

SUMMARY NOTES ON MEETING

Session: High Level Special Event during Thirty-fourth Session of the FAO Conference

Special Event: The Role of Aquaculture in Sustainable Development

Date: Monday, 19 November, 2007, at 14.30 – 17.30 Hours

1. Sixty five FAO Member delegations, of which twenty three headed by Ministers, attended the special event.
2. The Director-General of FAO, Mr. Jacques Diouf, delivered the welcome address. He expressed the importance of the aquaculture sector and future challenges in ensuring its sustainability.
3. Honourable President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr Mahinda Rajapaksa could not attend the meeting in person. A video containing his Keynote Address was shown. While recognising the importance of the sector, and thanking FAO for bringing the subject of aquaculture to a high level of discussion, the Honourable President made several recommendations and remarks towards making aquaculture a high priority sector for global social and economic development as well as within the mandate of FAO.
4. Mr Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director-General, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department introduced the subject by presenting the salient points of the Conference Document (C 2007/Inf/16 – The Role of Aquaculture in Sustainable Development).
5. The meeting was co-chaired by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs of Norway, Madam Helga Pedersen, and the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Land Reclamation of Egypt, Mr Amin Ahmed Mohamed Othman Abbaza.
6. The meeting was opened for discussion and twelve Ministers and 14 delegates made interventions.
7. Members thanked FAO for recognising aquaculture as an important activity and for organising the special event on aquaculture. All interventions emphasised the importance of the sector and explained how national aquaculture policies and plans have been developed and implemented in support of its development.
8. Although negative environmental impacts of aquaculture have been significantly reduced through continued stakeholder participation, the meeting considered continued sustainable aquaculture production with minimal negative social and environmental impact to be imperatively important.
9. The meeting recognised that small-scale aquaculture farmers are facing difficulties in producing for export due to stringent trading requirements. Empowering small-scale farmers to become competitive in global trade is therefore important and urgent, and, perhaps, is a significant corporate social responsibility.

10. Importance of aquaculture as a strong food producing sector, while contribution from capture fisheries is becoming limited, was duly recognised. Better management of the sector is essential to ensure maximising its contribution to social wellbeing, national economies and international trade.
11. In the light of rapid growth of aquaculture in comparison with other food producing sectors, the importance and necessity for creating a sound enabling policy, regulatory, institutional, and economic environment, including strong private sector investments, to ensure sustainability was stressed.
12. The meeting recognised that the governments' commitment to provide appropriate support to aquaculture growth is essential. Such commitment should be expressed in the form of clear articulation of policies, plans, regulatory frameworks and strategies, availability of adequate funding for their implementation, and incentives for investment.
13. It was stressed that there is a clear need for a concerted effort towards promoting aquaculture development in Africa, as a part of the overall regional development programme. FAO's Special Programme for Aquaculture Development in Africa (SPADA) was highlighted as a platform for collaboration.
14. The meeting recognised that the institutional and regional cooperation was important for technology transfer, sharing experiences, improving production and dealing with trans-boundary issues.
15. It was recognised that research, training, capacity building and extension are key areas for sustainable development of aquaculture.
16. The meeting recommended that the issue of climate change and its potential effects on aquaculture should be further studied and researched, in order to enable necessary adaptations based on gained knowledge.
17. The meeting made a strong call for increased allocation of FAO resources to be made available to aquaculture. Strengthened assistance to Members by FAO as well as its normative work were recognised as necessary in order to realize the full potential of aquaculture.