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**TENTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL FISHERY BODY
SECRETARIATS' NETWORK**

Rome, 5, 6 and 12 July 2024

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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is the report of the Tenth Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN-10), held on 5, 6 and 12 July 2024.

ABSTRACT

The Tenth Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN-10)¹ took place immediately before and in concomitance with the Thirty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI-36), which was held from 8 to 12 July 2024. The meeting was attended by forty-seven of the RSN members and permanent observers, one invited expert organization and the Government of France. The meeting discussed in detail global policies and the role of the network in their implementation at the regional level. Special attention was drawn to the need to establish a collaborative framework amongst regional fishery bodies (RFBs) with the aim of setting common priorities and creating potential opportunities for RFBs, Contracting Parties and Members, to streamline regional agendas and engage in impactful decision-making on matters of international concern.

¹ Background documents available at: <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/meeting/41450>

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABMT	area-based management tool
ACAP	Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels
BBNJ	marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction
BBNJ Agreement	Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction
BOBP-IGO	Bay of Bengal Programme-Intergovernmental Organization
CACFish	Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
BOBSAN	Bay of Bengal Stock Assessment Network
BMO	Basin Management Organization
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CCSBT	Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna
COFI	Committee on Fisheries
CRFM	Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism
CTMFM	Joint Technical Commission for the Argentina/Uruguay Maritime Front
CWP	Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics
DOALOS	Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
EAF	ecosystem approach to fisheries
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EIFAAC	European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
FIRMS	Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
ILBI	international legally binding instrument
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IUU	illegal, unreported and unregulated
IWC	International Whaling Commission
MCS	monitoring, control, and surveillance
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NACA	Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia and the Pacific
NAFO	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
NASCO	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
NEAFC	North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
NFI	Fisheries and Aquaculture Division of FAO
NPAFC	North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission
OECMs	other effective area-based conservation measures
OSPESCA	Organization for the Fishing and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus
PSC	Pacific Salmon Commission
PSMA	Agreement on Port State Measures
RECs	Regional Economic Communities

RECOFI	Regional Commission for Fisheries
RFAB	Regional fishery advisory body
RFB	regional fishery body
RFMO	regional fisheries management organization
RoP	Rules of Procedure
RSN	Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network
RSN-9	Ninth Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network
RSN-10	Tenth Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network
RSO	regional seas organization
SEAFDEC	Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre
SIOFA	Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement
SOFIA	The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture
SOI	Sustainable Ocean Initiative
SoSI	SOFIA State of Stocks Index
SPC	The Pacific Community
SPRFMO	South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
SSF	small-scale fisheries
TOR	terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFSA	United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement
WCPFC	Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WECAFC	Western and Central Atlantic Fishery Commission
WTO	World Trade Organization
VMS	vessel monitoring system

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN) held its Tenth Meeting (RSN-10) on 5, 6 and 12 July 2024 in hybrid modality.

The meeting was held in a highly participatory manner and was attended by 80 representatives of the secretariats of RSN member organizations and observers. Participants included secretariats of regional fishery bodies (RFBs²), RSN permanent observers, representatives from the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Government of France, and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) staff. The list of participants is available in Appendix 4.

The RSN Co-Chairs, Director-General of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and Secretary of the Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) respectively, opened the meeting, welcomed the participants³ and thanked the FAO and the RSN Secretariat for the support provided intersessionally.

The Assistant Director General (ADG) of FAO and Director of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI) welcomed the participants and recalled that since its inception in 1999 as an FAO-led initiative, the RSN has grown steadily to include 57 international organizations and permanent observers. He emphasized that RSN is a unique coordination and cooperation mechanism and forum for RFBs. It is also a focal point between the RSN members and FAO and could facilitate future implementation of international agreements (i.e., WTO Agreement on fisheries subsidies and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction [BBNJ Agreement]) through engaging both FAO Members and RFB Contracting Parties.

2. MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

The Secretary of RSN recalled that RSN-9 adopted new Terms of Reference and amended its Rules of Procedure. He pointed out that RSN members and permanent observers' secretaries speak in their personal capacity and not on behalf of the organizations to which they belong.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The provisional agenda was amended to include agenda item 13. The adopted agenda is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

4. PRESENTATION OF REPORTS

4.1 REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSONS

On behalf of the Chairpersons, the RSN Secretary provided a brief update of the intersessional RSN activities conducted since the last meeting of RSN in 2022 (RSN-9), which included the following:

² Regional fisheries advisory bodies (RFABs) and regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) are collectively referred to as regional fishery bodies (RFBs).

³ Throughout this document, the name of each RFBs is used only to refer to their secretaries attending the meeting and not to the respective body or agreement.

