and formulating recommendations to the Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) regarding priorities and work-plans for programme implementation in the respective region.

A summary of EAF-Nansen’s activities carried out in the CECAF geographical area since its start in May 2017 is provided below. A detailed activity report is provided in Information Document CECAF/XXII/2019/Inf.4 It should be noted that a detailed progress report on the

Programme's Scientific activities for 2017-2018 was submitted for the 8th Session of the Scientific Sub-Committee meeting held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from October 22-26, 2018.

REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE CECAF AREA IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EAF-NANSEN PROGRAMME- 2017 to date

Outcome 1: Fishery research institutions provide relevant and timely scientific advice for management

- **Planning meetings and pre-survey meetings**

In 2017, two planning meetings were organized for the CECAF area, one in Casablanca (Morocco) and one in Accra (Ghana). Based on the discussions at these meetings, the sailing orders for the surveys in 2017 were developed, which were then detailed in collaboration with the countries either through email exchange or through dedicated meetings, as required. In connection with the Eight Session of CECAF SSC in Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire in October 2018 the survey programme for 2019 was discussed and inputs received by participating countries. It was agreed that in 2019 the surveys with the R/V *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* should address distribution and abundance of demersal resources in the Gulf of Guinea. Countries from North West Africa proposed to have a pelagic coverage given that the vessel would be available at the same time historical coverages took place. Furthermore, it was proposed that a survey of the demersal resources of North West Africa would be organized to take place in the first half of 2020 (see Appendix 1 for proposed survey programme in 2020).

In 2019 two pre-survey meetings were held in Ghana (July) and Cote d'Ivoire (August) to finalize the planning for legs 3.1 (Cote d' Ivoire, Ghana) and Leg 3.2 (Liberia to Guinea-Bissau). A pre-survey meeting for Leg 4, North West Africa, was held in Casablanca back to back with the FAO CECAF Working group on the assessment of small pelagic fish in July 2019. A meeting of the acoustic survey planning working group for North West Africa (renamed as *Acoustic Working group of Northwest Africa* (AWG)) took place in Agadir, Morocco in June 2019.

- **Surveys**

The R/V *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* surveyed the CECAF region in 2017 and in 2019. In 2018 the vessel was used to survey the waters of the Indian Ocean, and the Bay of Bengal and was therefore not available to the CECAF region. In 2017, the survey focused on pelagic resources and ecosystems. In 2019, the vessel has been used to survey the west coast of Africa from South Africa to Morocco, broken up into four main legs (and 14 sub-legs). Three main survey legs with nine sub-legs have been carried out so far. 235 scientists will be involved over 299 survey days total. In addition to providing information on distribution and abundance of pelagic and demersal resources, the results of the 2017-2019 surveys feed into the science plan as well as into stock and/or ecosystems assessments. The detailed survey programme can be found in CECAF/XXII/2019/Inf.4.

- **Post-survey meetings**

The main purpose of the post-survey meetings is to finalize the survey report, discuss follow-up activities, including processing of the samples and data collected during the survey, review possible research projects, including deliverables to EAF-Nansen Programme and regional authorities and discuss needs for capacity development (as appropriate). Four meetings of relevance to the CECAF region have been held from 2017 to date, and a further two are scheduled for December 2019 and March 2020.

- **Port call events**

The Programme, in collaboration with the Norwegian Embassies, the national authorities and the national FAO offices organized three port call events in the CECAF region in 2017, i.e. Casablanca (Morocco), Dakar (Senegal), and Tema (Ghana). These port calls of the R/V *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* aim to raise the profile of the Programme, introduce the research vessel, and flag the longstanding collaboration between FAO, Norad, IMR and partner institutions on ocean issues.

- **Science plan implementation**

In planning research activities under the science plan, management needs and requirements with respect to fisheries, environment and energy sectors are considered, depending on the theme. Key management questions in relation to the different themes are discussed and information needs and gaps are identified. More strategic (long-term) questions are also addressed in some cases. Several activities have been organized of relevance to the CECAF under the science plan. This included an interregional workshop on “Pelagic resources and ecosystems of the Atlantic coast of Africa” organised in Cape Town in February 2018 to further plan the work of four inter-related themes relevant to pelagic resources and ecosystems.

