

COFI 29 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2011

COFI 29 reconvened in plenary throughout the morning and afternoon. The Committee addressed four issues including: good practices in the governance of small-scale fisheries; priorities and results under the medium-term plan and programme of work and budget 2012-13; other matters; and the date and location of the next session.

GOOD PRACTICES IN THE GOVERNANCE OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

The Secretariat introduced the item on small-scale fisheries (COFI/2011/8) and noted the importance of this sector for food security and poverty reduction. He highlighted challenges faced by small-scale fisheries including lack of infrastructure and vulnerability to natural disasters.

During discussions, many delegates called for an international instrument on small-scale fisheries and development of a global assistance programme. NORWAY suggested developing guidelines for small-scale fisheries, taking into account the voluntary guidelines on the right to food and the specific needs of women. BRAZIL supported an international plan of action. INDIA, with INDONESIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, BANGLADESH, the MALDIVES and MOZAMBIQUE, suggested the creation of a specific COFI sub-committee on small-scale fisheries.

The US, with NEW ZEALAND and MAURITIUS, noted the need to clarify the meaning of small-scale fisheries before developing an international instrument. The EU expressed preference for the effective implementation of existing instruments, rather than a new instrument. NEW ZEALAND suggested, with THAILAND, that the international instrument be a chapter in the CCRF.

SOUTH AFRICA called for an instrument parallel to the CCRF, while the US suggested that the instrument be an associated document to the CCRF, with a clear focus on small-scale fisheries in developing countries. OMAN said the international instrument should not be binding.

MALAWI called for a study of the development aspects of small-scale fisheries. NAMIBIA, with SOUTH AFRICA, highlighted the importance of assistance and capacity building for small-scale fisheries. Calling for FAO support for West African regional and sub-regional organizations, GUINEA noted the need for infrastructure development, access to credit and

modernization of inputs. MEXICO noted that RFMOs should contribute to small-scale fisheries initiatives and be involved in the global assistance programme.

INDIA cautioned against creating trade barriers for small-scale fishers in the international instrument and said that safety at sea for small-scale fisheries needs more attention. INDONESIA said FAO should devise buffer systems for small-scale fishers and models for market development. NEW ZEALAND and JAPAN noted the diversity of small-scale fisheries and JAPAN preferred a local approach for their development. OMAN highlighted the need for integrating subsistence fisheries in national economic development plans and for further consultation on guidelines or instruments on small-scale fisheries. AFGHANISTAN supported empowering small-scale fishers in local economic decision-making processes and called for technology transfer to this sub-sector.

AFGHANISTAN, ALGERIA and ARGENTINA highlighted the importance of market access. THAILAND underscored the importance of community-based management, micro-finance and credit for small-scale fisheries. Delegates also highlighted, *inter alia*: transparency; participatory approaches; linking fisheries and food security; recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples; coordinated policies; capacity building particularly for fish biomass determination, fisheries management, control, and surveillance and data collection; improving institutions; educating fishers, especially women; improving vessels; providing better conditions for landing of fish; and an ecosystem based approach to fisheries management.

MAURITIUS called for striking an appropriate balance between artisanal and small-scale fishing boats, and, with TANZANIA, emphasized that sustainability should be the core issue. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION also cautioned against “blurring the borders between small-scale and industrial fisheries.” SOUTH AFRICA emphasized the cultural importance of small-scale fisheries to communities.

COLOMBIA stressed that the global assistance programme should focus on good governance, application of ecosystem approaches to fisheries management, and disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. GAMBIA said the global assistance programme should consider: migration of small-capacity fishers; HIV in fishing communities; and sustainable credit schemes.

Highlighting the impacts of small fisheries, particularly on internationally shared stocks, JAPAN said they should be integrated into national and international management systems and policies.

BRAZIL observed that small-scale fishing often has a much lower environmental impact than other types of fishing. Highlighting the possibility for overexploitation of resources, ECUADOR said technical support should be provided to prevent this and to examine and create economic alternatives to ensure sustainability.

A number of intergovernmental organizations highlighted their activities relating to small-scale fisheries, with some supporting the creation of a sub-committee and inclusion of governance and labor issues in an international instrument on small-scale fishers. Several non-governmental organizations urged COFI to decide on a negotiated international instrument to complement the CCRF.

The Secretariat summarized the discussions noting, *inter alia*: the recognition of the importance of small-scale fisheries and the need for integrating them in national policies; the heterogeneity of the small-scale fisheries sector; the role of south-south cooperation; and the need for FAO to cooperate with other organizations on these issues. On the international instrument he noted consensus on the voluntary nature and the need to focus on developing countries, and the guidelines as the preferred option for such an instrument.

COFI endorsed the document and COFI Chair Pourkazemi noted that comments would be included in the draft report of COFI 29.