- contributed to the organization of Regional Consultation on the Development of a Coordination Framework between RFBs in the Eastern Central Atlantic Ocean (Accra, Ghana, 30 November to 2 December 2022);
- supported the organization of the international workshop “Mainstreaming climate change into international fisheries governance – the case of Regional Fisheries Bodies in the Indo-Pacific region (Chennai, India, 17-19 October 2023)” in coordination with the Government of India and BOBP-IGO;
- organised the “First global workshop between regional fishery bodies and basin management organizations towards sustainable inland fisheries in the context of food security and nutrition (Entebbe, Uganda, 6-8 December 2023)”, in collaboration with the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) and the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) in December 2023; and
- liaised and cooperated with relevant FAO colleagues in the organization of the “Workshop on Fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures in areas under the jurisdiction of regional fisheries bodies (FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 22-24 January 2024)”.

The meeting welcomed the work carried out by the RSN Secretariat during the intersessional period and its continued effort in strengthening relations amongst its members.

4.2 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS AND ISSUES THAT THEY WANT TO HIGHLIGHT RELATED TO THEIR ORGANIZATIONS/REGION THAT HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER RFBS

The Director General of FFA made a presentation focused on the economic and social aspects of the fisheries sector in the areas under the organization’s mandate and current related-opportunities and challenges faced by the FFA secretariat and its 17 members, in particular with regard to climate change and food security issues. Three main initiatives were highlighted in this respect: (i) Climate Change Strategy and Implementation Plan; (ii) the East New Britain Initiative on growing opportunities for economic benefits and (iii) Social benefits through the creation of the Social Benefits Unit at FFA. The FFA Director General also mentioned the MCS integrated framework developed by FFA over 40 years and for which there is continued effort in technology investments.

The Executive Secretary of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) recalled the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of ACAP and noted in particular the fisheries-related achievements and challenges for ACAP over the past twenty years. ACAP noted that cooperation with fisheries organisations and other multilateral bodies was essential to ACAP’s work in research, development of best practice advice, implementation and compliance, since the biggest threat facing albatrosses and petrels came from fishing operations.

The Executive Secretary of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) noted the increasing interest in krill fishing which led to the decision by the Scientific Committee to develop the scientific basis for a new krill fishery management approach. CCAMLR also reported that there are four new proposals to set up high seas marine protected areas in the CAMLR Convention Area, in addition to the two already in place.

The Secretary of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) provided the RSN Secretariat with a written statement, where it was noted that, in response to its third performance review in 2023, in 2024 NASCO agreed to a ten-year Strategy and Action Plan to prioritize actions to be initiated immediately, and over the next ten years, to ensure a robust commitment to the conservation and restoration of wild Atlantic salmon at a critical time for the survival of the species with the many pressures exacerbated by the climate crisis. NASCO also revised its observer rules, developing an accreditation procedure specifically for Indigenous Peoples’ representatives and institutions, and agreed the Decision to prohibit the salmon fishery in Faroese Waters in 2024/2025 and 2025/2026.

The Senior Technical Advisor for the Joint Technical Commission for the Argentina/Uruguay Maritime Front (CTMFM) delivered a short presentation called: “The Common Fishing Zone - An ideal area in the Southwest Atlantic to study the impact of climate variability on the abundance/availability of fish stocks” outlining climate change impact in key biological processes. CTMFM also presented its five-year Environmental Programme approved in September 2023.

The Head of the Advice Department of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) informed the meeting that the combination of climate change and ecosystem-based fisheries management is the main development point for ICES advice activities. ICES sees the need to have a regular forum where the best available science related to the uptake of climate science related to advice occurs. ICES further informed that it has released aquaculture overviews for several regions in which climate change indicators are included.

The Executive Secretary of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) updated the meeting on its latest scientific developments which included the recent IWC’s Scientific Committee’s assessment on cetacean populations and the cooperation with FAO and RSN in finding and implementing joint solutions, through science, tools and capacity building.

The Director of Bay of Bengal Programme-Intergovernmental Organization (BOBP-IGO) stated that BOBP-IGO is working towards improving operational cooperation among the countries in the region, in particular: (i) building capacity and cooperation in stock assessment through the Bay of Bengal Stock Assessment Network (BOBSAN); (ii) promoting south-south cooperation through the BIMReN platform for facilitating collaboration among marine researchers; (iii) building capacity through the post graduate Diploma on Fisheries Law and Policy (PGDFLP); (iv) creating the Working Group on the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) to address BBNJ matters; and (v) working with FAO on implementing a regional plan on safety at sea and the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI).

