



United States Department of State

*Bureau of Oceans and International
Environmental and Scientific Affairs*

Washington, D.C. 20520

June 16, 2016

Christine Chan A Shing
Chairperson
Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission

Dear Ms. Chan A Shing,

The United States is pleased to provide its initial views on the options under consideration to strengthen the cooperative conservation and management of the shared fisheries resources in the WECAFC area.

We appreciate the careful assessments in both the cost-benefit analysis authored by Dr. Kjartan Hoydal and the additional study coordinated by the CLME+. We would agree with the findings of both that the effective conservation and sustainable management of the shared resources in this area require a clear mechanism to support cooperative scientific study and to develop binding conservation and management measures.

This sort of formalized cooperation can take a number of forms, but to be successful, it must allow for the participation of all interested and affected parties and facilitate agreement on a clear set of policies and measures that will be effectively implemented by all concerned. To that end, we see the value and benefit of building on the existing cooperative arrangements in the Wider Caribbean through a regional fisheries management organization or arrangement.

It will be important to consider carefully the scope of such a future body – both in terms of the geographic areas and the stocks under its mandate. These issues will have implications not just for management measures, but also for the costs, workload, and membership of a prospective organization. The stocks identified by the CLME+ study seem like a reasonable starting point for consideration: i.e., straddling, deep sea, and highly migratory species (not already under ICCAT's mandate) in the areas beyond national jurisdiction of areas 31 and the northern part of 41, plus certain transboundary stocks such as sharks, queen conch, spiny lobster, shrimp, and dolphin fish. That said, we would like to discuss this issue further with a view to refining this list and continuing to integrate the principles of

ecosystem-based management into this process. It will be important to take into account available scientific information and to consider how best to ensure any new mechanism builds on existing bodies and avoids both redundancy and unnecessary complexity.

We remain open to the various options for the legal framework as noted in the cost-benefit study. There are many useful examples to draw on of both independent RFMOs and RFMOs established under the FAO Constitution, but we look forward to additional discussion to see which model is the best fit for the particular characteristics of the region.

A successful process to create a new mechanism will take considerable time and dedicated effort. It is critical that we develop a clear timetable and map of the decisions to be made and steps to be taken along the way. And, most importantly, we want to ensure that such an exercise does not prevent us from taking steps in the interim to continue strengthening cooperative science and management and improving coordination among WECAFC, OSPESCA, CRFM, and others in the region.

We look forward to discussing all of these issues further at the upcoming 16th session of WECAFC.

Sincerely,



Deirdre Warner-Kramer