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UNEP/GEF South China Sea
Project



Global Environment
Facility

***Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends
in the
South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand***

REPORT

**Third Meeting of the Regional Working Group for
the Fisheries Component**

Siem Reap, Cambodia, 29th April – 2nd May 2003

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Report of the Meeting

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1.1 Welcome address

1.1.1 Dr. John Pernetta, the Project Director welcomed the participants and opened the meeting on behalf of the Dr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Director, Division of Global Environment Facility Co-ordination (UNEP/DGEF). He noted with regret that once again Malaysia was not represented at the meeting and expressed the hope that members would agree a course of action that would encourage Malaysia's participation in the future. He noted that, the implications of Malaysia's non-participation to date, was a subject that the group would have to address during the course of this meeting.

1.1.2 Dr. Pernetta noted that a number of the country reports had been completed in draft and were available to the meeting. He noted further that, it was important the views of this group regarding the significance of the various habitats for maintenance of shared and transboundary fish stocks in the Gulf of Thailand be made available to the next meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee in order that this might be included in the consideration of potential demonstration sites for the habitat component of the project.

1.1.3 In this connection Dr. Pernetta noted that, the RSTC meeting that had been scheduled to take place in May, in Guangdong, Southern China, had been postponed to 16th-19th June, due to the SARS outbreak. He noted further that it looked likely that a further delay would be necessary and indicated that this could have consequences for the workplan and timetable of the entire project. Decisions regarding a further delay would be made, only following the meeting of the ASEAN Ministers of Health, which was to discuss the situation and provide guidance to the member states.

1.1.4 In closing, the Project Director expressed the wish that the meeting would have a successful outcome and complete the business of what was an extensive agenda.

1.2 Introduction of members

1.2.1 Members were invited to introduce themselves to the meeting and the list of participants is attached as Annex 1 to this report.

2. ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING

2.1 Election of Officers

2.1.1 The Project Director reminded members that the Rules of Procedure state that, the Regional Working Group shall elect, from amongst the members, a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur to serve for one year. The rules state further that, officers shall be eligible for re-election no more than once.

2.1.2 Mr. Wannakiat Thubthimsang, elected as Chairperson at the first meeting, ceased to be a member of the working group and was replaced by Mr. Pirochana Saikliang, as the Thai Focal Point following Thai Government restructuring. Mr. Wannakiat was replaced as Chairperson of the RWG-F, for the second meeting by Mr. Ing Try, the Vice-chairperson, who served as Acting Chairperson and subsequently attended the second meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee in Nha Trang, in December. Mr. Noel Barut, who served as rapporteur at the first meeting, was not available for the second meeting, and Dr. Johannes Widodo, the alternate for Ir. Salim, was elected as rapporteur in his place. Mr. Try, Mr. Barut, and Dr. Widodo are therefore all eligible for election and/or re-election.

2.1.3 Members were invited to nominate members as Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur for 2003. Mr. Noel Barut nominated Mr. Ing Try as Chairperson of the Regional Working Group, Dr. Son

nominated Mr. Pirochana as Vice Chairperson and Mr. Noel Barut as Rapporteur for 2003. Mr. Try, Mr. Pirochana and Mr. Barut were duly elected by acclamation.

2.2 Documents available to the meeting

2.2.1 In assuming the Chair, Mr. Try expressed his thanks to the members for their confidence in electing him and welcomed participants to Cambodia on behalf of the Department of Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

2.2.2 Mr. Try invited Mr. Kelvin Passfield to introduce the documentation available to the meeting in both hard copy and on CD-ROM. Mr. Passfield noted that draft country reports were available from Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam, The list of documents available to the meeting is contained in Annex 2 of this report.

2.3 Organisation of work

2.3.1 Mr. Passfield briefed participants on the administrative arrangements for the conduct of the meeting, and the proposed organisation of work. Mr. Passfield noted that the meeting would be conducted in English and in plenary.

3. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING AGENDA

3.1 The Chairperson invited members to consider the provisional agenda prepared by the Project Co-ordinating Unit as document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/1, and to propose any amendments or additional items for consideration. There being no proposed amendments or additions Mr. Barut proposed, and Dr. Widodo seconded, a motion for adoption of the agenda, which is attached as Annex 3 to this report.

