

Port of Spain, 20 May 2016

**Subject: CLME+ additional study to the cost-benefit assessment of an RFMO in the WECAFC area.**

**Dear colleague,**

The “Findings of the independent cost-benefit assessment of the options for strategic reorientation of WECAFC” revealed to us the tremendous opportunities available for us in this region to rebuild overexploited and depleted fish stocks, increase fisheries production, generate additional value, combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and develop our fisheries sustainably.

Dr Kjartan Hoydal, the author of this important assessment study, sadly passed away recently, but his findings remain valid. He estimated that if the region would establish a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO), our fishers, processors, retailers, traders and governments could expect after some 10 years a significant increase in value generated by the fisheries sector in the range of 700 million USD annually. The associated benefits in terms of employment opportunities, for over 250 thousand people, and fish supply for an additional 20 million people are indeed enormous.

At the 2nd WECAFC Strategic Reorientation Workshop, held in Trinidad and Tobago on 1-2 December 2015, the cost-benefit assessment was discussed. The assessment report was much appreciated by the delegates. The workshop acknowledged the value for fisheries in the region if an RFMO would be established.

Emphasis was also placed on informing the members comprehensively of the ongoing collaboration between the Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and their achievements. Further clarification was sought specifically with regard to what an RFMO could achieve for some important fisheries stocks. In addition more information was requested about the potential structure of an RFMO, and its coverage in area and species.

The Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME+) project kindly offered to support an additional study to address these points. Following the development of Terms of Reference for the study that should fill the remaining gaps in information, Dr. Helga Josupeit was contracted by the CLME+ for an “Assessment of the recent achievements and collaboration of CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC, including options for a regional institutional collaborative structure within an RFMO framework”.

The WECAFC executive secretariat is pleased to share with you her report, which will be presented at WECAFC 16 in Guadeloupe on 20-24 June 2016. This report received preliminary comments from the secretariats of CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC, as well as

from the CLME+ project coordination unit. The report will be finalized for publication after the WECAFC 16, addressing comments received.

This report provides the WECAFC members with a good picture of collaboration between the RFBs, it fills the gaps in information towards a decision on a way forward with the establishment of an RFMO in the region.

The report shows the potential benefits in production and value that could be achieved for key fisheries target stocks in the region, such as Spiny Lobster, queen conch, shrimp, sharks and Mahi Mahi. It provides an indication of the tremendous benefits that can be realized with a small investment in an RFMO, an investment that will generate impact on stocks and fisheries within 6 years. The conservatively estimated additional value generated by the RFMO for the fisheries on the 5 shared stocks previously mentioned, add up to more than 240 million USD annually. Alternatively, inaction is likely to cause our region to continue to lose out on production, value, employment and food for our people.

At WECAFC 16 we have an opportunity to decide on a “Way forward in the process of strategic reorientation of WECAFC”; a way forward that can safeguard our fish to perpetuity, and foster meaningful collaboration among RFBs in the region, respecting the agreed role of each RFB as defined in the respective *statutes*.

To facilitate the discussions at WECAFC 16 and allow the Secretariat to address any questions you may still have, in the best possible manner, I would be grateful if each member of WECAFC could send a (preliminary) opinion on the way forward.

These opinions should preferably include the following information:

1. Whether the member considers the establishment of an RFMO necessary (yes/no, and why).
2. If yes, what are the areas and stocks that should be covered by the RFMO (ABNJ in Area 31 and the northern part of area 41 alone, EEZs for regionally shared stocks [Queen conch, spiny lobster, dolphin fish, wahoo, shrimps and sharks], straddling stocks, deep sea fish stocks and highly migratory species that are not covered by ICCAT).
3. Whether the member has a preference for one of the options presented in the cost-benefit assessment study (continue as RFB, transform into an RFMO under article XIV of FAO’s constitution, or transform into an RFMO independent of FAO).

The executive secretariat would be deeply grateful if those members that have not submitted an opinion as yet on the way forward can kindly respond to this request to do so on or before Friday 10 June. All opinions will be made available in the language(s) they are provided in on the website dedicated to the 16<sup>th</sup> session of WECAFC, available at:





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FISHERY COMMISSION**

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Please share the report with your delegate to WECAFC 16 (Guadeloupe, 20-24 June 2016) and make sure that your delegate is fully informed of your country's opinion.

Together we have the chance to improve our region in line with the global commitments at RIO +20 and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and SAMOA Pathway. In line with "The future we want" (para. 113) we should work towards "healthy marine ecosystems, sustainable fisheries and sustainable aquaculture for food security and nutrition". Let us together increase the fish production in our region and secure the livelihoods of our people.

Let us seize this opportunity and take responsibility for rebuilding fisheries in our Western Central Atlantic Ocean for the better good of all of us.

I look forward to seeing you in Guadeloupe.

With kind regards

Christine Chan A Shing

WECAFC Chairperson

Director of Fisheries of Trinidad and Tobago

Cc: WECAFC Secretariat