

November 2016



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

| |
|--|
| Tenth meeting of the Working Group on Fisheries Management |
| Doha, State of Qatar, 6 - 8 December 2016 |
| RECOFI/ROPME Cooperation |
| Executive Summary |
| This working document provides an update on the progress to establish an effective cooperation framework between the relevant regional fishery body (RECOFI and regional sea organization (ROPME) in the Gulf and Sea of Oman region. |
| The WGFM is invited to: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider the merit and scope to establish cooperation between RECOFI and ROPME and provide any feedback or guidance on the way forward including the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding formalizing the RECOFI/ROPME cooperation. |

INTRODUCTION

1. At the seventh session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 14-16 May 2013, the Commission concurred on the need for due consideration to be given to ongoing ecosystem changes and their impacts, including climate change and red tide impacts on both fisheries and aquaculture. The Commission welcomed the opportunity to strengthen cooperation with the Fisheries Resources Committee of the GCC and other relevant regional partners including the execution of joint activities of fisheries and aquaculture.

2. In this respect, and also with regards to common regional priorities, the Commission emphasized the value of effective and viable regional cooperation which should be fostered by RECOFI in cooperation with other interested entities, such as the Fisheries Resources Committee of the GCC, Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). In this regard, the Secretariat proposed that a formal partnership arrangement between these bodies be sought.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A COOPERATIVE FRAMEWORK BETWEEN RECOFI AND ROPME: PROGRESS AND CURRENT STATUS

This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies. Most FAO meeting documents are available on the Internet at www.fao.org

3. At the ninth meeting of the RECOFI Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) held on 24-26 November 2015 in Kuwait City, Kuwait, the RECOFI Secretary noted that the Commission had requested cooperation with other relevant regional entities, such as the Permanent Fisheries Resources Committee (PFRC) of GCC and the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME). Further to this request, the RECOFI Secretary and Mr Rashid Al Shihi, Oceanographic Specialist with the Ministry of Environment and Water of the United Arab Emirates, used the WGFM meeting in Kuwait as an opportunity to meet Mr Abdul Rahman Al Awadi, Executive Secretary of ROPME and Mr Hassan Mohammadi, Coordinator of ROPME.

4. The mandate area and constituencies of ROPME and RECOFI were identical and, while keeping in mind the respective mandates of the two organizations, there could be areas for cooperation to the benefit of both regional organizations and their members. The Secretariats of ROPME and RECOFI, with the support of concerned national officers and experts, would work together to lay the ground for fruitful collaboration and synergies.

5. The Chairperson and the Secretary of RECOFI represented the Commission at the regional workshop entitled “Toward the Development of a Regional Ecosystem Based Management Strategy for ROPME Sea Area” held from 4 to 7 April 2016 in Dubai, UAE.¹ The Secretary made a presentation on the challenges and opportunities for regional fisheries management and aquaculture development in the region. The presentation provided a brief overview of RECOFI and a case study of the work conducted by the Commission. He referred to the international legal framework under which the flag and coastal States have the obligation and duty to cooperate for fisheries management through appropriate regional mechanisms/agreements such as RECOFI. The power of RECOFI to adopt binding recommendations was explained.

6. RECOFI and ROPME have exactly the same geographical coverage, which makes it clear to cooperate in the region. It was observed that many of the technical reports produced by RECOFI are not well used by the governments, civil society and regional organizations including ROPME. For instance, for socio-economic issues, the RECOFI task group has collected information and analyzed the information. The RECOFI Secretary stressed that the socio-economic information is highly relevant to ROPME. The workshop participants concurred the partnership between ROPME and RECOFI as an opportunity.

7. The Dubai meeting produced 12 recommendations. Recommendation 10 specifically addressed the cooperation between ROPME and RECOFI: “*Considering the identical geographical coverage and membership of ROPME and RECOFI, it would be highly desirable and advisable to establish an effective and viable cooperation framework. In this regard, ROPME and RECOFI should discuss areas for cooperation through a joint meeting*”.

¹ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/soiom-2016-01/other/soiom-2016-01-unep-03-en.pdf>

8. The RECOFI Secretary and Chairperson² were invited to participate in the “Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 26 to 28 September 2016. The case of the potential cooperation between RECOFI and ROPME was included in the Agenda and outlined by the RECOFI Secretary through a joint FAO/RECOFI and UNEP/ROWA presentation.

9. The so-called “Seoul Outcome” elaborated by the meeting (Appendix 1) reported that *“Participants also noted that there are many ongoing initiatives to enhance cooperation between regional seas conventions and action plans and regional fishery bodies, including in the North-East Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Western Indian Ocean, West and Central Africa, and the ROPME/RECOFI region, as presented during the meeting. ...”*

10. Consequently, at the international level there seems to be expectations that effective cooperation between the relevant regional sea organization (ROPME) and regional fishery body (RECOFI) in the region will be developed and established.

11. The WGFM is asked to:

- consider the merit and scope to establish cooperation between RECOFI and ROPME and provide any feedback or guidance on the way forward including the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding formalizing the RECOFI/ROPME cooperation.

² Eventually the Chairperson could not attend.