4. OPENING REMARKS FROM THE FOCAL POINTS FOR FISHERIES FROM EACH PARTICIPATING COUNTRY

4.1 The Chairperson invited the focal points from the SEAs to provide a short overview of their progress subsequent to the second meeting of the RWG and to introduce any additional documentation tabled at the meeting.

4.2 Mr. Barut noted that delays in the issuance of the contract to the Institution commissioned to lead the preparation of the country report, had resulted in delays in producing the report from the Philippines. He noted some difficulties in distinguishing the fisheries data that related specifically to the South China Sea and internal difficulties related to accessing funds, which had been partially resolved.

4.3 Dr. Widodo, reported that there was a lack of quantitative data for fish catch in that part of Indonesia's EEZ contained in the South China Sea, but that they had been able to assemble qualitative data relating to the importance of habitats in the South China Sea. He noted the need to improve the fisheries data and outlined some developments in the creation of the meta-database entries.

4.4 Dr. Son noted that following the last meeting he had convened a national committee meeting and they had agreed to bring up to date (end 2002) the fisheries catch data. Extensive revision of the various chapters had been undertaken and the final draft was submitted to the PCU on 21st March.

4.5 Mr. Pirochana, noted that, he had tabled a revised version of the report prepared earlier, which included greater detail relating to the habitats. He noted that the Thai committee had completed some database forms for inclusion in the regional GIS database covering 16 specific landing sites, and gear types. He noted that the meta-database was not yet completed but that the data could be easily assembled and entered into these forms.

4.6 Mr. Try noted that the two reports from Cambodia available to the meeting were near final and that they had been submitted to an FAO expert for review. This expert had noted various difficulties related to the statistics and suggested that these should be considered as indicative rather than definitive. He noted further that the absence of non-profit making organisations in Cambodia meant that sub-contracts were issued to different offices within the department of fishery of the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries. He noted also that funds were not yet received from UNEP for the first half of 2003 and that, the Ministry was subsidising activities at the present time. He noted further various public awareness activities being encouraged and developed in the framework of the project including development of a glossary and guide to marine life in Cambodia.

4.7 In responding to Mr. Try's point regarding delays in receipt of funds Mr. Passfield informed the meeting that the transfer had been authorised on 4th April following receipt of all the required, signed documentation, and that the cause of these delays would be discussed in more detail under agenda item 6.

5. CONSIDERATION OF THE PARTICIPATION OF MALAYSIA AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP

5.1 Participation of Malaysia

5.1.1 Dr. Pernetta introduced document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/4 highlighting the difficulties for the Regional Work Group in the absence of participation by Malaysia. He noted that it would likely be difficult for the Regional Working Group to complete its stated objective of developing a sub-regional management system of habitat *refugia* for important transboundary fish stocks in the Gulf of Thailand, without the participation of Malaysia. He highlighted two key questions, firstly, what could members do to encourage Malaysian participation in the work of the Regional Working Group, and secondly, under a worst case scenario if Malaysia did not participate, to what extent would this compromise the work of the group?

5.1.2 Mr. Somsak proposed that one might be able to hire a consultant to prepare a country report for Malaysia but that such a report would not carry the same weight as one prepared by a government designated focal point. He noted the need to involve SEAFDEC given their past work in research and development relating to transboundary stocks and noted further that, their involvement might also bring pressure to bear on Malaysia to participate. Mr. Barut reiterated the importance of SEAFDEC involvement and noted also the need to involve ICLARM.

5.1.3 Dr. Son supported the idea of contacting SEAFDEC in Malaysia, Indonesia noted further the importance of this given the existence of a SEAFDEC project on compiling regional fisheries data. Mr. Try offered and the meeting accepted that he raise the problem of the non-participation of Malaysia at appropriate meetings of SEAFDEC. It was further agreed that Mr. Barut, Mr. Pirochana and Dr. Son would, following this meeting, make personal contact with individuals in Malaysian fisheries in order to alert them to the existence of the UNEP/GEF project and the urgent need for Malaysia to participate in the work of the RWG-F.

5.1.4 It was agreed that the PCU member would draft a statement that could be tabled by members at appropriate meetings and used as the basis for personal contacts in Malaysian Fisheries. This statement is attached as Annex 4 to this report.

