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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

Ninth Meeting of the Working Group on Fisheries Management

Kuwait, State of Kuwait, 24-26 November 2015

Main outcomes of the eighth session of RECOFI and implications for the WGFM

Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to provide information to the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) on the outcome of the Ninth Session of RECOFI that was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from 12 to 14 May 2015. A number of these outcomes are particularly important to the WGFM, such as the confirmation of the regional priorities identified by the WGFM, noting that none of the priority activities had been undertaken in the previous biennium, and most importantly that RAIS would include the data collected under RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 on minimum data reporting.

The WGFM is invited to:

- consider and comment on the outcomes of the Ninth Session of RECOFI, with particular consideration to the implications for the WGFM work to be implemented during the intersession period.

BACKGROUND

The eighth session of RECOFI was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from 12 to 14 May 2015. The session was attended by 21 delegates from all eight of the RECOFI Member countries (Bahrain, Iran I.R., Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates). Two observers (CITES and WWF) attended the Session.

The Commission reviewed the work carried out in the intersessional period, in particular the work of the WGFM, the WGA and the Commission's administrative and financial reports. The Commission considered select issues of particular relevance for the region, such as the state of the aquaculture, fish stock status reporting, regional minimum data collection and reporting, aquaculture development; review the functioning of the Commission including strengthening its Secretariat and adopting a work programme for the current intersessional period (2015-2016).

MAIN OUTCOMES AND DECISIONS

The main outcomes of the session and decisions taken by the Commission were the following:

- The Commission **took note** of a number of issues related to the national fisheries and aquaculture sectors and **concurred** on the merit to take a regionally concerted approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development based on the shared nature of the marine ecosystem and its fishery resources in the RECOFI region.
- The Commission **acknowledged** the urgent need to formulate coordinated policy measures with the objective of effective fishery management of an increasing number of commercially important species, and to ensure their sustainable exploitation.
- The Commission **commended** the work of the Secretariat to raise its visibility at the international level and for providing the working documents and publications prior to the meetings and sessions and **expressed** its strong appreciation for the support provided by FAO to the Commission and expressed his wish that FAO would be able to maintain this vital technical support in the future.
- The Commission **commended** the work of the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) whilst acknowledging that some planned activities could not be undertaken due to budgetary constraints.
- The Commission **took note** of the main issues affecting the efficient and full functioning of the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS).
- The Commission **adopted** the terms of reference of the RAIS Regional Centre staff and **appreciated** that the State of Kuwait confirmed its availability in providing the services needed to operate and manage the system.
- The Commission **reviewed** the outcomes of the seventh and eighth meetings of the Working Group on Fishery Management (WGFM) and **confirmed** the relevance of the regional priorities identified, including the joint appraisal of shared fishery resources and regional management plans.
- The Commission **acknowledged with concern** that none of the priority activities of the WGFM had been addressed during the intersessional period and member countries should be called on to be more pro-active to support and implement the Commission's decisions and work.
- The Commission **adopted** the draft RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/8/2015/1 on Minimum Reporting on Aquaculture Data and Information, and **agreed** that June 1st would be the annual deadline for submission of the mandatory aquaculture data and information.
- The Commission **was informed** that the data reported under the RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 on minimum data reporting in the RECOFI area now would provide adequate basis for monitoring the status of fishing operations and resources and taking management decisions.

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- The Commission **decided** that RAIS would include the data collected under the aforementioned Recommendation, **acknowledged** the need to establish an agreed data access protocol and develop a standardized and integrated database, and **endorsed** the dissemination of data through RAIS.
 - The Commission **considered** the strengthening of the Secretariat including its location in a RECOFI member country, and **agreed** that the actual decision on the budget and elements involved would need to be discussed and agreed at an *ad hoc* session in 2016.
 - The Commission **noted** the offer of the State of Kuwait to host the RECOFI headquarters and Secretariat, should they be relocated.
 - The Commission **agreed** that due to still enduring budgetary constraints, the activities of the WGFM were reduced to include only the first priority, the regional assessment of kingfish stock.
 - The Commission **reduced** the number of activities of the WGA and to join some of them to be held concurrently with others.
 - The Commission **reconfirmed** that the ninth session of RECOFI would be hosted by the State of Kuwait in May 2017.