5. RSN ACTIVITIES - REGIONAL UPDATES

5.1 COORDINATION AND COOPERATION AMONG RFBS

The RSN Secretary, gave a presentation on the value of regional cooperation and coordination of RFBs along with the potential complementary role of RSN to facilitate this process. The meeting noted that a certain level of collaboration may improve the support to respective constituencies, promote achievements, contribute to food security, as well as influence action at global scale. Participants stressed the importance of initiatives such as the Regional Consultations on the Development of Coordination Frameworks, and the international workshops on RFBs and climate change, to foster cooperation among RFBs. The meeting found it would be useful to conduct a mapping of existing formal arrangements between RFBs, including indicating the type of information collected through such arrangements. In this respect, formal mechanisms such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) as well as informal mechanisms, e.g., the Common Oceans Programme, should be encouraged to foster collaboration among RFBs.

The Chair pointed out that inputs provided on this item could create the basis for follow-up discussion and this would be done during the last session of RSN-10.

5.2 MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE CHANGE INTO INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES GOVERNANCE – THE CASE OF REGIONAL FISHERIES BODIES IN THE INDO-PACIFIC AND ATLANTIC REGIONS

The FAO Fishery Resources Officer gave a presentation on “Mainstreaming Climate Change into International Fisheries Governance: The Case of Regional Fisheries Bodies in the Indo-Pacific and Atlantic Regions”. She described the results and progress of FAO's activities supporting RFBs in their responses to climate change, including a global review and two regional workshops. She emphasized the need for improved data, risk-based decision tools, cross-learning, adaptive measures, recurrent or regular discussion on climate change, and access to climate funds to support climate-resilient fisheries management at the multilateral level.

The Deputy Director of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the FFA Director General delivered a joint presentation on “climate change and oceanic fisheries management”. SPC presented scientific evidence on observed impacts of climate change on the Pacific ecosystems, and projected climate change impacts on tuna fisheries, using SEAPODYM to model changes in abundance, distribution, and biomass. The results show significant implications for food security and livelihoods in the Pacific. FFA also shared its climate change strategy (2023) and implementation plan (2024).

The FAO Common Ocean programme shared updates on the deep-sea fisheries project which is currently working with seven RFBs to identify climate resilient solutions and the lessons learned. It added that the Tuna Project is looking at modelling results for Pacific tuna fisheries under different climate change scenarios. This will inform ongoing initiatives including a Green Climate Fund (GCF) project in the Pacific that might be replicated in the Indian and Atlantic oceans.

The meeting welcomed the presentations made and recognised climate change as a key area for cooperation and collaboration among RFBs. It reiterated the impact of climate change on small islands developing states and coastal communities which are experiencing escalation and intensification of extreme events due to climate change. Further, the importance of having good science, building capacity and sharing climate change expertise within regional fishery bodies and across their members repeatedly came across as crucial to fishery management.

6. RSN ACTIVITIES - GLOBAL UPDATES

6.1 INLAND RFBs AND BASIN MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The FAO Fishery Officer, and the FAO International Fisheries Consultant, presented the outcomes of the workshop between RFBs and Basin Management Organizations (BMOs) held in Entebbe in December 2023, which included the establishment of a Steering Committee between RFBs and BMOs. They explained that this Committee was created to prepare proposals for regional pilots and that FAO has initiated inter-divisional collaboration for multi-sectoral integrated water resource management (IWRM) pilot methodologies to support these regional pilots.

It was noted that for the first time inland fisheries related matters were presented to RSN, showing the added value this network brings to RFBs communities, as it creates synergies and opportunities to integrate knowledge across sectors. It was also noted that instruments such as the GBF are as relevant for inland fisheries as they are for marine fisheries given the high levels of biodiversity inland bodies support, making mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations in inland fisheries management a priority.

6.2 OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES (OECMS) AND RFBS

The FAO Fishery Officer, presented on the workshop on other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in areas under the jurisdiction of RFBs, which was held at FAO headquarters in Rome 22-24 January 2024. She explained that the aim of the workshop was to introduce the OECM concept, criteria and guiding principles through a mock evaluation exercise of four RFMOs case studies. The workshop also provided a forum for participants to discuss the role of RFBs in the Kunming-Montreal GBF (Target 3) and the BBNJ Agreement.

The Meeting recognized that the concept of OECM is evolving, especially with respect to the fishery sector. It was noted that guidance on criteria to identify activities that may or may not occur within an OECM is provided by CBD COP decisions, and these criteria should be applied by relevant authorities on a case-by-case basis and in a flexible manner.

Participants appreciated the experience gathered on this topic by organizations like NEAFC and NAFO and highlighted the value of the RSN network as a platform where knowledge can be passed onto others and be applied to their own work. When NEAFC and NAFO had completed their reporting processes, they would pass on the relevant information/best practice for RSN to circulate.

