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y la
Alimentación

TWENTY-SEVENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Havana, Cuba 22 to 26 April 2002

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

I. Introduction

1. The Tenth Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) and the Seventh Session of the Committee for Development and Management of Fisheries in the Lesser Antilles were held at the Accra Beach Hotel, Rockley, Christ Church, Barbados, from 24 to 27 October 2001.
2. The main objective was to discuss the work of the Commission during the last biennium, adopt the work programme for 2002-2003 and discuss the draft strategy of the Commission. Delegates from 18 WECAFC member countries and the European Community, and observers from the Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Conservation Association, and World Wildlife Fund attended the Sessions.
3. Given the social and economic importance of fisheries to the WECAFC member countries, the role fisheries play in their national food security, and the keen interest in regional cooperation for the conservation and management these fisheries resources facilitated through the unique and neutral forum, the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, it was considered necessary to inform to the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean on the outcome of the Tenth Session of the Commission.

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II. Main Decisions and Recommendations of the Commission

State of Fisheries Resources

4. There was considerable information on quantitative stock assessments for many of the commercially important resources. This suggests that if WECAFC continues to develop a list of priority resources for which assessments are required, WECAFC would be able to further improve management of marine resources. For many of the resources, for which quantitative assessments have been made, stocks are either over-fished or fully fished.

5. The lack of information on the status of other stocks, and the uncertainty associated with their assessments highlighted the difficulty of providing quantitative advice to fishery managers. This, however, should not be used as an excuse to avoid taking management measures.

6. The Commission was requested to focus on how: it could direct its resources towards those stocks that have shown signs of large decreases of abundance (e.g. reef fish); on how to improve the collection of data on landings of sharks at the lowest, appropriate level; and on how to strengthen the activities of WECAFC working groups.

Situation and Trends of Fisheries and in the WECAFC Region

7. Several delegations provided their views on the subject of subsidies in fisheries and their possible impacts on trade in fish and fish products and on sustainability of fishery resources. Many delegates stressed the need to know more about such impacts and emphasized the need to reach a definition of subsidies in order to facilitate their assessment and its impact. Most interventions noted that in addressing the issue of subsidies at regional level, account must be taken of the outstanding economic and social importance of small scale-fisheries in the WECAFC area and the need for developing countries of the region to take better advantage of their resources in a sustainable manner to ensure food security.

8. The Secretariat highlighted the complexity surrounding the issue and its political sensitivity, the role played by FAO as a neutral forum for the debate, and the important technical work being conducted by the Fisheries Department. The main aim is to determine the extent of the impact of subsidies in fisheries. The results of this work would be a useful contribution to the progress of the global debate on subsidies in fisheries and it will be submitted to the consideration of member countries as soon as it is available.

Intersessional Activities and Matters Referred to the Attention of the Commission

9. Brief reports highlighting the work of the following *ad hoc* working groups were presented:

- *Ad hoc* Working Group on Shrimp and Ground fish Resources in the Brazil-Guianas Shelf;
- *Ad hoc* Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster (*Panulirus argus*);
- *Ad hoc* Flying fish Working Group of the Eastern Caribbean; and
- *Ad hoc* Working Group on Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*).

10. The Commission expressed satisfaction with the work and achievements of the *ad hoc* working groups. Many delegates informed the Commission of the benefits they derived from participating in the activities of these groups.

11. The Commission expressed satisfaction with the follow-up actions undertaken by the Secretariat and the intersessional activities that were implemented.

Lesser Antilles *ad hoc* Working Group on Developmental Sustainable Moored FAD Fishing

12. A summary of the report of the first meeting of the Lesser Antilles *ad hoc* Working Group on the Sustainable Development of Moored Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) Fishing, was presented to the Commission, including the proposed Terms of Reference for the Group. The countries that participated in this meeting were: Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, French overseas departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

13. The Commission endorsed the formation of the Lesser Antilles *ad hoc* Working Group on the sustainable development of moored FAD fishing and approved its terms of reference.

Progress Report on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

14. Delegations informed the meeting on actions taken to implement the Code. Concerns were expressed regarding its slow implementation and the difficulties encountered. Most delegations considered research as very relevant and indicated that it deserved more support.

15. The Commission was of the view that the Code needed to be disseminated more widely. The Commission suggested that non-governmental organizations should play a significant role in the dissemination of the Code and create awareness at the community level.

16. The Commission recommended that national fisheries administrations should include the implementation of the Code in their work programmes.

17. The delegate from Saint Lucia informed the Commission that, in early 2002, it will be hosting a meeting of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission. It was agreed that scientific representatives from WECAFC should attend the IWC meeting in Saint Lucia and report to the Commission at its next Session. At that time the Commission should be in a better position to arrive at a decision regarding the establishment of an *ad hoc* working group on marine mammals.

