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COMMITTEE FOR INLAND FISHERIES OF AFRICA

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EMERGING ISSUES IN INLAND CAPTURE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE OF RELEVANCE TO THE CIFA REGION

Summary

The strengthening of **fisheries governance** in regional fishery bodies or arrangements such as the Committee for Inland Fisheries of Africa (CIFA) is rapidly emerging as a necessity for the sustainability of global fisheries resources. Creating and maintaining a **supportive/enabling environment** that comprises *inter alia* economic, legal, social and physical components and ensure fair access to resources, mechanisms for conflict resolution and access to information, credit and market is now considered essential for sustainable growth of inland capture fisheries and aquaculture. Linked to the provision of a suitable climate, the need to enhance the contribution of fisheries to the reduction of food insecurity and poverty in fishing communities particularly by using **sustainable livelihoods approaches** is high in the international agenda of many agencies and organizations. The increasingly serious and universal phenomenon of **illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing** that undermines national and regional efforts to conserve and manage fish stocks also has negative effects on fishing community livelihoods. **Subsidies in fisheries** can be a contributory factor to over-investment in the sector as well as a cause for distortion in international fish trade. There is strong interest among member countries to better understand whether and how subsidies affect fisheries sustainability and fish trade. Lastly there is growing recognition for **objective and reliable fishery status and trends reporting** which could be enhanced by the development of an International Plan of Action on Status and Trends Reporting on Fisheries as a means of enhancing advice of the most up-to-date and accurate view of the prospects of maintaining or enhancing fish production. These are among the issues that will be discussed at the Twenty-fourth Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries in February 2001.

The Committee is invited to review and discuss these issues in the context of the region covered by the Committee for Inland Fisheries of Africa.

INTRODUCTION

1. In complying with the mandate given by the FAO Conference, the FAO Fisheries Department is promoting and coordinating the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The mandate also extends to the addressing of several related issues of international significance that have emerged in world capture fisheries and aquaculture and that concern such implementation. The issues include regional fishery governance, creating and maintaining an enabling environment for fisheries and aquaculture development and management, improving livelihoods in fishing communities, illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, subsidies in fisheries and objective and reliable fishery status and trends reporting. These issues are interrelated to some degree and some of them will be considered at the FAO Committee on Fisheries at its Twenty-fourth Session in February 2001.

I. REGIONAL FISHERIES GOVERNANCE

2. The need for regional cooperation among States for the conservation and management of fish stocks has been formally recognized at least since 1902, when cooperative scientific research commenced with the establishment of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). However, since that first initial step, and particularly since the Second World War, both national and international efforts to deal with stock management have intensified, as fish production has increased dramatically due largely to advances in fish harvesting technology. Nonetheless, these management efforts have very often not yielded optimal results, and global reviews by FAO of the current state of fish stocks indicate that in most cases present systems of fisheries governance¹ have failed to ensure resource conservation, economic efficiency and optimal human benefits.

3. In recent years, an increased international focus on governance in regional fishery bodies (RFBs) or arrangements has emerged consequent to the emphasis placed by the international community on the sustainable use of resources, transparency and accountability of institutions managing resources. The need for addressing and improving fisheries governance has also contributed to a more general trend in the shift in the role of government². Presently, when the role of government is changing and stakeholders are assuming greater participation in decision-making, the challenge for States is how to promote and facilitate fisheries governance that is effective in terms of conservation and

¹ Fisheries Governance is defined here as "a continuing process through which governments, institutions and stakeholders of the fishery sector-- administrators, politicians, fishers, environmental and other interested organizations-- elaborate, adopt, and implement appropriate policies, plans and management strategies to ensure resources are utilized in a sustainable manner. It could be at the global, regional, sub-regional, national or local levels. In the process conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative actions may be taken".

