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联合国
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Food
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des
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l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
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организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Miami, United States of America, 15-18 July 2019

MAIN DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THIRTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES (COFI) AND THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

This document contains highlights of the topics discussed at the 33rd Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and the 16th Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC). The full reports of both sessions are made available respectively as WECAFC/XVII/2019/Ref.5 and WECAFC/XVII/2019/Ref.1.

Suggested Action by the Session

The Commission is invited to discuss the decisions and recommendations of the two meetings and propose actions from WECAFC and its members to follow-up in 2019 -2020 on the decisions and recommendations made.

THIRTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES. ROME, 9–13 JULY 2018

MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST

1. The Committee **welcomed** the improvement in the 2018 questionnaire on the implementation of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) and noted the progress of Members on the implementation of the Code and related instruments, but also identified gaps and constraints and underscored the important role of FAO in assisting Members. The Committee called upon FAO to consult with Members on matters of potential confidentiality in the use of the country information and emphasized the need for Members to validate the use of the information for SDG reporting.
2. The Committee **welcomed** the increasing number of Parties to the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (PSMA), and encouraged further adherence to the Agreement.
3. The Committee **commended** the launch of the public version of the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessel and Supply Vessels (Global Record). The Committee expressed concern about transshipment activities that may contribute to IUU fishing and welcomed the global study on transshipment 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.
4. The Committee **welcomed** progress in implementing the small-scale fisheries (SSF) Guidelines and requested FAO to further develop an implementation monitoring system for the SSF Guidelines. The Committee welcomed the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2022.
5. The Committee **emphasized** the importance of Members achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 14. The Committee requested FAO to continue to assist Members in strengthening statistical capacity and delivery of their data and information. The Committee requested FAO to review potential opportunities of Blue Growth and Blue Economy initiative. The Committee further **requested** FAO to support members in inland fisheries and develop best practices for management of inland fisheries.
6. The Committee **commended** the work of FAO in the area of climate change in fisheries and aquaculture including the comprehensive review on the impacts of climate change in fisheries and aquaculture and adaptation options. The Committee **endorsed** the Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear. The Committee **welcomed** the work of FAO on bycatch, including work on marine mammal bycatch.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL OCEAN PROCESSES OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO WECAFC

7. The Committee **reaffirmed** 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 and further commended the participation of FAO in the many international fora concerning the oceans, relevant to fisheries and aquaculture, and requested that FAO increase its involvement in these international fora.

8. The Committee also **recognized** the limited capacity of some countries to participate in the increasing number of oceans fora.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. The Committee **welcomed** the support of FAO to the CBD towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and FAO participation in the post 2020 vision of CBD. It requested FAO to continue the work concerning area-based management tools and its cooperation with other organizations working on this matter. The Committee requested FAO to continue cooperation with CBD and UN Environment in facilitating formal coordination mechanisms between RFBs and the Regional Seas Programmes.
12. 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.
13. 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. It **recommended** that FAO dedicate more resources to the work of the RSN.
14. 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.
15. The Committee **appreciated** the work of FAO to develop capacity for increasing resilience of the fisheries sector to disasters and expressed appreciation for the disaster relief assistance provided to the fisheries sector in the Caribbean after the hurricanes in 2017.

MAIN DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF WECAFC

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF FISHERIES IN THE WECAFC REGION

16. Members **requested** that in future status reports metadata be included, as well as more recent information from ICCAT stock assessments and the latest work under the FIRMS partnership. It was further noted that some Members would like to see the current status report updated on the following matters: inclusion of the interim collaborative

arrangement for sustainable fisheries between CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC, reference to the latest Albacore tuna information and adjustment of information on the exploitation levels of Queen Conch in Jamaica and Belize.

17. The Commission **agreed** that statistical information is essential for the functioning of a regional fishery body (RFB) and that a future regional fishery management organization (RFMO) in the WECAFC region will have serious challenges if Members pay insufficient attention to stocks and fisheries data and statistics, including the quality of information.

INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF WORKING GROUPS AND OTHER MATTERS REFERRED TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMISSION

18. The Commission **observed** that none of the current WGs should be abolished. Their terms of reference should be reviewed by each session and re-focused (as necessary) with a view to broaden their scope and encompass cross-cutting issues. The possibility of organizing virtual WG meetings should be considered to reduce costs and enable wide participation of experts.
19. The Commission **requested** the Secretariat to send invitations for future SAG sessions to all Members, to allow the Members to participate as observer in the session, if they so desire.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS MADE UNDER THE WECAFC-FIRMS PARTNERSHIP

20. The Commission **agreed** to establish a working group for fisheries data and statistics matters, based on the ongoing work of the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership and supported the development of a regional database in collaboration with the Members and partners in the region.
21. Members **welcomed** the FIRMS inventories. Some of them requested further clarification on the purpose, content and indicators of the ongoing WECAFC-FIRMS work and to address explicitly the data sharing policy in order to increase Member engagement. Moreover, it was **requested** that social and economic information be included in the databases and to broaden the participation of social scientists and economists in the work so as to develop data collection forms that are understandable by a wide audience and not only fisheries biologists.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

22. The Commission discussed and adopted the following recommendations, which appear in Appendix C to the report:
 - **Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/1** “on the regional plan for the management and conservation of Queen conch in the WECAFC area – *addendum to recommendation WECAFC/15/2014/3*”
 - **Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/2** “on spiny lobster management and conservation in the WECAFC area”
 - **Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/3** “on the sub-regional fisheries management plan for flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean”
 - **Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/4** “on the management of deep sea fisheries in the high seas”

- **Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/5** “on the management of shrimp and groundfish resources in the WECAFC area”
23. The Commission **requested** all Members to inform the Secretariat soonest on the start and end dates of their closed season for lobster fisheries and the period of peak reproduction identified, in order to allow inclusion of this information along with the Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/2 on the web, with a view of working towards regional or sub-regional harmonization of the closures. In addition, it was agreed to include in an annex to the same Recommendation a table with the different conversion factors regarding length and weight,
24. The Commission discussed and **adopted** the following resolutions, which appear in Appendix C to the report:
- **Resolution WECAFC/16/2016/6** “on sea cucumber fisheries management and aquaculture”
 - **Resolution WECAFC/16/2016/7** “on Marine Protected Areas as fisheries management tool in the Caribbean”

PROGRAMME OF WORK OF WECAFC (2016 -2017)

25. The Commission **approved** the Programme of Work shown in Appendix D of the report of the 16th Session.
26. The Commission **reviewed and endorsed** the updated Terms of References of the Working Groups, as presented in working document WECAFC/XVI/2016/15, with minor amendments to the RWG on IUU fishing and the WG on sharks. The CRFM representative informed the meeting that CRFM would continue to coordinate the RWG IUU and the WG on flying fish. The OSPESCA representative reiterated its coordinating role for the WG on spiny lobster. Mr Mauro Gongora (Belize) kindly offered to convene the WG on sharks. The United States of America offered Mr Eugenio Piñeiro to convene the FADs WG.

CONSIDERATION OF EXTRA-BUDGETARY FUNDING

27. The Commission expressed appreciation for the efforts of the WECAFC Secretariat, with support from FAO, the WECAFC Executive Committee and Members of various WGs, in mobilizing resources in support of WECAFC’s Programme of Work.
28. The Commission **noted and commended** the countries and institutions for the financial and technical support received from the European Union, CERMES, CLME+, GEF, NOAA/USA and the World Bank that allowed WECAFC to carry out a number of essential activities. The delegates from the EU and USA indicated that financial commitments are tied to the development and agreement of their respective internal processes. Support would be considered particularly for activities in relation to a transition of WECAFC into an RFMO.
29. The Commission **endorsed** the document WECAFC/XVI/2016/7 and requested the Secretariat to continue the search for funding for the project proposals and particularly in support of the RFMO establishment process.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION IN ADDRESSING IUU FISHING

30. The Commission congratulated the Members that acceded to the PSMA in the intersessional period and appreciated the work undertaken by FAO and its WECAFC Secretariat in terms of awareness raising and capacity building for implementation of the PSMA in the region.
31. Members **agreed** that the successful implementation of the PSMA requires the adoption of proper legal frameworks, the establishment of effective national cooperation among relevant stakeholders as well as international cooperation among countries, whether coastal, port or flag States, and regional fisheries bodies and management organizations. The Commission commended FAO for its efforts to establish a global capacity development programme particularly focused to support developing countries and Small Island Developing States that are party to the Agreement.
32. The Commission **agreed** that IUU fishing is a serious issue that undermines current efforts of achieving sustainable use of fisheries resources in the region. The Commission welcomed the initiatives aiming at combatting IUU as described in document WECAFC/XVI/2016/9 and agreed that IUU fishing should be addressed in a comprehensive way, including by linking IUU to organized crime such as trafficking in the proceeds of crime, money laundering, human trafficking, illegal arms trafficking and drugs trade. Reference was made to the recent legal opinion of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea in Case 21 which elaborates on the rights and duties of flag States vis-à-vis their fishing vessels, and the circumstances in which the flag State may be held liable for IUU fishing conducted by its vessels.
33. The Commission was **supportive** of WECAFC entering into a collaboration with TM Tracking, to participate in the IUU fishing vessel list and carry out further research on IUU fishing activities in the region.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR REGIONAL FISHERIES GOVERNANCE

