

**ACP/84/095/17 Rev. 1**  
*Department of Sustainable Economic  
Development and Trade*

**Nassau, 19 September 2017**

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF  
ACP SENIOR OFFICIALS IN CHARGE OF FISHERIES  
AND AQUACULTURE**

**NASSAU, BAHAMAS, 18-19 SEPTEMBER 2017**

## Introduction

1. The ACP Senior Officials in charge of fisheries and aquaculture met on 18 – 19 September 2017 in Nassau, Bahamas to prepare for the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of ACP Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture.
2. The meeting was opened by Mrs. Phedra Rahming, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. Other speakers during the opening session included H.E. Dr Kaire Munionganda Mbuende, the Chairperson of the ACP Working Group on Fisheries and also Mr. Viwanou Gnassounou, the ACP Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Department of Sustainable Economic Development and Trade who invited the Acting Director of Marine Resources of the Government of the Bahamas, Mr. Edison Deleveaux, to chair the meeting.
3. The meeting was attended by representatives from 55 ACP States, representatives from regional organisations as well as invited international partners. Delegates expressed their appreciation to the ACP Secretariat for organizing the meeting and to the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas for the warm welcome extended and excellent facilities provided to them. The meeting also observed a minute of silence in recognition of the extreme hardships caused to the people of the Caribbean affected by the recent hurricanes. The list of participants is attached to this report.
4. The following issues were discussed by the participants:
  - I. Stocktaking the implementation of the ACP strategic plan of action for fisheries and aquaculture
  - II. ACP Aquaculture development
  - III. Fight against IUU fishing
  - IV. Effective management of ACP fisheries
  - V. Blue economy: maximising benefits from fisheries and aquaculture
  - VI. Small-scale fisheries: securing access to resources and markets
  - VII. The way ahead for fisheries subsidies reforms

## **I. Implementation of the ACP strategic plan of action for fisheries and aquaculture**

5. The ACP Secretariat presented a report on the state of play of implementation of the ACP strategic plan of action for fisheries and aquaculture, on the basis of the meeting document ACP/84/087/17. It should be recalled that the strategic plan of action was adopted by the ACP Ministers in charge of fisheries in 2012 and in 2015, Ministers reaffirmed the relevance of the action plan and extended the implementation period to 2020. The overarching objective of the plan is to increase the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the social and economic development of ACP countries. The strategic plan's priority areas include: i) effective management for sustainable fisheries; ii) promoting optimal returns from fisheries trade; iii) supporting food security; iv) developing aquaculture; and v) maintaining the environment.
6. The meeting noted the considerable progress made by some ACP countries in implementing the elements of the strategic plan of action, in particular with regard to improvement of the fisheries governance frameworks. It was acknowledged, however, that some ACP countries still face difficulties with regard to control of fishing activities taking place in areas under their jurisdiction. In this context, the entry into force of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement is welcome, as it will enhance fisheries governance. It is however, expected that the full implementation of the agreement by ACP Member States will create additional burden on national authorities and therefore require additional capacity building support from partners.
7. It is also noted that market access barriers due to the high incidence of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, regulatory challenges and other technical barriers to trade (TBT) continue to undermine efforts to expand economic opportunities from fisheries and aquaculture exports trade. While most ACP countries are responding to the challenges stemming from new trade regulations governing fisheries and aquaculture products in major developed markets, considerable efforts and resources must be deployed by ACP States to improve trade capacity and maintain and expand access to the international markets.
8. Many ACP countries have included fisheries and aquaculture products in their food and nutrition security strategies. In this respect, the prominent role of artisanal fisheries is acknowledged in terms of supply but also in terms of support to the livelihood of coastal communities including youth and women due to their pivotal role in the post-capture value chain.