Furthermore, a training workshop on identification of egg and larvae (Theme 1) was held in Casablanca in April 2018 for countries in North West Africa based on the 2017 pelagic surveys. In October 2018 a workshop on stock identification of pelagic resources in west Africa was held in Bergen (Theme 2), with participation of scientists from several countries of the CECAF region. As a result, a detailed work plan for necessary research activities to stock identification of priority pelagic species was agreed.

In November 2018, and in connection with Theme 3, an expert meeting was held on mesopelagics in Rome, Italy. Two meetings were hosted by IMR, Norway in November 2018. One addressed Nutrition and Food Security (Theme 8) to plan scientific papers based on the samples collected with the R/V *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* in relation to nutrition, food safety and biosecurity. The second one was on Marine Debris and Micro Plastics (Theme 6), also based on the observations made through the R/V *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* surveys. In April 2019, a workshop was organized in Cape Town on Acoustic Survey Methodology (Theme 2) with special emphasis on the use of sonar data for improved biomass estimation of pelagic fish using the acoustic method. Theme 8 (nutrition and food safety) organized a second meeting in Rome to in July to continue progress on the preparation of planned publications.

- **Support to stock assessment working groups**

The Programme supported specific workshops to analyze the results of the 2017 *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* surveys with the objective of preparing working papers for use by the FAO Working group. These were on the assessment of small pelagic fish off Northwest Africa that took place in Banjul, The Gambia, June 2018; and the FAO/CECAF Working Group on the Assessment of Small Pelagic Fish (South subgroup) held in Accra, Ghana in September 2018. Technical and financial support was also provided to both of the CECAF pelagic working groups.

Outcome 2: Fisheries management institutions manage fisheries according to the EAF principles

The outputs under outcome 2 relate to technical support to improve fisheries management, encompassing policy, legal and operational management support, the collection and analysis of relevant fisheries data (including biological, ecological as well as social and economic data). Also related is support to the development of science-based decision-making through the implementation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) including the development of fisheries management plans using the EAF framework and support to setting up a functional fisheries management cycle.

- **Development and implementation of regional and national fisheries policy, legal and management frameworks and plans**

A Legal assessment tool/checklist has been developed that can be applied to check for the consistency with EAF of national policies and legislation. A preliminary gap assessment has been conducted applying the checklist for 32 countries, including CECAF countries.

- **Support to the implementation of fisheries management plans and the setting up of a fisheries management cycle**

A framework document for small projects to support implementation of programme-supported management plans was developed and small projects, together with umbrella activities, have been developed for three countries in the Gulf of Guinea to work to support the implementation of the beach seine management plans in Cote d'Ivoire, Benin and Togo. A regional inception meeting, combined with training on EAF, the EAF implementation monitoring tool and gender was organized in Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire in July 2019, and follow up national inception meetings were organized in Benin and Togo in August.

Furthermore, an interregional workshop on the management of shared stocks and implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries within the framework of the EAF-Nansen Programme was held in Dakar (Senegal) in April 2018. The legal, political, management and scientific considerations in the management of shared resources were reviewed. The Northwest African region identified small pelagics, specifically sardinella, as a priority. The countries concerned are Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and The Gambia. After a participatory process, a final draft regional project document is available, and an inception meeting is planned in 2019.

- **EAF-Implementation Monitoring Tool**

A revised tool has been developed to track EAF-implementation and also the EAF-process. Two consultations were held in Rome in January and February 2019 that agreed that a completely new tool be developed instead of revising the existing 'Tracking Tool'. The new tool was then tested in Tanzania in April 2019, and a training workshop organized on it in Abidjan in July 2019 for selected participants from Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo.

- **Socio-ecological assessments of vulnerability of coastal communities to climate variability and change.**

The EAF-Nansen Programme is contributing to develop a common approach to vulnerability assessments, building on a toolkit that was produced in the Eastern Caribbean.

- **Development of framework for collection of fisheries socio-economic data**

The Programme, in partnership with the FAO Fisheries Policy Branch and the PESCAO Project, has commenced the development of a framework for the collection of socio-economic data on small-scale fisheries in the CECAF area. This activity directly feeds into the work of the CECAF Artisanal Working Group.

