



## **REBYC**

**Reduction of Environmental Impact from Tropical Shrimp Trawling through the introduction of Bycatch Reduction Technologies and Change of Management**

<http://www.fao.org/fi/gefshrimp.htm>

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# **Nigeria**

**Meeting on the Harmonization of Laws in the Gulf of Guinea States**

**20 – 25 March 2007**

**Lagos, Nigeria**

## **Additional Meeting Information**

**Coordinated by:**

**The Nigerian Federal Department of Fisheries &  
Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research**

Annex 1

**MEETING OF THE SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION IN MARINE FISHERIES MONITORING,  
CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE IN THE SOUTHERN GULF OF GUINEA ON  
THE HARMONISATION OF FISHERIES LAWS AND REGULATIONS OF THE REGION  
HELD AT THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE FOR OCEANOGRAPHY AND MARINE RESEARCH,  
VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS, NIGERIA FROM 22 – 23 MARCH, 2007.**

**22/03/2007 ATTENDANCE**

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**MEETING OF THE SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION IN MARINE FISHERIES MONITORING,  
CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE IN THE SOUTHERN GULF OF GUINEA ON  
THE HARMONISATION OF FISHERIES LAWS AND REGULATIONS OF THE REGION  
HELD AT THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE FOR OCEANOGRAPHY AND MARINE RESEARCH,  
VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS, NIGERIA FROM 22 – 23 MARCH, 2007.**

**ATTENDANCE AT THE TECHNICAL SESSIONS**

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**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> MEETING OF THE  
SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION IN MARINE FISHERIES  
MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE IN THE SOUTHERN  
GULF OF GUINEA ON THE HARMONISATION OF FISHERIES LAWS  
AND REGULATIONS OF THE REGION HELD IN LAGOS NIGERIA  
FROM 22 – 23 MARCH, 2007.**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting on the Harmonization of Fisheries Laws and Regulations within the Southern Gulf of Guinea States was held from the 22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007 at the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria.

The purpose of the meeting was to establish the framework for the establishment and harmonization of marine fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) procedures and enforcement processes within the Southern Gulf of Guinea, as such eliminate all forms of unwholesome fishing practices including Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing.

The Meeting was declared open by the Honourable Minister of state for Agriculture and Water Resources, Otunba Bamidele F. Dada (ffs, OON) who was represented by Mr. Philip Amiengheme, Director, Federal Department of Fisheries.

Ten (10) official delegates from the Republic of Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe, eight (8) observers from Nigeria's Federal Department of Fisheries and Mr. Blaise Kuemlangan of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Legal Office, Rome attended the meeting.

Delegates noted the dire need to collaborate within the subregion in order to derive maximum benefits from their marine fisheries resources but observed that a lot needed to be done nationally and subregionally to achieve this objective. After very careful and extensive deliberations on the various issues relevant to the

#### Annex 4

1. The name of the initiative shall be “Sub-Regional Cooperation In Marine Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance in the Southern Gulf of Guinea” (SCMFMCSGG).
2. The Secretariat of the initiative shall be domiciled in Nigeria.
3. The meetings of the initiative shall be rotated among member States and that the host country shall Chair the meeting.
4. A sub-regional marine fisheries data Bank should be established immediately in the Secretariat and inputs for the data Bank shall include fleet information, industrial fisheries landing data and fishing gear specifications.
5. The software provided by the FAO should be used to render information on fishing efforts.
6. Information for the data Bank should be rendered to the Secretariat within one month from this meeting to facilitate early dissemination to all member States.
7. Fishing/Shrimping landing returns by operators of vessels should be made mandatory before their licenses are renewed.
8. All information and data forwarded to the Secretariat should thereafter be sent to all member States.
9. Though it was considered outside the responsibility of this initiative to decide on penalties for infringement for all member States, it was deemed necessary that each member State to know the penalty regimes in each of the member States in order to properly advise their governments on possible harmonization.
10. Steps are to be taken to ensure that any vessel(s) banned in any of the member States due to illegal fishing activities shall consequently be banned in all the cooperating States. In furtherance of this, all information about such banned vessel(s) must be forwarded to the Secretariat for dissemination among member States.
11. The operations of pair trawling vessels in Nigeria is to be closely monitored, due to complaints about pair trawling and its destructive effects on the resource by many of the member States, and decide