9. Following the exchange of views, the meeting made the following recommendations:
- a) Reaffirm the importance of the ACP strategic plan of action for fisheries and aquaculture in promoting the implementation of coherent actions for sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture. ACP States will remain fully committed to implementing the ACP strategic plan of action, noting its relevance and contribution to the achievements of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 14. In this regard, the meeting further stressed the need for strengthened partnerships and access to funding to support or to implement the strategic priorities of the action plan;
  - b) Sub-regional and regional cooperation should be encouraged and supported to strengthen the fight against IUU fishing, develop aquaculture and address technical barriers to trade as exemplified by recent experiences in ACP regions. In this respect, existing regional fisheries bodies and economic integration organisations which provide cooperation mechanisms, should be supported through adequate political support and funding from their Member States and international development partners; and
  - c) In view of the importance of the Strategic Plan, the monitoring of its implementation should be improved at State and regional levels. The meeting invited the ACP Secretariat to propose adequate monitoring mechanisms.

## **II. ACP Aquaculture development**

10. The speakers (Motseki Hlatshwayo from SADC, Matilda Quist from Ghana and Shalendra Singh from Fiji) provided regional and national perspectives of aquaculture development highlighting in particular, the experiences and lessons learnt.
11. The meeting noted encouraging initiatives by member states in aquaculture development. However, small holder and large-scale aquaculture enterprises face considerable production and marketing challenges to enhance productivity and competitiveness.
- a) The meeting therefore agreed to recommend the strengthening of aquaculture production in ACP countries, by inter alia, providing an enabling policy environment, strengthening aquaculture production systems, including improved feed, seed and advisory delivery systems, and providing technical and financial support to the private sector investments in aquaculture businesses. In this context, particular attention should also be paid to the alignment of research and development with the national and regional policy objectives and strategic directives;

- b) Approaches to aquaculture development should be adapted to the objectives pursued, which can differ significantly according to States priorities (food security, increasing income, secure jobs);
- c) In view of the impacts of the frequent climate change-related weather events on aquaculture enterprises, the meeting invited Member States in collaboration with regional entities and international partners to explore the development of sustainable disaster risk management solutions;
- d) The meeting welcomed the Blue Growth Initiatives that would provide an opportunity to enhance aquaculture production in ACP countries and contribute towards wealth creation, job creation, and food and nutritional security;
- e) In view of the high cost of imported feeds for aquaculture, which may account for up to 60% of aquaculture input costs, the meeting recommended the urgent need to undertake research and development initiatives to develop cost effective feeds made from affordable local ingredients;
- f) The meeting emphasized the need for capacity building and technology transfer in several relevant disciplines to support aquaculture development in ACP countries; and
- g) The meeting invited the ACP to develop a mechanism to assist States in sourcing and transferring high quality brood stock to improve aquaculture seeds in ACP States.

### **III. Fight against Illegal Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing**

- 12. Presentations during the session outlined practical policy interventions to fight IUU fishing. The presentation by Stefaan Depypere, the EU DG-MARE Director for International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries, highlighted practical trade-based policy actions to fight IUU fishing, whereas the presentation by Per Erik Bergh, from Fish-I-Africa, outlined the experiences and lessons learnt from the Western Indian Ocean region, mainly based on regional information sharing. The presentation by the ACP Secretariat was based on meeting document ACP/84/088/17 and highlighted the current state of play and challenges to the fight against IUU fishing in ACP countries.
- 13. The meeting emphasised the urgent need to dramatically increase the fight against IUU fishing, especially noting that target 14.4 of Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development specifically calls for ending IUU fishing by the year 2020.