7. WIDER GLOBAL UPDATES

7.1 THE AGREEMENT UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA ON THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF MARINE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION (BBNJ AGREEMENT) AND THE ROLE OF RFBS

The Legal Officer of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) provided an overview of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), adopted on 19 June 2023, and underscored its relevance to RFBs, noting the many opportunities in the Agreement for cooperation and coordination with relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies (IFBs). He also provided an overview of capacity building activities that DOALOS, in its role of ad interim Secretariat of the BBNJ Agreement, is carrying out to assist states in becoming Parties to the Agreement and in its implementation. He noted that the Preparatory Conference met in June 2024 and planned further meetings during 2025.

The discussion touched upon the future implications for RFBs in relation to the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, including the need for RFBs to be proactive in adopting and improving management measures within their competence and encouraged cooperation and coordination, as referred to under the Agreement. Participants agreed that there is still a degree of uncertainty about what the way forward will be with respect to the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. Although it was also noted there have been some indications by contracting parties on next steps, for example by starting to include the matters developed in the Agreement in the agenda of RFMO scientific committees' work. The meeting also noted that RSN could have a role in collating RFBs' practices with regard to BBNJ implementation as they evolve, so that this information may be used by Secretariats to inform their members and create a basis for a coordinated approach.

7.2 FISHERIES AND THE CBD KUNMING-MONTRAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

The Senior Fishery Resources Officer at FAO, presented on the Kunming Montreal GBF, elaborating on its global goals and targets for biodiversity for 2030 and the wide applications of the GBF to aquatic

systems, fisheries and aquaculture and their sustainable use and management. He informed the meeting about the FAO's work to support Members to identify opportunities, challenges, and needs for operationalizing implementation of the GBF, while reflecting the varied views of fisheries stakeholders and fisheries management objectives. Finally, he reported that FAO is collating information and advice from fishers for a publication, with the aim of building on a biodiversity mainstreaming narrative for fisheries actors and signalling to the CBD community the requirements and opportunities for engaging fisheries in delivering on the objectives of the GBF.

The Programme Management Officer at the CBD Secretariat presented the GBF targets of interest for the fishery sector, including targets 3, 5 and 9. Target 5 in particular is key as it focuses on fisheries management and sustainable harvesting practices and approaches. He recalled that the CBD COP adopted a decision alongside the GBF emphasizing the critical importance of strengthening cooperation and synergies among processes, multilateral agreements, conventions, frameworks, and the critical need for those bodies to play an active role in the implementation of the framework. The COP also invited the governing bodies of those different conventions and agreements to endorse the GBF and to contribute to its implementation and monitoring. In addition, he recalled the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue, and its 4th biennial meeting held in Seoul in June 2024. He remarked that SOI aims to identify opportunities and approaches to enhance collaboration between regional seas and RFBs by looking at ways in which different regional entities can better improve their cooperation and coordination, including by finding linkages to the global processes.

The meeting had further discussion in relation to GBF indicators and reporting from RFBs and how such information will be taken up into a global assessment. It was concluded that more clarity on this matter is expected to come out of COP 16, in November 2024.

7.3 THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION AGREEMENT ON FISHERIES SUBSIDIES

The Head of Fisheries Subsidies at the World Trade Organization (WTO), reported on the status of ratification of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies noting that there are expectations for the entry into force to occur this year. Yet, she recalled that a second wave of negotiations is still on-going on outstanding issues such as subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing. She highlighted that the agreement is particularly important for RFMOs, especially with regard to the determination of IUU fishing activities by vessels and operators which may trigger prohibitions of subsidies. Finally, she reported on the approval of a Fish Fund to support all WTO members that would need assistance to operationalise the Agreement once it enters into force.

The meeting noted that the Agreement explicitly mentions RFMOs but not advisory bodies and asked the WTO to consider directly facilitating or supporting capacity development programs through the RFABs as well. The meeting pointed out that reporting requirements provided under the WTO Agreement are similar to FAO reporting requirements or reporting requirements and data sharing requirements under the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. Therefore, both FAO and the RFBs could play a role in assisting states in implementing the WTO Agreement without necessarily getting into the socioeconomic aspects which may not fall under the RFBs' specific competence.

7.4 CURRENT STATUS OF THE PSMA AND THE ROLE OF RFBs

The FAO Senior Fishery Officer, and the FAO Fishery Officer, made a presentation on the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) which currently has 105 Parties. The Agreement sets minimum requirements for port State measures at global, regional and national levels. RFBs have an important role to play in the implementation of the minimum requirements at regional level and play a role in sharing relevant information on the agreed standards. RFBs with e-PSM systems in place can support their Contracting Parties, that are Parties to PSMA, in meeting their obligations under PSMA by channelling relevant data to the Global Information Exchange System (GIES). RFMOs are also recipients of compliance information generated by Parties and would benefit from receiving information

related to breaches with their CMMs. For these reasons, Parties have agreed to the need for a dedicated PSMA Questionnaire for RFBs.

