



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
FISHERIES DIVISION

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The Secretariat

Western and Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission

Attn: Mr Raymon Vananrooy

Trinidad and Tobago Position WECAFC as a RFMO

Trinidad and Tobago has reviewed the information presented in the two documents entitled: **“Findings of the independent cost-benefit assessment of the options for strategic reorientation of WECAFC” (Kjartan Hybdal)** and **“Assessment of the recent achievements and collaboration of CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC including options for a regional institutional collaborative structure within an RFMO framework “(prepared by Helga Josupeit, April 2016).** These two documents testify to the significant time, effort and funding resources that have been devoted to providing considerable guidance with respect to the strategic reorientation of the Western and Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission.

Essentially Trinidad and Tobago supports the strategic reorientation of the WECAFC to a RFMO. Further Trinidad and Tobago recommends that WECAFC should become a regional fisheries management organisation RFMO as an FAO Article XIV body with a mandate to make legally binding decisions. We believe that it would be extremely beneficial to have the continued support, guidance and expertise of the FAO. In addition, it was stated that this option is more likely to have a smooth transition and shorter conversion time frame than the establishment of an IGO. It is considered that the large FAO RFMO would be better in which each country has a vote rather than the small FAO RFMO suggested as an option in the CLME+ report in which the CRFM would represent all the member countries.

While acknowledging the successes achieved with respect to some fisheries, It is believed that fisheries governance in the region has suffered tremendously given that although there are a number of mechanisms and various declarations and principled opinions expressed in support of various fisheries management measures, the value of



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such measures can be greatly improved for the fisheries management process if they are binding, and appropriate action can be taken to mobilise implementation.

It can be appreciated that in moving in the direction mentioned previously there is much that will be required, for countries to be confident that this transition will be in their best interest and the interest of joint efforts of resource sustainability, as the most viable option in the long term. There may still be doubts with regard to the financial commitments and whether there will be any unforeseen issues that may result in an increase in financial commitments when budgets are stagnating with respect to fisheries management as important as this is and should be to coastal countries of the region. Trinidad and Tobago recommends that all concerns must be acknowledged and ventilated so that the way forward is unambiguous and widely supported.

Looking forward to fruitful deliberations towards the strategic reorientation of the WECAFC

C Chan A Shing

Director of Fisheries