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联合国  
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Organización  
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Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

**TWENTY-SIXTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE  
FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

*Merida, Mexico, 10 to 14 April 2000*

**REPORT OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE WESTERN  
CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION  
(WECAFC)**

1. The Ninth Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) and the Sixth Session of the Committee for Development and Management of Fisheries in the Lesser Antilles were held at the National Insurance Conference Facility, Castries, Saint Lucia, from 27 to 30 September 1999 at the kind invitation of the Government of Saint Lucia.
2. The main objective was to determine the future role of the Commission in promoting regional co-operation for achieving sustainable fisheries, taking into consideration FAO Conference Resolution 13/97 and the recommendations of the Twenty-second Session of COFI. 40 delegates from 18 WECAFC member countries and observers from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the European Community and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) attended the Session. In order to provide direct information on the recommendations made during the last meeting of WECAF to the .
3. Because of the importance that the member countries of the Region have given to the fishery sector, requesting FAO the implementation of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, it has been considered convenient inform to the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean the concepts and recommendations generated during the last meeting of the Commission

## **MAIN CONCEPTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION**

### ***STATE OF FISHERY RESOURCES***

4. Reaffirmed its commitment to develop and implement sustainable fisheries management practices in the WECAFC area.
5. Urged that countries should continue to improve their data collection systems and the quality of the data being collected for the evaluation of the resources in order to improve the scientific knowledge of the status of the stocks in the region.

### ***TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION***

6. Agreed that regional technical co-operation was a crucial element if members were to benefit from the current globalisation process within the context of clearly defined national and regional objectives for sustainable development and responsible fisheries management. The Commission further agreed that, given its geographical coverage and membership, WECAFC could play a crucial role in promoting, backstopping, co-ordinating, strengthening and complementing the technical co-operation activities in the region.
7. Stressed that the needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the region required special and urgent consideration.

### ***REGIONAL CO-OPERATION***

8. Agreed that responsible fisheries management requires regional and sub-regional co-operation through working groups for the application of the precautionary approach to fisheries of the WECAFC region.
9. Recognized that many important commercial fish stocks seem to be overfished and that the remedial measures of reducing fishing capacity are complex and challenging policy decisions especially for small island and developing states.

### ***RESTRUCTURING OF WECAFC***

10. Agreed that WECAFC's activities had contributed significantly to the development and management of fisheries in the region. In particular, the Commission noted with satisfaction the achievements of the current ad hoc Working Groups and partnership arrangements with the CARICOM Fisheries Program (CFRAMP). It was unanimously agreed that WECAFC should continue its activities in assisting the Members to move closer towards self-reliance in sustainable fisheries development and management.

11. Recognized that in order to enhance the effectiveness in providing fisheries management advice, it needed to:

- Limit its activities to a few key areas supported by its Members;
- Strengthen partnership arrangements with other regional and international organizations and donors;
- Ensure that the programmes of action were more specific and pragmatic with clear objectives, taking into account, the needs of the Members and their capacities to realize such activities;
- Develop national and regional capacity in international fisheries management, negotiations and conflict resolutions;
- Improve communication among the agencies involved in fisheries in the region with a view to encouraging complementarity and avoiding overlapping;
- Provide avenues for other regional fishery bodies working in the area to report on their activities to the Commission;
- Intensify efforts in undertaking joint activities and actions, in particular through networking arrangements; and
- Increase its efforts in seeking external funding and sharing the costs of inter-sessional activities.

12. Recommended that there be close coordination between WECAFC and other international and regional organizations or programmes concerned with fisheries in order to avoid duplication of effort and wastage of development assistance funds. In this context, the Commission endorsed the Working Group on the management of queen conch initiated by the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council.

13. Agreed that a regional approach to management of many of the region's fisheries was a feasible arrangement for achieving sustainable fisheries in the region, and that WECAFC is in a unique position to serve as an umbrella organization for this purpose.

14. Unanimously expressed strong support for WECAFC and recommended that it be maintained under Article VI of the FAO Constitution. The Commission requested FAO to maintain its support to WECAFC, at least at the present level. The Commission also abolished the two Working Parties of WECAFC (WECAFC Working Party on the Assessment of Marine Fishery Resources and on Economics and Planning).

15. Agreed to establish a Scientific Advisory Group (SAG). The Commission suggested that this matter should be reconsidered at its next Session.

16. Agreed that in view of existing constraints, the Commission should have a simple structure consisting of the Secretariat, a Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) which will act as

advisory body to the Commission and ad hoc working groups with clearly defined Terms of Reference and time bound clauses, established as and when required.

17. Agreed to the new mode of operation through ad hoc groups and member countries committed themselves to participate actively in supporting the activities of the ad hoc Working Groups.

18. Recommended that the following groups should continue their activities as ad hoc working groups:

- Ad hoc Working Group on Shrimp and Ground Fish Resources in the Brazil-Guianas Shelf;
- Ad hoc Working Group on Spiny Lobster, *Panulirus argus*; and
- Ad hoc Working Group on Flying Fish.

### ***CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES***

19. Agreed that the Code provided a comprehensive framework to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of fishery resources.

20. Noted the fact that at its Twenty-third Session, the Committee on Fisheries adopted three international Plans of Action on the Management of Fishing Capacity, the Reduction of Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries and on the Conservation and Management of Shark Fisheries. The members of the Commission were urged to implement these Plans of Action as appropriate.

21. Expressed appreciation to the FAO Conference for instituting the Margarita Lizarraga Medal to be awarded biennially to the individual, institution or organization that had made significant contribution to the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

### ***OTHER MATTERS***

22. FAO was requested to issue a circular state letter to all member countries informing them of the main outcomes of the Ninth Session of the Commission.

23. Requested members to provide at future sessions a short country report highlighting their main achievements.

24. Noted the offers of Suriname and Brazil to host the Tenth Session of the Commission in November 2001.