

STATEMENT OF THE REGIONAL FISHERY BODY SECRETARIATS NETWORK

TO THE INFORMAL CONSULTATION OF STATES PARTIES TO UNFSA

18 March, 2009

The Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN) is an informal consortium of secretariats representing up to 46 regional fisheries bodies (RFBs)¹ responsible for inland, coastal and oceanic fisheries. It provides a forum for promoting dialogue and consultation. In executing its function the RSN serves to underpin the important role played by RFBs in the conservation and management of fish stocks.

This role has been stressed in international law and instruments and UNGA resolutions. RFBs face similar challenges in their efforts to support collaborative processes that assist their members in their collective and individual endeavours to achieve sustainable resource use, conservation and management. They reflect the consensus policy position of their Contracting Parties. RFB mandates are varied and include one or more of the following:

- Organisations with a management mandate and organizations that simply support cooperative arrangements for information sharing;
- Convention-based, informal agreement or FAO-affiliated bodies;
- Development and provision of scientific advice;
- Highly migratory oceanic pelagic stocks, demersal and pelagic straddling stocks, shared inland and riverine stocks and anadromous stocks;
- Single species organizations, to organizations dealing with a large number of target species and species taken incidentally, to organizations that address entire ecosystems and multiple industry sectors;
- Artisanal, small scale fisheries or high technological, capital intensive, large scale fisheries.

The members of the institutions participating in the RSN include most States with an economic interest in marine or freshwater fisheries; these states account for the vast majority of the annual global harvest of wild-caught fish. Many inter-governmental and non-government organizations participate as observers in the work of these bodies. .

Members of the RSN are undertaking performance review as a mechanism for improving transparency as well as performance. Six fisheries organizations have concluded a performance review and at least six others have commenced or have ongoing review processes. The review processes employed have been similar, largely drawing on the uniform set of criteria drafted at the Review Conference in 2006, but taking into account unique characteristics that may be associated with individual organizations.

¹ The term RFB is used in this document to encompass Regional Fishery Bodies, Regional Fishery Management Organizations and Regional Arrangements

Each review process involved external experts who were either tasked to carry out the assessment or who reviewed the assessment carried out by an internal panel; in one case, the review was performed by stakeholders and NGOs. Members of those organizations that have completed a review are now actively engaged in programmes of work to assess and implement their Review's recommendations and advice.

The most recent meeting of the RSN took place 9-10 March at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. One of the important agenda items was an exchange of ideas and experience of network members in combating IUU fishing. The discussion identified several important factors that should be considered in the design of strategies to combat IUU fishing:

- Port state measures
- Establishment of fishing and fish transport vessel "black lists"
- Catch documentation schemes to enhance traceability of fish products
- The establishment of a global record of fishing vessels
- The capacity of developing countries
- Regional cooperation and information sharing

Issues discussed during RSN biennial meetings include:

- The role of RFBs
- External factors affecting fisheries management
- Global fisheries governance
- IUU fishing
- Overcapacity
- Incorporating ecosystem considerations into management arrangements
- Relations between RFBs and other multi-lateral agencies with shared interests
- Market and trade-related issues
- Small-scale fisheries
- Inland fisheries
- Aquaculture
- Capacity development in developing countries

FAO serves as the secretariat to the RFB Secretariats Network that meets biennially immediately after FAO's Committee on Fisheries meeting. The RSN provides a valuable international resource for disseminating information relating to the Agreement and discussing regional and sub-regional experiences associated with it. More information can be found at <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn>.



Second Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network, Rome, Italy, 9-10 March 2009