APPENDIX 1

**Outcome of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress Towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 26 to 28 September 2016
("Seoul Outcome")**

1. The Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 26 to 28 September 2016, was convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with financial support from the Government of the Republic of Korea (through the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, the National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea, the Korea Maritime Institute and the Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation), the Government of Japan (through the Japan Biodiversity Fund) and the European Commission, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Secretariat of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention, IUCN-CEM-Fisheries Expert Group, and the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative.
2. Participants comprised representatives of regional seas organizations, regional fishery bodies, and relevant UN/international organizations/initiatives as well as experts from national governments and agencies, and non-governmental organizations.
3. The meeting aimed to facilitate exchange of experiences and to discuss specific tools and guidelines, in order to enhance science-based, cross-sectoral and ecosystem-based approaches for addressing biodiversity and fisheries issues, and to identify options and opportunities to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration among regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies, with a view to further strengthening their complementary roles in supporting national implementation towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Participants noted that this was the first time that such a global meeting was held bringing together the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and regional fishery bodies.
4. Participants recognized that biodiversity, a healthy environment and resilient ecosystems underpin sustainable fisheries and food security, and that the ecosystem approach to fisheries contributes to sustained environmental functions and the provisioning of ecosystem services.
5. Participants recognized that the level of ambition posed by the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals necessitates action at multiple scales, including at the regional and national levels, and acknowledged the notable challenges facing the achievement of these global goals and targets, including gaps in capacity, issues related to governance, lack of cross-sectoral coordination, limited information base, and constraints related to monitoring, assessing and reporting progress in implementation.
6. Participants also affirmed the essential role played by regional organizations in supporting and facilitating actions by national governments for the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems, and in supporting and assessing progress towards global-level goals, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.
7. Participants stressed the need for enhanced cooperation and collaboration at the regional scale, supported by continual exchange of information and lessons learned, exploring of shared objectives, and addressing issues of common interest.

8. Participants acknowledged the diversity of experiences, challenges, priorities and capacities among countries and regional organizations in different ocean regions, and noted the respective mandates of various regional and global intergovernmental organizations.

9. Participants also noted that there are many ongoing initiatives to enhance cooperation between regional seas conventions and action plans and regional fishery bodies, including in the North-East Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Western Indian Ocean, West and Central Africa, and the ROPME/RECOFI³ region, as presented during the meeting. For some regions, such cooperation is also facilitated by the regional scientific bodies and Large Marine Ecosystem projects, including through cross-sectoral ecosystem-based scientific assessment.

10. Participants noted that regional cooperation is at different stages of development in various regions, and, as such, that the appropriate next steps would vary among different regions, ranging from the establishment of dialogue to support cooperation where it does not exist, to strengthening this cooperation where it already exists.

11. In recognition of the above, participants highlighted various ways and means to further enhance cooperation and coordination among regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies to facilitate implementation towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional scale, including through scientific collaboration and cooperation as well as through the use of tools, approaches and indicators in support of the application of the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach, including, inter alia:

- Interacting and exchanging information on the respective measures and activities of regional organizations to promote mutual understanding, build trust, and ensure that they take their respective outputs into account, thereby complementing each other's work while respecting their different mandates;
- Joint regional-level strategies, memoranda of understanding, or other collaborative arrangements to identify common objectives, outline joint and/or complementary activities, and clarify roles and expectations of respective regional organizations;
- Identification of specific issues of common interest around which to structure cooperation and coordination on scientific and technical matters as well as management tools and approaches;
- Promoting harmonized approaches for collecting and accessing data, and exchanging the scientific information produced by a wide range of entities, including governments, universities, research institutions/partnerships, non-governmental organizations, and United Nations agencies (e.g., information on EBSAs and VMEs as well as from OBIS);
- Using the above information for the production of complementary and holistic assessments of the status and trends of the marine environment, fisheries, biodiversity and ecosystems; and
- Supporting national reporting through regional frameworks, including through compatible approaches for data and reporting formats, using, where possible, existing indicators, and aligning this with reporting on progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

12. Participants also stressed that cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination at the regional level is underpinned by national-level coordination, and that effective regional coordination on scientific as well as management aspects can also facilitate national-level coordination.

³ ROPME = Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment
RECOFI = Regional Commission for Fisheries

13. Participants affirmed that the meeting provided a valuable opportunity to share experiences from different regions, better understand mandates and complementary roles of respective regional organizations/bodies in supporting national implementation for achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets and Sustainable Development Goals, and engage in an interactive dialogue to identify ways and means to further strengthen synergies through collaboration and cooperation.

14. In this regard, participants emphasized the need to continue global dialogues with regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies on accelerating progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and welcomed the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Korea to make this global dialogue a regular forum, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, regional seas organizations, regional fishery bodies, and other interested donors. Such regular global dialogues could continue, perhaps on a biennial basis, to facilitate, promote, and take stock of regional-level cooperation.

15. Similarly, participants emphasized the need for capacity building activities in support of cooperation at the regional level.

16. In order to prepare for future global dialogues, participants suggested that an informal working group be formed, consisting of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and interested regional organizations, to prepare substantive elements of the meeting programme of future global dialogues and maintain intersessional communication among participants.

17. Participants expressed their deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea for hosting the meeting and to the local organizers (the National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea, the Korea Maritime Institute and the Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation) for successfully organizing the meeting and for providing its kind hospitality.