5.1.5 In responding to some of the points raised during discussion Dr. Pernetta informed members that he was not in a position to hire a consultant or contract an organisation independently of the UNEP National Focal Point to prepare a national report for Malaysia. He noted further that at the time that it had endorsed the full project Malaysia had expressed no reservation regarding the Fisheries component and in the light of this he had discussed with the Executive Director of UNEP his possible personal intervention at the Ministerial level.

5.1.6 The meeting agreed that each member would contact colleagues in Malaysian Fisheries informally regarding the participation of Malaysia, informing them of the existence of the project and

the goal and purpose of the fisheries component. Copies of such correspondence would be sent to the Project Director.

5.2 Participation of Regional organisations

5.2.1 The PCU member briefed the meeting on initial contacts and discussions with FAO's Regional Office, The World Fish Centre (ICLARM) and SEAFDEC. In the case of FAO an initial meeting between the Project Director and the FAO Regional Director had resulted in agreement on the part of FAO to participate in, and assist in the execution of the fisheries component of the project. A follow-up meeting had taken place between Mr. Passfield and the technical officer responsible for the sub-region, but the details of co-operation had yet to be finalised.

5.2.2 In the case of ICLARM a series of interactions had occurred between the Project Director and the Coastal Challenge Programme being developed by ICLARM and between the Fisheries expert from the PCU and the Trawl-base project with a view to co-operation and access to data. In relation to the TrawlBase project phase 2 proposal, Mr. Ing Try said that to his knowledge, Cambodia has not yet had discussions with the World Fish Centre regarding their participation in phase 2.

5.2.3 Mr. Passfield noted that the workplan for the fisheries component of the project included the promotion of the FAO code of conduct for responsible fisheries and that there was an obvious linkage between this activity and the work of SEAFDEC. Further contact between SEAFDEC and the PCU would follow.

5.2.4 Mr. Somsak informed the meeting of various activities of SEAFDEC, associated with the development of a Regional Code of Conduct for responsible fisheries based on the FAO code of conduct and focussing on non-destructive fishing technologies, community based fishery management, fish processing for maximum utilisation of the resources, and other aspects of importance to the region.

6. REPORTS FROM THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATING UNIT (PCU) REGARDING OVERALL PROGRESS TO DATE

6.1 Status of end-year progress reports, expenditure reports, and budgets

6.1.1 Mr. Passfield presented document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/5 containing a summary of the current status of budgets and reports from the Specialised Executing Agencies in the participating countries. The PCU member highlighted the difficulties of the PCU and the problems consequent upon the failure of the Focal Points to meet agreed timelines and submission dates. Delays in submission of the reports by the focal points, result in them being received at the time the regional working group meetings are being organised. Given the limited human resources of the PCU this results in lengthy delays in PCU response.

6.1.2 Members agreed that in future they would try and ensure that all reports were submitted within ten days of the due date (June 30th and December 31st) in accordance with the instructions of the Project Steering Committee.

6.2 Status of planned substantive outputs from the national level activities

6.2.1 It was agreed that the timing of finalisation of the reports would be discussed under agenda item 10 whilst the nature of the publications, translation, and distribution would be discussed under the next agenda item.

7. REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF NATIONAL OUTPUTS ACCORDING TO WORKPLAN

7.1 National Country Reports

7.1.1 The Chairperson invited the focal points from the SEAs to provide a short overview of their reports following which there would be discussion and comments from the floor.

7.1.2 Mr. Barut opened the presentations by reviewing progress to date in compiling the Philippine's national report. He noted that the contractor had been provided with terms of reference closely following the agreed outline of the national reports approved during the first meeting. He noted that detailed data were generally lacking and that a focus had been made on Lingauyen Gulf and Manila Bay with less complete coverage of some 7 additional areas included in the GIS and Meta-databases.

7.1.3 During discussion several points of clarification were raised including the fact that the data presented for fish stocks of significance in Manila Bay and the Lingauyen Gulf made no reference to the particular habitats of importance as spawning, nursery of feeding grounds. It was noted in this regard that the Philippines was proposing as a demonstration site a seagrass bed of 2,600 ha extent in the Lingauyen Gulf and it would be important to know which transboundary fish species were utilising this habitat. Questions were also raised regarding the apparent 8 fold increase in CPUE by drift gillnet over the period 1997 to 2002 in the Batanes Area. It was agreed that further information on the mode of conducting the survey and re-evaluation of these data were required.

