



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

Sixth Session

Rome, Italy, 10 – 12 May 2011

ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING IN THE RECOFI REGION: ESTABLISHMENT OF A DATABASE OF VIOLATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and related activities undermine efforts to promote sustainable and responsible fishing practices and protect the marine environment. IUU fishing is a global problem and most capture fisheries are affected by such fishing. Fuelled by a lack of transparency and financial incentives, the situation is further aggravated by factors such as inadequate national fishing capacity controls, a lack of resources dedicated to combating IUU fishing, weak regional cooperation and corruption, all of which lead to poor fisheries governance and unacceptable outcomes such as serious damage to biological, human, social and environmental frameworks. These conditions must be addressed if fisheries governance is to be enhanced, outcomes improved and inroads made to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.¹

2. Within this context FAO, in cooperation with the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI), convened a regional workshop to combat IUU fishing in Muscat, Oman (30 March-2 April 2009).² The outcomes of the workshop were reported to the Commission's Fifth Session. RECOFI expressed concern about the presence and impact of IUU fishing in the region and encouraged Members to take steps to combat it at all levels and in all fisheries.

3. At the Fifth Session the Sultanate of Oman proposed that RECOFI initiate a reporting system for IUU fishing violations. It was suggested that Members report violations to the Secretariat that would maintain a record of reports. It was noted that such reporting was common in other regional fisheries commissions and that it would enhance transparency and strengthen dialogue among Members to reinforce fisheries management. RECOFI welcomed the proposal and agreed that the Sultanate of Oman should submit a paper on it to the WGFM's Third meeting for review and

¹ The FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) at its 2011 Session agreed that IUU fishing continued to be a major global threat to the long-term sustainable management of fisheries and the maintenance of productive and healthy ecosystems. COFI noted that developing countries, in particular, were impacted by IUU fishing.

² FAO. 2009. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 903. Report of the FAO/RECOFI Regional Workshop to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. FAO. Rome. 30p. Available at: www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0917e/i0917e00.htm

consideration. Following the review by fisheries experts, a recommendation would be made to RECOFI's Sixth Session.

THIRD MEETING OF THE WGFM

4. Recognizing that IUU fishing was a concern for RECOFI Members, the WGFM agreed that the problem should be kept under consideration. It was pointed out that one way of combating and mitigating the effects of IUU fishing was to encourage Members to promote the full and effective implementation of international instruments. An important aspect of promoting these instruments was to encourage regional cooperation to ensure that IUU fishers did not benefit from their illicit activities. The WGFM agreed that efforts should be made to ensure that RECOFI was briefed at its sessions concerning developments with IUU fishing because it undermined fisheries management and the social and economic returns for Members from their fisheries.

5. In line with the request from RECOFI's Fifth Session, the Sultanate of Oman proposed a conceptual approach to the development of a record of IUU fishing violations. The proposal was appreciated by the WGFM and after considerable discussion it was agreed that a stepwise approach should be followed. It was agreed that RECOFI should take steps to (i) initiate the development of a regional database of violations; (ii) establish a list of vessels authorized to fish by Members; and (iii) promote the establishment of a regional monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) network. The WGFM envisaged that following a feasibility review of options for these three initiatives, the WGFM should address concrete issues relating to their implementation.

FOURTH MEETING OF THE WGFM

6. At the Fourth meeting of the WGFM, and with the concurrence of the Third meeting to proceed with the concept presented to it, the Sultanate of Oman tabled draft terms of reference for a feasibility study. It was noted that there was poor regional information available on vessel identification and ownership and control for MCS purposes. Furthermore, information that was available was not easily accessible by RECOFI Members. It was therefore proposed that a regional database be established to provide information to Members in a timely manner to support their efforts to combat IUU fishing and as a means of enhancing resource management.

7. The Sultanate of Oman proposed that a feasibility study be undertaken to assess whether a regional database of fishing violations, a list of vessels authorized to fish, and a MCS information exchange scheme should be established. It was stressed that the feasibility study would not create commitments for Members and that the results of the study would be considered at a subsequent WGFM meeting, as agreed at the WGFM's Third meeting, before further action was taken.

8. There was extensive discussion on the proposal and issues were raised in relation to the need to involve other national agencies responsible for MCS such as the coastguard if a project moved beyond the feasibility stage. In discussion, the similarities and differences among Members in terms of the characteristics of their fishery sectors were noted. Some Members explained that they had comprehensive vessel authorization and monitoring schemes already in place.

9. The WGFM agreed to proceed with the feasibility study and that it should be listed in the projects for implementation by RECOFI.³ However, the WGFM amended the title of the feasibility study to "Feasibility study to review the development of regional databases for violations, establish a list of vessels authorized to fish by Members and the establishment of a MCS information exchange scheme". The terms of reference for the feasibility study agreed by the WGFM are in Appendix 1.

³ The feasibility study is listed as project 10 in Appendix 3 of document RECOFI/2011/6.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

10. The Commission is invited to consider and approve the draft terms of reference for a feasibility study to review the development of regional databases for violations, establish a list of vessels authorized to fish by Members and the establishment of a MCS information exchange scheme so that the study can be implemented from RECOFI's Seventh Session.

Appendix 1**DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A FEASIBILITY STUDY TO REVIEW THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL DATABASES FOR VIOLATIONS, ESTABLISH A LIST OF VESSELS AUTHORIZED TO FISH BY MEMBERS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MCS INFORMATION EXCHANGE SCHEME****RATIONALE⁴**

1. One of the greatest challenges faced by fisheries management and enforcement authorities in the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) region is the lack of access to region-wide information on fishing vessel identification, ownership and control. As stated in the paper submitted to the Third meeting of the WGFM held in Doha, Qatar (20-22 October 2009), the Commission, as regional fisheries body, has a strong role to play in promoting regional fisheries management. In line with international agreements and initiatives with regard to IUU fishing the Commission could initiate the development of a regional database that keeps a full record of all types of fishing violations by traditional vessels and other key information in relation to vessel operators, vessel characteristics, details of fishing operations, and catch compositions and amounts. This type of information could be shared among RECOFI Members and could be used as a part of early alert system to reduce risk and improve efficiency of management measures.

2. Drawing from relevant case studies from other regions the feasibility study should cover all issues relevant to the development of a regional database system. However, in particular the study should:

- Determine (by working closely with RECOFI and Members) the scope of the record, content and format of the proposed database system;
- Review comprehensively the current situations with regard to baseline information requirements, inventory of key information sources, national MCS scheme, current national policies and practices with regard to MCS, national capacity (human, financial and technology related) in meeting the needs, policies on access to information and the existing networking environment (if any), including all Member countries in the region;
- Provide complete appraisal of important factors such as, technology and system requirements including their functionality, information requirements, economic, legal and operational feasibility, and highlight any key elements that should be paid attention to create an effective MCS system;
- Recommend guidelines and a framework for a set of minimum requirements for the system with regard to data format, data types, data provision protocol and governance approach;
- Recommend different options for the preparation of and access to a regional records of fishing violations as a part of regional knowledge management mechanism and that such options should be supported by associated cost estimates for implementation and long-term maintenance;
- Recommend practical and justified actions to any obstacles that could be considered to improve decision making and enhance information exchange among member countries for combating IUU fishing; and
- Determine essential requirements to ensure appropriate linkages to other relevant databases and networking initiatives.

⁴ Drafted and submitted by the Ministry of Fisheries Wealth, Sultanate of Oman. Please note that these draft terms of reference are for comment.