² Contributing to these shifts are the following: (i) the recognition that the role of civil society and the market is changing; (ii) greater accountability is being demanded by civil society concerning public actions generally and particularly with respect to natural resource utilization; (iii) government is not the only crucial actor in addressing complex societal issues; (iv) centralized command and control interventions of governments are not always effective; (v) government action can be made more effective in a multi-actor network environment in which different steering mechanisms (government, civil society, market) interact for better negotiation and communication, striking a better balance than is currently the case; and (vi) actors at both the international and national levels interact.

economic performance, equitable for both current and future generations, and broadly accepted to all stakeholders. The latter includes those who have a direct and real interest in the fisheries sector and those that do not but which, nonetheless, consider that they have a right to participate in decisions concerning what they consider a heritage of humankind. It is this situation, highly summarized, that challenges States as national resource custodians, and stakeholders in arriving at arrangements designed to strengthen fisheries governance that will ensure the long-term sustainable exploitation of stocks. This implies that assignment of enforceable and explicit rights be established.

4. Central to the process of governance under a decentralized management approach is the notion that stakeholders with a real interest in a fishery should have the opportunity to participate transparently in the formulation and implementation of fisheries management decisions. Furthermore, this approach to governance implies, *inter alia*, that stakeholders should:

- act responsibly as co-managers in the fishery, being accountable for their actions and/or inaction with respect to management;
- ensure that fisheries are exploited in a long-term sustainable manner and that decisions concerning exploitation are flexible and adaptable, capable of taking account of circumstances that can change rapidly;
- take a holistic view of fisheries management and allocate fishing opportunities that will promote orderly, rational and efficient behaviour and outcomes;
- apply the precautionary approach in decision-making in situations where information is incomplete or lacking; and
- ensure that the real costs associated with fishing and fisheries are allocated and that these costs are ultimately reflected in the price of fish.

5. Where regional fishery bodies exist, States have, in principle, delegated some of their responsibilities to such bodies. Regional fisheries governance therefore focuses on international, cooperative management of shared resources mostly in international water bodies. The foundation and framework for regional governance is specified in global instruments, such as the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. At the same time, it must be recognized that sound regional governance depends on effective input from members of regional bodies/arrangements. This issue concerns the political willingness of States to participate openly and cooperatively for the good governance of stocks subject to management, and the national capacity to meet commitments and obligations technically and financially.

6. While most RFBs or arrangements that have fisheries management mandates³ have failed to deter overfishing (and in some cases to prevent the collapse of stocks within their areas of competence), and to deter serious international disputes, some bodies have none-the-less, made important contributions to fisheries governance by:

³ CIFA performs only advisory functions.

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- promoting the development of national research and management capacity;
 - improving and strengthening data collection, handling and dissemination; and
 - adopting management measures and resolutions relating to such issues as effort reduction, gear type, minimum sizes, mesh sizes, etc.

7. However, in some regional fishery bodies governance has continued to languish for a variety of reasons, including:

- a failure by some States to accept and implement international instruments central to enhanced fisheries governance;
- a lack of willingness by some States to delegate sufficient decision-making powers and responsibility to the regional bodies;
- members of organizations and arrangements not providing complete and accurate data and information concerning their fishing operations, as required, in a timely manner, and in some cases, not reporting catches at all;
- outputs of some RFBs not being operational because of the absence of an appropriate link between the scientific and technical experts on the one hand, and the decision/policies-makers and those responsible for implementing decisions/policies, on the other hand;
- the lack of enforcement of management measures both at the national and regional levels, including the absence or lack of MCS mechanisms to enforce management decisions;
- problems arising from many of the regulated stocks being harvested in mixed fisheries where the overall fishing capacity is neither limited or controlled;
- inadequate human and financial resources to enable the bodies or arrangements to carry out their mandates satisfactorily; and
- the low frequency of meetings of bodies or arrangements which implies that action may not be taken as urgently as may be desired.

