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منظمة  
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# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## Thirty-fourth Session

1–5 February 2021

### DEVELOPMENTS IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

#### Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of some of the major global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture governance that are implemented with the involvement and support of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN). It describes the role that FAO plays as a key stakeholder and as the specialized UN entity working on fisheries and aquaculture issues. In particular, given the numerous processes in which FAO is involved in this respect, this paper also highlights the importance of an adequate level of coordination among the relevant organizations in order to achieve the targets set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This paper describes the FAO collaborative processes, and considers how these activities address the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions as key to achieving sustainable development.

#### Suggested action by the Committee

##### The Committee is invited to:

- encourage FAO to continue to develop and strengthen fisheries and aquaculture governance, through efforts such as enhanced partnerships across the UN system and with relevant global and regional organizations;
- advise on FAO's function in facilitating dialogue and information exchange among all relevant stakeholders involved in major global and regional processes with a view to strengthen synergies and avoid duplications;
- comment on the role that regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and regional fishery advisory bodies (RFABs) play in fisheries governance and aquaculture development, and provide guidance on the actions FAO may take to promote their further strengthening, also through the FAO supported regional fishery body secretariats' network (RSN);
- encourage its Members to make contributions to the Part VII Assistance Fund;
- provide guidance on the role and participation of FAO in the discussions for a new international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ);
- comment and advise on FAO's role in support of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) related work on oceans and fisheries, including vulnerable marine ecosystems and deep-sea stock sustainability, UN Ocean Conference, and UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration;

Documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

- consider and support the proposed FAO activities: Development of an international strategy to provide guidance to States in support of the implementation of the ILO, IMO and FAO international instruments aiming to improve safety at sea and decent working conditions in fisheries; Preparation of basic safety training and basic sustainability training model courses and training packages, in support of implementation of the Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch-keeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) Convention for all fishers; and Implementation of the Global Umbrella Programme for efficient, safe and socio-economically sound fishing operations (FISH-OPS); and
- note and advise on the ongoing regional collaboration with other UN entities at the global and regional scale.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Global instruments and normative processes have to be implemented and translated into actions at the country and regional levels, as appropriate because the scale is relevant to oceans governance. Ecological features and processes, as well as governance levels are described in scalar terms – national, regional and global. Ocean governance actions can be more effective if properly matched to the ecological scale of the process being governed. Consequences of scalar mismatch can be avoided through governance at global or regional level and coordination among scales. The biophysical nature of aquatic ecosystems combined with the fixed political boundaries makes questions about the politics of scale in the governance of such ecosystems particularly compelling.

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development. The rationale for regional oceans governance is aligned with the scale and linkages of oceans challenges. Regional fishery organizations are international institutions established by states that identify common gains in cooperating to address and overcome problems related to regional fisheries.

3. The regional dimension is key to international fisheries management policy. The international community has increasingly recognized that strengthening governance of shared fisheries is best achieved by enhancing the role of regional fishery bodies (RFBs). There are some 50 RFBs worldwide. Most provide only advice to their members, and are hence referred to in this work as regional fisheries advisory bodies (RFABs). Regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) have mandates to adopt legally binding conservation and management measures based on scientific evidence. The role of regional fishery organizations has evolved following changes in the global institutions of fisheries and aquaculture governance. FAO supports and provides overview of these processes and developments.<sup>1,2</sup>

4. This paper describes the FAO collaborative participation in global and regional processes. The paper also aims to provide an overview of on-going initiatives of particular relevance for fishery and aquaculture governance and related issues, and refers to the role of FAO for consideration by the Committee. Notably not included in this paper are those processes in which FAO is involved, but are covered in other working documents papers: COFI/2020/5; COFI/2020/7; COFI/2020/9; and COFI/2020/9.1; and information papers: COFI/2020/Inf.11; COFI/2020/Inf.14; and COFI/2020/Inf.15.

## II. THE GLOBAL SCALE: PROCESSES RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND RELATED FRAMEWORKS

### A. The UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the Part VII Assistance Fund

5. The 13<sup>th</sup> round of informal consultation of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) was held at UN headquarters in New York, 22–23 May 2018. Pursuant to the UNGA resolution 72/72, adopted on 5 December 2017, the 13<sup>th</sup> round of informal consultation focused on the topic “Science-policy interface”. FAO provided inputs on the topic, in particular regarding the experiences by RFMOs in charge of tuna and/or deep-sea fisheries management.

