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FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC

SIXTEENTH SESSION

Tenerife, Spain, October 22-24 2002

EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES

1. At the first meeting of FAO and non-FAO Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and Arrangements held in Rome in 1999¹, the meeting recommended, among other things that:

“... there was a need to address extrinsic factors outside the control of fisheries management agencies at subsequent meetings of RFBs, such as pollution and environmental degradation, the introduction of foreign and transgenic species...”.

2. At the second meeting held in Rome in February 2001, the working paper identified the following as possible factors that may impact negatively on RFBs:

- (i) land-based activities and pollution,
- (ii) species introductions and genetically-improved species
- (iii) global climate change and natural disasters
- (iv) trade globalisation, and
- (v) ecosystem-based management of fisheries.

3. The meeting recognised that not all the factors were present or equally important to all RFBs. It, therefore, recommended that each RFB review these factors and determine which were most relevant in its area of coverage. For its third meeting scheduled for 3rd and 4th March 2003, it agreed to include “**external factors affecting the management of fisheries**” in the agenda.

4. In the CEEAF Region, the more important factors that impact on fisheries management are land-based activities and pollution; global climate change and natural disasters; trade globalisation and the application of ecosystem approach to fisheries. Information relevant to the CEEAF region is described below:

Land-based Activities and Pollution

5. Five major land-based activities were likely to have adverse impact on nearshore waters in the CEEAF region; flood control and diversion of rivers, agricultural pesticides, fertilizers (including intensive livestock activities), overgrazing leading to soil erosion, and agro-industry.

6. The coastal areas of the CEEAF region are heavily populated and used. Land-based activities include agriculture, forestry, tourism, urban and rural development, and other activities that contribute in varying quantities. Pesticide residues come mainly from coastal outfalls, and are important where the countries have industrial-type plantations in the coastal regions. Pollution from heavy metal-type contaminants is relatively unimportant in the region.

7. Problems posed by debris have increased dramatically in the region. No country in the CEEAF region has adequate disposal facilities for plastics. The result is that, increasingly, un-degraded plastic containers, used instead of the traditional degradable plant materials, are present in the marine environment and threaten fisheries as they are mistakenly ingested by the larger fishes.

¹ Report of the Meeting of FAO and non-FAO Regional Fishery Bodies or Arrangements; *FAO Fisheries Report no. 597*, FIPL/R 597

8. Nutrient load from land-based activities (sewage, fertiliser residues, and phosphates from detergents) has not reached levels that can cause phytoplankton blooms in the CECAF area waters. More data need to be obtained on nutrient load to the marine environment.

9. Oil pollution problems are related to oil spills and incidents of steady introduction of oil into the environment from tanker and other ocean vessel discharges at sea. The effect of these and other related marine activities on fisheries are not fully known but it is recommended that the potential for harm to fisheries be reviewed as often as practicable.

Global climate change and natural disasters

10. The ocean affects the rate of climate change and is in turn affected by it as well. Global warming due to the greenhouse effect could alter inputs of salt water, fresh water, oxygen, nutrients and pollutants with potentially large consequences for marine ecosystems and species. Changes in currents would also influence the recruitment of organisms in coastal and offshore waters. There is also the possibility that increased carbon sequestration on land could affect productivity in the oceans, as high levels of carbon dioxide could lead to possible increases in photosynthesis and perhaps increased production.

11. Fisheries and coastal aquaculture are known to suffer greatly from storms and high waves. Apart from the human and economic dimension of such disasters, habitats are affected and that may further exacerbate environmental stress, leading to a reduction of stock size and/or a shift in distribution. Unfortunately, the long-term effects of natural disasters may be unknown, particularly with regards to nearshore population recruitment, and precautionary management controls are not likely to be popular.

Trade Globalisation

12. As noted, this is an issue not yet addressed by many RFBs. In the CECAF region, there is a need to ensure that by-catches of the different fisheries (e.g. trawling for shrimps) are fully exploited. This may create markets for export of exotic items such as shark products. Implementing the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries would ensure a better utilisation of marine by-catch for human nutritional objectives. Whether trade globalisation has any impact on management of fisheries depends on the fisheries and the value placed on them. The major concern for exports would be to ensure that products meet the standards for food importation in the different countries (e.g. Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points –HACCP – particularly for the European Union, Japan and the United States of America).

Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries

13. The concept of ecosystem-based management of fisheries is not fully developed in the areas delineated by CECAF. For example, the extent to which fisheries impact on the major Canary Current and Gulf of Guinea Large Marine Ecosystems is yet to be determined. However, the problem posed by the lack of the

necessary facilities in many of the countries of the region to conduct effective monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) of their waters would need to be addressed. This is because of the over-fishing of stocks that have resulted from uncontrolled access to fishing grounds by foreign-based fishing companies. RFBS need to include ecosystem objectives in parallel with their current conservation objectives of fisheries management.

Suggested Action by the Committee

14. The following information is provided to assist the Committee provide inputs on addressing external factors in the CECAF area to the Third Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies to be held at FAO Headquarters, Rome on 3rd and 4th March 2003.