14. International fisheries agreements provide an enabling framework to combat IUU fishing, especially with the entry into force of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement. This agreement will further close the gap in IUU fishing by denying IUU vessels access to ports.
15. Regional cooperation is instrumental in strengthening monitoring, control and surveillance capacities. Experiences from ACP regions provide varied results. Some ACP States have successfully integrated some of the key monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) functions through existing regional fisheries bodies (VMS, observer schemes, sea patrols).
16. Nonetheless, acquiring and maintaining surveillance assets to prevent IUU fishing, including the means for monitoring their own fleet or for patrolling the maritime spaces requires considerable investments, which most ACP States cannot afford.
17. The meeting also recommended the following:
  - a) Capacity building of national enforcement authorities should be given priority, considering the growing complexity of IUU fishing. Particular attention should also be given to enhancing inter-agency cooperation among all relevant national authorities connected to maritime surveillance, enforcement and prosecutions;
  - b) Due diligence obligations to fight against IUU fishing should also take into account small-scale fishing vessels;
  - c) The meeting also called for expanded efforts to fight IUU fishing in inland waters;
  - d) The meeting expressed concern about the unintentional consequences of some international agreements, namely an increase in IUU fishing, especially in the Caribbean queen conch fishery;
  - e) As far as possible, regional cooperation mechanisms of the ACP States should be strengthened and supported to pool their efforts and resources to fight IUU fishing. This may involve the organisation of joint surveillance programmes, regional observer schemes, and the training of inspectors; and
  - f) Traceability systems, which are useful to detect IUU origin of landings, should be further developed, noting that they are a precondition for access to major regional and international markets for fisheries products.

#### **IV. Effective management of fisheries**

18. Three presentations were made. Mr Mohamed Seisay of the African Union and Mr Milton Haughton from the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism highlighted the fisheries management experiences in Africa and the Caribbean regions respectively. Mrs Maria Luisa Cassama Ferreira from the UEMOA presented the regional programme for the development of fisheries and aquaculture, emphasising the need for effective fisheries data collection and statistics. The ACP Secretariat meeting document ACP/84/089/17 provides the state of play on the subject.
19. The meeting emphasised the urgency of enhancing measures to ensure effective management of fisheries due to the worrisome cost of delayed action. It was noted that one third of the assessed fisheries globally are overfished, with the World Bank estimating the sum of foregone net benefits due to overfishing to be at least \$84.6 billion per year, including \$ 10.4 billion for Africa. It should be recalled that effective fisheries management is one of the early targets that needs to be achieved by the year 2020, in order to give full meaning to the implementation of Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
20. The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides valuable guidance for ACP States to manage fisheries through a transparent, international, and legal policy framework.
21. Following discussions and an exchange of views, the meeting recommended the following:
  - a) To enhance the timely availability of the scientific data needed by the dedicated scientists to carry out their work, through strengthened regional cooperation in the sharing of scientific research resources, such as research vessels or scientific personnel;
  - b) Enhance the development and implementation of long-term management plans for key fisheries resources, with the aim of, inter alia, maintaining high productivity of the stocks and for overexploited stocks, taking actions that lead to recovery of the fish stocks in the shortest time possible. Enhanced stakeholder involvement in decision making and implementation should be encouraged to improve the relevance of management measures;
  - c) For transboundary and/or straddling stocks, shared between several States, management plans should be developed through cooperation between the concerned States. Furthermore, measures contained in management plans should be implemented as foreseen, and management plans implemented, subject to regular interim evaluations to verify their relevance and effectiveness;

- d) To intensify efforts to manage the fishing capacities of national fishing fleets in keeping with the available fishing opportunities, based on the best available scientific advice. Registration of small-scale vessels is a necessary first step underpinning the implementation of fishing authorisation mechanisms;
- e) Encourage and support initiatives to strengthen governance through stakeholder participation, accountability and transparency to enhance the quality and credibility of decision-making; and
- f) The meeting requested the ACP to assist Member States participation in tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organisations.