6. According to the General Assembly resolution 73/125 (11 December 2018), the 14<sup>th</sup> round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the UNFSA (henceforth ICSP-14), was held at UN headquarters in New York on 2 and 3 May 2019. ICSP-14 focused on the topic “Performance reviews of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements (RFMOs/As)”. FAO supported ICSP-14, participating in the discussion panel on the importance and role of performance reviews of RFMOs/As, and providing the FAO statement, as well as intervening on Illegal, Unreported

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<sup>1</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7843en](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7843en)

<sup>2</sup> COFI/2020/Info.14

and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, including implementation of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA) through RFMOs, and on matters related to reporting on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.6. FAO organized the side event “Regional fishery advisory bodies and management organizations: The Path to Positive Change”.<sup>3</sup>

7. FAO has continued to administer the Assistance Fund established under Part VII of UNFSA through resolution 58/14 of the UNGA, in close cooperation with the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS). Both Organizations have continued to make calls for contributions to the Assistance Fund. The Governments of Canada, the Republic of Iceland, the Lebanese Republic, New Zealand, the Kingdom of Norway and the United States of America have made financial contributions to the Assistance Fund totaling USD1 667 455. While additional contributions have been received from New Zealand since 2018, the Assistance Fund has not been ready for full operation and further additional contributions are expected.

### **B. Conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction**

8. Marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) represent 64 percent of the total surface area of the oceans and around half of the planet’s surface area. Pursuant to UNGA resolution 69/292 of 19 June 2015,<sup>4</sup> negotiations are under way for a new international legally binding instrument (ILBI) under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). In its Resolution 72/249 of 24 December 2017,<sup>5</sup> the UNGA decided to convene an Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) that will meet in four sessions.

9. The first Session was convened from 4 to 17 September 2018 and the second Session from 25 March to 5 April 2019. The third Session was convened from 19 to 30 August 2019. By decision 74/543 of 9 March 2020,<sup>6</sup> the General Assembly decided to postpone the fourth Session of the conference to the earliest possible available date to be decided by the General Assembly.

10. As identified in Resolution 69/292 of June 2015, discussions at the IGC focused on: Marine Genetic Resources, including access and benefit sharing; area based management tools, including marine protected areas; environmental impact assessments and capacity building and transfer of technology. Cross cutting issues were also discussed.

11. Given the potential implications this process might have on the fisheries sector, and as instructed by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2018, FAO attended and contributed to all the three IGC Sessions to provide fisheries and other pertinent technical information on issues related to FAO’s mandate. FAO contributed to IGC through statements and providing technical information. FAO organized or directly contributed to ten events held in the IGC context. FAO facilitated information exchange with RFMO secretariats attending IGC to discuss elements of common concern, establishing network and coordination around fisheries related issues in BBNJ. Moreover, FAO facilitated the contacts and exchange of views among Member delegations concerning provisions of the draft text.

12. Sustainable utilization of fisheries resources in ABNJ cannot be achieved without biodiversity conservation. Many of FAO’s current areas of work have direct links to biodiversity. Technical assistance and capacity development are key factors to support an ILBI on BBNJ and FAO Members are invited to consider the multidisciplinary portfolio of capacity development programmes implemented by the Organization.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.fao.org/fishery/static/news/FAOsideEvent-ICSP-14UNHQ-2May.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fishery/static/news/FAOsideEvent-ICSP-14UNHQ-2May.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/187/55/PDF/N1518755.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>5</sup> <http://undocs.org/en/a/res/72/249>

<sup>6</sup> <https://undocs.org/en/a/74/l.41>

### **C. United Nations General Assembly related work on oceans and fisheries: review of the implementation of UNGA resolutions 71/123 and 74/18 relative to the impacts of vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea stocks**

13. FAO works collaboratively with governments, inter-governmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, fishing industry and the scientific community to improve fisheries management practices, increase knowledge of fish and fisheries and protect vulnerable areas in the deep-sea high seas.

14. The five year project “Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)” concluded in 2019. The project was supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by FAO in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and in partnership with 20 partner organizations, including six RFMO/As responsible for the management of deep sea fisheries in ABNJ. The project included components aimed at: 1) improving the implementation of existing policy and legal frameworks; 2) reducing adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems; 3) improving planning and adaptive management for deep sea fisheries in ABNJ; and 4) developing and testing methods for area-based planning.

15. FAO has organized and/or supported, a series of regional vulnerable marine ecosystems (VME) and deep-sea fisheries multi stakeholder workshops in the Southern Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, the Southeast Atlantic, the Eastern Central Atlantic, the Western Central Atlantic and two in the North Pacific. The workshops aimed to facilitate information-sharing on VMEs, including on best practices for deep-sea fisheries management and conservation.

16. The VME portal and database requested by UNGA in Resolution 61/105 was launched in December 2014.<sup>7</sup> The VME portal documents historical and current management measures adopted by RFMO/As to protect VMEs. The portal and database are maintained by FAO and partner RFMO/As and promote awareness and transparency regarding the conservation and management measures implemented by RFMO/As to manage deep-sea fisheries and protect VMEs.

### **D. United Nations Ocean Conference (2017 and 2020)**

17. The high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (UN Ocean Conference) was held from 5 to 9 June 2017 in New York. The UN Ocean Conference was a first-of-a-kind global event dedicated to oceans. It was co-hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden and attended by Member states, UN entities, academia, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector to discuss the implementation of SDG 14. The Conference adopted a Call for Action<sup>8</sup> which focuses on concrete and action-oriented recommendations. The UN Ocean Conference has generated more than 1 400 voluntary commitments on forward facing work related to the implementation of SDG 14.