8. Regional fishery bodies/arrangements have the potential to be vehicles for sound fisheries governance provided that they have, among other things, realistic mandates, the required political backing, and the financial and human capacity to function as they are intended. A High Level Panel of External Experts in Fisheries, which met at FAO headquarters in January 1998, stressed the relevance of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries for governance. The participants concluded that the Code and its guidelines were technically credible to fisheries experts and readily understood by non-experts and, therefore, constitute an important reference for improved fisheries governance⁴.

9. The First Meeting of FAO and non-FAO regional fishery bodies/arrangements that was held in Rome in February 1999 concluded that RFBs should continue to review

⁴ Report of the High Level Panel of External Experts in Fisheries, 1999 FAO, Rome (mimeo) 45p.

and adapt/modify, where appropriate, their mandates, structures and strategies in order to play their increasingly important roles in the process of achieving sustainable fisheries development and to discharge their responsibilities in implementing the recent series of international instruments concerned with fisheries⁵.

10. The FAO Fisheries Department is reviewing and reforming/restructuring FAO RFBs with increased attention to their effective governance. The Department has also undertaken an analysis of constraints to effective regional fisheries governance, actions taken by RFBs to address these constraints and priority activities for strengthened efficiency of regional fishery bodies⁶.

11. The Committee is invited to identify and discuss mechanisms to improve its working arrangements to enable it to contribute to good fisheries governance at national, bilateral and sub-regional levels.

II. CREATING AND MAINTAINING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

12. Few countries have appropriate legal frameworks and policies for inland capture fisheries and aquaculture. Often comprehensive policies and associated legal frameworks have been overlooked because development has been seen mainly in technical terms and support has been often largely focused on technical aspects of production. Also policy-makers have often treated these two sectors (inland capture fisheries and aquaculture) in isolation from other sectors, thus ignoring important linkages, including externalities. The need to incorporate political, economic, social, environmental and legal aspects has been neglected, usually with negative consequences for the sector. The growing competition for resources, the emphasis on enhancing the contribution of fisheries for the reduction of food insecurity and rural poverty as well as the continuing rapid growth of aquaculture in some countries have focused attention on the need for more holistic policy measures and regulatory frameworks.

13. Governments need to create and maintain suitable climate, that is a supportive/enabling environment for sustainable growth of inland capture fisheries and aquaculture. Such an environment comprises economic, legal, social and physical components and should ensure, *inter alia*, fair access to resources, mechanisms for conflict resolution and access to information, credit and markets. For this to be effective there should be functioning channels of communication between institutions and representatives of all possible stakeholders of the sector.

14. In addition, there is a high priority need to put the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries into operation, to clarify how sustainability choices might work in practice, to incorporate principles of the Code in aquaculture development

⁵ Report of the Meeting of FAO and non-FAO Regional Fishery Bodies or Arrangements, para. 41.

⁶ Swan, J. (2000) Regional Fishery Bodies and Governance: Issues, Actions and Future Directions, FAO Fisheries Circular 959, 44p.

policies and plans and in management plans for inland capture fisheries and to implement the Code, taking into account the specificities of a country, sub-region or region.

15. Existing administrative and legal framework for the sectors may need to be reviewed and adjusted to address the specific characteristics and needs of the sectors, but enacting comprehensive regulatory frameworks is often legally and institutionally complex. As an option, consideration might be given to include the enactment of regulations under existing legislation and voluntary approaches, such as guidelines and codes of practice.

16. In many countries, the interface between the land and the water body where inland capture fisheries or aquaculture is practiced is subjected to multiple uses and many different types of economic activities, such as industrial development, tourism, housing and settlements, forestry and farming. Some of these activities also have adverse side effects, such as deforestation, effluent discharge and pollution, soil and coastal/basin area erosion. In addition to these side effects there is usually competition for space and resources resulting sometimes in very serious conflicts. To minimize potential conflicts, careful integrated area planning, involving as much as possible all users and actors interested in the sector is required. Governments should therefore create public awareness about the need for integrated area management, taking into account economic, social and cultural factors. International and regional agencies and organizations need to play the role of catalysts and facilitators in the process.