#### **Annex 4**

12. The Sub-regional initiative should be fully established and operational before the expiration of the GEF/UNEP/FAO Shrimp Fisheries Project.
13. FAO, GEF, Donor Agencies and other Development partners should assist in actualizing and sustaining the objectives of this initiative.
14. A Sub-regional MCS incorporating a Vessels' Monitoring System be established without delay with the assistance of FAO, GEF, Donor Agencies and other Development partners. The FAO was requested to be the arrowhead in this assistance.
15. The TEDS and BRDS workshops organized under the GEF/UNEP/FAO Shrimp trawling Project should be expanded to cover other member States.
16. The next meeting of the initiative would hold in Nigeria in June 2007.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Delegates thanked the GEF/UNEP/FAO Shrimp Fisheries Project for facilitating the meeting; the organizers of the meeting; the Federal Department of Fisheries, the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Government and people of Nigeria for the excellent facilities provided for the meeting and the very warm hospitality of her people extended to all the delegates.

**MEETING ON THE HARMONISATION OF FISHERIES LAWS AND REGULATIONS  
WITHIN THE SOUTHERN GULF OF GUINEA STATES**

**22-23 March, 2007**

**PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<b>Day 1: Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007</b>		
	<b>Session 1: Registration and Opening</b>	
08:30 – 09:30	Arrival of Participants	
09:30 – 10:30	Registration of Participants	
10:30 – 11:45	Opening Ceremony  Opening Remarks by the Chairman  Welcome Statements  Statement by the FAO  Keynote Address by the HMS  Vote of thanks  Group photo	<b>Chair:</b>          <b>DF</b>          <b>DDF (MCS)</b>          <b>All</b>
11:45 – 12:15	<b>Tea/Coffee</b>	
	<b>Session 2: Objectives of the Meeting and the Country Presentations</b>	<b>Chair:</b>
12:45 – 12:55	Objectives of the Meeting	
12:55 – 13:30	Adoption of the Minutes of the Nigeria/Cameroon Meeting	

Annex 2

13:30 – 14:30	<b>Country Presentations</b>	
	Country Presentations	
	Country Presentations	
<b>14:30 – 15:30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
15:30 – 16:30	<b>Session 2: Country Presentations continue</b>	
	Country Presentations	
	Country Presentations	
	Country Presentations	
16:30 – 17:00	Discussions	All
<b>Day 2: Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007</b>		
9:30 – 11:30	<b>Session 3: Position on areas to be harmonized</b>	<b>Chair:</b>
	Country Positions	
	Country Positions	
	Country Positions	
	Country Positions	
11:00 – 11:30	<b>Tea/Coffee</b>	
11:30 – 12:00	<b>Session 4: Position on areas to be harmonized continues</b>	
	Country Positions	
12:00 – 13:30	Discussion on Country positions	All
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch	
14:30 – 15:30	Adoption of Communiqué	
15:30 – 16:00	Closing Ceremony	

## **Meeting on the Harmonization of Fisheries Laws and regulations in the Gulf of Guinea FAO Statement**

Hon. Minister of State, FMA & WR,  
Director Amiengheme, FDF and Executive Director Ezenwa, NIOMR  
Deputy Directors,  
Madam Representative, Association of Shrimp Trawlers,  
Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Mr. Hichiro Nomura, Assistant Director General, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department of FAO and the Project Coordinator Mr. Janne Fogelgren, I would like to extend deep appreciation to the Nigerian Government and in particular to Mr. James Ogbonna of the Federal Ministry of Fisheries and Dr. Bolu Solarin from the Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research and their colleagues and other collaborators for organising and convening this meeting and for the hospitality extended to us.

Admittedly, this international meeting was not easy to organise. My information is that the plans for a December 2006 rendezvous were dropped for January and finally March 2007 as the difficulties of conflicting schedules and confirmation of participation by prospective delegations, among other things, had to be dealt with. We therefore commend our hosts for having the will and the way to bring this meeting to reality. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to meet professional colleagues and friends again and I look forward to making new acquaintances.

This meeting and the past and planned activities are welcome testimonies to individual and institutional commitments to the objectives of the Project **EP/GLO/201/GEF "Reduction of Environmental impact of Shrimp Trawling through By-Catch Reduction Technologies and Change of Management"**. In its implementation, FAO and other inter-governmental organization partners can only do so much in ensuring that the objectives of the project are achieved. The real direction and work will have to be done at the national level and in this case, also at the regional level. This is in acknowledgement of the fact that fisheries resources are migratory and part of a wider ecosystem which is not restricted by national boundaries. In this context, one cannot make progress in sound conservation and management for sustainable utilization of such resource alone.

