

**REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES**

**Report of the**

---

**SPECIAL MEETING ON CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Rome, 11–12 May 2010**



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ISBN 978-92-5-106769-7

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## PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is the final report of the Special Meeting on Consolidation and Development of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) that was held at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11 to 12 May 2010.

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Report of the RECOFI Special Meeting on Consolidation and Development. Rome, Italy, 11–12 May 2010.

*FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report*. No. 960. Rome, FAO. 2011. 32p.

### ABSTRACT

The Special Meeting on Consolidation and Development of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) was held at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11 to 12 May 2010. The objective of the special meeting was to consider ways and means to enhance the role of RECOFI as a regional fisheries management organization. The meeting participants reviewed the preliminary findings of a technical review on the work and operations of the Commission. In addition, comparative information was provided on the statutes, budgets and structures of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and RECOFI. The meeting considered the financial status of RECOFI and future scenarios for the consolidation and development of the Commission with particular focus on the significant difference between Members' contributions and the total expenses of the Commission. The history and present structure of the GFCM was presented to the participants who agreed that the future strengthening of their own Commission would certainly benefit from the experience of the GFCM. The meeting agreed unanimously that RECOFI required strengthening to make it a more effective and legitimate organization. The meeting agreed to make three broad recommendations in relation to the future technical and institutional work of RECOFI and its financial needs. The proposals and recommendations from the meeting will be for consideration by the Commission at its Sixth Session in 2011.

## CONTENTS

OPENING OF THE MEETING	1
ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING	1
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES	1
OUTLINE OF SOME EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS AND FINANCING MECHANISMS OF REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BODIES	3
FINANCIAL AND ACTIVITY SCENARIOS: PRESENT SITUATION AND FUTURE OPTIONS	3
THE POINT OF VIEW AND EXPERIENCE OF A STAKEHOLDER OF THE GFCM	5
OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SIXTH SESSION OF RECOFI ON THE CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMISSION	5
ANY OTHER MATTERS	6
ADOPTION OF THE REPORT	6
 <b>APPENDIXES</b>	
A. Agenda	7
B. List of participants	8
C. List of documents	12
D. Opening statement by Mr Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director-General, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department	13
E. Preliminary findings on the operations of the Regional Commission for Fisheries	15
F. RECOFI publications (2008 to present)	21
G. Outline of some existing arrangements and financing mechanisms of regional management bodies	23
H. Financial and activity scenarios: present situation and future options	26
I. Brief outline of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean	32

## **OPENING OF THE MEETING**

1. The Special Meeting on Consolidation and Development of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) was held at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11 to 12 May 2010. The meeting was attended by seven Members of the Commission. The list of participants is attached as Appendix B.
2. The meeting is a follow-up to the Fifth Session of RECOFI held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, from 12 to 14 May 2009, during which the Commission requested the Secretariat to convene an ad hoc intersessional meeting to consider ways and means to enhance the role of RECOFI as a regional fisheries management organization.
3. The meeting was called to order by Mr Piero Mannini, RECOFI Secretary and Senior Fishery Officer, FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa, Cairo, Egypt. He invited Mr Jean-François Pulvenis de Séligny, Director of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Economics Division, FAO, Rome, Italy, to read a statement on behalf of Mr Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director-General, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, FAO, Rome, Italy. This statement appears in Appendix D. The RECOFI Secretary then invited His Excellency Dr Hamad bin Said Al-Oufi, Undersecretary, Ministry of Fisheries Wealth, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, in his capacity as the highest ranking delegate, to make a statement on behalf of the other delegates. Dr Al-Oufi highlighted the importance of the fisheries sector in RECOFI countries in many respects, including food security, employment and trade. He stressed that the Sultanate of Oman is a committed supporter of the Commission. Dr Al-Oufi concluded by wishing everyone present a fruitful meeting.
4. The RECOFI Secretary thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for the understanding and cooperation shown in accepting that the meeting be convened at FAO headquarters in Rome instead of in the Islamic Republic of Iran as originally planned. This arrangement permitted the largest possible participation and support of the FAO Secretariat while keeping the cost of the meeting relatively low.
5. In the absence of the current RECOFI Chairperson, the Secretary moved that Mr Jassim Al-Qaseer, General Director, General Directorate for the Protection of Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife, Manama, Bahrain, as the current Vice-Chairperson of RECOFI and the Chairperson of the next plenary session in May 2011, be nominated to chair this meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING**

6. The Chairperson solicited input and suggestions from Members on the provisional agenda, which was adopted without any amendments. The agenda is in Appendix A. The list of documents for the meeting is attached in Appendix C.