17. There is also an associated need to strengthen institutional capacity to manage the sector and to expand the knowledge base in order to enable sustainable development policies for aquaculture and inland fisheries resources. As knowledge of the sector is often scarce and fragmentary, there is a growing and urgent need to create new knowledge and to synthesize information from a broad spectrum of disciplines so that decisions can be based on a much broader perspective and understanding. Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) methods have opened up new avenues to involve users in the diagnosis, planning, execution and evaluation of their activities, thus improving the knowledge base as well as the environment in which activities are undertaken. In addition, the techniques, if well used, provide users access to information on a wide range of subjects including credits and markets. These concepts have been applied in the management of onshore fisheries infrastructures in the marine capture fisheries of the Gambia and Guinea, for the development of co-management initiatives in Lake Nokoue in Benin and Aby Lagoon in Cote d'Ivoire, for the development of a fisheries plan in Togo, etc.

18. The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is beginning to have a worldwide influence on the development of an enabling environment for sustainable aquaculture and, to a lesser extent, inland fisheries management. Member countries of CIFA may wish to work towards:

- increased participation of stakeholders in the decision-making processes about coastal/basin area uses;

- increased identification and protection of appropriate traditional and customary rights of users;
- enacting measures to protect artisanal fisheries and the development of environmentally sound aquaculture;
- strengthening of national technical and institutional capacities;,,
- strengthening of bilateral and regional consultation and cooperation; and
- improved policy, legal and institutional frameworks for inland capture fisheries, aquaculture and coastal/basin resource management that take account of the fragility of ecosystems.

III. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN FISHING COMMUNITIES

19. Sustainable Livelihoods⁷ Approach⁸ (SLA) is a way of thinking about objectives, scope and priorities for development. It does not have any particular sectoral focus, but can be used in any sector and it provides a link between sectors. The SLA is mainly concerned with poor and vulnerable people, such as many of the groups who depend on artisanal fisheries. The SLA has been in existence, and has been evolving since the 1980s. It is used by a number of development agencies but has become important in recent years as the international community is exploring mechanisms that would facilitate the realization of two important goals to:

- i) reduce the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty by half by the year 2015; and
- ii) eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015.

20. The poverty eradication strategy uses the SLA, because the approach is based around an understanding of poor people, their assets, vulnerabilities, and their preferred outcomes and livelihoods strategies. The external environment that affects them includes vulnerabilities and the institutional environment, both in terms of organizations, laws and customs. A holistic approach is taken to assets, which include natural, human, financial, physical and social resources. If a real difference is to be made in combating poverty, this approach suggests that it is critical that poor people's own preferred outcomes are recognized by support institutions, and that livelihood strategies are developed together to address these.

21. In terms of food security, the following are core objectives of the SLA:

⁷ The word "livelihoods" is used here to mean the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living.

⁸ Ways of understanding the needs of the poor and setting the objectives for development. Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches build on a wide range of participatory and holistic methods which have been developed by field practitioners over many years. SLAs offer a new way of bringing these methods together.

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- more secure access to, and better management of, natural resources;
 - improved access to high quality education, information, technologies and training and better nutrition and health;
 - a more supportive and cohesive social environment;
 - better access to basic and facilitating infrastructure;
 - more secure access to financial resources; and
 - a policy and institutional environment that supports multiple livelihoods strategies and promotes equitable access to competitive markets for all.

22. The SLA is a flexible approach, but its principles are an essential element of the approach that should not be compromised. They are the guidelines on how the approach should be implemented. The main principles are briefly explained below.