18. To follow-up on the implementation of the voluntary commitments; to catalyze and generate new voluntary commitments; and to facilitate collaboration and networking amongst different actors in support of SDG 14, the United Nations launched nine thematic multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action (COA). FAO participated actively in the preparatory process in the lead up of the UN Ocean Conference and continues to work with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean (His Excellency, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji) and the broader UN system.

19. FAO was nominated as a Focal Point for the COA on Sustainable Fisheries and has worked tirelessly to assess progress on registered voluntary commitments in the areas related to the COA;

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<sup>7</sup> [www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/)

<sup>8</sup> <https://oceanconference.un.org/callforaction>

increase registrations of new voluntary commitments in the area related to the COA; and increase multi-stakeholder interest and engagement in the COAs and the Ocean Conference.

20. A second UN Ocean Conference was scheduled for 1 to 5 June 2020, however, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic postponement of the UN Ocean Conference was proposed and new dates are being considered. The co-hosts, the Republic of Kenya and the Portuguese Republic, reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of our Ocean, as well as their readiness to resume the logistical preparations as soon as possible. Meanwhile, FAO is co-leading development of two of the eight thematic papers for the conference and contributing to the other six, to ensure the substantial preparatory work continues as feasible in the present circumstances.

### **E. UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration**

21. The UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030<sup>9</sup> was proclaimed by the UNGA as resolution A/RES/73/284 on 1 March 2019<sup>10</sup> with the aim of supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration. FAO and UNEP have been invited to “lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Rio conventions, and with other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and entities of the United Nations system”.

22. The need for restoration is demonstrated in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems. Inland waters and freshwater ecosystems show among the highest rates of ecosystem declines and marine ecosystems, from coast to deep sea, also show the increased impact of human action, with coastal marine ecosystems showing largest historical decline in condition.

23. These ecosystems are among the most productive systems globally, and their loss and deterioration reduce ecosystem service provision, as well as their ability to provide sustainable livelihoods to coastal communities. The integrity and health of the ecosystems that sustain these resources is essential to the service they provide. The restoration of degraded marine and aquatic ecosystems has thus the potential to help address ecological, economic and social objectives, while considering the potential trade-offs between these objectives.

24. “Ecosystem restoration” can be interpreted differently by the various actors operating in different sectors, ranging from “restoration” as a return to a non-degraded (e.g. fully productive) state to “restoration” as meaning the re-establishment of the original or “natural” state of an ecosystem. FAO is taking an active role in framing a vision for the implementation of the Decade, including a focus on ecosystems which provide capture fisheries and aquaculture and has prepared a position paper intended to provide technical clarifications to the concept of “ecosystem restoration”, this is provided as information paper COFI/2020/Inf.11.2.

### **F. Safety at sea and decent work in fisheries and aquaculture**

25. In the area of safety of fishing vessels of 24 m in length and over, the commitments by States to ratify the IMO 2012 Cape Town Agreement got a boost at the Ministerial Conference in Torremolinos, Spain, in October 2019.

26. The IMO led process to review the 1995 Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch-keeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), is ongoing. An Intersessional Working Group on the Review of the STCW-F Convention agreed on draft amendments on mandatory minimum requirements for basic safety training and on-board safety familiarization for all fishing vessel personnel. FAO plans to work (with IMO) on basic safety training and basic sustainability training model courses and training packages for small-scale fishers.

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<sup>9</sup> Also referred to under Agenda item 11.1

<sup>10</sup> <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/284>

27. FAO continues its active participation in these IMO processes, and in the Joint FAO/IMO/ILO ad Hoc Working Group on IUU Fishing and Related Matters, promoting the implementation of international instruments that address safety at sea and decent work in the fisheries sector. In this respect, it would be beneficial to develop an international strategy to provide guidance to States in support of the implementation of the ILO, IMO and FAO international instruments that aim to improve safety at sea and decent working conditions, and reduce accidents and fatalities in fisheries and aquaculture.

28. COFI/2020/Inf. 14.1 provides an overview of recent FAO activities and plans for future work on this subject. FAO developed and currently implements various capacity building programmes on safety at sea for small-scale fishers in the Caribbean and Pacific regions. FAO also developed an accident and fatality reporting system for fisheries in the Caribbean. It is planned to establish a combined global formal legislative accident reporting system and a voluntary confidential accident reporting system for the fisheries and aquaculture sector, in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. To provide a coherent approach on these subjects a Global Umbrella Programme for efficient, safe and socio-economically sound fishing operations (FISH-OPS) has been developed.