7.1.4 Mr. Pirochana noted that the species lists presented appeared not to conform to the listings developed and agreed during the second meeting and Mr. Barut agreed that these lists would be transmitted to the Contractor to be taken into consideration in finalising the report.

7.1.5 Dr. Widodo presented the outcome of the work of the Indonesian national committee presenting information on habitat distribution, fishing grounds and spawning areas. He noted that the fishing areas in the South China Sea for small pelagics and bottom fin fish were limited by the monsoon season and the fishermen from Java, moved back to the Java Sea during the off-season. He noted that the scads, Indian mackerel, skipjack and tuna-like fishes nursery grounds were still unknown. He noted that threats included mangrove habitat destruction in the Riau islands area, destructive fishing practices including bottom trawling, bottom sand mining, and coastal reclamation. He noted that populations of one sardine species had declined as a consequence of high sawdust inputs to the environment, which were mistaken for plankton and ingested.

7.1.6 Dr. Son made a comprehensive presentation of the contents of the Vietnamese national report, highlighting the data relating to landings, the biology and ecology of important species, threats, habitats, current management regimes and recommended actions.

7.1.7 During discussion it was noted that the southern fisheries areas were not only more productive than those in the North but the range of species was also quite different. It was also noted that the management goal of reducing the number of small scale fishermen engaged in capture fisheries was a difficult problem that was not easy to address, since fishermen moving out of the capture fishery required financing and support to become engaged in aquaculture. Dr. Son noted that this was a major problem since more than 80% of Vietnamese fishermen were small scale operators, nevertheless alternative low capital investment aquaculture, such as that of seaweeds or clams might be a viable alternative livelihood.

7.1.8 Mr. Pirochana focal point for fisheries in Thailand, noted that following the last meeting he had concentrated his efforts on assembling data relating to the priority species identified during the meeting. Data from 1980 onwards had been assembled covering all sections of the agreed outline of the report. He noted that ranking of importance had been completed for 16 fishing ports by landings of important species including pelagic, demersal, crustacean and cephalopod species. Pattani ranked quite highly when considering both total value and important species. He noted that the Indo-Pacific mackerel in the Gulf of Thailand was composed of an eastern and a western stock, the latter being fished off the coast of Chumphon Province, where closed seasons had been introduced to protect the breeding stocks.

7.1.9 Mr. Pirochana, noted further that, although some data and information regarding the biology and life history of important species was available this was far from complete. He drew the attention of the group to data relating to the spawning areas of important species noting that, in the case of Indo-Pacific mackerel spawning seemed to be associated with mixed seagrass and coral reef habitats.

7.1.10 There followed a brief discussion of some of the problems associated with the data which had been derived from different sources and the need to clarify that the figures in the tables did not reflect total landings of all species at each landing site but rather landings of the important transboundary species selected for review during the previous meeting. Mr. Pirochana agreed that for sake of clarity an additional column would be introduced giving the total landings at each port.

7.1.11 Mr. Try then proceeded to introduce the Cambodian report which had largely been completed prior to the previous meeting. He noted that Cambodian data were assembled on the basis of 2 provinces and 2 municipalities. He presented the outcome of recent work on satellite tracking of turtles, jointly conducted between Thailand and Cambodia. He focussed on future plans of the national committee, which included the development of a glossary and guide for the marine environment.

7.1.12 During the subsequent discussion issues regarding the relationship between the work of the RWG-F and the country reports and the work of the other components of the project were explored and Mr. Somsak noted in this respect that the biology of many species were insufficiently known in order to determine the comparative importance of habitats to the various species. He suggested that considerable information on the life-cycles of commercially important species were available and that some additional work could be undertaken to expand this aspect of the reports.

7.1.13 Mr. Pirochana informed the meeting that as a result of a national level meeting the fisheries focal point had been asked to compile a listing of fisheries resources associated with particular habitats in Thai waters. Such an analysis was noted as being of considerable value to the habitat sub-components.

7.1.14 Dr. Widodo suggested that an examination of the tables in Annex 4 of the previous meeting report would enable a general statement regarding habitat importance to be derived reflecting the transboundary significance of each species.