The meeting acknowledged the progress made in the implementation of the PSMA, including through operationalizing the GIES which supports Parties to the PSMA in fulfilling their obligation to share information with the purpose to take action against vessels involved in IUU fishing.

8. DATA AND ANALYSIS

8.1 UPDATES ON STOCK ASSESSMENT WORK

The FAO Senior Fishery Resources Officer, presented on the update of the Stock Status reporting done for the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOS-SOFIA), followed by an overview of the methodology used for the SOS-SOFIA and of the status of new areas examined compared to previous approach. He pointed out that FAO is working on improving the three categories (i.e., data, assessment and reporting) used for monitoring the global fish stocks status by using the assessment framework, used by ICES, which is evidence-based, replicable, consultative and has buy-in from countries.

The meeting congratulated FAO on the development of this new index and highlighted the importance of ensuring consistency in applying global indicators across different regions. FAO stressed that this new approach is meant to be participatory, therefore consultation with relevant regional bodies when collecting data sets and existing assessments will be taken into account.

8.2 DEVELOPMENT OF FISHERIES AND RESOURCES MONITORING SYSTEM (FIRMS)

The FAO Senior Fishery Officer and Secretary of Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) and the FAO Information Manager, explained that the 13th FIRMS Steering Committee meeting (FSC13, June 2023) responded positively to a proposal from NFI to support SOFIA State of Stocks Index (SoSI), making strategic recommendations including biennial data calls. As a result, FIRMS partners' stocks status submissions will be explicitly and transparently contributing to the index, in the SOFIA SoSI dissemination corner of the FIRMS website. A FIRMS Technical Working Group will take place during the fourth quarter of 2024 to review and validate SoSI Reference List of stocks and to operationalize support to the biennial updates of SoSI.

Participants expressed support to FIRMS as a platform for information flow, and where interactions between this global system and the RFBs is enhanced, including visibility of partners' contributions to the global SoS Index. The meeting also highlighted that Scientific Committees of RFBs would need some time to adapt to the new approach and to the fact that indicators they are not familiar with will be publicly available. The meeting agreed that to facilitate this process, for any technical meeting that FAO organizes, they should provide explicit instructions, timelines and deadlines well in advance to allow secretariats to discuss possible involvement and participation with their own constituencies.

8.3 UPDATES ON COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON FISHERY STATISTICS (CWP) ACTIVITIES

The Senior Fishery Officer and Secretary of the Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP), made a presentation on CWP activities. She remarked that since 1960 CWP, supported by the 19 participating organizations, continues to serve as the premier international and interorganizational forum where common definitions, classifications and standards for the collection of fisheries statistics are agreed upon, and more recently have also included aquaculture statistics. The intersessional work of CWP for the period 2022-2025 covers the development of standards on different topics carried out through ad hoc Task Groups, including catch and fishing effort concepts, geospatial, reference

harmonization, small-scale fisheries definitions, confidential_data and aquaculture handbook. She encouraged RSN Members who had not yet done so to become partners of CWP, or alternatively to join as observers of one or more Task Groups.

9. RSN VISIBILITY AND PROFILE

9.1 RESULTS OF THE RSN MAGAZINE SURVEY

The FAO International Fisheries Policy and Legal Expert presented the results of a survey on the future of the RSN magazine circulated ahead of the meeting. The survey purpose was to collect opinions on the usefulness of the product, and for the RSN members and partners to decide if it should continue to be published and if new funding opportunities should be explored. According to the results, RSN members and partners are overall satisfied with the magazine's content, format and layout. On average, all the sections of the magazine were rated as excellent or good in terms of contents, in particular the Editorial, the RSN guest and member updated sections. Strong preference was indicated in the survey for the magazine to become an online product to reduce the publication costs.

The meeting recognized the value of the magazine and reiterated its preference to move to an online version, possibly focusing on pre-determined themes decided by the network. The RSN Secretariat pointed out that after the magazine becomes an online product, the network will have to consider opportunities for future funding of the magazine's editorial work, as donors' contribution may be reduced or discontinued.

9.2 REPORTING TO PARTIES AND MEMBERS

The Chairs sought the meeting's views on ways to improve information exchange between the RSN Secretariat and RSN Members, and in turn from Members to their own constituencies.

Overall, the meeting commended the results of the regional workshops and proposed that the RSN Secretariat increase information exchange activities, particularly related to disseminating secretariats' "best practices" among other members. The meeting also thanked the RSN Secretariat for its work and coordinated effort, acknowledging the limited resources under which they operate.