### **III. THE REGIONAL SCALE: MATTERS RELATED TO REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND REGIONAL FISHERY ADVISORY BODIES**

#### **A. FAO support to RFMOs and RFABs, and related activities**

##### ***a. The Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN)***

29. Global achievements are built upon regional efforts. FAO is committed to bolstering regional cooperation through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN),<sup>11</sup> which provides a forum for promoting consultation and regional dialogue, addressing priority issues of common concern and facilitating the coordination, exchange of experiences and lessons learned by RFBs. At its 33rd Session COFI acknowledged FAO for the support provided to the RSN and recommended that FAO dedicate more resources to the work of the RSN.

30. RSN aims to communicate to a wide audience the role and work of RFMOs and RFABs in the context of regional and global ocean governance in general and fisheries sustainability in particular. This is especially relevant today, as countries face the challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, engage in discussions on the governance of areas beyond national jurisdictions including marine biodiversity conservation, prohibition of harmful fisheries subsidies and establishment of cross-sectoral cooperation between RFMOs and RFABs and regional seas organizations/conventions.

31. RSN has maintained regular liaising with its members (more than 50 RFBs and other fisheries related institutions and networks),<sup>12</sup> including through the production of a popular magazine<sup>13</sup> and making available relevant data and information related to RFBs,<sup>14,15</sup> also in international technical venues and global fora such as the UNGA.<sup>16</sup> FAO through RSN has been able to address promptly the challenges posed by COVID-19 to regional fishery frameworks, in particular to the work of RFBs.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/en)

<sup>12</sup> [www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/search/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/search/en)

<sup>13</sup> [www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/newsletter/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/newsletter/en)

<sup>14</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA0183EN](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA0183EN)

<sup>15</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7843en](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7843en)

<sup>16</sup> [www.fao.org/fishery/static/news/FAOsideEvent-ICSP-14UNHQ-2May.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fishery/static/news/FAOsideEvent-ICSP-14UNHQ-2May.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [www.fao.org/3/ca9279en/ca9279en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca9279en/ca9279en.pdf)

### ***b. Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC)***

32. The 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of APFIC was held from 5 to 7 March 2019 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to discuss, among others, the preparations for the 8<sup>th</sup> Regional Consultative Forum Meeting and the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission to be held in Thailand.<sup>18</sup>

### ***c. Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF)***

33. CECAF saw the conduct of both the Scientific Sub-committee as well as the Committee in October 2018<sup>19</sup> and September 2019 respectively. In addition all of the four assessment working groups (small pelagics and demersal resources, sub-groups north and south) and the artisanal fisheries working group met in the reporting period.

34. CECAF held its 22<sup>nd</sup> Session from 17 to 18 September 2019 in Libreville, Gabon.<sup>20</sup> Major topics discussed were: the independent cost-benefit assessment for improved directions of CECAF; the improvement of data quality and assessment models for Working Groups; the EU-funded PESCAO project “Improved regional fisheries governance in west Africa”; and matters regarding the EAF-Nansen programme.

35. Key achievements in the period include the continued provision of scientific advice for management for more than 100 shared small pelagic and demersal stocks within its area of competence, the revival of the artisanal working group as a key forum to discuss issues related to artisanal fisheries, the conduct of a cost-benefit analysis for the options for the improved functioning of CECAF, the launching of the CECAF webpage<sup>21</sup> that will provide relevant information on CECAF activities, meetings, and projects and finally the support to the implementation of selected CECAF activities through the CECAF-PESCAO project that aims to improve regional governance of marine resources under CECAF’s area of competence. CECAF also benefits from the collaboration of the EAF-Nansen programme: “Supporting the Application of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management considering Climate and Pollution Impacts”, and acts as the programmes regional steering committee for the CECAF area.

### ***d. Committee on Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA)***

36. The 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the CIFAA was held in Bamako, Mali, from 26 to 28 November 2019. Twenty-nine Member Countries and two observers (African Development Bank and *Commission Economique du Bétail de la Viande et des Ressources Halieutiques*) attended the Session.

37. The Session confirmed the importance of inland fisheries as they serve important nutritional, economic, and cultural roles and are key components of sustainable ecosystem function. It also highlighted the contribution that aquaculture could play, in many countries, in their national poverty alleviation and food security programmes. The Committee noted the various conflicts among the various water uses that hinder sustainable production and the important role that the river or lake basin organizations can play in resolving those conflicts.

38. The Committee noted that, most member countries had aquaculture-specific legislation and guidelines, an indication that aquaculture has grown beyond the promotion stage and is generating significant socio-economic benefits to their populations but require further expansion. It highlighted the key constraints to aquaculture development in Africa as: shortage of appropriate feed and seed, inadequate access to financing and insurance, inadequate skills and know how, uncoordinated fish markets, insufficient research, data and information sharing, conflicts with other resource users such as agriculture and inland fisheries and limited enforcement of laws and regulations.

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<sup>18</sup> [www.fao.org/3/ca7426en/CA7426EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca7426en/CA7426EN.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5623b](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5623b)

<sup>20</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8000b](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8000b)

<sup>21</sup> [www.fao.org/cecaf/en/](http://www.fao.org/cecaf/en/)



39. In response to diseases and environmental constraints, the CIFAA noted the need to provide information in regards to biosecurity challenges in a more systematic way and to use preventative rather than reactive measures, and national strategy on aquatic animal health.

*e. CIFAA and the Aquaculture Network for Africa (ANAF)*

40. CIFAA also continued working with ANAF, which aims to stimulate aquaculture discussion, technical exchanges and advancement of aquaculture in the continent. During its 17<sup>th</sup> Session held from 9 to 11 May 2017 in Banjul, the Gambia, the Committee agreed that in order to formalize ANAF as a legally recognized platform and to better facilitate cooperation among countries, the Network is to be integrated within the African Union Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) structure, with FAO providing required technical expertise. The integration became effective in 2018, and since then the network has carried out several activities, including its regular annual meetings, the last of which was held on 17–19 February 2020 in Accra, Ghana. During this Session, it was recommended that AU-IBAR: quickly fast-track the process to finalize drafting of legal instruments (Rules of Procedures) of ANAF to secure its key role in sustainable aquaculture development in the Continent; utilize the final legal instruments for setting up and hosting a new ANAF website within AU website; expand ANAF mandate including knowledge generation and delivery of capacity building; and ensure that the network is operational and that the roles played by Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are well defined in the Network.

41. AU-IBAR shall submit the finalised ANAF Rules of Procedures and other legal instruments to the AU General Assembly prior to the Meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment meeting for consideration. Follow-up work has been initiated and is proceeding at an appropriate pace. With the support of member countries, the objectives should be fully achieved before the next regular meeting of the Network in 2021.

*f. Commission for Small-Scale and Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture of Latin America and the Caribbean (COPPESAALC)*

42. The Commission, with FAO's facilitation and technical support, has led a number of regional processes, among which the strengthening of institutional stock assessment and fisheries management capabilities; the adoption of guidelines to improve the occupational safety of small-scale fisheries that employ diving, and the adoption of an agenda to improve social security for small-scale fisheries, can be highlighted. The Commission has expanded its mandate to attend marine small-scale and artisanal fisheries thus incorporating a subsector that is a pillar of food security and a source of cash income for thousands of families throughout the region.

*g. European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC)*

43. EIFAAC is the only pan-European platform for addressing issues facing inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture of Europe. EIFAAC promotes region-specific solutions and harmonized approaches to the common problems of its Member Countries and the European Community. The FAO Secretariat facilitates collaboration between the EIFAAC research institutions, Inter-Governmental organizations (IGOs), NGOs, academics, as well as inland fishers, fish farmers and angler associations. The EIFAAC operational structure is a project approach under direction of the Technical and Scientific Committee, contributing to FAO technical work such as: conference on river habitat restoration;<sup>22</sup> welfare of fishes in aquaculture;<sup>23</sup> data collection systems for inland fisheries;<sup>24</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> EIFAAC Session

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<sup>22</sup> [www.fao.org/3/ca5741en/ca5741en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca5741en/ca5741en.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> [www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA5621EN/](http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA5621EN/)

<sup>24</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7993en](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7993en)

and an EIFAAC conference on food safety and conservation of inland fisheries and aquaculture (Dresden, 2019).<sup>25</sup>

#### *h. Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC)*

44. SWIOFC is an advisory body, established by the FAO Council in 2004, within the framework of Article VI of the FAO Constitution. Its Secretariat is hosted at the National Fisheries Administration office of Ministry of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries of the Republic of Mozambique, in Maputo.

45. The 10<sup>th</sup> SWIOFC Session was held in the Maldives (1–3 October 2019).<sup>26</sup> For the first time since the Commission was established, all Member Countries attended the Session. The SWIOFC approved the reports and recommendations by the 9<sup>th</sup> Scientific Committee (SC)<sup>27</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> Working Party on Collaboration and Cooperation in Tuna Fisheries (WPCCTF).<sup>28</sup>

46. According to the SC analysis, 44 percent of the 86 species groups assessed in the SWIO are overexploited. Recognizing that all sea cucumber stocks were classified as overfished and that there is no local consumption of this resource as all catches are exported, the SC was requested to carry out a study on management measures and plans adopted or not by all countries in the region.

47. The WPCCTF reported to the Commission that the “Guidelines for Minimum Terms and Conditions (MTC) for Foreign Fisheries Access in the SWIOFC Region” were finally adopted in February 2019. To follow-up on the ten provisions in the Guidelines classified as requiring joint implementation by Member Countries, a meeting of the MTC Task Force was scheduled for 1 and 2 April 2020 but it had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

48. In order to bring to a conclusion discussions started in 2012 on a SWIOFC financing mechanism and the establishment of a Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Framework Agreement (SWIO FFA), the Secretariat presented possible options to the 10<sup>th</sup> Session. The Commission requested that all member countries would carry out an internal consultation on both proposals and communicate the national position to the Secretariat by 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020. Unfortunately, only one member country reported its national position within the fixed deadline and then both proposals were not approved.