7.1.15 Dr. Son raised the issue of the declining anchovy resource in the Southwest of Viet Nam, which was a transboundary stock shared with Cambodia and Mr. Try noted that fish sauce derived from anchovy was highly prized in Cambodia.

7.1.16 In discussing the publication and use of the report Dr. Son noted his intention was that the report be translated into Vietnamese and published in both languages. In the case of Philippines and Indonesia the intention was to translate an executive summary into the local language, and publish the whole report in English. Mr. Pirochana noted his intention to translate and publish in Thai but he recommended the joint publication of all reports by UNEP. Mr. Try expressed his intention to translate and publish in Khmer and in the event that UNEP did not publish the national reports he would also publish in English.

7.1.17 The Project Director briefed members on the decisions of the Project Steering Committee regarding the implementation of the independent peer review of country reports. It was agreed that all members would provide names of potential reviewers before the end of the meeting.

7.1.18 The Project Director noted that joint publication of all country reports was likely to be an unrealistic undertaking given the need to bring all into a uniform format. He indicated that the PCU would organise and manage an independent review process and would assist the countries with editing of the English prior to publication. He proposed that rather than publishing all reports in a single volume it might be more useful to produce a regional overview based on the contents of the national reports.

7.1.19 Mr. Somsak noted that a regional or sub-regional overview would be difficult to produce without data and or information from Malaysia and China.

7.1.20 During discussion it was noted that the recommendations in each national report covered not merely national actions but also regional level actions and that these should be drawn together by the PCU into a single document.

7.1.21 It was agreed that each focal point would take responsibility for translating and publication of the national reports into the required local languages. The PCU would publish the reports in English for regional distribution and hence the PCU needed to know how many copies in English of the other country reports were required for distribution in each participating country.

7.2 Status of meta-database, and national inputs into the regional GIS database

7.2.1 Mr. Passfield noted that to date no data, had been submitted for inclusion in the meta-database or regional GIS. He invited the focal points from the SEAs to provide a short overview of progress in compiling fisheries information in the agreed GIS format, for incorporation into the regional GIS database, as well as progress in completing the national meta-databases.

7.2.2 Mr. Barut informed the meeting that the Philippines has prepared the data in an Access database, and they propose to convert this to the GIS format for submission.

7.2.3 Dr. Widodo stated that Indonesia had reduced the number of sites, as some of those in the original questionnaires prepared by SEA START RC were not valid. Data for the last 10 years were available, and this had been given to the GIS specialist who had attended the regional GIS workshop in Bangkok for entry into the GIS format.

7.2.4 Dr. Son, reported that Viet Nam had collected the data, but not by species, nor for all years, since they have only total catch, for some years. Mr. Passfield advised that Dr. Son should submit the data as available, since no country was able to provide the data in as much detail as first proposed.

7.2.5 Mr. Pirochana noted that landings per port had been completed and that the numbers of gear registered by Province for 1980, 1990 and 1998 had been compiled and that Thailand has landings by species, quantity and value, but was not able to complete all the questionnaires, as other data were not available. He noted that these data would be dispatched to Dr. Anond copied to the PCU.

7.2.6 Mr. Try indicated that the development of a meta-database for fisheries was proceeding in parallel with the development of the coral reef and seagrass meta-databases which also fell under the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries. He informed the meeting that Cambodia had compiled more than 100 metadata forms for the fisheries, coral reef, and seagrass components combined.

8. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE SELECTION OF DEMONSTRATION SITES FOR THE HABITAT COMPONENT OF THE PROJECT

8.1 The Project Director introduced to the meeting the principles and procedures agreed and approved by the RSTC and PSC concerning the nature of proposed demonstration sites for the habitat component of the project, their description and ranking for determination of regional priorities (UNEP/GEF/SCS/RSTC.2/10/Amend.1 & UNEP/GEF/SCS/RSTC.2/8).

8.2 Basically the procedure is a three step process involving assembling site specific data; conducting a cluster analysis to determine similarity between sites; and finally ranking sites within each cluster according to a set of agreed criteria. Following the receipt of the site specific data by the PCU, cluster analyses for each sub-component will be undertaken, in order to group potential demonstration sites according to their degree of similarity. This grouping will provide initial guidance to the national committees on those sites for which concrete proposals should be prepared by September 2003.