The discussion touched upon different cooperative approaches and mechanisms that could enhance information exchange among RSN members, taking into account their diverse mandates and areas of interest. Again, the RSN magazine was mentioned as an added value for RSN members, especially for those that do not have a dedicated communication budget and for which the magazine is used to inform their constituencies of global and regional updates. Other participants shared concerns about how to develop and establish a working mechanism to ensure effective information exchange on regional developments among RFBs, whilst ensuring it does not become overwhelming or impractical. The meeting supported mapping out RFBs' respective mandates to enable the creation of regional sub-groups, that on a volunteer basis could provide inputs and information to the network on specific subjects. In addition, issues of an administrative nature, related to budget, meetings calendar and internal reporting to constituencies, could also be discussed in specific forums.

9.3 RSN CHAIRS' STATEMENT TO COFI36

The statement of the RSN Chairs is attached as Appendix 3 to this Report.

10. OTHER INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

10.1 UNOC 25 AND THE RFB FOCUSED SIDE EVENT

The Deputy Head of Department for Sustainable Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture of France presented an update on the RFB focused side event being organized for the third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3) which will take place in Nice, France in June 2025.

The meeting noted that RSN Members should be actively involved in this preparatory meeting of UNOC25 to ensure visibility to RFBs, particularly RFMOs, and seize the opportunity to strengthen partnerships. It was underlined that the target constituency at the conference was the State delegates (rather than NGOs etc) many of whom would be unfamiliar with fisheries and the work of the RFMOs. Some concerns about meeting logistics were raised by the meeting. In this context, RSN Members highlighted their recommendation to adjust the agenda of the side event, as follows:

- a. presentation of the different management strategies in the RFMOs;
- b. governance of the high seas;
- c. status of IUU fishing and the implementation of monitoring, control and surveillance systems, as well as conservation measures.

RSN Members also stated that such an event should be held in the “blue” zone given that RFBs are intergovernmental organizations, not civil society, and to appropriately highlight the important role of RFMOs under UNCLOS.

10.2 THE HONIARA SUMMIT

The FFA Director General provided an update on the Summit on SDG 14.4 being organized by the Solomon Islands Government in collaboration with the Forum Fisheries Agency, and the Office of the UN Envoy for Oceans, which will be held in Solomon Islands from 24-27 February 2025. The meeting will provide a platform for focused discussions on fishery management issues, including the role of RFBs and RFMOs in particular on ocean sustainability, in preparation of UNOC3 next year.

11. DISCUSSION ON RSN FOCUS PRIORITIES AND PROPOSED INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Chairs opened the floor for discussion on this matter. Future meetings of interest for the RSN network in the intersessional were mentioned, such as the BBNJ COP and the next workshop on climate change to be held in the Atlantic region, for which dates are to be decided.

Focus priorities and workplan of RSN for the intersessional are included in Appendix 2. The discussion continued under item 12.3

12. ELECTION OF RSN CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The current RSN Chairs, the Director General of FFA and Secretary of NEAFC, were re-elected as Co-chairs. In accordance with article 2 of the Rules of Procedure, the Director of the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter Governmental Organisation, was elected as Vice-Chair.

13. ANY OTHER MATTERS

13.1 UNOC 25

The discussion started under Agenda item 10.1 was continued on the final day of the meeting under agenda item 13.1, with the Ambassador from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in Rome, confirming that France was interested in organizing the RFB related side event in the margins of UNOC 2025.

The meeting welcomed France's commitment on this matter and asked that meeting logistics concerns be duly addressed before setting-up the side event.

13.2 PRESENTATION FROM THE SOUTHWEST INDIAN OCEAN FISHERIES COMMISSION (SWIOFC)

The Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) Secretary *ad interim* made a presentation on SWIOFC. He presented the background, main objectives, internal governance, institutional networks, partnerships and priorities of the Commission.

13.3 COMMON OCEANS PROGRAMME: STATE OF PROGRESS

The Senior Fishery Officer and Common Oceans Programme coordinator made a presentation to showcase the Common Oceans knowledge-sharing platform hosted on Dgroups. She demonstrated how this platform is being used to build a community and facilitate knowledge sharing and communication among programme and project partners and stakeholders.

The meeting highlighted the importance of actively participating in the Common Oceans Programme to feed technical discussions.

13.4 FOLLOW-UP ON DISCUSSION UNDER AGENDA ITEM 5.1

Following discussions of agenda items 5.1, 9.2 and 11, the Co-Chair and FFA Director General, drafted a working document to summarize discussions under the said agenda items which was circulated before the last session of RSN-10. The document is attached as Appendix 2.

The meeting:

- a) agreed to further explore ways to scale up internal coordination;
- b) stressed the importance of increasing RFBs' visibility in the FAO SOFIA biannual report. RFBs should have a special box on RFBs achievements in SOFIA;
- c) urged the RSN Secretariat to map out current formal arrangements between RFBs;
- d) recognized the need to support ongoing dialogues in groupings by region;
- e) called on RSN Members to follow up on the document during the intersessional period;

13.5 COFI OUTCOMES AND MATTERS OF INTEREST TO RSN

The meeting agreed that the network is of growing importance and visibility in the COFI context. It was highlighted that this recognition is the result of coordination and cooperation experiences put in place so far and for this reason it is essential to keep the momentum going in enhancing policy and practices as necessary. It was also noted that in the margins of COFI it would be beneficial for the group to prioritize work on specific areas based on the outcomes of the subcommittees' meetings.