## **V. Blue economy: optimising benefits from fisheries and aquaculture**

- 22. Three presentations from Jacqueline Alder from FAO in Rome, Mr Mike Batty from the Forum Fisheries Agency of the Pacific region, and H.E Haymandoyal Dillum the Ambassador of Mauritius to the Kingdom of Belgium and the EU outlined the perspectives of the blue economy concept and actions to optimise benefits from fisheries, aquaculture, and other sustainable ocean-based economic activities.
- 23. While there seems to be a multiplicity of terminology, the “blue economy” concept seeks to promote development, while at the same time ensuring the environmental sustainability of the oceans and coastal areas. From a fisheries and aquaculture standpoint, the blue economy concept seeks to optimise economic benefits from the sustainable use of fisheries resources, while at the same time minimising ecosystem impacts.
- 24. The blue economy concept has strong links to advancing the achievement of target 14.7 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which focuses on enhancing the economic benefits from sustainable use of marine resources for coastal Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- 25. The meeting agreed to recommend for ACP states to take actions to include the blue economy in national and regional development plans, noting the availability of FAO to support actions through the Blue Growth Initiative.
- 26. The meeting underscored the urgent need for capacity building and exchanges of experiences among ACP States and for international development partners to contribute to the transformation of the ocean economy of ACP States.



27. The meeting also noted that considerable experience and capacity has been gained by some ACP States in relation to the development of the ocean economy and therefore agreed to recommend to the enhancement of technical cooperation, to share experiences and lessons learnt.
28. The meeting considered the proposed ACP Blue Growth Initiative, which proposes to catalyse the development of the blue economy for the benefit of ACP Member States.
29. The meeting welcomed the FAO Blue Growth Initiative, which aims at creating an enabling environment for people involved in fisheries and aquaculture to transition to a Blue Growth economy; contribute to improved governance and management of aquatic ecosystems; and empower concerned communities along the fish value chain.
30. To further accelerate the growth of the blue economy, the meeting agreed to recommend enhanced collective and collaborative actions by all stakeholders concerned, including Government entities, private sector, civil society and local communities. This cooperation should be facilitated and encouraged through the creation of dedicated multi-stakeholder platforms.

## **VI. Small-scale fisheries: securing access to resources and markets**

31. The meeting considered information document ACP/84/091/17, and the presentation by the Secretary General of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fishing Organisations (CAOPA), Mr Dawda Foday Saine, which outline the African perspectives for small scale fisheries.
32. The meeting stressed the importance of small-scale fisheries in many ACP regions in ensuring food and nutritional security, national economies, employment and livelihoods, a practice that is firmly rooted in local communities, traditions, and values.
33. Also, the meeting recalled the growing recognition of the contribution of small scale fisheries to national economies in particular recalling the outcome document of Rio+20 and target 14 b of goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which aims to secure access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.
34. Accordingly, FAO adopted in 2014 the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small Scale Fisheries. These guidelines aim to provide States with advice and recommendations for sustainable management of the small-scale fisheries.

35. Considering that these international efforts present an opportunity for all stakeholders, the meeting therefore agreed to undertake policy reforms at national levels to establish an enabling environment for sustainable small-scale fisheries.
36. It was also recommended that to secure access for small-scale fisheries to fisheries resources, a range of policy interventions should be considered, including the exclusion of industrial vessels from inshore zones, implementation of co-management initiatives, and the implementation of coastal zone management plans to prevent habitat destruction of inshore fishing areas.
37. Access to markets for small-scale fisheries products is constrained by, amongst others, food safety standards imposed by market states, which are often burdensome to small-scale fisheries and presents particular market access challenges. In this regard, the meeting recommended actions for infrastructure development and the necessary capacity building actions to enhance compliance of small scale fishery products with food safety standards of international markets.
38. The meeting also emphasised that there is no harmonised definition of the term “small-scale fisheries” and that the usage of the term is relative and may differ from one country to the other, depending on local circumstances.

## **VII. The way ahead for fisheries subsidies reforms**

39. The meeting considered the information note outlining the current state of play of the ongoing negotiations on fisheries subsidies rules at the WTO.
40. The meeting recommended that support be given to the efforts of the ACP Group in its constructive engagement in the discussions to advance and secure ACP interests and concerns in any outcome on fisheries subsidies rules at the WTO. In this regard, the meeting stressed that any acceptable outcome must preserve the policy space and flexibility for ACP States to develop their fledgling and growing fishing sectors, and expressed concerns for their small scale, artisanal and subsistence fisher folk.
41. The meeting agreed to maintain the ACP position that there must be a negotiated outcome on fisheries subsidies rules at MC11.

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