34. The Commission **welcomed** the interim coordination arrangement for sustainable fisheries between CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC, which was formalized in Cartagena, Colombia in January 2016.
35. The Commission **welcomed** the existing collaboration between CBD Secretariat and FAO, which can benefit the work of WECAFC, in particular a joint organization of an Expert Meeting on Improving Progress Reporting and Working Towards Implementation of Aichi Biodiversity Target 6 (9-11 February 2016) and a forthcoming Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress Towards the Aichi Biodiversity Target, being convened by the CBD Secretariat in collaboration with FAO and UNEP, and hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea (Seoul, Korea, 26-29 September 2016).
36. The Commission, while recognizing the voluntary nature of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, **concurred** on the continuing central role of the Code to promote sustainable fisheries management and aquaculture development. The Commission commended FAO's work to support and monitor the implementation of the Code.
37. Members of WECAFC that are not (yet) contracting party of ICCAT were **encouraged** to become party. Various Members informed the Commission that they were in the process of becoming party to ICCAT.

38. The Commission was informed of CITES developments relevant to the WECAFC Members, including on Queen Conch, sharks and proposals for new listing of various species in Appendix II of CITES. Members raised concern on IUU fishing for Queen Conch in some areas and on the long-term use of scientific quota, following the 2nd review of significant trade of Queen Conch. It was noted that the range States determine their annual quotas themselves and that CITES Secretariat does not have a mandate to set any quotas for Queen Conch trade. Members raised concerns on the accuracy of the Queen Conch production data submitted by some countries for publication in FAO and CITES reports. The information published by FAO and CITES on Queen Conch is provided by the range States themselves, who have reporting obligations to FAO and CITES.

STRATEGIC RE-ORIENTATION OF WECAFC (FINDINGS OF THE COST BENEFIT ASSESSMENT)

39. The Commission **agreed** to launch a process to establish a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) and to clarify issues in relation to competency area, stocks coverage, budgetary implications for Members, institutional structure, membership, decision making processes, national sovereignty aspects, its objectives and any other relevant matters that the Members may wish to consider.
40. The Commission **noted** the importance of taking into account the sub-regional and local peculiarities. In this respect the Commission noted that such an RFMO should not replace existing RFBs, but instead establish functional ties and formal relationships with CRFM, OSPESCA and ICCAT. The Commission considered it important to build on the positive momentum created by WECAFC and sub-regional partners in recent years.
41. Given the efforts made by the Members in establishing co-management and participatory approaches to fisheries management, the Commission **agreed** that the process towards the establishment of an RFMO should ensure effective stakeholder participation and capacity building, as well as a mechanism for effective stakeholder participation in decision making once the RFMO is established.
42. The Commission **recognized** the value of establishing an RFMO in the WECAFC area of competence, being the Western Central Atlantic (area 31) and the Northern part of the South West Atlantic (area 41) to collaborate in fisheries management and conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) of straddling stocks, deep sea fish stocks and highly migratory species that are not under the mandate of ICCAT.

WAY FORWARD IN THE PROCESS OF STRATEGIC RE-ORIENTATION OF WECAFC

43. The Commission took note of the road map options provided and recognized that the timeframe presented would require adaptation and flexibility.
44. It was **agreed** that a 1st preparatory meeting of the Members would be held in 2017. In view of this meeting the Members and observers were requested to submit technical, legal and stakeholder questions and areas of concern to be addressed at the preparatory meeting to the Secretariat. Members and observers were requested to endeavor to have participation by relevant experts in the 1st preparatory meeting.
45. The European Union and the CLME+ Project Coordination Unit indicated that they would explore the possibility to support the organization of this meeting.
46. FAO indicated its availability to assist and facilitate the transformation process of WECAFC into an RFMO.

ANY OTHER MATTERS

47. The Commission **expressed concern** about the limited consultation with stakeholders in the fisheries sector regarding the plans for banning of parrotfish fisheries. WECAFC was **requested** to assess the state of the parrotfish stocks and their relationship with the health of coral reefs.