Work Programme of WECAFC

18. In reviewing the draft work programme for 2002-03 the Members of the Commission were requested to take into account the limited resources (financial and human) available to the WECAFC Secretariat.

19. The delegation of the United States requested that a second Workshop on the Assessment of Queen Conch be included in the draft work programme for the *ad hoc* Working Group on Queen Conch. This workshop would be funded by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC) and the National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS).

20. The Commission unanimously adopted the Draft Work Programme of WECAFC 2002-03 and took note that its successful implementation would depend on obtaining the necessary financial resources from extra-budgetary sources.

III. Progress in Restructuring of WECAFC and Draft Strategy

Report of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

21. The Commission suggested that, when appropriate, SAG should invite experts from other institutions or regional fishery bodies to their meetings to complement their current expertise when discussing issues that are of interest to these organizations.

22. The Commission noted that the project, TCP/RLA/0070 - Preparation for Expansion of the Domestic Fisheries for Large Pelagic Species in CARICOM Countries, was of interest to non-participating WECAFC members and ICCAT. It was proposed that WECAFC member countries that were not participating in the project and ICCAT should be invited to attend the two workshops envisaged under the project, at their own expense.

23. The Commission accepted the first report of the Scientific Advisory Group and the modified terms of reference for the SAG.

Modalities for Co-operation and Capacity Building for Responsible Fishery Management in the WECAFC Region

24. It was suggested that *ad hoc* Working groups should maintain close contact with fisheries managers in their respective countries through regular periodical meetings (every 3-4 years). This should facilitate better understanding of the outcome of the *ad hoc* Working Groups, promote ownership and facilitate management of fishery resources. While *ad hoc* Working Groups remain part of the Commission, it is envisaged that some of them may in the longer term become independent management bodies.

25. The Commission was of the view that the document on modalities for co-operation and capacity building contained a number of useful suggestions for improving responsible fisheries management in the region. It suggested that members should analyze their individual situation and make efforts to implement those suggestions that were relevant to their needs.

Draft Strategy of WECAFC

26. Some delegations reopened the debate already undertaken by the Ninth Session on the issue of whether it was advantageous or disadvantageous for the Commission to move from Article VI to Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. The Ninth Session had recommended that the Commission be maintained under Article 6 of the FAO Constitution. There was agreement that a decision to move to Article XIV body may have important financial, legal, structural and operational implications for member countries. In this regard, the Commission requested more information on the subject and recommended that a discussion paper, containing different possible options on the future strategy of WECAFC, be prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with member states, for review and discussion at the next session of the Commission.

27. One delegation observed that the Commission may face the same dilemma in arriving at a decision as faced by the Ninth Session of the Commission given the current financial situation of most countries in the region. However, several delegations noted that there were significant advances in the work of the *ad hoc* working groups since the last session of the Commission and recommended that the groups should continue their good work.

28. Some delegations, in commenting on the issue of financing the activities of *ad hoc* working groups highlighted a number of difficulties that could be faced by them in the process of seeking self reliance. They referred to legal as well as procedural obstacles that may arise concerning the provision of contributions towards activities of the working groups under the present legal status of the Commission. It was noted that contributions could be made through supporting the attendance of participants to meetings, by the host countries bearing local costs for meetings and by securing the support of the fishing industry.

29. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the work, productivity and accomplishments of the *ad hoc* working groups under the present arrangements, considering their modest resources and reasonable objectives. The Commission recommended that the matter of supporting the activities of the working groups should be analysed further in the discussion paper to be prepared on the future strategy of WECAFC for discussion at the next session of the Commission.

FISHERY BODIES

Main Recommendations of the Second Meeting of FAO and Non-FAO Regional Fishery Bodies

30. The Commission was informed about the main conclusions and recommendations of this meeting that were relevant to the work of the Commission.

Main Decisions of the Twenty-Fourth Session of COFI

31. The Commission was informed of the main outcomes of this Session that were relevant to the work of the Commission.

OTHER MATTERS

32. The Commission was informed of the project presently being developed by IOCARIBE for submission to the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) for funding. The title of the project was Sustainable Management of the Shared Resources of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) and Adjacent Regions.

33. Grenada and Trinidad & Tobago were elected Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, respectively, for the next Session.

34. The Commission noted the offers made by Grenada and Trinidad & Tobago to host the Eleventh Session of WECAFC in the latter half of October 2003. Delegates agreed that to facilitate forward planning the Commission should hold its session during the latter half of October every biennium.