## **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES**

7. Mr Joseph Catanzano, an independent consultant, introduced document RECOFI:2010/2 addressing preliminary findings of a technical review on the work and operations of the Commission. The document is attached in Appendix E. He pointed out that the purpose of the technical review was to make recommendations to enhance RECOFI's role and efficiency. The analysis and preliminary findings of the technical review were based on eight considerations:

- (i) knowledge on the status of resources and fisheries, data collection and sharing;
- (ii) knowledge on the status of aquaculture;
- (iii) regional dimensions of the fishing and aquaculture sectors;

- (iv) decision-making, transparency, participation and methods to define the Commission strategy, to implement the strategy and to assess the results;
- (v) quality and provision of scientific advice and economic and social analysis;
- (vi) decision-making process to adopt Commission recommendations and measures;
- (vii) capacity development, training and technical assistance; and
- (viii) communication and information.

8. In his presentation, the consultant highlighted a number of pertinent issues, including that the Commission:

- was heavily reliant on FAO services, both financial and in kind;
- had not yet made recommendations to its Members concerning fisheries management and aquaculture despite having the mandate to do so; and
- had served as a forum for the transfer of knowledge and for strengthening capacity for fisheries research and management and aquaculture development.

9. In addition, the consultant noted that:

- Members lacked the financial and human resources to maximize benefits for the initiatives already being undertaken by the Commission;
- the non-political nature of FAO regional fishery bodies (RFBs) was important in facilitating dialogue and cooperation among Members;
- efforts to overcome Members' constraints identified in the questionnaire should be addressed, including fostering a more participatory approach in the Commission's work and decision-making;
- an assessment of national governance capacities was required;
- criteria and principles to define and develop RECOFI's regional governance priorities was needed;
- weaknesses in raising financial resources to support RECOFI's activities required attention; and
- a new vision was required to guide the Commission.

10. The meeting welcomed the consultant's presentation noting that it provided a fresh approach to strengthening, reorienting and reforming RECOFI's operations. It was agreed that a revised Commission structure would assist considerably in implementing Commission decisions and making it a more dynamic and responsive organization. Moreover, it was suggested that reviews of this type, which were seen to be healthy and productive, should be undertaken on a regular basis to ensure that the Commission's activities were attuned to Member's needs and changing regional and global conditions.

11. Within the scope of the Commission's mandate and as a starting point for further enhancing regional cooperation, the meeting agreed that there would be merit in evaluating the current role and needs of the fisheries sector in Member countries. It was proposed that RECOFI undertake national assessments to identify priority issues and areas for future work. It was agreed also that a more robust and vigorous Commission would assist Members in their efforts to implement RECOFI decisions.

12. The meeting, while noting the considerable amount of work carried out by the Commission and its subsidiary bodies during the last biennium as shown in the up-to-date list of RECOFI publications (Appendix F), expressed considerable concern about the lack of follow-up and implementation of decisions and recommendations from the technical meetings convened by the Commission. Reasons were identified for this lack of follow-up and it was agreed that RECOFI should be involved in assisting Members in implementing decisions. However, it was recognized that such a role had financial implications and that funding would need to be secured if activities to support the implementation of Commission decisions were to be undertaken. To bolster its legitimacy,

the meeting underscored the need for the Commission to achieve tangible results of a quantifiable nature.

13. The meeting reaffirmed the strong basis for cooperation among RECOFI Members. However, it was noted that there were capacity differences among Members and not all countries were in an equivalent position to implement Commission decisions. Furthermore, the meeting recognized that strengthening cooperation with other organizations in the region working on fisheries, fisheries-related issues and aquaculture should be encouraged. It was stressed that the Commission should seek to interact with these organizations, drawing on and learning from their challenges and achievements.

14. The Commission's funding constraints affected its capacity to deliver quality services to its Members. Also affected by this funding constraint are the promotion of regional cooperation and collaboration. The meeting recognized the need for Members to ensure that the Commission had the resources required to fund its programmed activities. Considerable attention focused on the ways and means to secure funding, and it was suggested that FAO should assist RECOFI to prepare well-documented project proposals for donor funding. To reinforce the importance of securing extra-budgetary support for projects, the meeting agreed on the need for a proactive approach.

