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ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

Thirty-seventh Session

Qingdao 13-15 June 2023

Report of the seventy-eighth meeting of the Executive Committee

1. The Executive Committee of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) convened its Seventy-eighth Session in virtual format, from 21 to 23 June 2022, hosted by the People's Republic of China. The full report of the meeting is presented as information paper APFIC/23/Inf-05.
2. The APFIC Executive Committee at its Seventy-eighth Session comprised China (Chair), Thailand (Vice-Chair and former Chair), India (Member), Malaysia (Member) and the Philippines (Member).
3. The Executive Committee:
 - a) Reviewed the report and recommendations of the Thirty-sixth Session of the commission (APFIC/23/Inf-04);
 - b) Reviewed the intersessional activities of the commission and work under FAO programmes;
 - c) Reviewed the report and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission;
 - d) Reviewed and amended proposed protocols for convening virtual meetings of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission;
 - e) Provided input to the preparations for the 37th Session.
4. Specific recommendations arising from the Seventy-eighth meeting of the APFIC Executive Committee are summarized below.

INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDER BIENNIAL WORK PROGRAMME

5. The Executive Committee noted that there had been no substantive technical work programme of the commission during the current biennium due to restrictions of the use of FAO regular programme funding to support APFIC activities.
6. The Executive Committee was informed that two virtual meetings (18 - 19 August 2021, 24 - 25 February 2022) of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC were chaired by China.
7. It was informed of FAO Regional Office technical activities, which are not part of the commission's work programme, but relevant to the recommendations and interests of the commission and its Members. The Executive Committee welcomed these FAO activities in support of capacity building and knowledge exchange in stock assessment and aquaculture.

8. The Executive Committee recommended that the APFIC Member Nations continue to approach FAO for support regarding:

- a) the EAF-Nansen Programme for fishery surveys and assessment in the APFIC region;
- b) capacity building in stock assessment and related support to fishery assessments.

9. Executive Committee requested the APFIC Secretariat to keep APFIC Member Nations informed about the opportunity to engage in Global Environment Facility programme development by FAO and physical and virtual training courses in aquaculture and mariculture

DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOCOLS FOR VIRTUAL FORMAT ACTIVITIES OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

10. The Executive Committee reviewed and amended the draft protocols prepared by the APFIC Secretariat for convening the session of the commission and working groups in virtual format, where decisions were to be made (APFIC/23/Inf-01).

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

11. The Executive Committee reviewed the recommendations of the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC.

12. The 78th Executive Committee welcomed the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC, noting that the commission is one of the few regional bodies that provides a common voice in relation to fisheries and aquaculture for most countries in the Asian region.

- a. Reviewed the two resolutions – to suspend or to continue – to be considered by Members during the Thirty-seventh Session of APFIC
- b. It agreed that there is a need for responsibility among Member Nations to provide adequate resourcing if the activities of the commission are to continue.
- c. Noted that should APFIC continue, that resolution commits to identifying financing aspects.
- d. Was informed that if the commission decided to suspend activities, that after a period of five years the Director-General of FAO would contact the Member Nations to convene a Special Session of the commission.

13. The Executive Committee endorsed the report of the ad hoc working group and recommended that the report be presented to the Thirty-seventh Session of the commission for its consideration

14. The 78th Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to

- a. Present the options on the future of the commission to Member Nations in the form of a decision tree or flow chart to assist them in understanding these options and their implications;
- b. Provide information to Member Nations on the cost implications for continuation of activities, to assist in their decisions on the future of the commission (APFIC/23/Inf-09);
- c. Requested that the procedure for convening the Special Session is described in an appendix to the report of the Thirty-seventh Session (APFIC/23/Inf-10);
- d. Urged Member Nations to ensure that delegates to the Thirty-seventh Session of the commission are adequately informed and authorized to make decisions on the future of the Commission.

ASSESSMENT OF MARINE CAPTURE FISHERY RESOURCES AND STATUS IN AREA 57 AND AREA 71

15. The Executive Committee was informed of the FAO and SEAFDEC capacity-building workshops in stock assessment for the Southeast Asian region and that there were plans to extend training to other subregions.

16. The Executive Committee emphasized that there was a pressing need to improve the understanding of the status of fish stocks in the region to inform discussions regarding the sustainable use of the region's marine fishery resources and to assist reporting on the SDG 14 fishery indicators.

- a. suggested that pilot fishery management areas be established, using assessment and modelling approaches that are applicable to the regional context.
- b. recommended that the training and capacity building in stock assessment provided by FAO and SEAFDEC be extended to other Member Nations in the region.
- c. recommended that sharing of information and experience on stock assessments among stock assessment practitioners in the region be facilitated.
- d. requested FAO and the APFIC Secretariat to develop a regional project to support these recommendations.

17. These recommendations have been taken up and the results of a Regional Workshop on stock assessment are presented under Agenda Item 3.

PREPARATIONS FOR THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION

18. The Executive Committee discussed the preparation for the Thirty-seventh Session of APFIC and noted that there were no plans to convene an APFIC Regional Consultative Forum Meeting prior to the Session.

19. The Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to clarify;

- a. The procedure to convene a Special Session of the commission following a period of suspension as indicated in the draft resolution of Annex H of the Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC;
- b. Whether the Chair of the commission would remain as the incumbent country following suspension;
- c. If the Chair of the commission remained the incumbent country, whether this obliged the Chair country to also host the subsequent session of the commission, or that the Special Session could be convened at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

20. The clarifications are presented under Agenda Item 5.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

21. The Commission is invited to review the report of the Seventy-seventh meeting of the APFIC Executive Committee for endorsement and to consider the specific recommendations therein.