

## **ASSISTANCE TO THE FISHING COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE TSUNAMI IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND MEASURES TO REHABILITATE AND REACTIVATE THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTORS IN THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED**

1. The Secretariat introduced document COFI/2005/Tsunami. The Committee expressed its sincere condolences to the countries and the families of the victims in the disaster. It commended the international community and FAO for their swift response to the disaster and thanked FAO for including this topic on the COFI and Ministerial Meeting agendas. The Secretariat provided an overview of the impact of the disaster that killed an estimated 300 000 people and caused damage of approximately US\$ 7 billion. It was pointed out that the tsunami had its greatest impact on poor coastal fishing communities, many of which lost all or most of their livelihood assets.

2. The Secretariat described the unprecedented response and assistance provided by Governments, UN agencies and others that, through the UN Flash Appeal, raised more than US\$ 700 million for the relief and early recovery efforts. It was noted that FAO's response included the deployment of FAO teams in affected countries to assist with coordination, the provision of technical assistance, the supply of fishing gear, repair and replacement of boats, rehabilitation and restocking of fish ponds, early rehabilitation of harbours, anchorages, fish storage and processing, and agriculture inputs. Close collaboration has been maintained with international financial institutions (IFIs) including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank.

3. In considering the issues and constraints to rehabilitation, the Secretariat expressed concern that rehabilitation could reinstitutionalize factors leading to vulnerability and unsustainability. The major concern was the risk of developing fishing capacity in excess of the post-tsunami productivity capacity of fish stocks and the introduction of fishing gear and practices that were not appropriate for the affected countries.

4. The Committee endorsed FAO's medium- to long-term rehabilitation strategy for the fisheries and aquaculture sector in affected countries. This strategy was based on a set of important principles including the adoption of a livelihood approach that put people first. The Committee pointed out that FAO should continue to closely collaborate with other UN agencies and IFIs in providing assistance to affected countries.

5. The Committee was advised by countries directly affected by the tsunami of the magnitude of the damage in their countries, with special emphasis on the damage suffered by the fisheries and aquaculture sector. These Members summarized steps taken by their governments to provide relief in collaboration with international development partners and NGOs. They welcomed the assistance provided by FAO as they moved into longer term rehabilitation, emphasizing FAO's future role in providing coordination and technical assistance. They emphasized the importance of ensuring that capacity did not exceed pre-tsunami levels as a result of international interventions.

6. The Committee expressed its support for FAO's strategy for rehabilitation and reconstruction of livelihoods in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Many Members offered their support in implementing the strategy through financing or the provision of expertise or other action according to the wish of affected countries. The Committee also welcomed the initiative of the Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihood Communities in Tsunami-

Devastated Nations (CONSRN) that was formed to facilitate the coordination of regional fisheries and aquaculture bodies and research institutions in the region.

7. The Committee highlighted the need for FAO to play a key role in collaboration with others in assisting the governments of affected countries, including through the coordination of fisheries rehabilitation activities and the provision of technical assistance, stressing the importance of placing advisors in affected countries. In terms of the support to be provided, many Members stated that attention should be paid to a number of issues including: the development of national strategies to ensure long-term sustainability based on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; the multisectoral nature of rehabilitation; the need to improve fisheries science and management capabilities and integrated coastal area management advice; rebuilding institutional capabilities for better conservation and management at all levels; rehabilitating the supply chain; addressing gender issues; monitoring and controlling the build-up of fishing capacity; sea safety and vessel construction standards; promoting environmentally responsible aquaculture; and reducing the impact of future tsunamis, or other natural or man-made phenomena with similar potentially devastating consequences.

8. Many Members stressed the need for FAO to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the tsunami on fisheries resources, habitats and the livelihood of coastal communities. FAO was requested to further develop a regional project proposal to conduct such an assessment in collaboration with relevant national institutions, CONSRN partners, and other international agencies, with the view of advising on appropriate levels of fishing capacity and livelihood and habitat rehabilitation.

9. The Committee recognized the increased workload and the disproportionate burden imposed on the Fisheries Department as a result of its work to initiate a rapid response and implement its programme for rehabilitation. It also recognized the need for extrabudgetary funding for a coordination and technical assistance unit to be based at FAO Headquarters and in the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP). It was also suggested that the Secretariat pursue partnership funding with other organizations such as IFIs.

10. The Committee was also informed that a mid-term review of the UN Flash Appeal funding arrangement would be undertaken in the near future. This review could reallocate funding towards sectoral coordination and technical assistance and fill the funding gap for countries such as the Maldives, Seychelles and Somalia.