

SAFETY AT SEA IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

1. This document provides a summary of recent FAO activities that support the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries with regard to safety at sea in the fisheries sector.

2. Fishing is considered to be the world's most dangerous occupation, with more than 24 000 casualties per year¹ (which corresponds to approximately 80 fatalities per 100 000 fishers per year). The issue of the safety in the fisheries sector was raised at the Twenty-ninth session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) where the Committee welcomed the ongoing collaboration between FAO, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in relation to safety at sea. The Committee encouraged the continuation of such collaboration and existing activities. The Committee also agreed on the need to strengthen the conditions of safety at sea in particular with regard to small-scale fisheries. Moreover, the Committee did not support the proposed de-emphasis of the issues related to safety at sea for fishing vessels².

Guidelines for best practices to improve safety at sea in the fisheries and aquaculture sector

3. The Expert Consultation on Best Practices for Safety at Sea in the Fisheries Sector³, noting the recommendation contained in the report of the Twenty-seventh Session of the Committee on Fisheries that "FAO should develop guidelines on best practices for safety at sea", recommended that the FAO Secretariat should proceed with the development of the Guidelines and proposed an outline and general guidance.

4. These Guidelines, which also refer to vessel operations in aquaculture, are primarily intended for the use of maritime, labour and fisheries administrations; industry; fisher associations and representatives. They seek to raise awareness of the breadth of the problem, and to offer guidance on the broad range of issues that must be addressed if the safety issues are to be tackled in an effective and holistic manner. The FAO Secretariat is now in the process of finalizing the Guidelines and is aiming towards having them published in 2012 under the FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries series.

FAO/NIOSH International Study on Fishing Management Regimes and their Impacts on Fishing Safety

5. In 2008, FAO and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the United States of America (NIOSH) collaborated to conduct the *International Study on Fishing Management Regimes and their impacts on Fishing Safety* to provide a first empirical review of the effects of fisheries resource management measures on the safety of fishing operations and to provide guidance to fisheries managers on how to make commercial fishing safer. The study, which was based on 16 diverse case studies sponsored by FAO, concluded that fisheries managers should acknowledge that their decisions have indirect and direct effects on safety and therefore should consider safety as an explicit management objective. It was recommended that fisheries managers and safety professionals should work together to develop shared understanding on issues of mutual concern. The FAO Secretariat is now in the process of finalizing the report of the FAO/NIOSH Study and aims towards its publication in 2012 as a FAO Fisheries Circular.

¹ ILO. 1999. Tripartite Meeting on Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry, Geneva, 13-17 December 1999.

² FAO. 2011. Report of the Twenty-ninth Session of the Committee on Fisheries. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No 973. FAO. Rome. 64p. (paragraphs 12, 59 and 63).

³ FAO. 2008. Report of the Expert Consultation on Best Practices for Safety at Sea in the Fisheries Sector. Rome, 10-13 November 2008. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No 888. FAO. Rome.

The global safety at sea programme for small-scale fisheries in developing countries (GCP/GLO/200/MUL)

6. In 2006, FAO launched a global safety at sea project for small-scale fisheries in developing countries (GCP/GLO/200/MUL). The overall objective of the project was to improve the livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities by decreasing the number accidents at sea and their effects. Regretfully, the project is in the process of being closed due to lack of funding. Nevertheless, the project, which was supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Swedish Maritime Administration (SMA), was successful in many ways.

7. The safety at sea project had global coverage and activities in two regions, West Africa and South Asia. The activities were implemented in close collaboration with the regional fisheries bodies in these two regions. Part of the South Asia activities was carried out through the joint FAO-IMO component “Tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation in the Bay of Bengal with a focus on small fishing vessel safety”.

8. The Safety for fishermen website was developed under the global FAO project and is today a major gateway for quality sea safety material with a focus on fishers and fishing boats. The website, which is hosted by FAO and managed by a selected group of experts, can be consulted at <http://www.safety-for-fishermen.org>.

Cooperation between IMO, ILO and FAO on the subject of fishers’ safety

9. There is an ongoing and long-standing cooperation between IMO, ILO and FAO on the subject of fishermen’s safety. The new safety standard for small fishing vessels titled “FAO/ILO/IMO Safety recommendations for decked fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length and undecked fishing vessels”, was approved by IMO in 2010 and subsequently accepted by ILO and FAO. The final draft text of the document, as approved by IMO, is available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish at <http://www.sigling.is/pages/1266>. The aim is to have the English final version of the Safety recommendations published in 2012, both in hard copy and on the internet.

10. In recent years, the three Organizations completed the development of the *FAO/ILO/IMO Guidelines to assist Competent Authorities in the implementation of Part B of the Code of Safety for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels, the Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels, and the Safety Recommendations for decked fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length and undecked fishing vessels (“Implementation Guidelines”)*. The document, was approved by IMO in 2011, after which it was submitted to ILO and FAO for their consideration, as appropriate, with due regard to timely publication. The final draft of the “Implementation Guidelines”, as approved by IMO, has been made available as a reference document⁴. It is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish and can also be consulted at <http://www.sigling.is/pages/1122>. The Committee is invited to welcome the FAO/ILO/IMO Implementation Guidelines and recommend the early publication of this document⁵.

11. The only internationally binding conventions on the safety of fishing vessels and fishers are the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), 1995⁶, and the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993 relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977. The Torremolinos Convention never entered into force and neither has the Protocol even though 19 years have passed since its adoption. The 2nd Joint FAO/IMO Working Group on IUU fishing and related matters (JWG), held at FAO HQs from 16 to 18 July 2007, recommended that IMO, in consultation with FAO, should explore the possibility of preparation of a draft Agreement relating to the implementation of the Torremolinos Protocol with a view to adoption by an appropriate

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/cofi/cofi2012/64143>

⁵ See paragraph 19 of COFI/2012/3 and the related proposed action by the Committee.

⁶ The STCW-F Convention will enter into force on 29 September 2012.

IMO organ. FAO has been assisting IMO in accelerating the entry into force of the Protocol and this work did recently result in the completion of the development of a new draft Agreement on the implementation of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol, together with associated amendments to the technical requirements of the Protocol. The basis for this work has been the outcome of regional IMO seminars (in Beijing, China; Guayaquil, Ecuador; and Bali, Indonesia), where FAO has provided substantial assistance in their preparation and conduct. It is envisaged that this new binding instrument would be adopted at a diplomatic conference that is scheduled to be held in Cape Town, South Africa, in October 2012.