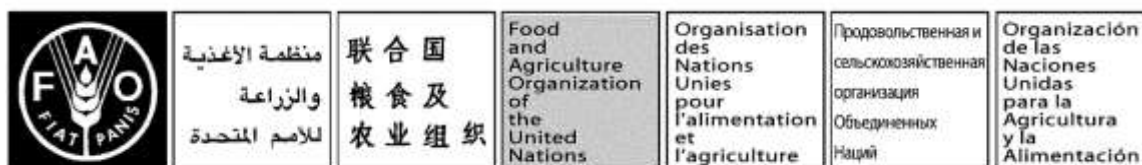


November 2018

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WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

NINTH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY GROUP (SAG)

Bridgetown, Barbados, 19-20 November 2018

Main decisions and recommendations of the 33rd session of COFI and WECAFC 17

I. INTRODUCTION

This document contains draft highlights of the topics discussed at the 33rd Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). Considering that the official report is not available yet, no reference is made to decisions and recommendations. As such, this is an information note for the Scientific Advisory Group, it will instead present key issues of particular interest to the regional fisheries management organisations/arrangements and especially to strengthening WECAFC and supporting the strategic reorientation process this regional fishery body is embarked on.

The SAG is therefore invited to discuss the matters raised and provide guidance for follow-up ideas for the attention of WECAFC 17.

The thirty-third session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held in Rome from 9 to 13 July 2018. The session was attended by 114 Members of the Committee, by observers from eight other FAO Member Nations, the Holy See and Palestine, and one Associate Member of FAO, by representatives from ten specialized agencies and related organizations of the United Nations and by observers from 44 intergovernmental, one Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and 33 international non-governmental organizations. The Agenda and Timetable for the session adopted by the Committee which included the addition of two items (14.2(a) Report from the Republic of Korea on the progress of the pilot programme for the World Fisheries University; and 14.2(b) A proposal for the establishment of a new sub-committee on fisheries management), featured the following topics:

II. AGENDA OF THE 33RD SESSION

The diversity and comprehensiveness of the topics underscore the role of COFI as the most important international forum for policy debate and the adoption of policy instruments in the fisheries and aquaculture sector:

- STATE OF WORLD FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

- PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES (THE CODE) AND RELATED INSTRUMENTS
- DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE, BUSAN, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, 4–8 SEPTEMBER 2017
- DECISION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE, ROME, 24-27 OCTOBER 2017
- FISHERIES AND OCEAN GOVERNANCE (with Combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; Small-scale and artisanal fisheries governance; Global and regional ocean processes as headlines)
- THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
- CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RELATED MATTERS
- FAO'S PROGRAMME OF WORK IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE UNDER THE FAO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
- MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK (MYPOW) OF THE COMMITTEE

III. SPECIFIC MATTERS OF INTEREST TO WECAFC

Following are selected highlights of the deliberations that raise issues of global and regional reach, particularly pertaining to the governance of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and sustainability of the marine resources in WECAFC. It is worth noting how the recommendations and resolution in the agenda of this SAG meeting are consistently reflected in these matters:

- The Committee reiterated the importance of operational national data collection systems to support scientific and decision-making processes, emphasizing the need for capacity building in developing countries and wide dissemination of the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) report. Indeed the SOFIA publication was once again praised for its prominence, as a global reference for development status and trends in fisheries and aquaculture that is supported by data, statistics and information, and as a tool to help states improve the sustainability of fisheries under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG 14.
- The Committee expressed support for the Blue Growth Initiative (BGI), confirmed its validity as the framework for achieving tangible outcomes for the work of FAO in fisheries and aquaculture. In this respect, FAO was encouraged to integrate existing regional activities on Blue Growth into its programme of work, as well as to support the development of new regional initiatives.
- Serious concern was expressed about the overall aggregated status of fish stocks, noting the continued increase in the proportion of overfished stocks. Regretting that the global community has been unable to reverse this trend, the Committee emphasized how illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, together with unregulated transshipment and harmful fisheries subsidies, were undermining the sustainability of marine fishery resources. The Committee called upon Members for strong commitment in the fight against IUU fishing, including ratification of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA) and underscored the importance of national policy reforms for strong and efficient management action towards achieving sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and the SDGs.
- To address these challenges, the Committee expressed strong interest in discussing the establishment of a sub-committee on fisheries management in order to assist the international community, especially developing states;
- The role of regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and other regional processes for the sustainable management of common fisheries resources was highlighted, with a strong

call for increased support to Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) and national mechanisms for sustainable fishery management;