Outcome 3: Fisheries research and management institutions have appropriate human and organizational capacity to manage fisheries sustainably

The outputs under outcome 3 relate to capacity development across the thematic themes of the Programme, technical support to research and management institutions for gender mainstreaming in the Programme activities, and the establishment of a functional knowledge and information sharing mechanism.

- **Capacity development and the Technical training Network**

A capacity development strategy for the Programme has been developed. The Technical Training Network (TTN) has also been identified in the Programme document as instrumental to implementing capacity development activities in Africa and working on making this functional. While the capacity strategy provides overall guidance on capacity development under the Programme, there is still a need to get specific feedback from partner countries on the short-term courses and the thematic areas of highest priority that would support building the required capacity within partner institutions. Further information on potential partner institutions in relation to their areas of competence in the different sub-regions where the EAF-Nansen Programme is operating is also needed. Feedback from the partner countries in CECAF is therefore sought on this issue.

So far, CECAF countries have benefited mostly from on-the-job training through the survey work, however this is expected to change as the research work under the science plan picks up and the technical training network becomes fully-operational.

- **Gender Strategy**

A gender strategy, to provide a framework on how the Programme can assist fisheries research and management institutions for gender mainstreaming in the programme activities, was prepared and shared with partners in early 2018. The strategy suggests three priority areas for mainstreaming: Programme management, programme activities, and programme Communication. Specific indicators have been incorporated into the Programme's work plan to aid in the monitoring of the achievement of gender mainstreaming in every aspect of the Programme's work.

Two training workshops on gender mainstreaming generally, and specifically on the Programme's Gender Strategy, were conducted in July 2019 for the Programme's National Focal Points and some members of the national fisheries working groups of Benin, Ivory Coast, and Togo.

- **Communication**

The EAF-Nansen Communication Strategy was also rolled out in March 2019. This strategy clearly spells out how the Programme's communication and visibility is to be handled. Under this strategy, the Programme's newsletter has been re-formatted and needed human resources obtained to ensure that both the newsletter and website are regularly updated.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES OF RELEVANCE TO CECAF

From September to-December 2019 a pelagic resources and ecosystem survey will be carried out in Northwest Africa, and in early 2020, the survey work will focus on the demersal resources in the same sub-region. The main science activities for the CECAF region will be linked to the surveys, to the follow up of the research work from the 2017 and 2019 surveys and the research projects identified in the science plan as well as the assessment work, nationally or through CECAF. Support can also be provided to facilitate science-management policy dialogues and the EAF-Nansen Programme is likely to partner with the PESCAO project on this work.

For the fisheries management output, the on-the-ground work to support implementation of EAF in the three Gulf of Guinea countries will be initiated. Countries were selected based on their commitment to engage in the EAF process in the earlier phase, but renewed commitment needs to be expressed. The work on supporting shared stocks management, including through the EAF-process will continue in the Northwest Africa region and on the selected sardinella case study. The work will be conducted in close consultation with CECAF, the CCLME and other relevant bodies.

Global work on Legislating for EAF, development of policy, bringing fisheries into cross sectoral dialogues and support to track EAF implementation (including the use of the EAF Implementation Monitoring Tool) will continue and expand. The same is the case for the capacity development component, and it is expected that the technical training Network will become operational during the course of 2019.

Specific upcoming activities include:

October:

- Workshop Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 15-17 October 2019, Theme 9 (Comparative analyses of the Angolan and Ivory-Ghana upwelling ecosystems)

November:

- 5-7 November 2019, Cotonou, Benin, Semi-annual meeting and Forum of the EAF-Nansen Programme
- TBC, Ecosystem characterization workshops with the CCLME

December:

- 1-10 December, CECAF Demersal Working group North
- 10-12 December, 2019, Bissau, Guinea Bissau, Post-survey meeting for 2019 survey leg 3.

ACTIONS REQUESTED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is invited to:

- Provide feedback on the overall implementation of the programme in the CECAF region based on this report
- Provide inputs for the workplan in 2020 in relation to:
 - Research activities, including surveys
 - Fisheries management at national and regional levels
 - Capacity development priorities
- Comment on possible inter-linkages between the EAF-Nansen Programme, and related projects and programmes in the CECAF region as well as pertinence from a national perspective.