15. Noting that the traditional focus of the Commission had been on statistical and scientific matters, the importance of economic and social considerations was underscored. Some Members expressed the view that financial and economic issues would be more difficult to address nationally because they did not fall within the purview of fisheries administrations. Nonetheless, the meeting agreed that fisheries and aquaculture played an important economic and social role in RECOFI Members and that the Commission should address these issues fully.

16. Recognizing that the consultant's complete report would be made available in the near future by the Secretariat, it was agreed that Members should review the report and provide responses to the Commission's Secretary within a prescribed period of time. A reasonable review period would be required given that a number of national agencies, and not only the fisheries administration, would be engaged in the process.

17. The meeting agreed that there should be clear, solid, and well-structured proposals and recommendations coming out of this meeting for consideration by the Commission's 2011 session. Ultimately, the problems faced to accomplish this will have to be solved by the Commission.

## **OUTLINE OF SOME EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS AND FINANCING MECHANISMS OF REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BODIES**

18. The Secretariat introduced document RECOFI:2010/3 providing comparative information on the statutes, budgets and structures of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI). The document is attached in Appendix G. GFCM, IOTC and RECOFI are the three regional fishery bodies established under the FAO Constitution with management powers and autonomous budgets. The Secretariat highlighted similarities and differences between the three bodies, including the level of technical support from FAO to the Commissions.

19. Members noted the similarities and differences among these bodies, recognizing that RECOFI was a relatively new organization, especially compared with the GFCM, which was founded in 1949.

## **FINANCIAL AND ACTIVITY SCENARIOS: PRESENT SITUATION AND FUTURE OPTIONS**

20. The Secretariat introduced document RECOFI:2010/4 addressing the financial status of RECOFI and future scenarios for the consolidation and development of the Commission. The document is attached as Appendix H.

21. The Secretariat reviewed the financial situation of the Commission as of May 2009 highlighting in particular the significant difference between Members' contributions and the total expenses of the Commission. In the last biennium (2008–2009), the actual total working costs related to RECOFI activities were US\$557 459.91, including the cost of FAO staff members (technical support and travel costs) supporting the Commission. The latter cost is about seven times more than the total national Members' contributions over the same period (US\$80 000). The Secretariat noted that the FAO contribution over the same period represented 73.61 percent of financial commitments. If the Commission were to be fully autonomous and financially self-supporting, the annual contribution of Member countries would need to rise. The independent consultant estimated the amount to be around US\$35 000 per country per year as a minimum.

22. During the Fifth Session of the Commission, the Secretariat informed Members that the accumulated pending arrears were US\$90 187.83 as of May 2009.

23. The Secretariat expressed the view that RECOFI should evolve towards an organization capable of better delivering services to the Members and to broaden the scope of activities and to involve other stakeholders such as other regional bodies and the private sector. The importance of the ways and means of improving the Commission's financial capacity was based on the following utilities:

- more autonomy for the Commission;
- more activities in service of Members;
- more participation of internal and external human capacities; and
- a higher ability to attract partners/donors, as the commitment of the latter was based on the degree and ability of RECOFI to self-finance on an ongoing basis.

24. Looking to the future, three scenarios were presented:

1. a status quo of equal payment with upward adjustment of annual contributions;
2. maintaining the principle of equal and compulsory minimum contribution supplemented by extra-budgetary contributions by Member countries on a voluntary basis; and
3. replacing equal payments with indexed contributions based on a variety of variables.

25. The meeting noted that, besides the three aforementioned scenarios, other options could also be identified and taken into consideration. Moreover, it was highlighted by the Secretariat that there were two different financial means to support the Commission: (1) directly through agreed contributions by Members; and (2) indirectly and, additionally, through extra-budgetary funding of field projects (national or regional).

26. The meeting remarked, with regret, that it was most counterproductive that some Members had not yet settled their arrears and that they did not pay their assessed contribution to RECOFI on time. This should be taken to reveal the low or, at best, uncertain degree of the Members' commitment to support the Commission.

27. The meeting took note of the very significant financial contribution that FAO has provided to RECOFI during the last biennium, and was informed that this level of support could not be continued indefinitely in the future given the financial constraints faced by FAO.

28. The meeting recognized that the key was to link the budgetary decisions to implement the desired projects with desired outcomes, such as capacity development and other ongoing activities. Needless to say, autonomy of the Commission required a solid and recurrent budget. Relations with other commissions and donors would be that much stronger with an autonomous and self-financing RECOFI.