- People, rather than the resource, are considered as the focus. Sustainable resource-use is one way of achieving benefits for the people involved in the sector. The SLA defines success in the terms of the achievements of benefits which the artisanal fishworkers define for themselves.
- It recognizes the holistic nature of people's lives, their use of multiple livelihood strategies, and so the need for holistic responses, rather than organization-driven sectoral approaches
- It is responsive and participatory and poor and vulnerable people themselves are the key players in the development process. External operators are there to facilitate, listen and to respond.
- It builds on positives – a respectful approach to rural people as people with strengths and opportunities and not just needs.
- It recognizes the differences within rural communities, and implies the need to do livelihoods analysis on different groups so that responses can be appropriate.
- The SLA recognizes the dynamic nature of the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable, it is flexible and responds to change
- It implies a partnership approach between State, community and private sector, including NGOs - the role of the state as facilitator, animator, or provider.
- It works at all levels in fishing communities and groups, at district government, central government, regionally and globally. Most important, it works at the linkages between levels.
- It recognizes the importance of transforming institutional structures and processes which determine access and their value and so the attractiveness of livelihood strategies.
- And so implies the need for bottom-up participatory work as well as top-down strategic work.

23. Using the principles of the SLA as a framework and relating the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to that indicates great compatibility between SLA and the Code. Both are people centred, dynamic and holistic ways of thinking, both advocate responsive and participatory processes, both work at all levels and both emphasize partnership and sustainability. The level of conflict between the two sets of principles is minimal. It is rather that they do not fully cover the same areas to the same extent and with the same emphasis.

24. A comparison of the two approaches is shown below:

<i>A COMPARISON OF THE SLA AND THE CODE</i>		
	SLA	CCRF
Goal	Positive outcomes for poor and vulnerable fishworkers. More focussed on the artisanal workers.	Positive outcomes for all workers in the sector. More inclusive, less specific.
Immediate objectives	Wider more generalized aims which are inclusive of sectoral objectives.	Mainly focussed on sectoral issues.
Principles	Wider in perspective. More concerned with empowerment aspects.	Narrower in perspective. More concerned with functional aspects.
Strategies	More bottom-up and non-specific. To be led by the artisanal fishworkers. More an approach than a tool.	More top-down and prescriptive. To be largely led by the State. More a tool than an approach.
Entry points	Mainly transforming structures and processes, and assets. Less so in the vulnerability context and livelihood strategies	Mainly transforming structures and processes

25. The SLA offers an approach that can facilitate the application of the Code in ways that support the artisanal fishworkers to achieve their sustainable livelihoods. Likewise the Code can facilitate the application of the SLA by providing normative guidance of specific sectoral issues. Combining the two approaches with the Code as a tool to provide guidance for the implementation of the SLA has the benefit of offering a wider base of support to the artisanal fishworkers whilst not compromising wider conservation, management and sustainable issues. The SLA is inclusive of the elements of the Code which relate to the livelihoods of artisanal fishworkers but goes beyond it. Nothing in the SLA conflicts with the Code, but the application of the Code, outside of the SLA, could be less supportive of the livelihoods of artisanal fishworkers.

26. Harmonization of the two approaches is thus best achieved by the Code being a tool for guiding the implementation of the SLA in specific instances concerned with transforming structures and processes related to the sustainable use of fisheries and aquatic resources. Generally therefore, it will mainly operate through the entry point of improving structures and processes. This in turn will allow those structures and processes to indirectly provide support to avoid or mitigate the adverse effects of the external

environment, support asset development and provide support to strengthen and diversify livelihoods⁹.

27. These ideas are presently being implemented in the framework of a regional project that covers 25 countries in West Africa¹⁰. The Programme seeks to reduce poverty in coastal and inland communities by improving the livelihoods of people dependent on fisheries and aquatic resources through the application of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The project is financed by the Government of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland acting through the Department for International Development (DFID) and is executed by the FAO Fisheries Department.

28. The Committee is invited to exchange experiences on improving livelihoods in fishing communities in the framework of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

IV. ILLEGAL, UNREGULATED AND UNREPORTED FISHING

29. Illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing is not a new phenomenon. It has been a source of concern for resource custodians since the earliest times when fishing communities first started to implement measures to conserve fish stocks. IUU fishing is found in all capture fisheries (small-scale and industrial), irrespective of their location (marine and inland, in zones of national jurisdiction and on the high seas), species targeted, fishing gear employed or intensity of exploitation.