The two countries participating in the project namely Cameroon and Nigeria had the wisdom and foresight to acknowledge the reality that the living marine resources of the Gulf of Guinea could not be conserved and managed if the other neighbouring coastal and island states do not participate in the activities of the Project to achieve a bigger impact. Apart from embracing and trialling for eventual extensive application of by-catch reduction devices in the shrimp trawl activities, harmonization of policies and regulations and ultimately their implementation are also important to institutionalise or mainstream by-catch reduction technologies and change of management. The first steps in this regard have been taken albeit at varying degrees. Nigeria has passed regulations directly obligating fishers to install by-catch reduction devices particularly turtle exclusion devices while Cameroon is contemplating similar legislation. They have correctly identified the need to also achieve the same commitment at least in their neighbouring countries by convening this meeting and inviting their neighbours to the table. It is a step in the right direction which should be encouraged.

It is easy to forget that regional cooperation and harmonised policies and legislation cannot work without internal cohesion. In engaging your neighbours in plans and activities for sound conservation and management of fisheries resources, each country must ensure that their national implementation mechanisms are operating in tandem to ensure that commitments at the regional level can be implemented at the national level. I am sure you also recognise the fact that it is not enough that sound policies, laws and regulations are in place for introduction of by-catch reduction technologies. These have to be implemented and appropriate mechanisms for monitoring control and surveillance (MCS) are established to ensure compliance.

FAO's participation in this meeting today is primarily as an observer and provider of information and advice where these can be offered. Apart from that, I as FAO's only representative at this meeting will follow your discussions with keen interest and will report back to the Project Coordinator and FAO on the key recommendations.

I wish you a successful meeting. Thank you.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION  
IN MARINE FISHERIES MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE  
IN THE SOUTHERN GULF OF GUINEA ON THE HARMONISATION OF  
FISHERIES LAWS AND REGULATIONS OF THE REGION HELD AT THE  
NIGERIAN INSTITUTE FOR OCEANOGRAPHY AND MARINE  
RESEARCH, VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS, NIGERIA FROM  
22 – 23 MARCH, 2007.**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The meeting, which is the second in the series, is designed to bring together Fisheries managers and researchers from States within the southern Gulf of Guinea, namely: - Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe and Togo to discuss possible areas where fisheries laws and regulations could be harmonized within the sub-region and modalities for the harmonization and cooperation in fisheries management, such as the establishment of a sub-regional marine fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance programme.

**2. OPENING CEREMONY**

The opening ceremony was attended by delegates from the various countries as well as fisheries managers and researchers from the Federal Department of Fisheries and the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research respectively. The Nigerian Honourable Minister of State for Agriculture and Water Resources, Otunba Bamidele F. Dada (ffs, OON), who was the Guest of Honour was represented by the Director Federal Department of Fisheries, Mr. Philip Amiengheme. The ceremony was chaired by the Executive Director of the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research, Dr. Bernard I Ezenwa who welcomed delegates to Nigeria and particularly his Institute. He praised the efforts of the GEF/UNEP/FAO Shrimp Fisheries Project in engineering positive changes for sustainable shrimp fisheries management in Nigeria and for championing the process for the harmonization of fisheries laws and regulations within the sub-region. He enjoined participants to make the best use of facilities provided by his Institute.

Mr. Akinsola V. Amire, Deputy Director of Fisheries and Head of the Fisheries Resources Monitoring, Control and Surveillance, Nigeria also welcomed participants to the meeting. He said the need to have regional cooperation in fisheries research and management are in consonance with the articles and spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and enjoined delegates to take the deliberations during the meeting with all the seriousness and responsibility it deserves. Mr. Blaise Kuemlangan of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in his remarks said it is imperative for coastal States within the same region to regularly come together to share information and cooperate in order to solve common problems encountered in the management of their fisheries resources in line with the provisions of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. He also underscored the need for countries to ensure internal cohesion for better implementation of regional initiatives.

The Honourable Minister of State in his opening address said the fisheries of the Gulf of Guinea was under very serious stress because of indiscriminate use of environmentally unfriendly gear, excess capacity, lack of well coordinated MCS and enforcement capabilities including low level research. He advised the Countries that share the common resources of the Gulf of Guinea to consider the resource as a collective natural endowment, which must be rationally and sustainably exploited.