- The importance of topics such as boosting implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), occupational health and safety (safety at sea notably) issues in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and promotion of decent work for fish workers was highlighted. On the latter cooperation for joint initiatives among agencies- IMO, ILO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and FAO- is essential, considering the links between IUU fishing, safety at sea and poor working conditions in parts of the fisheries sector;
- The Committee expressed the need for greater cooperation and information sharing between Members, including through mechanisms established by RFMOs and other IGOs;
- The Committee commended the launch of the public version of the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record), recognizing that it plays an important role in the fight against IUU fishing. It encouraged Members to submit information to the Global Record and provide regular updates;
- The Committee reiterated its support for the work of FAO on commercially-exploited aquatic species of interest to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- The Committee recognized the value of the Voluntary Guidelines for CDS as part of a comprehensive suite of measures necessary to combat IUU fishing, particularly with respect to improving traceability of fisheries products.
- The Committee expressed concern about transshipment activities which, when inadequately regulated, monitored and controlled, can contribute to IUU fishing. The Committee welcomed the global study on transshipment conducted by FAO, and called for in-depth studies to support the development of guidelines on best practices for regulating, monitoring and controlling transshipment;
- The Committee expressed support for the work of FAO in continuing to develop the technical guidelines for the estimation of the magnitude and geographic extent of IUU fishing, noting the value of these guidelines for the production of consistent and reliable estimates, determining national, regional, global trends, and measuring the impacts of IUU fishing;
- The Committee recalled the important role of Flag States in their actual control of their vessels in combatting IUU fishing;
- The Committee appreciated the increased cooperation of FAO with relevant entities, notably UN-Oceans, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), CITES, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), World Customs Organization, World Health Organization and WTO;
- The Committee appreciated the ongoing work to establish a new legally-binding agreement for the conservation of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and recognized that the process should not undermine existing relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional and sectoral bodies;

- The Committee also encouraged the increased contribution of FAO and other global, regional and sectoral bodies with an interest in fisheries, *inter alia*, RFMOs and other RFBs, to these negotiations, and encouraged Members to send representatives from their fisheries sectors;
- The Committee expressed appreciation for the work of regional and sectoral bodies, including RFBs and RFMOs, as important mechanisms for the cooperation of States in fisheries management and conservation. Members were encouraged to consider the establishment of RFMOs for species and areas not yet covered, taking into account the sovereignty of coastal States on this issue;
- The Committee called for FAO to continue its cooperation with RFBs and RFMOs and commended FAO for the support provided to the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN), noting its important role in facilitating the coordination, exchange of experiences and lessons learned by RFBs;
- The Committee requested FAO to continue supporting the reorientation from advisory bodies to management bodies of the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), facilitate the strengthening of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) and provide support for the establishment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Aquaculture and Fisheries Organization;
- The Committee acknowledged the work of FAO and resource partners in promoting the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF), the EAF Nansen Programme, the Common Oceans Programme and the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Programme;
- The Committee commended the work of FAO in the area of climate change in fisheries and aquaculture, and its engagement with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, also noting the recent inclusion of climate change in a range of international instruments and initiatives
- The Committee encouraged FAO to continue to collaborate with other international organizations, RFBs and RFMOs, to advocate the positive contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to sustainable development, and avoid the duplication of effort.

IV. CONCLUSION

The central global role of COFI and the importance of fisheries and aquaculture for food security and nutrition, improved livelihoods, poverty alleviation, income generation, job creation and trade, particularly for small-scale producers were underscored by members at this 33rd session. Likewise, the thoroughly reviewed challenges facing the sectors were unanimously acknowledged.

The decisions and recommendations are yet to be validated and made available in an official report. However, the nature of the topics covered and messages from the deliberations presented so far as above summarized suggest a positive perspective for regional fisheries management organizations/arrangements. Obviously the Secretariat of WECAFC overwhelmingly commends this trend.

More support to WECAFC is therefore foreseen, to enable actions that foster members' compliance with international agreements and regional commitments in line with the objective of promoting the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence.