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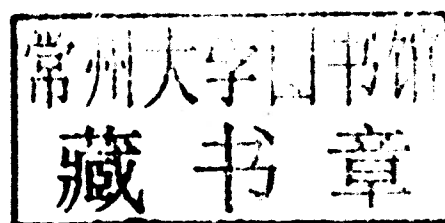
**SECOND MEETING OF REGIONAL FISHERY BODY SECRETARIATS
NETWORK**

Rome, 9–10 March 2009



Report of the
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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is the final version of the report as approved by the Second Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network held in Rome on 9 and 10 March 2009.

FAO.

Report of the Second Meeting of Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network.

Rome, 9–10 March 2009.

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ABSTRACT

The Second Meeting of Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN-2) was held at FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, on 9 and 10 March 2009. The Meeting reviewed the decisions of the twenty-eighth session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) relevant to regional fishery bodies (RFBs). The Meeting discussed factors affecting fisheries management, including illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, overcapacity and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 61/105 on Sustainable Fisheries. It also addressed the role of RFBs with emphasis on performance enhancement and small-scale and inland fisheries and aquaculture. The Meeting reviewed the status of the Fisheries Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS), the Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP), the RSN webpage and other related matters.

The meeting reached a number of conclusions regarding matters that meriting the attention of RFBs, governments and FAO.

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OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The second meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN-2) (being the sixth meeting of regional fishery bodies) was held at FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, from 9 to 10 March 2009. Participants included representatives from thirty-two Regional Fishery Body Secretariats and organizations with mandates that are related to fisheries, a representative of the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UN/DOALOS) and the Secretary of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). Representatives of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FI) were also in attendance. A list of participants is in Appendix B.

2. Mr Ichiro Nomura (Assistant Director-General, FAO/FI) opened the meeting. He described the unique role played by regional fishery bodies (RFBs) in facilitating cooperation for the conservation and management of fish stocks and noted the special recognition accorded to some for their work in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Code of Conduct). Mr Nomura referred to the wide range of issues addressed by RFBs, and reaffirmed the strong expectation and commitment of FAO to work with RFBs continuously and in a collaborative manner. He noted the consensus of COFI in preferring the current meeting schedule, and undertook to convey these views within FAO. In closing, Mr Nomura emphasized that cooperation and coordination among RFBs was one of the most effective ways to strengthen regional fisheries governance and affirmed that FAO would endeavour to collaborate to facilitate decisions that may be taken during the Meeting. The full text of the Assistant Director-General's statement is in Appendix D.

3. The Chairperson of the Meeting, Professor Denzil Miller, announced that the Executive Secretary of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Mr Alain Bonzon, would be unable to attend and undertook to convey to him the Meeting's warm wishes for recovery and good health.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

4. The Meeting adopted the agenda in Appendix A. A list of documents provided to the Meeting is in Appendix C. Mr Hiromoto Watanabe coordinated meeting arrangements and Ms Judith Swan served as rapporteur.

5. The Chair noted that thematic sessions would be held under Agenda Item 6, the Role of RFBs. It was agreed that aquaculture would also be addressed by the group on small-scale and inland fisheries issues, noting that discussion could also take place in relation to aquaculture networks.

6. It was agreed to maintain the status quo regarding the participation of observers in the Meeting so as to preserve the informality of the proceedings and to allow a free exchange of views.

REVIEW OF THE DECISIONS OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF COFI (COFI-28) RELATING TO REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES

7. The Secretary of COFI, Mr Ndiaga Gueye, reviewed COFI-28 issues relevant to RFBs. He noted that there was no specific COFI agenda item on RFBs, but their important role was repeatedly underscored in several substantial agenda items. In particular, he drew attention to

progress in the implementation of the Code of Conduct, noting that response rate to the FAO questionnaire by Members and RFBs was low, and encouraged RFBs to respond more appropriately in future. Referring to deep-sea fisheries, Mr Gueye emphasized the key role of RFBs, particularly with respect to actions agreed in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries 61/105 and as agreed by COFI. He noted the development of a vessel identifier system by some regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements (RFMO/As) and noted its possible contribution to the development of a Global Record of Fishing Vessels. He acknowledged that the proposed timing of COFI meetings could conflict with the schedules of some RFBs. In closing, Mr Gueye reaffirmed the importance of strengthened institutions and FAO's strong commitment to work with RFBs continuously and in a very collaborative manner.

8. The Chairperson highlighted the following issues from the COFI-28 report as being important for RFBs.

- Responses to the FAO questionnaire on implementation of the Code of Conduct. (COFI-28 Report, Paragraph 10)

The RSN expressed concern about the low rate of responses to the questionnaire, resulting in a weak information base in relation to the impact of implementation. In this regard, the Meeting encouraged quantitative analysis based on performance indicators to help to assess how the Code of Conduct is being implemented. Some reasons for the low response rate were discussed. It was agreed that the RSN should promote the Code of Conduct in the best possible way among RFB members.

- Implementation of the Code of Conduct. (Paragraph 11)

The RSN recognized the important coordinating role that the Network plays in advancing implementation of the Code of Conduct. It was suggested that responses to the FAO questionnaire on the implementation of the Code of Conduct should be made publicly available. However, a need for confidentiality was understood and it was acknowledged that the FAO summary of responses identifies the respondents and summarizes all information submitted. In the interests of transparency, it was noted that any RFB may decide to make its response to the questionnaire publicly available.

- Implementation of the International Plans of Action (IPOAs) elaborated under the Code of Conduct. (Paragraph 13)

The RSN noted that the Committee agreed on further actions to be taken by RFMO/As in relation to the four IPOAs. Further discussion is under Agenda item 4.

- Fundamental importance of subregional and regional cooperation. (Paragraph 14)

The RSN noted the call by COFI to improve regional cooperation, especially with respect to monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Further discussion is under Agenda items 4(b) and 6(b).

- Performance reviews of RFMO/A. (Paragraph 15)

The RSN took strong note of the call to strengthen regional governance by conducting and implementing performance reviews, and that consequences of the failure of some RFMO/A members to implement agreed management measures was to erode the effectiveness and credibility of these organizations. Further discussion is under Agenda item 6(b).

- Failure to implement the Code might undermine its objective and the role of FAO and RFMO/As. (Paragraph 22)

The RSN expressed serious concern about the consequences of failure to implement the Code.

- Development of best practices guidelines for catch documentation schemes and for traceability for consideration by the next Session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI: FT). (Paragraph 34)

The RSN noted the recommendation for the Secretariat to develop best practices guidelines, mindful that this issue had been flagged at previous RSN meetings along with the need to review the outcomes on harmonization of catch documentation of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade. Further discussion is addressed under Agenda item 4(b).

- Regional aquaculture networks. (Paragraph 41)

It was acknowledged that the RSN could facilitate the exchange of information between aquaculture and blue water fisheries and vice versa. Equally, it could assist the development of relevant networks. Further discussion is under Agenda item 6(c).

- Implementation of UNGA Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries 61/105. (Paragraph 52)

The RSN noted COFI's conclusion that, in some cases, additional efforts by RFMO/As were required to respond fully to Resolution 61/105. Further discussion is under Agenda item 5.

- New RFMO/As. (Paragraphs 53, 82)

The Network noted that the establishment of new RFBs (in the South Pacific, North Pacific and Red Sea regions) would promote cooperation in fisheries management. Once established, these organizations would be welcome to become members of the Network. There had been no further developments regarding the establishment of an RFMO in the South China Sea since the Coordination Working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP) reported this lacuna to RSN-1.

- Strengthen high seas governance. (Paragraph 61)

The RSN noted that the call to strengthen high seas governance related to both deep-sea fisheries and IUU fishing. The network has a facilitation role in strengthening high seas governance *inter alia* by sharing best practice information. Further discussion is under Agenda items 4(b) and 5.

- Action by RFMO/As to combat IUU fishing. (Paragraph 64)

It was noted that COFI cited measures adopted by RFMOs that have had some success in combating IUU fishing. Further discussion is under Agenda item 4(b).

- Development of a Global Record of Fishing Vessels. (Paragraph 70)

The development by the tuna RFMOs of unique vessel identifier systems and its potential usefulness to the FAO Global Record initiative was noted. Further discussion is under Agenda item 4(b).

- Climate change and fisheries management. (Paragraph 88)

Active collaboration on information gathering encouraged by COFI was noted, and further discussion is under Agenda item 5.

- Developing country assistance and capacity building. (Paragraphs 17, 21, 27, 55, 69, 80, 90 and 91)

The RSN endorsed development assistance and capacity building for developing countries and recognized that without sufficient capacity it would not be possible to attain many of the goals elaborated by COFI and RFMO/As at a global level. It was strongly emphasized that development assistance and capacity building is fundamental to the work of all RFBs.

- High priorities among activities relating to Organization Results of the FAO Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. (Paragraph 100)

All of the priority activities identified by COFI were noted.

- Small-scale fisheries. (Paragraph 102)

The RSN recognized the importance of small-scale fisheries as an organizational result for FAO as a whole. This was discussed under Agenda item 6, where the issue of how the Network can make space for such considerations in the future was addressed.

- Timing of the next COFI meeting. (Paragraph 104)

Some members expressed difficulty with the proposed timing of the next COFI meeting in the later part of 2010, noting conflicts with international and regional meetings.

9. In discussion, it was noted that the role and effectiveness of RFBs in fisheries management is heavily dependent on the financial and human resources available to each and every organization, particularly in the current global economic climate.

FACTORS AFFECTING FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

General

10. Note was taken of the outcomes from the conference on the World Ocean in Globalization: Challenges for Marine Regions held in August 2008 in Oslo, Norway, sponsored by the Nansen Institute.

IUU fishing

11. It was noted that IUU fishing undermines the work of RFBs and diverts financial and human resources, making sustainable management of fisheries resources very difficult.

12. Mr David Doulman, Senior Fishery Liaison Officer, International Institutions and Liaison Service, FAO, briefed the Meeting on current FAO activities with respect to IUU fishing. He announced that the second resumed session of the Technical Consultation to draft a legally-binding agreement on port State measures would be convened in Rome, Italy, from 4 to 8 May 2009, and an Expert Consultation on flag State performance, originally called for by the twenty-seventh session of COFI, would be held in Rome, Italy, from 22 to 26 June 2009. He noted that the COFI-28 had also agreed to proceed with a Technical Consultation on flag State performance and reported that FAO would endeavour to coordinate this prior to the next COFI.

13. The RSN strongly emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and robust institutional arrangements to combat IUU fishing, both on the high seas and particularly in the coastal and inland fisheries under areas of national jurisdiction. It was acknowledged that wherever IUU fishing occurred, it was imperative for RFBs and their members to cooperate and exchange and disseminate good information, ensure adequate resources to deal with the problem, including bringing collective wisdom to bear on it. In relation to recent developments, problems and successes in efforts to combat IUU fishing, the Meeting noted that a range of issues under review in the tuna RFBs included: (a) a minimum vessel size limit for inclusion on an IUU vessel list; (b) achieving consensus in the decision-making process where a flag State can exercise a veto in preventing their vessels from being included on an IUU vessel list; (c) varying criteria for inclusion on an IUU vessel list among RFBs; (d) reciprocal recognition of the IUU lists of other RFBs and the consequences of automatic listing of vessels from another RFB; (e) the impact of IUU listing of one vessel on other vessels controlled by the same owner; and (f) follow up on how members monitor landings and implement their obligations for prohibiting IUU vessels from landing their catch.

14. The RSN also noted that some tuna organizations were reviewing three other issues in relation to a process for identifying and taking action against IUU fishing. These comprised: (a) recognition of IUU vessel lists from other RFMOs; (b) expanding the reach of penalties for confirmed IUU fishers so that the inclusion of a vessel on an IUU vessel list would result in all other vessels in a fleet owned by that person or entity being listed; and (c) achieving consensus in the decision-making process, where flag States of vessels being considered for inclusion on an IUU vessel lists participate in the discussions leading to a listing.

15. One tuna RFB reported on additional developments including: (a) new modifications on a comprehensive catch documentation scheme; (b) a stricter approach to positive and negative vessel lists, including the possibility of including member countries in the IUU vessel list; and (c) encouraging non-members to join and comply with conservation and management measures.

16. The effectiveness of an IUU vessel list that is maintained by a further RFB for contracting and non-contracting parties was described. Other new developments in that organization include the adoption of measures that deal with the control of nationals, a policy of cooperation for capacity building in respect of both trade documentation and cooperation for contracting parties and non-contracting parties.

17. In one region, controlling access into national zones was used as a RFB compliance tool. This requires good standing on a regional register prior to entry and prohibiting access if a vessel has carried out IUU activities on the high seas such as illegal catch or transshipment. The need for investment in various MCS tools has been highlighted, including strengthening members' capacity to conduct joint high seas patrols, addressing cross-jurisdictional issues relating to observers, and commissioning a study of the MCS capacity of all RFB members in the region, with a view to developing the next set of tools. In this regard, one of the options proposed is a regional MCS centre.

18. A RFB with eleven members, three of which are least developed countries, faced a lack of resources and capacity as a key constraint. In addressing this situation, the RFB members agreed that one member should take the lead in advancing progress to combat IUU fishing in the region, and as a result two regional fora have been held and regional organizations have been mobilized. A plan of action is being prepared to address the feasibility of setting up a regional MCS centre. Concerted efforts are being made to examine the special requirements of developing countries, and discussions are taking place on how to address this at the resumed session of the Technical Consultation to draft a legally-binding agreement on port State measures, with a focus on training and capacity development.

19. The RSN recognized that one of the most important challenges for small-scale fisheries is traceability of catch and product. In this respect, there is a strong need for capacity building, especially in monitoring, surveillance and compliance enforcement.

20. The RSN noted the success of a two-pronged approach which herds vessels flying flags of non-compliance from the area of an RFB's competence, and establishes an IUU vessel list which prohibits listed vessels from receiving services in areas where two or more RFBs cooperate. In addition, RSN highlighted the importance of a port State control system that requires flag State verification that a vessel has been licensed, allocated a catch quota and was fishing legally.

21. The RSN noted that in some RFBs the minimum size limit of vessels eligible for inclusion on an IUU vessel list has been extended from vessels 24 metres in length to vessels less than 24 metres that are capable of fishing on the high seas. A clear definition of IUU fishing would be needed to confirm that such fishing can occur anywhere, and not just in zones under national jurisdiction as some States currently assert.

22. To ensure that vessels to be placed on IUU lists can be rigorously identified, the RSN acknowledged that a unique vessel identifier would facilitate production of a single global

IUU vessel list. It would also ensure that vessel information provided by different RFB IUU vessel lists is comparable. The latter consideration was seen as being relevant to the future establishment of a Global Record of Fishing Vessels.

23. In addressing compliance enforcement, the successes of one RFB were attributed to proper planning, the building of experience through the exchange of enforcement personnel, use of modern information technology (IT) for coordination of enforcement efforts and regional cooperation.

24. The RSN agreed that good planning and adequate coordination are essential for effective MCS and compliance enforcement. It was also noted that effective cooperation and planning were key, and that problems arose with the breakdown of compliance by a vessel and not necessarily by the flag State. The RSN reiterated that funding and coordination are fundamental in effective compliance enforcement.

25. The Chair summarized the discussion, and identified in order of priority the following areas that had repeatedly been addressed.

- Capacity building: the need for the right tools and people to do the job.
- The need for MCS cooperation with respect to information sharing and coordination of activities.
- The clear fact that political mobilization has been helpful, noting that comprehensive information sharing and political mobilization are interdependent.
- The need for transparency. Irrespective of how vessels are listed, publicly available information on vessels facilitates informed judgements by operators. Major factors include public access to information, making available information on RFB IUU vessel lists as well as on vessel identification. Such information would also facilitate recognition by RFBs of the IUU vessel lists of other RFBs.
- Targeting of the operators: knowing who is responsible for the vessels concerned supports compliance processes, including traceability.
- For coastal States, the requirement for fishing vessels to be in good standing offers a means of controlling access for responsible vessels only.

The RSN concurred with this summary.