14. OTHER MATTERS

The meeting extended warm thanks to the FAO Secretary of RSN and FAO Senior Liaison Officer, for his outstanding work during all his time as RSN Secretary and wished him a happy retirement.

The FAO ADG and NFI Director assured FAO's support to RSN and committed to minimising the time taken to fill the RSN Secretary position.

15. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

The meeting agreed that the report would be prepared by the RSN Secretariat to be adopted electronically.

16. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting on Friday 12 July 2024 at 12.00 hours (Rome time).

APPENDIX 1

AGENDA OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL FISHERY BODY SECRETARIATS' NETWORK (RSN-10)

(Hybrid meeting)

5, 6 and 12 July 2024 (09.00-17.00 hours Central European Time)

MEETING PLACE: FAO HQ

First Session, Friday 5 July 2024

Room: Philippines (C277)

From 09.00 to 17.00

- 1) Opening of the meeting
- 2) Meeting arrangements
- 3) Adoption of the Agenda
- 4) Presentation of reports
 - 4.1 Report of the Chairpersons
 - 4.2 Reports from members on particularly important developments and issues that they want to highlight related to their organizations/region that have implications for other RFBs.
- 5) RSN activities - Regional updates
 - 5.1 Coordination and cooperation among RFBs
 - 5.2 Mainstreaming climate change into international fisheries governance – the case of Regional Fisheries Bodies in the Indo-Pacific and Atlantic regions
- 6) RSN activities - Global updates
 - 6.1 Inland RFBs and basin management organizations
 - 6.2 OECMs and RFBs
- 7) Wider global updates
 - 7.1 The BBNJ and the role of RFBs
 - 7.2 Fisheries and the CBD Kunming-Montral Global Biodiversity Framework
 - 7.3 The World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies

Second Session, Saturday 6 July 2024

Room: Philippines (C277)

From 09.00 to 17.00

- 7) Wider Global updates (cont.)
 - 7.4 Current status of the PSMA and the role of RFBs
- 8) Data and analysis
 - 8.1 Updates on Stock assessment work
 - 8.2 Development of FIRMS
 - 8.3 Updates on CWP activities
- 9) RSN visibility and profile
 - 9.1 Results of the RSN Magazine survey

- 9.2 Reporting to Parties and Members
- 9.3 RSN Chairs' statement to COFI36

- 10) Other International Meetings
 - 10.1 UNOC 25 and the RFB focused Side Event
 - 10.2 The Honiara Summit

11) Discussion on RSN focus priorities and proposed intersessional activities

12) Election of RSN Chair and Vice-Chair

13) Other matters

Third Session, Friday 12 July 2024

Room: Lebanon (D209)

From 09.00 to 12.00

(Coffee break)

- 13) Other matters (cont.)
 - 13.1 UNOC 25 (France)
 - 13.2 Presentation from SWIOFC
 - 13.3 Common Ocean Programme: state of progress
 - 13.4 Proposed follow-up on discussion under Agenda Item 5.1
 - 13.5 COFI outcomes and matters of interest to RSN

APPENDIX 2

COORDINATION AND COOPERATION OF RSN: the co-Chair's draft text elements

Summary of Discussions regarding Agenda 5.1, 9 and 11

Under agenda item 5.1, the meeting discussed the value of regional cooperation and coordination of RFBs including on the potential complementary role of RSN to facilitate this process.

The Network is made of RFBs with similar but also very diverse mandates as they include for example, inland, aquaculture, coastal, offshore (EEZs and high seas). Irrespectively of their mandate, the challenges faced by RFBs in the context of international development of fisheries and aquaculture governance are often very similar as they are asked more and more to be able to keep up with such developments.

Ensuring a certain level of collaboration would possibly improve the support to respective Members/constituencies, promote the achievements contributing to food security, as well as influencing action at global scale. Different levels of collaboration are possible both formal (e.g. MOUs) and less formal (e.g. Common Oceans Programme) and by establishing information exchange and reporting mechanisms.

Pending the need for resources, regional consultations similar to those held in the Eastern Central Atlantic and in the Western Indian Ocean could be organized in other regions with the view of continuing to promote collaboration by organisations. In this framework, FAO can play a key role in supporting and assisting RFB Secretariats to coordinate and RSN is in a unique position to connect RFBs and other relevant organisations.