Mr. J. C. Ogbonna, GEF/UNEP/FAO Shrimp Fisheries Project National Coordinator gave the vote of thanks.

### **3. PARTICIPANTS**

Ten official delegates and eight observers from Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Sao Tome & Principe and Nigeria attended the meeting. Mr. Blaise Kuemlangan, Legal Officer, FAO, Rome also attended. The list of participants is annexed to this report.

### **4. TECHNICAL SESSION**

The Technical session was attended by the official delegates only.

## **DAY 1 – 22<sup>nd</sup> March 23, 2007**

The attached Provisional Agenda was adopted.

Mr. Akinsola V. Amire, Head of the MCS in Nigeria chaired the meeting. In his opening statements, he enjoined all delegates to freely express themselves on all issues discussed in order to justify the confidence of the various Governments on their delegates. He said a lot of illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing goes on within the sub-region; as such the countries must cooperate to fight this common menace. One way of actualizing this, he said, is to harmonize the various fishing laws and regulations of the countries within the sub region, exchange fisheries information and data and ultimately establish a sub-regional MCS system.

### **5. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE CAMEROON/NIGERIA MEETING**

The minutes was read and translated to delegates. The chairman said electronic copies of the minutes was earlier sent to all the delegates, as such, he expected the minutes to have been read so that delegates can easily discuss and adopt it.

### **REACTIONS**

#### **GABON**

Mr. Doumambila thanked the organizers of the meeting for the facilities provided, noting however that though the minutes were earlier sent, it probably did not get to the appropriate persons. As a result of this, it may be difficult to discuss the minutes. He suggested that both Cameroon and Nigeria should adopt the minutes since they were the only countries present at the meeting.

## BENIN

Madame Gbaguidi thanked Cameroon and Nigeria. She supported the position of Gabon that the minutes probably did not get to the right persons but would want the report adopted because all the problems raised in the minutes were common to all the other countries. Her only worry, she said was that attention was always focused on the industrial fisheries to the detriment of the traditional and artisanal fisheries sub-sector. She also opined that the Headquarters of the meeting could be decentralized.

## NIGERIA

Mr. Ogbonna agreed with the contributions from Gabon and Benin. He however reminded delegates that adopting the minutes only meant it was the correct record of the proceedings of the meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2006 attended by both Cameroon and Nigeria and that though the headquarters of the meeting will be domiciled in Nigeria because it is the headquarters of the GEF shrimp fisheries Project for the region, hosting the meeting will be rotated among member States. Accordingly, the host State will produce the Chairperson for the meeting. He shared similar opinion with Benin on the issue of traditional and artisanal fisheries.

## CAMEROON

Dr. Pierre Meke thanked all the delegates and those that spoke earlier. He said that the first meeting was the beginning of a process of tackling the problems of marine fisheries within the sub-region; it was therefore their responsibility to note the identified problems with a view to finding ways to solve them in their various countries. He observed however that the issue he raised about sending landing records from Nigeria on Nigerian flagged vessels fishing in Cameroon was not adequately represented.

## SAO TOME & PRINCIPE

Mme. Godinho reported that they got the document sent to them but that it was only in English. She thanked the chairman but suggested that French version of documents

should be sent to them. She opined that the Headquarters of the meeting should be in Nigeria.

#### CHAIRMAN

Responding to the various comments, the Chairman said the issue of French version of documents was noted. He reminded delegates that the meeting was made of fisheries managers and researchers responsible to higher authorities. In that vein, it was not possible for the meeting to turn itself into a law making body. All it needed to do was to take recommendations agreed to at the meeting to their various governments for concurrence and implementation. He said the minutes of the last meeting was a correct representation of the proceedings and advised that it be adopted to enable the meeting progress.

#### ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2006 was subsequently adopted following a motion by Cameroon and supported by Nigeria.

The Chairman thanked delegates for this initiative.

### **6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES**

#### a. NAME FOR THE MEETING

After many contributions, it was agreed that the meeting shall be called “**Subregional Cooperation in Marine Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance in the Southern Gulf of Guinea**” and the Secretariat shall be domiciled in Nigeria.

#### b. AREAS OF HARMONISATION

The meeting agreed that all the areas of harmonization listed are necessary for effective cooperation and resource monitoring within the sub-region.