30. In any form, IUU fishing serves to undermine national and regional efforts to conserve and manage fish stocks. In cases where stocks are seriously depleted, IUU fishing will inhibit, if not prevent, the re-building of those stocks. Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing also leads to increased uncertainty in making responsible fisheries management decisions and in assessing the status of fish stocks.

31. IUU fishing was raised as an issue at the Twenty-third Session of COFI in February 1999 on the basis of a paper presented by Australia. The paper urged that an International Plan of Action (IPOA) to combat IUU fishing be developed. The issue was considered further by the FAO Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, held in Rome, on 10 and 11 March 1999. The Ministers and their representatives issued a declaration. In this, they declared *inter alia*, that they will develop a global plan of action to deal effectively with all forms of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, through coordinated efforts by States, FAO, regional fishery management bodies, and other relevant international agencies. The Ministers also

⁹ Livelihoods are sustainable when they are resilient in the face of external shocks and stresses, are not dependent upon external support, maintain the long-term productivity of natural resources, and do not undermine the livelihoods of, or compromise the livelihood options open to, others.

¹⁰ Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d' Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

requested that FAO coordinate its activities on IUU fishing with the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

32. Subsequently, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in April 1999 considered IUU fishing and supported the decision of the Ministers at their FAO meeting to give priority to the development of an IPOA. At the same time, CSD also encouraged FAO to work with IMO in order to address IUU fishing. FAO also informed the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Ocean Affairs of work being undertaken on IUU fishing when the Informal Consultative Process met in New York from 30 May to 2 June 2000.

33. In response to the request made by the FAO Ministerial Meeting, FAO submitted a paper to the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of the IMO at its May 1999 session. This paper, while bringing the IUU fishing issue to the attention of IMO members, achieved very little. However, subsequent follow-up action by Australia, Canada and United States, as well as FAO at the Sub-Committee on Flag State Implementation (FSI) at its Eighth Session in January 2000 resulted in the recommendation that a joint FAO/IMO *ad hoc* Working Group be established. The matter was referred to parent Committees, the Marine Environment Protection Committee and MSC which endorsed the recommendation. Consequently, the Joint FAO/IMO *ad hoc* Working Group was established. Action to this end, in cooperation with a number of countries, is being taken.

34. Outside the UN System, IUU fishing is also being addressed in a number of international fora such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Fisheries Working Group in Japan in July 1999 and the International Conference on Monitoring Control and Surveillance, Santiago, Chile in January 2000. The following regional fishery management bodies are working on IUU fishing: the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR); the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT); the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC); the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT); the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO); and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). Other fishery bodies are also in the process of addressing the issue.

35. There is a high degree of agreement that the following are some of the major issues that need to be addressed in order to combat IUU fishing:

- States should take action nationally in relation to their fisheries and related legislation.
- International fisheries instruments should be brought into force as a matter of priority, and States should focus more intensely on implementing the Code of Conduct and the recently concluded IPOAs, and in particular the IPOA on the management of fishing capacity¹¹.

¹¹ At its Twenty-third Session the FAO Committee on Fisheries adopted the IPOA on the Management of Fishing Capacity. The plan is voluntary—countries that decide to implement it would first assess the capacity of their fishing fleet and then develop plans to manage the capacity in a sustainable way. The declaration issued by the Ministerial

- Flag States should enhance control over the operations of their fishing vessels as the crux of the problem lies in the lack of control over fishing vessels.
- Port States measures should be invoked.
- Regional fisheries management organizations/arrangements should be strengthened.
- Fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) should be enhanced.