49. The SWIOFC, in partnership with the UNEP-Nairobi Convention, is working on project called “A Partnership for Marine and Coastal Governance and Fisheries Management for Blue Growth” funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The project’s main goal is to reconcile fisheries and conservation management objectives.

#### *i. Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)*

50. The reporting period featured a particularly dynamic agenda of WECAFC, with most of the Commission’s statutory bodies holding their regular meetings, thanks to the FAO regular programme funds and an increased extra-budgetary contribution of over USD 4 million in the portfolio of fisheries projects hosted by the Secretariat of WECAFC and interregional or global scope projects on members’ capacity building for compliance with the PSMA. Meetings were held of eight out of the 11 Working groups and two consultations of the Scientific Advisory Group were held (one face-to-face and one remote). The first preparatory meeting for the strategic reorientation of the Commission was convened in March 2019 in Barbados as an intersessional activity, which benefitted from the technical support of the Fisheries Division and the FAO Legal Office.<sup>29</sup>

51. The 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission held in July 2019 and attended by 25 members and 20 partner organizations adopted seven regional fisheries management recommendations, the Regional

<sup>25</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7495en](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7495en)

<sup>26</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7456b](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7456b)

<sup>27</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7501b](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7501b)

<sup>28</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8254b](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8254b)

<sup>29</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8259t](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8259t)

Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (RPOA-IUU 2019–2029), and other important recommendations and resolutions in support of the regional framework in fisheries and ocean governance, including climate change, and other environment and socio-economic related issues.<sup>30</sup>

52. In relation to the strategic reorientation of the Commission, the 17<sup>th</sup> Session saw a major breakthrough with Member States taking ownership of the process to define and establish autonomously the best alternatives for the Commission to achieve the sustainable management of their shared living marine resources. A clear roadmap was provided to the WECAFC Secretariat for progressing towards the Development of a Model for a Regional Fisheries Management Entity or Arrangement in the WECAFC Area, which is being implemented by a member-driven Ad Hoc Intersessional Working Group facilitated by FAO/WECAFC.

***j. Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean***

53. The Arctic region is warming at almost three times the global average rate, causing a change in the size and distribution of fish stocks. As a result, the Arctic high seas may become more attractive for commercial fisheries in the medium to long term. However, until present, most of the Arctic high seas were not covered by any international conservation and management regime. Meanwhile there is still a limited understanding of the marine ecosystems of the Arctic and, in particular, of determining whether fish stocks might exist in this area that could be harvested on a sustainable basis.

54. In October 2018, the five Arctic Ocean coastal States (Canada, Denmark (on behalf of Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Norway, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America) together with the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Iceland, Japan, Republic of Korea and the European Union signed the “Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean”.

55. This is the first international agreement of this magnitude to be reached before any commercial fishing has taken place in a high seas area. This legally binding agreement prohibits commercial fishing in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean for a period of at least 16 years after it enters into force, and commits the signatories to a joint program of scientific research and monitoring to improve understanding of the ecosystems in and surrounding the central Arctic Ocean to determine if fish stocks may one day be sustainably harvested in this area.

56. FAO follows closely this important new regional process and contributed to the “Research Conference of participating countries which had signed The Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean” in April 2019 in the Russian Federation.

***k. Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Aquaculture and Fishery Organization (RAAFO)***

57. In response to the several calls made at COFI and the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, FAO has convened since 2014 four regional consultation meetings with the Near East and African coastal countries of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, to elaborate the establishment of an RFMO. The designated Coordination Group (the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of the Sudan) with the technical assistance of FAO formulated a zero-draft of the agreement to establish this regional organization. The zero-draft agreement was made available to the concerned coastal countries in Arabic and English. The Coordination Group was tasked to revise the draft agreement and advice on the way forward. The Coordination Group meeting in November 2018 was poorly attended and no progress could be made. FAO stands ready to continue assisting the concerned countries to progress towards the establishment of RAAFO.

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<sup>30</sup> [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8748t](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8748t)

### ***I. Common Oceans Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) Program***

58. Human activities from various sectors, including fisheries, affect biodiversity in the ABNJ. Although the ABNJ is far from unregulated, an effective management of the ABNJ to achieve the conservation and sustainable utilization of marine biodiversity requires the cooperation of all interested parties. Thirteen RFMOs encompassing more than 100 countries and other stakeholders collaborate in the management of fisheries in the ABNJ. However, the challenges to establish an effective and sustainable utilization of marine resources are many, stemming from the remoteness of some areas, and the difficulties of achieving concerted actions among the many actors involved.

59. To assist in addressing these challenges, FAO, with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) established in 2014 the Common Oceans ABNJ Program. The Program brought together global stakeholders and partners to further promote the sustainable utilization of fisheries and the protection of marine biodiversity in the ABNJ. The Program involved RFMOs as well as other intergovernmental organizations, national governments, the private sector, civil society and academia.