8.3 At the national level, ranking of the importance of proposed sites for each habitat type has been completed by a number of countries, and national priorities will be taken into consideration during the process of developing the regional priorities. The trans-boundary significance of these sites with respect to fisheries is one of the factors taken into consideration in the regional ranking process.

8.4 It is imperative therefore that the Regional Working Group on Fisheries provide inputs to the next meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee regarding priority areas of habitat in

the South China Sea and particularly in the Gulf of Thailand, which are of significance from the perspective of the maintenance of transboundary fish stocks.

8.5 It was proposed by the Chairman and agreed by the meeting that, the fisheries focal points would identify the comparative importance of habitat areas and communicate this information to the National Technical Focal Point for inclusion during consideration of the national level priorities for demonstration sites. At the same time the information will be sent to the PCU and to the Chairman of the RWG-F so as to ensure that the information is taken into account during discussions of the demonstration sites at the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee.

8.6 Mr. Pirochana briefed the meeting on the process of demonstration site selection by the Thai National Technical Working Group, indicating that fisheries data had been fed into the national habitat working groups and taken into consideration during the development of national priorities. Dr. Son indicated that a similar process had been undertaken in Viet Nam.

9. UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE PROPOSAL FOR A BLAST FISHING DETECTION TRIAL

9.1 In introducing this agenda item Mr. Passfield reminded participants that at the second meeting of the Regional Working Group on Fisheries, Dr. George Woodman had made a presentation on the development of a blast fishing detection device. At that meeting, several participants expressed interest in being involved in further testing of the device.

9.2 Mr. Passfield then presented document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/6, which provides an update of progress in developing a Blast Fishing Detection Trial. He noted that Dr. Woodman had pursued and developed a proposal for trials based on the Shell platforms in Sabah, Malaysia and that, there was some support from the Malaysian Fisheries department for such a proposal. He noted further that, whilst Shell were willing to make available infrastructure and other in-kind support they were unable to provide cash co-financing. The proposal prepared by Dr. Woodman was still under consideration and the group was requested to consider whether they wished to support further work in developing this proposal or whether they wished to find an alternate location for the trials.

9.3 Members agreed that the blast fishing detection trials should be pursued. It was noted that Malaysia possessed significant marine control and surveillance (MCS) capability, and that Sabah was the preferred location due to the availability of the oil drilling platforms and other infrastructure, as well as MCS capability. They further indicated that as the funding for the trials was within the fisheries component, conducting the trials in Malaysia would only be possible if Malaysia formally joined the fisheries component of the project. The meeting requested the PCU to continue their efforts to get Malaysia to participate in the project, and also reiterated that they would also use their own contacts in the Malaysian Fisheries Department to try and achieve this.

10. REVISION OF THE WORKPLAN AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES

10.1 Mr. Passfield noted that during the first and second meetings of the Regional Working Group a work plan and timetable had been developed and agreed, but that some countries had been unable to meet the deadlines for submission of outputs as planned. There followed an extensive discussion of the current work plan. In agreeing to some of the new milestones, the following reservations were made by participants in relation to the data in GIS format.

10.2 Mr. Pirochana noted that since the Thai data covered 16 provinces, there was an enormous amount of data to be placed in the GIS format and they had reached an agreement with SEA START RC that the data would be submitted in word format, and that the staff of SEA START RC would convert to the GIS format. Mr. Try said that Cambodia would also be submitting the available data in word format, and not on the questionnaires provided. Other members agreed to submit the data in GIS format, but noted that only some data were available.

10.3 With regard to development of a management plan to support the Strategic Action Programme, it was agreed that for this to happen, one or two stakeholder consultations should be completed. Based on this, there was an agreement that the members should request to move funds from other budget lines, e.g. 5214 (publication of metadata base), 5213 (publication of national management plan), or others as requested, to hold a stakeholder consultation on preparation of a management plan based on the recommendations that come out of the national reports. It was also noted that it would be expected that this plan would be consistent with any existing National Management Plans and would be an integral part of that existing plan.

10.4 Dr. Widodo informed the meeting that the SCS management area is only one of the 9 management areas in Indonesia, and the plan will be specific to this area.