With this in mind, the following practical next steps are proposed to the meeting:

1. **STARTING POINT** – be clear on existing cooperation
 - a. MAP out current formal arrangements.
 - b. Recognise and support ongoing dialogues in groupings by region.
2. **IDENTIFY priority areas for cooperation** (also by using those highlighted from the two regional consultations, if helpful)
 - a. within each of these areas and any others, work with relevant programmes where cooperation is already in place, such as Common Oceans Programme, to exchange information and seek resourcing;
 - b. volunteers to help drive information exchange, especially on topics of common concern. For example:
 - proposal from FFA on IUU Fishing;
 - proposal from ICES on Climate Change;
 - others may wish to lead and coordinate on any of these, including the protection of biodiversity.
 - c. where there are minimum international standards to be implemented – incorporate into this work.

3. **BE MORE TARGETED in exchange of information**

- a. MAP by mandate – to divide us into relevant groups so we can target what information is sent to who – have clarity on mandate for each RFBs.
- b. Use existing mechanisms (not reinvent, not drift and expand) i.e.. ONLINE magazine, RSN meetings, online meetings, volunteers to share information, join an existing group chat or create a new one (noting the resources required to create groupings).
- c. MAP by theme e.g. DSM, BBNJ, WTO, CBD (OECMs), Climate Change, Administrative procedures. New tools i.e. EM, Aquaculture.
- d. Any other specific topics that would be useful for the various groupings.
- e. MAP by region (note this is in the current RSN website. Check for what needs updating).
- f. Draw on successful precedents for cooperation such as NAFO suggestion – FAO Deep Seas Project (Practically get together to see what we are all doing, Handbook on what is being done, Importance of FAO to manage). Suggestion from OLDEPESCA for guidelines.
- g. Circulate dates of RSN-organised regional consultations in advance (e.g. OECM, Climate Change). Ensure these meetings are not one-off and is part of the pathway to addressing priority needs.
- h. Better use of AI to facilitate work, including meeting records, share questions and responses – when we learn more about this capacity, harvest knowledge from websites.
- i. Proposal for a small taskforce from RSN to discuss HOW to improve on information exchange and sharing of capacity building.

4. **NEED RESOURCING** so this is not done in an ad hoc manner and can be implemented

- a. credibility – RSN and FAO to work together;
- b. FAO's support has been beneficial, and we need this to continue;
- c. need Members to support RSN;

APPENDIX 3

Statement from the RSN's chairs Thirty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI36) 8-12 July 2024

Mr Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

I speak as Co-Chair of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network, known as the RSN. The RSN brings together the secretariats of 54 regional fishery management organizations and regional fishery advisory bodies and partners. These cover a huge diversity of oceanic, coastal and inland fisheries, and aquaculture, from industrial to artisanal. The RSN does not make binding decisions, nor does it receive financial support from its members.

The RSN meets regularly in the margins of COFI. Twenty-five years old, the network is an important coordination and briefing mechanism on the key issues on which fisheries bodies can support their own parties. The network shares best practice, including on administration and it publishes information on the work of fisheries bodies internationally, supporting their parties on issues related to income, food security, environment, employment, subsistence, and women's livelihood.

With the important support of FAO, it promotes technical work under areas identified by COFI, and which members can support within fisheries bodies. These include

- management of fisheries, including in the high seas
- climate change
- Area Based Management for Conservation.
- the WTO Agreement on fisheries subsidies
- the BBNJ Agreement and the Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Inland waters and river basin management
- and aquaculture.

RSN work is carried out with limited resources from FAO and appreciates current support by Japan and the European Union. This has enabled 5 intersessional consultations and workshops with fisheries bodies on the key issues I have already listed. We look for further support both in resource and through member countries engagement in their regional fisheries bodies.

On behalf of the RSN, I wish to thank COFI for its recognition and support to the RSN as an invaluable tool to help deliver the goals and commitments identified by you at this meeting.

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Forty-eight secretariats of regional fishery bodies (RFBs) participated at the Tenth Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN-10). The meeting brought together secretariats of regional fishery bodies (RFBs) with diverse mandates from all geographic regions, including FAO and non-FAO regional fishery bodies, marine and inland fishery advisory and management bodies and agreements. Other invited international organizations and stakeholders such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations (UN) Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Government of France, which is hosting UNOC25, also attended the meeting. RSN-10 took place immediately before and after of the Thirty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI36), which was held from 8 to 12 July 2024. As was the case with COFI, RSN-10 met in hybrid format, in person and virtually, via videoconference, to facilitate the participation to those who could not assist personally. For the second time, the meeting was convened over three days. The meeting allowed participants to exchange views and discuss global processes of particular relevance to RFBs. In particular, RSN-10 paid special attention to how to scale up cooperation and coordination among RFBs in view of the recently adopted international agreements that involve RFBs' work.

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