#### i. Fisheries Data Bank

It was unanimously agreed that a Fisheries Data Bank be established without delay. Gabon was however of the opinion that some fisheries data must be considered confidential and as such might not be available to all and sundry. The Chairman allayed his fears and said the data required are only those that would be used for administrative purposes. **It was agreed that data on fleet, industrial fish landings and gear should be sent within the next one month to the Secretariat that will in turn send them to all the other countries.** Fleet information should include names and origin of vessels, specifications, types, etc. The Chairman informed delegates that Nigeria, Cameroon and Benin had already started sharing information on fleet and advised other countries to follow suit by sending their information to the Secretariat as advised.

ii. Fishing Effort.

One of the delegates from Nigeria advised that the use of vessel number as an indication of fishing effort was obsolete. She therefore recommended the use of the FAO format which was already introduced to all the countries within the Sub-region. The Chairman supported this position and advised that all landing data reports to the Secretariat must be rendered using the adopted FAO format.

iii. Fisheries Conservation Measures

The delegates from Cameroon, Benin and Gabon complained about the harmful effects of pair trawling observed in their Country. The operators trawl within the creeks and estuaries, they said. It was suggested that the Sub-region took a decision to collectively ban the practice. A delegate from Nigeria said pair trawling was still being legally practiced in Nigeria but in the open sea unlike in the other countries. The Chairman in his response said Nigeria has noted the comments of delegates and would henceforth beam a searchlight on the operations of pair trawlers and if found irresponsible, government will not hesitate to outlaw its use. It was similarly agreed that in the long run any fishing vessel banned in

any of the cooperating States for irresponsible and illegal fishing activity should be banned as well in all the other member States.

Delegates discussed and agreed on the need to urgently establish a Subregional Marine Fisheries Resources Monitoring, Control and Surveillance System, in view of its capabilities in vessel monitoring and surveillance. It was also agreed that the FAO should assist the sub-region in making this initiative a reality. Delegates resolved that Mr. Kuemlangan should kindly take this request to the FAO for possible assistance through either the GEF Project or any other donor Agency.

iv. Penalty Regimes

Delegates were advised to send a compendium of their fishing offences penalties to the Secretariat for circulation to other countries. This, it was agreed would assist member States in determining appropriate penalties, commensurate with those of other countries within the sub-region.

v. Trawl Cod-end Mesh Sizes

Delegates were informed that this was part of the information required on gear specifications.

vi. Regional Vessels Monitoring System (VMS)

It was unanimously agreed by delegates that a Subregional VMS was a sine qua non for effective MCS within the Gulf of Guinea. Some members suggested the use of same VMS systems by all the collaborating States. This idea was however disabused as members were informed that the various systems could be interconnected. The FAO was requested to assist the sub-region in actualizing this initiative.

## **7. COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS**

Presentations were made by delegates from Benin, Cameroon and Nigeria on the status and development of Fisheries in their various countries. Copies of the presentations are annexed to this report.

The reports were discussed and questions asked for clarification.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

The Chairman thanked delegates for their patience and contributions to the discussions. He announced that the field trip to the Kirikiri Lighter Terminal Fishing jetties scheduled for the afternoon session was postponed till Friday, in order to cover most of the items on the agenda. Delegates would take off from their Hotel for the trip at 9.00am. Afternoon session would commence at 2.00pm immediately delegates returned from the field trip. The Chairman adjourned the meeting till the following day at exactly 17:45hrs.

## **DAY 2**

### **9. COUNTRY PRESENTATION (Contd.)**

#### **i. SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE**

The delegate from Sao Tome & Principe gave her country's presentation which was discussed by members.

## **10. DISCUSSIONS**

The initiative agreed that the TEDS workshop should be extended to cover countries hitherto not part of the programme to ensure uniform and standard operational practices within the sub-region.

## **11. VENUE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held in June 2007 in Nigeria, that of September 2007 in Cameroon and that of March 2008 should be held in Gabon.

## **12. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES**

The draft minutes was read and after necessary amendments were made, it was adopted following a motion to that effect by Cameroon and supported by Gabon.

## **13. VOTE OF THANKS**

The vote of thanks was given by Mr. J. C. Ogbonna. He thanked the GEF/UNE/FAO Shrimp Fisheries Project and the entire management for the support given to the initiative and the governments of the Region for their cooperation. He thanked the host Institute for the excellent facilities provided for the meeting.