60. During the Program's five years, FAO and its partners supported important advances ranging from implementation of the Precautionary Approach via Harvest Strategies, supporting implementation of the ecosystem approach through the piloting of adaptive management frameworks and engaging stakeholders, reinforcing compliance and monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems in Member States and reducing the impact of tuna and deep-sea fishing operations on biodiversity, including through measures to prevent significant adverse impacts on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems. The Program also supported capacity building for regional leaders participating in the UN process to develop an implementing agreement on sustainable utilization and conservation of biodiversity in the ABNJ (i.e. the BBNJ process).

61. The positive reviews received at the end of the six years of implementation encouraged FAO and its partners to develop a proposal to GEF for a second phase of the Program, now under development, to secure and expand on the successful outcomes of the first phase.

### **IV. ONGOING REGIONAL COLLABORATION WITH OTHER UN ENTITIES**

62. *Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies.* Sustainability can only be achieved through cooperation among all stakeholders, as recognized in SDG 17 (Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development). The international community has increasingly recognized the importance of regional cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation in facilitating the achievements set by the 2030 Agenda that aim at maintaining the health of the ecosystems, including the oceans, so that they can increase their ability to contribute to food security and poverty reduction.

63. Regional organizations that work toward enhancing the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity can make such cooperation effective through formal mechanisms and joint activities, especially by creating linkages between existing fisheries management and biodiversity conservation initiatives, as the achievement of food security will require fisheries and environmental management agencies to work together.

64. COFI welcomed and is supportive of the joint efforts of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat, FAO and UNEP within the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets to strengthen collaboration on issues of common interest, taking into account their different mandates and roles.

65. FAO in cooperation with the CBD Secretariat and UNEP maintains its engagement and support to the Sustainable Ocean Initiative: a global process implemented the regional scale that has paved the way to promising and substantive results. FAO stands ready to support the further expansion of these cooperating mechanisms with the hope to achieve an integrated approach to secure a sustainable food provision based on the healthy and functional marine and coastal ecosystems.

66. The *Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF)* supported by GEF continues to seek collaboration with regional organizations operating within and close to its geographical area and the scientific advice on status of stocks from CECAF is being made available to cross sectoral networks and sub-regional organizations. Through the project in support of the preparatory activities for the implementation of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME) regional project “Towards sustainable management of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem”, CECAF will act as an executing agency and will ensure close collaboration with UNEP and the Abidjan Convention to pursue the goals and support the countries moving towards seeking support for the full implementation of the CCLME Special Assistance Program.

67. CECAF is also partnering with UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for the implementation of the regional project “Strengthening of the Enabling Environment, Ecosystem-based Management and Governance to support Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem”, with special focus on the fisheries component and governance aspects. FAO and CECAF will contribute to updating knowledge and data on fisheries resources and related capacity development, strengthened fisheries management and discussions on governance arrangements and data and information management and sharing. The Abidjan Convention is invited to CECAF statutory meetings as an observer as well as to ad Hoc workshops and meetings on topics of mutual interest.

68. The *General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)* continues to closely cooperate with UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) in the context of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) adopted to contribute to the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries and spatial-based management. This cooperation has resulted, among others, in the definition of common indicators for fisheries and ecosystems, increased complementarity in the use of area-based management tools and the improved monitoring of non-indigenous species. More recently, the synergies between GFCM and UNEP MAP were showcased at the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Consultation Meeting of Large Marine Ecosystem and Coastal Partners (September 2019, the Republic of Colombia) which focused on the topic “Building Partnerships Around LMEs in Support of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda”.

69. GFCM is also cooperating with the CBD within the framework of the SOI Global Dialogue, sharing its experience on fostering positive dialogue between RFBs and Regional Seas Organizations to accelerate progress towards the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and SDG 14 in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The SOI has recognized the ongoing cooperation between GFCM and UNEP MAP as a positive example of cross-sectoral approach to conservation and management in ocean policies.

70. The *Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC)* with the financial support of SIDA cooperates with UNEP to implement the regional project “A Partnership for Marine and Coastal Governance and Fisheries Management for Sustainable Blue Growth”.

71. The project’s main area of focus is the area of concern for both fisheries and environment, that can benefit directly from a coordinated and mutually-reinforcing intervention on the areas beyond what could be obtained by uncoordinated interventions on each field. The project aims to improve food security, increase resilience, and reduce poverty of poor fisheries-dependent coastal communities. Moreover, the project will foster coordination between fisheries and environmental management institutions at national and regional levels.

72. Cooperation has been established in the Indian Ocean between the *Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI)* and the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) began in early 2016 aiming to promote the cooperation and the desire of work between the two organizations. On 27 November 2018, FAO (on behalf of RECOFI) signed a MoU with ROPME.

73. The 10<sup>th</sup> Session of RECOFI (Rome, July 2019) acknowledged the value in cooperation between the two organizations and highlighted areas of cooperation including the promotion of ecosystem-based fisheries and aquaculture management.