26. Mr Stephen Stuart, Global Record Project Manager, FAO Fishing Technology Service, outlined FAO development of a Global Record of Fishing Vessels. He explained that the Record was being designed as a tool to combat IUU fishing, and recalled the Expert Consultation on the Development of a Comprehensive Global Record of Fishing Vessels held in Rome, Italy, from 25 to 28 February 2008 (FAO Fisheries Report No. 865) and programme of work endorsed by COFI-28. He underlined the importance of assessing MCS in a wider group of user needs, and reported that the experts had agreed that a Global Record would be most useful if a unique vessel identifier were adopted; this would offer increased transparency and traceability with regard to the movement of vessels. In this regard he expressed interest in the work of the tuna bodies, and an intention to collaborate with the work they have undertaken. Mr Stuart stated that the ultimate outcome would be a technical report to outline a range of matters, especially costs and benefits and recommendations on development of a comprehensive Global Record.

27. In discussion, it was noted that the Global Record could cover fisheries support (i.e. refrigerated transport and supply) vessels, as well as fishing vessels. The RSN noted that the outcomes of the meeting of tuna RFMOs to be held in June in San Sebastian, Spain, relating to work on a unique vessel identifier offers potential as a component of a pilot project to test the Global Record's implementation.

28. The potential role of the CWP in combating IUU fishing was noted, including its service as a mechanism for global coordination and data sharing, and for ensuring consistency of data. It was noted that the CWP could provide a forum to address implementation of a unique vessel identifier, and less urgently the requirements for data to be reported correctly to facilitate the implementation of port State measures. The RSN noted that, in terms of end use of information, CWP has an extremely important role to play.

29. The Chair drew attention to the issue of catch documentation harmonization as an outcome of the eleventh session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, Bremen, Germany, 2–6 June 2008 (RSN/II/2009/Inf.6) and endorsed by the COFI-28. He noted that harmonization of the documentation schemes is still an objective of the FAO. While there has been limited commitment to changing the reporting forms with respect for catch documentation and certification schemes, the use of electronic data has improved sharing and harmonization of data largely attributable to the contemporaneous nature of the data. It was noted that modification of individual schemes would not be required as long as similar categories of information were collected. The Session identified the information that would be needed, and FAO has been asked to develop harmonized procedures in that regard.

30. The RSN noted that harmonized catch document information is necessary for verification and certification of:

- catches
- landings
- transshipments
- export and import operations
- fish caught for farming purposes
- landings for domestic consumption

31. The Chair drew attention to the Sub-Committee's discussions on ecolabelling, and to the conclusions and recommendations of COFI (COFI-28 Report, Paragraphs 26–32). It was noted that some developing countries may have concerns on the question of ecolabelling.

Overcapacity

32. The RSN noted the IPOA on the Management of Capacity, and that the ongoing work on the matter is important to sustainable fisheries management. It was recognized that the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is the only RFB that has a strict capacity limitation regime in place.

33. In one region, overcapacity has been identified as a driver of other problems including IUU fishing. However, tackling this in the context of small-scale fisheries would require balancing overcapacity mitigation with considerations of community livelihoods. It would be important to continue sending the message to governments that sustaining overcapacity is

doing no favours to fisheries management in the long term. In this regard, the RSN acknowledged the importance of capacity building, outreach and education.

34. The RSN noted that overcapacity will be addressed by the tuna RFBs meeting in San Sebastian in the form of a special workshop. The RSN also noted that tuna RFBs are addressing socio-economic impacts. A key consideration in this regard is how capacity restrictions impact on coastal States' legitimate aspirations to develop tuna fisheries.

UNGA Resolution 61/105

35. Mr Andre Tahindro, Secretary of the Informal Consultations of States Parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), provided information on behalf of UN/DOALOS to highlight developments in the work of DOALOS that are directly relevant to the work of RFBs. He reported on the status of UNSFA and on the forthcoming UNSFA Review Conference in 2010, the eighth round of informal consultations of States Parties to UNSFA (ICSP), implementation of UNGA 61/105 and the UN Open Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. The full text of Mr Tahindro's statement is in Appendix E.

36. The Chair recalled the availability to developing States of the assistance funds from Part VII Trust funds of the UNFSA. He also noted that RFBs will be called on to contribute to the Secretary General's report for the UNFSA Review Conference. The RSN acknowledged the importance of input by RFBs to the Conference.

37. The RSN again emphasized the vital role of capacity building and attendance at meetings for developing member countries, and it was considered important that different options be made available to support such activities. The RSN urged RFBs to bring information on the use of Part VII funds to the attention of their members.