36. The outcome of the preliminary work undertaken by the FAO Fisheries Department¹² was reviewed by an Expert Consultation on IUU fishing in Sydney, from 15 to 19 May 2000. The Expert Consultation was hosted by Australia in collaboration with FAO. The meeting elaborated a preliminary draft IPOA that will be considered by a Technical Consultation on IUU fishing at FAO Headquarters, 2-6 October 2000. At this stage it is envisaged that the IPOA from the Technical Consultation will be submitted to the Twenty-fourth Session of COFI in February 2001 for consideration and adoption.

37. Bearing in mind that information is needed to make the right decisions in planning, development and management of inland capture fisheries and aquaculture, and also that the required information and data should as much as possible be accurate and provided on a timely basis, the Committee is invited to discuss the incidence of IUU fishing in the region and suggest how this phenomenon could be addressed at sub-regional, bilateral and national levels.

V. SUBSIDIES IN FISHERIES

38. Subsidies in fisheries could be one of the contributing factors to overinvestment in fisheries as well as a cause for distortion in international trade. There is a need to better understand whether and how subsidies affect fisheries sustainability and fish trade. FAO has been called upon both by the FAO Sub-Committee on Fish Trade¹³ and the International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity¹⁴ to compile and disseminate information on fishery subsidies at the global level, as a basis for further analysis aimed at identifying factors contributing to overcapacity.

Meeting on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Rome, 10-11 March 1999) also calls upon all concerned to collaborate for an effective and integrated monitoring of fisheries management.

¹² The Government of Australia seconded an expert to work in the Fisheries Department for 6 months with the main task to assist in analysing data obtained and prepared the expert consultation.

¹³ Report of the Sixth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, para. 17.

¹⁴ "When developing their national plans for the management of fishing capacity, States should assess the possible impact of all factors, including subsidies, contributing to overcapacity and unsustainable management of their fisheries, distinguishing between factors, including subsidies, which contribute to overcapacity and unsustainability and those which produce a positive effect or are neutral". (Paragraph 25- International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity).

39. In order to fulfil the mandate of FAO member countries to address the fishery subsidy issue in relation to fish trade and fishery resource sustainability FAO will prepare a thorough and exhaustive review of the forms of subsidies.

40. An Expert Consultation will be convoked to review all relevant information on the issue. The Expert Consultation is scheduled to take place in Rome (FAO Headquarters) from 28 November to 1 December 2000. Cooperation with other relevant inter-governmental organizations, especially, the World Trade Organization (WTO), will be sought.

41. The Consultation will contribute technical inputs to the preparation of a report to be submitted to the Twenty-fourth Session of COFI to be held from 26 February to 2 March 2000, for consideration and guidance on further work.

42. The Committee is requested to take note of these developments.

VI. OBJECTIVE AND RELIABLE FISHERY STATUS AND TRENDS REPORTING

43. Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture require informed decisions and actions at all levels, from policy makers to individual fishers, as well as environmentalists that are increasingly concerned about fisheries, consumers and the public. Decision-making based on the best scientific evidence requires reliable, relevant and timely information. There are increasing demands for objective, unbiased, peer reviewed and transparent information on the status and trends of fisheries and fishery resources as a basis for policy making and fisheries management. The driving forces behind such demands include the increasing recognition that overfishing is pervasive and effective management is often lacking, and the increasing adoption of the precautionary approach to fisheries management as embodied in the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, as well as eco-labelling issues and concerns about rare or endangered species and the environment.

44. Status and trends reporting has become an issue because a large amount of misinformation is being propagated by special interest groups. A study by the University of Washington¹⁵ evaluated the validity of 14 statements commonly made about the state of marine fishery resources and found that 10 of these were unsupportable or questionable, whereas only four were supportable. (Most of the supportable ones and few of the unsupportable ones were attributed to FAO). Irrespective of whether such inaccurate information is generated deliberately to promote a cause or inadvertently through ignorance, it can have a major impact on public opinion and policy making which may not be in the best interests of both sustainable use of fishery resources and conservation of aquatic ecosystems.