PRIORITIES AND RESULTS UNDER THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN AND PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET 2012-13

The Secretariat introduced this item (COFI/2011/9) and highlighted that this novel approach for technical committees, such as COFI, to recommend priorities was requested by FAO governing bodies, and that priorities under consideration by COFI 29 only refer to the biennium 2012-13. He then invited COFI to endorse the priorities and areas of de-emphasis contained in the document.

ANGOLA said the priorities identified by the 2010 FAO Regional Conference for Africa could be adapted to fisheries. ARGENTINA underscored that each region should define priorities. AFGHANISTAN noted inconsistencies between the proposed areas of de-emphasis and current discussions at this session, for example regarding safety at sea.

The EU prioritized developing recommendations to restore and reverse the trend of declining global fishery stocks and addressing the weaknesses in the FAO global monitoring of these stocks. He also supported looking into aquaculture practices to ensure sustainability. JAPAN, with CANADA, underscored the implementation of the CCRF. REPUBLIC OF KOREA prioritized capacity building for the implementation of existing normative frameworks such as the PSMA, financial and technical support for RFMOs to apply an ecosystem approach to fisheries and aquaculture. THAILAND emphasized the need to focus on co-management, micro-credit and insurance schemes for small-scale fisheries. NEW ZEALAND supported an advocacy role for FAO to combat negative perceptions of fisheries. BRAZIL, with URUGUAY, welcomed the inclusion of cooperation on development as a priority under many areas of the work programme. MEXICO prioritized aquaculture and artisanal fisheries and called for strengthening RFMOs. NORWAY called for cooperating with other standard setting agencies to avoid duplication of work. INDIA and ICELAND highlighted safety at sea.

NAURU, with the COOK ISLANDS and NEW ZEALAND, called for the consideration of Pacific Island states needs. TURKEY said support for the Caucasus region on aquaculture and fishing should continue. INDONESIA highlighted: the need

for viral diseases control and development of alternatives to fish meal; including responses to emergencies in the budget for the biennium; and capacity building and south-south cooperation.

CANADA, NEW ZEALAND, ICELAND and INDIA noted that the proposed global conference on fleet capacity was not a priority. ARGENTINA, JAPAN and BRAZIL said there was not consensus to prioritize the GR. AUSTRALIA and the US expressed concern over the de-emphasis of deep-sea fisheries management. CHINA said deep-sea fisheries are not a priority.

The US said they would like to see dedicated funding for the GR and called on FAO to seek funding partners for this initiative, as well as highlighting capacity building for implementation of port state measures by developing countries. On small-scale fisheries, NORWAY questioned whether funds are best spent on a permanent body or action on the ground, and highlighted the possibility of including this issue permanently on the agendas of COFI and its sub-committees.

In summarizing the discussions, the Secretariat noted, *inter alia*: constructive interventions and support for the ongoing reform of FAO in general and the approach taken by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department in particular; large support for the priorities; and concern on de-emphasizing aquaculture in Asia and safety at sea, especially regarding small-scale fisheries.

Chair Pourkazemi noted that the discussions would be reflected in the COFI 29 report.

OTHER MATTERS: SRI LANKA supported by INDIA highlighted their intention to host an Asia Pacific Ministerial conference on aquaculture development for food security and economic development and requested FAO collaboration on this, which was endorsed by COFI.

The REPUBLIC OF CONGO conveyed a message from the regional fisheries committee of the Gulf of Guinea. KYRGYZSTAN, on behalf of Azerbaijan and Turkey, with OSPESCA, highlighted recreational fisheries.

DATE AND LOCATION OF THE NEXT SESSION: Delegates agreed to hold COFI 30 from 9-13 July 2012, in Rome, Italy.

IN THE CORRIDORS

“Low key” were words used to describe the day by one observer. Highlighting small-scale fisheries as “another conundrum,” another developing country delegate mused over its definition, and whether it applied across the board or was more specific to developing countries. He worried that the “discussions on these fisheries might detract from the issues of equitable access to and conservation of high seas fisheries, as these are more lucrative for some states purportedly supporting artisanal fisheries.”

Meanwhile, some observers were excited about reference to indigenous fishers and the cultural value of small-scale fisheries. Others however, qualified this with one noting that “human rights should be left to those with the mandate to address them.”

Afternoon proceedings concluded with a sobering discussion on priorities, in light of the numerous activities required and their funding implications.

Emerging from plenary, some delegates were already beginning to reflect on the outcomes of COFI 29 and how the draft report, due out on Friday lunchtime, would be received. “Hopefully, after all this work, everyone will agree that their views have been adequately reflected so that we can enjoy an evening in this beautiful city before flying home.”

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COFI 29 will be available on Monday, 7 February 2011 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/FAO/cofi/cofi2011/>