## THE POINT OF VIEW AND EXPERIENCE OF A STAKEHOLDER OF THE GFCM

29. The Chairperson of the GFCM, Mr Mohamed Hadj Ali Salem, was invited to present in his personal capacity this FAO Article XIV regional fishery body focusing on key historical events that shaped the organization and that led to its present structure. Like other regional fishery management organizations, the GFCM mandate is to focus on the conservation, rational management and appropriate utilization of its living and shared marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and connecting waters. The full presentation of Mr Hadj Ali Salem is in Appendix I.

30. The delegates of the participating RECOFI countries thanked the Secretariat as well as the GFCM President for the informative presentation on the current structure of the GFCM and the evolutionary milestones that have occurred since its existence to strengthen the management role played by this Commission in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The importance of GFCM and its management and regulatory role in the region was noted and well appreciated regardless of the decline in capture landings over the years. The delegates agreed that the future strengthening of their own Commission would certainly benefit from the experience of the GFCM and noted that capacity building in the region is needed and could possibly be supported by existing training platforms operating in the Mediterranean area such as the Centre International de Hautes Études Agronomiques Méditerranéennes (CIHEAM; [www.ciheam.org](http://www.ciheam.org)).

## OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SIXTH SESSION OF RECOFI ON THE CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMISSION

31. The meeting agreed unanimously that RECOFI required strengthening to make it a more effective and legitimate organization. However, it was recognized that the movement towards a stronger and more dynamic Commission should be achieved in a phased, stepwise approach. It was stressed that Members should lead the Commission's work and activities, both in the period of reorganization and strengthening and afterwards as RECOFI takes on its role as a fully functional and operational regional fisheries management organization. Under this scenario, the Commission, as an FAO body, would continue to benefit from support and guidance provided by the Organization.

32. The meeting agreed to make three broad recommendations in relation to the future technical and institutional work of RECOFI and its financial needs:

**Technical:** RECOFI:2010/2 made a suite of technical recommendations that should be considered as Members move to strengthen RECOFI. It was agreed that Members would review the document in their countries and provide written comments on each of the eight points raised in RECOFI:2010/2 to the Secretariat before 30 September 2010. The Secretariat would collate and analyse the national responses to develop a paper and recommendations for consideration and decision at the 2011 session of the Commission.

**Institutional:** The meeting noted that the RECOFI operated with a part-time Secretariat. This situation limited the scope and depth of the Commission's work. Members should consider whether the services provided by FAO at the current level were sufficient and adequate to meet the fisheries needs and challenges of the region. If this was not the case a decision concerning a permanent Secretariat would have to be faced as an option. Decisions relating to the Commission's structure and other institutional considerations were needed. Members were specifically directed to paragraph 14 of RECOFI:2010/2 in relation to these matters.

**Financial:** Based on the information contained in document RECOFI:2010/4, the meeting recognized that RECOFI's financial needs, including the level of Members' contributions, depended on the work programme agreed by the Commission. It was also recognized that the current contribution level (US\$5 000 per year) was quite inadequate, particularly when the amount of arrears were taken into account. After having assessed and agreed on the Commission's technical and institutional

requirements to address fisheries and aquaculture issues in the region, RECOFI should determine how the work programme would be funded. The Commission's core functions and activities should be covered at least by Member contributions while other activities of a project nature could be funded by extra-budgetary funding.

33. Members were aware that a major challenge for delegates attending this meeting would be how to present its recommendations and outcomes to relevant national authorities after returning to their respective capitals. This would be important to ensure that solid decisions could be made at the Commission's 2011 session. The meeting underscored the fact that RECOFI was vital to the region if regional fisheries cooperation was to be enhanced further and if problems such as overfishing, resource depletion, environmental damage and adverse impacts on wildlife were to be mitigated or avoided and if food security in the region is to be enhanced.

#### **ANY OTHER MATTERS**

34. The Secretariat distributed to meeting delegates a CD-ROM with the updated series of RECOFI capture production statistics (1986–2008) compiled by the FAO Statistics and Information Service (FIPS).

#### **ADOPTION OF THE REPORT**

35. The report was adopted on 12 May 2010.

### **Agenda**

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the meeting
3. Preliminary findings on the operations of the Regional Commission for Fisheries
4. Outline of some existing arrangements and financing mechanisms of regional management bodies
5. Financial and activities scenarios: present situation and future options
6. The point of view and experience of a stakeholder of the GFCM
7. Options and recommendations to the Sixth Session of RECOFI on the consolidation and development of the Commission
8. Any other matters
9. Adoption of the report

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