38. The RSN recalled that information on the Network's activities had been presented in 2005) to ICSP. It noted the positive benefits for the RSN in continuing such communications. It agreed that the RSN should provide a statement for presentation at ICSP-8 (16 to 19 March 2009 in New York, United States of America). The statement is attached as Appendix F and will be delivered by the incoming Chair of the RSN.

39. The RSN agreed that a report of its 2009 meeting would be presented to ICSP-9 in 2010. It was agreed that the continuity of RSN information presentations to the ICSPs would be beneficial.

RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES AND MANAGEMENT IN AQUATIC, PARTICULARLY MARINE, ECOSYSTEMS

40. The Chair encouraged an open discussion on responsible fisheries and management in aquatic, particularly marine, ecosystems. He recalled a range of issues that have been discussed including the need to strengthen high seas governance through implementation of UNGA Resolution 61/105 on sustainable fisheries, port State measures, flag State performance and the Global Record of Fishing Vessels. He drew attention to discussions on discards, the results from the High Level Conference on Food Security in June 2009 and the meeting of parties to the Regional Seas Convention from 25 to 27 November 2008. Additional considerations included a global approach to marine protected areas (MPAs) and

their designation, developments to regulate bottom fisheries, vulnerable marine ecosystem designation and management, monitoring bycatch of non-target dependent and related species, implementation of the IPOA-Sharks and threats to fisheries by climate change. He noted the relevance of RSN-2 documents 6, 9, 11 and information documents 8 and 15 (see Appendix C).

41. In addressing the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF), the RSN pointed out that members may wish to consider the role of new technologies in facilitating ecosystem management. One tuna RFB reported their work in this regard, noting developments in scoping activities and priorities for stock assessment and capacity building.

42. The need for a global approach to MPAs was suggested, noting that the emphasis should be on fisheries management as this is sometimes not taken into account. Other impediments to establishing MPAs include cultural restrictions and management of non-target species.

43. A further MPA issue relates to promoting area networks without due regard to alternative employment for fishers, and those which establish no-take fishing zones where sustainable fishing is possible. In this regard the RSN took note of the value of MPAs as a tool for fisheries management, but encouraged a deeper understanding of the complexities and consequences of their establishment. The important role of scientific advice in this regard was emphasized.

44. The RSN acknowledged that its regional seas counterparts favour initiatives to form a representative network of MPAs, but that more dialogue with fishers should be undertaken. For example, one RFB finds it more useful to declare closed areas establishing measures for the whole ecosystem. Dialogue with other organizations (e.g. the International Maritime Organization [IMO] and the International Seabed Authority [ISA]) focusing on the marine environment is being undertaken).

45. One Programme reported on regional MCS initiatives, including the January 2008 Chittagong Resolution on MCS, which included plans to develop a regional MCS action plan. This Programme includes the formulation of a regional plan on sharks and a global project on safety at sea to link marine safety considerations with fisheries management.

46. The broad understanding of EAF attributed to one RFB considered it necessary to plan and support capacity building initiatives among its members.

47. The RSN underscored the difficulty for some RFB members, especially developing countries, to understand the EAF. In this regard, it agreed that it would be a high priority to improve understanding through outreach, education and capacity development.

48. One RFB reported on the scientific discovery of vulnerable marine areas that overlap with intensively fished areas. This situation is likely to be addressed later in 2009.

49. The RSN noted that FAO is about to declare a large marine ecosystem (LME) project for the Bay of Bengal, and that the Nansen Institute has initiated a number of EAF related projects in southwest Africa in cooperation with the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC).

50. The provision of scientific advice to fisheries managers by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) on a wide range of topics is evolving, and the need for more clarity of scientific information in the context of multiple objectives was underscored. The increasing importance of scientific advice on climate change was reported, as well as development of advice on good environmental status indicators for fisheries and ecosystem management as well as interactions between predators and prey.

51. An RFB noted, it is essential that an EAF be pursued for the sustainable management of salmon. The RFB concerned has developed a plan of action on habitat, and salmon aquaculture was considered to be an important issue, particularly in relation to the transmittal of genetic abnormalities, disease and parasite impacts.

52. For marine mammals, the multispecies aspects of management were underlined by another RFB. The interaction among predators and prey is being studied, and bycatch monitoring activities are being considered as important.