¹⁵ Alverson, D.L. and K. Dunlop. 1998. Status of World Marine Fish Stocks. Fisheries Research Institute, University of Washington. FRI-UW-9814. 29 pp.

45. FAO is addressing this issue by proposing the improvement of fishery status and trends reporting using a multifaceted approach as outlined by the FAO Advisory Committee on Fisheries Research (ACFR). ACFR has proposed that this could be facilitated by an International Plan of Action (IPOA) on Fishery Status and Trends Reporting which States would adopt through COFI. As envisaged, the IPOA would be a voluntary instrument which would specify actions and procedures to be undertaken by States, both individually and through regional fishery organizations or arrangements, and by FAO to improve fishery status and trends reporting. The IPOA could be built around the following principles:

- **Sustainability and security.** States should demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development of fishery resources and fisheries by providing the best information possible on the status and trends of fisheries within their jurisdictions and fisheries in other areas in which they participate.
- **Best scientific evidence.** States should seek to collect, compile and disseminate the best scientific evidence available on the nature and conduct of fisheries, including environmental and socio-economic information, in conformity with UNCLOS.
- **Participation and cooperation.** States should adopt mechanisms for inclusion of all relevant participants in the preparation, analysis and presentation of fishery information, including fishers, government and non-governmental organizations. States should cooperate with other States in developing and maintaining such fishery information either directly, or through regional fisheries organizations or arrangements, as appropriate.
- **Objectivity and transparency.** States should individually, and through regional fishery organizations and FAO, prepare and disseminate fishery information in an objective manner, taking into account the best scientific evidence available (including uncertainty), the precautionary approach and national and international obligations related to it, and applying quality criteria and quality assurance protocols. The IPOA should be implemented in a transparent manner in conformity with Article 6.13 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

46. A mechanism to collate and exchange fishery information including status and trends reports is under development and it could serve as the key vehicle for implementation of the IPOA. A major effort is being directed by FAO towards the development of a global information system for fisheries (FIGIS) which will facilitate exchange of fishery information on a wide variety of information domains such as fishery statistics, exploited species, fishery resources and stocks, the fisheries themselves, fishing methods, fishing fleets, fish processing and food safety, fish marketing and trade, species introductions, and fish diseases, to name but a few. The information architecture will be designed so that the complexity of the whole system will be presented in a simplified way, through logical navigation channels. FIGIS will not be just a dissemination system, but also a means for partners to contribute information. The information will be exchanged according to arrangements specified in partnership agreements involving FAO, regional fishery organizations and national centres of excellence, and using agreed protocols. Thus, the main novelty will be the more systematic and transparent assembly and synthesis of information from national to regional, and then to global scales, with users having the possibility of accessing a much more comprehensive range of

information. Another main focus and beneficiary of this approach will be the synthesis on the global state of marine fishery resources.

47. FAO has a major responsibility to support capacity-building in developing countries to allow users to access, utilize and contribute to fisheries information and knowledge systems including FIGIS. For example, the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA) bibliographic database will be a satellite system of FIGIS and a major effort is being made to provide access to ASFA in low-income food-deficit countries and to provide more input to the database from those countries. Communication between FIGIS and the FAO regional information systems like those for Mediterranean capture fisheries and aquaculture, or a GIS project for the West African coast, will be given precedence during the early phases of the FIGIS initiative. Likewise, software for the collection and processing of fishery statistics has been implemented in many developing countries to improve the quality of national statistics and facilitate exchange at regional and global levels.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE

48. The Committee is invited to review these issues in the context of the CIFA region. In particular, the Committee may wish to identify mechanisms to improve fisheries governance and reporting on the fisheries sector, to contribute to the creation of supportive climates for aquaculture development and the management of inland fisheries and the enhancement of livelihoods in fishing communities. Furthermore, the Committee may wish to exchange experiences on the effects of subsidies in the fisheries sector of the region and formulate recommendations to member countries on any of the issues.