74. The *Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)* strengthened its collaboration with a number of agencies among which UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, UNESCO/IOCARIBE through the MoU establishing the Interim Coordination Mechanism for the Sustainable Management, Use and Protection of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems, signed in 2017.

75. The collaboration with Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was sustained within the Caribbean Fishery Management Council/Organization of Fishing and Aquaculture in Central America /WECAFC/Caribbean Regional Fishery Mechanism/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch. CITES Secretariat participated in all the working group meetings and provided significant inputs to the deliberations of the Queen Conch Statistical, Scientific and Technical Advisory Group created under the aegis of this working group to streamline the implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan endorsed by WECAFC members at the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission in June 2016.

76. Cooperation was pursued with the United Nations Office for Project Services and UNDP through the second phase of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem project (CLME+) “Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems”. The overall scope is to foster inter-sectoral governance and improved management practices that address fisheries, biodiversity and pollution. FAO contributed to update the current knowledge and data on fisheries resources and supported capacity building in the WECAFC area on topics that relate to data and information management and processing, governance arrangements and investment plans.

77. The *Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish)* collaborate with the EUROFISH to implement the regional workshop “Post-harvest market measures, rules, and standards for safe and quality fish and fish products” which was organized on 12 and 13 November 2019 in Istanbul, Turkey.

78. *FAO and IFAD* in East Africa (Kenya) in collaboration with Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and the Blue Economy are implementing the Aquaculture Business Development Programme (ABDP) with the aim of providing a framework for alleviating rural poverty and malnutrition and building climate resilience for poor households through supporting smallholder aquaculture farmers and value chain actors within Kenya’s growing aquaculture subsector. In addition, ABDP aims at using both public and private sector vehicles to strengthen the aquaculture value chains with whole-community initiatives to promote good nutrition and food security, environmentally sound development and building resilience to climate change.

79. *FAO and UNIDO* are formulating a cooperative project to establish a fiberglass canoe/boat production industry in the Republic of South Sudan that will be implemented within the framework of the Fisher Community Enhancement Project that was launched in February 2020.

80. *FAO supported by GEF* implemented the regional project “Enhancing Climate Change Resilience in the Benguela Current Fisheries System” through combined effort by the Benguela Current Commission (BCC), the governments of Angola, Namibia and South Africa. The goal of the project is to build resilience and reduce the vulnerability to climate variability and change of the marine fisheries and mariculture sectors within the BCC large marine ecosystem through strengthening adaptive capacity and implementing participatory and integrated strategies in order to ensure food and livelihood security.

81. *FAO and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific* co-organized the following in Bangkok: (i) Session on Sustainable blue economy and sustainable fisheries during the Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean on 20 November 2018; and (ii) Session on Sustainable Fisheries during the Second Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean on 8 November 2019. FAO Regional Office for Asia-Pacific also co-organized with the International Labour Organization and the International Organization for Migration, in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries of Thailand, the observance of the International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing on 5 June 2019 in Bangkok. FAO, ILO and IMO also issued a joint statement on the occasion of the International Day for the Fight Against IUU Fishing.

## V. OTHER GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND PROCESSES

82. FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with UNEP developed a concrete Tripartite Work Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) (2019–2020) in support of the Global Action Plan on AMR and subsequently endorsed at the Tripartite Executive Meeting in Rome (February 2019).<sup>31</sup>

83. FAO participated in the Secretariat of the UN ad Hoc Inter-Agency Coordinating Group (IACG) on AMR Report which was submitted to the UN Secretary-General in April 2019 and which included 14 recommendations focusing on progress in countries, innovation, collaboration, investment and global governance.<sup>32</sup>

84. ASEAN Plus Three Leaders' Statement on Cooperation Against AMR, the Republic of Singapore, November 2018, includes aquaculture as follows: "Emphasize our strong determination to enhance close international cooperation and effective multilateral mechanism against AMR by encouraging countries in the region to take effective measures through a One Health approach; We hereby decide to undertake the following to accelerate regional action against AMR: 1) Strengthen efforts to effectively implement commitments under the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to fight malaria, human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), tuberculosis, hepatitis, the Ebola virus disease and other communicable diseases and epidemics, including by addressing growing AMR and neglected diseases; and 2) Encourage and support countries in the region in the formulation and implementation of National Action Plans against AMR through the One Health approach, which integrates actions under the human health, animal health, aquaculture, agricultural and environmental sectors".<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> <http://web.oie.int/downld/WG/AMR/AMR-Tripartite-Workplan-updated-08-April-2019.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> [www.who.int/antimicrobial-resistance/interagency-coordination-group/IACG\\_final\\_report\\_EN.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/antimicrobial-resistance/interagency-coordination-group/IACG_final_report_EN.pdf?ua=1) – The IACG Report includes aquatic animals and plants

<sup>33</sup> [https://asean.org/storage/2018/11/APT-Leaders-Statement-on-AMR\\_Adopted-15-Nov.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2018/11/APT-Leaders-Statement-on-AMR_Adopted-15-Nov.pdf)