53. An ecosystem risk study is being undertaken by one RFB, and is likely to be completed by the end of 2010. This RFB has adopted binding measures relating to seabirds, sharks and sea turtles. Efforts have been made to address the catching of non-target finfish species and fishing with long driftnets has been prohibited. Two high seas areas in the West and Central Pacific will be closed to tuna fishing from 1 January 2010. These encompass 450 000 square kilometres of ocean. Another two areas are under consideration.

54. In another region, activities were described where the objectives of the concerned RFB Convention provide guidelines relating to the EAF and the application of precaution in the face of uncertainty. Related measures include a ban on driftnets and gillnets and a prohibition on the taking of sharks. A process of bioregionalization to identify specific areas by their biotic and abiotic character has been undertaken. The examination of potential areas for MPAs, including multiple use MPAs, is under evolution. Measures have been promulgated on bottom fishing, including definitions of vulnerable marine ecosystems. The requirements of UNGA Resolution 61/105 on vulnerable marine ecosystems had been met and six areas have been closed to fishing. Bycatch measures have also been initiated. Climate change is being addressed, and account is being taken of potential interactions between predators and prey where prey are also fishery target species. In the latter respect, management measures have allowed for escapement of prey species where these are targeted by both fisheries and predators.

55. The RSN acknowledged progress and the high levels of consistency in measures adopted to mitigate seabird bycatch by fisheries. It noted that there is still a need for ongoing research on the effectiveness of some measures and development of new mitigation techniques.

56. The RSN noted that the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) had reported that it was entering into memoranda of understandings (MOUs) with RFBs to facilitate the exchange of information on seabird distribution, and the need to develop sea-based observer programmes targeting seabird bycatch. The RSN reemphasized the ongoing need for information exchange on seabird bycatch mitigating measures between relevant RFBs.

57. In summary, the Chair noted that issues arising from general discussion highlighted the lack of uniform understanding of what is meant by an EAF. He also noted that financial and human resource capacity limitations are being faced by a number of RSN members in addressing the EAF and in providing for the mitigation of potential impacts of fisheries on non-target species.

ROLE OF REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES – THEMATIC SESSION

Presentation on the updated FAO Fisheries Circular on the role of RFBs

58. Ms Florence Poulain, Fishery Liaison Officer, International Institutions and Liaison Service, FAO, presented background to the publication by FAO since the 1980s of Fisheries Circulars that provide information on RFBs. She explained that the latest publication, in 2003, had also provided an analysis of emerging trends in fisheries governance by RFBs, and that an updated version was currently under preparation on the basis of responses to FAO questionnaires that had been distributed to forty-one RFBs in 2008. Ms Poulain reported that thirty-one responses had been received, and that the updated Circular was expected to be published in the coming months.

59. The Network noted this development and encouraged those RFBs that had not yet responded to the FAO questionnaire to do so.

RFMO/RFB performance enhancement

60. Mr Kjartan Hoydal, Secretary of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and Chair of the theme session relating to RFMO/RFB performance enhancement, reported on the outcomes of the session. Six fisheries organizations (NEAFC, ICCAT, IOTC, CCAMLR, NASCO, and CCSBT¹) reported that they have already concluded performance reviews and many others have started with the process (e.g. GFCM, NPAFC, IATTC, ICES²). Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) has just finalized a comprehensive reform process and intends to review its performance after most elements of the reform have been implemented. Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) is only 3 years old and anticipates a full performance review in a few years time. The Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC) reported that it is responsible for scientific advice and technical assistance only and has not yet initiated a performance review since it is not a body responsible for management. All final reports are accessible through the public web pages of the organizations. The UN/DOALOS representative communicated his satisfaction at this progress.

61. The theme session noted the many similarities of the procedures set up by the different organizations. In all cases the review process focused on similar areas including the efficiency and adequacy of management and conservation measures, scientific assessment and advice, compliance and control, and finance and administration. In some cases the review panel also

¹ NEAFC: North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission; ICCAT: International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas; IOTC: Indian Ocean Tuna Commission; CCAMLR: Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources; NASCO: North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization; CCSBT: Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna.

² GFCM: General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean; NPAFC: North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission; IATTC: Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission; ICES: International Council for the Exploration of the Sea.