## **14. CLOSING**

The Chairman thanked all delegates for their support and excellent contributions and hoped that they will find the decisions of the meeting very handy for implementation by their various governments. He wished them very safe journey back home. The meeting ended at exactly 18.30hrs.

**EP/GLO/201/GEEF – TROPICAL SHRIMP RAWLING**  
**PROJECT: OPENING ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR**  
**OF FISHERIES, MR. P. O. AMIENGHEME ON THE**  
**OCCASION OF THE SECOND MCS HARMONIZATION**  
**MEETING OF COUNTRIES BORDERING THE**  
**SOUTHERN GULF OF GUINEA**

**PROTOCOL**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this very important second MCS Harmonization meeting taking place in Lagos, Nigeria. I am particularly delighted that countries bordering the Southern Gulf of Guinea are coming together to tackle a common problem, in this case, Reducing the Environmental Impact of Shrimp Trawling through the use of By-Catch reduction devices and change of Management. There is no doubt in my mind that all our countries are in agreement that a common MCS in our region would go a long way in eliminating all abuses being committed by unscrupulous fishers who do not have the interest of our region at heart.

Research has shown that the Fisheries of the Gulf of Guinea is under very serious stress because of indiscriminate use of environmentally unfriendly gear, excess capacity, lack of well coordinated MCS and enforcement capabilities including low level research. The

result of this is that many species of fish have totally disappeared from the fisheries with the attendant consequences of species diversity erosion and loss of huge investment. The situation has gone so bad that current fish landings are dominated by juveniles of large food fish. The resultant effect is that operators spend more days (over 60 days) in search of fish and shrimps compared to (25 – 30) days in the recent past. The longer fishing periods have direct negative impact on AGO consumption vis-à-vis profit margin, that is, if there is any profit at all.

I am particularly passionate about reversing this ugly situation and it is fulfilling to note that this passion is shared by you all. It is therefore our sacred duty to contribute our quota to ensure that our future generation enjoy the vast living marine resources of our region. There is no alternative to this goal.

The artificial boundaries created by man has nothing to do with fish. Thus fish migrate according to environmental conditions like abundance of food, movement of current, temperature etc. The bottom line of this is that fish does not recognise the artificial boundaries or the national borders created by man. Gentlemen, it therefore behoves on us who share this

common marine resources of the Gulf of Guinea, as our collective natural endowment, to ensure that these resources are rationally and sustainably exploited. This could be achieved by, among other things, exchange of information, harmonization of the MCS procedures and greater interaction among the countries of the region. I understand that this exchange had already started between Nigeria and Cameroon. I wish to encourage you all to make this meeting vis-à-vis information exchange a continuous one..

Nigeria recently reviewed its TEDs/and other BRDs regulations in order to conform with the American/International Standards. You are aware that the mainstay of the marine Industrial Fisheries of this region is predicated on its abundant shrimp resources. In Nigeria shrimps contribute over \$60.0 million non-oil foreign exchange. I am quite sure that a similar scenario is played out in other countries of the Southern Gulf of Guinea. Apart from this, the contribution of the marine industrial fisheries sub-sector in Nigeria to job creation (5,000 direct jobs and 500,000 down stream jobs) is enormous. These figures are very significant and critical to the economies of developing countries like ours. Dear colleagues these benefits are what we are bound

lose if there is no concerted effort to check the indiscretional access to and uncontrolled exploitation of the resources of the region. We should not allow this to happen. There is therefore the need for rational management of the living marine resources in order to safe guard the future of our fisheries and prevent over fishing with its attendant consequences.

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen, one of the ways of limiting access and overcapitalization is to find alternative sources of fish production. I am very happy to inform you that Nigeria has taken a leap into Aquaculture production and the results are very and fulfilling. Many of our shrimping companies are also blazing the trail in that direction. There are lots of opportunities in aquaculture production especially production of farmed shrimps which is competing favourably with production from the wild. In your discussion of common problems associated with fisheries governance vis-à-vis MCS procedures it would be pertinent to look at all the options critically in order to give your decisions and recommendations the desired flexibility for easy implementation by all.

Finally distinguished participants I wish to thank the FAO which has through, the Tropical Shrimp Trawl Project, brought all of you together for the purpose

working together to find a common agenda for the management of the resources of our region. I wish to invite you to take some time out to savour the beauty of Lagos, Nigeria's industrial /commercial capital including the warmness and vibrancy of the people.

Once more welcome to this very important meeting. On behalf of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources. I hereby declare this meeting open.