10.5 In reply to a question by Mr. Somsak on funding for some future activities identified under the project, Mr. Passfield informed the meeting of the appointment of Mr. Boon Tiong Tay to the PCU. He explained that Mr. Tay was to source funding for activities such as the 15 demonstration sites in the regional portfolio that would not be funded under the current GEF grant.

10.6 Mr. Passfield explained that input of RWG-F to the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) would be based on the recommendations that come out of the National Reports. National fisheries committees would then develop a national action plan to implement the SAP, which would include stakeholder consultations. The timeline for completion of the national action plan is dependant on the time of completion of the SAP.

10.7 Regarding the preparation of proposals for fishery pilot activities, which appears in the original workplan, it was noted that there was no budget line for this activity. It was therefore agreed that, where fisheries issues were present, the fisheries component would provide input into demonstration site activities in the habitat component, if required.

10.8 Regarding the promotion of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, it was noted that the regionalisation process has not yet been completed by SEAFDEC. The articles on fishing operations and aquaculture are complete, and the part dealing with fisheries management is nearing completion. It was agreed that Mr. Passfield would contact SEAFDEC, to determine when this would be completed, and to discuss an appropriate approach to promote the Code. One possible activity suggested by Mr. Pirochana was translating the regional guidelines for fishing operations into local languages. Mr. Somsak advised however that SEAFDEC already had a budget for this translation. He also noted that the original FAO Code has already been translated into local languages with the exception of Khmer.

10.9 The finally agreed revised workplan and timetable is attached as Annex 5 to this report.

11. DATE AND PLACE OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES

11.1 Members were invited to consider and agree upon the proposed time and place for the fourth meeting of the RWG-F. The overall schedule of meetings currently has the fourth meeting scheduled for September 8th to 11th. It was noted that there have already been unavoidable delays in holding several other meetings, due mainly to travel restrictions consequent upon the SARS outbreak. It is possible therefore that it may be necessary to re-schedule the fourth meeting at later date.

11.2 Mr. Barut informed the meeting that the invitation to hold the meeting in the Philippines was still open. It was agreed that Manila was the first choice, as logistics would be easier. Participants agreed that the preferred dates would be 8th to 11th September, and Mr. Passfield advised that he would keep participants informed of any changes to this schedule if they became necessary.

11.3 Members attention was drawn to the fact that PEMSEA has, in collaboration with the Government of Malaysia scheduled a major East Asian Seas Congress during the week commencing 8th December 2003, which conflicts with the approved dates for the Regional Scientific Conference and fourth meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee.

11.4 Members were invited to indicate whether or not this presents a conflict in their personal schedules and whether the Regional Scientific Conference should be delayed to the first quarter of 2004. Regarding the proposed PEMSEA meeting, no member had received prior notice of this meeting. The proposed dates for the Regional Scientific Conference did not conflict with any other arrangements they had made.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 The Chairperson invited members to raise any additional items of business under this agenda item.

12.2 The Chairperson sought clarification from the Project Director regarding the nature of the "National Action Plan". The Project Director explained that the National Action Plan would be developed on the basis of the contents of the regional level Strategic Action Programme. These contents would reflect the recommendations contained in the individual country reports and the regional fisheries overview prepared on the basis of these reports.

12.3 In reply to a question from Mr Pirochana on budget revisions, Dr. Pernetta said that the 3 countries that had not yet finalised their second six month reports for 2002 should finalise a revised budget before leaving this meeting, and should dispatch the signed documentation as soon as possible since the due date was long past.

12.4 Dr Pernetta noted that at the next meeting of the RWG-F, the group will need to make decisions on the future activities that should be undertaken in the fisheries component. Mr Somsak stated that habitat management was quite straightforward in comparison to fisheries management. Since for successful fisheries management, you need to consider the fishermen, their livelihoods and alternatives, as well as consider which fishing methods are allowable.

12.5 Dr Pernetta noted that the GEF is interested in promoting sustainable use, rather than protectionist, conservation and that, all demonstration sites will include human use, such as fisheries. If fishing is a major threat to a site, the proposal must address that threat. It would be expected that the habitat component would seek input from the fisheries component regarding how to address the issue. It may be that in some demonstration sites, significant funds may in fact be targeted at fisheries related problems. Therefore the fact that money is not available for purely fisheries demonstration activities does not exclude the involvement of fisheries in demonstration activities under the project.

12.6 In relation to scheduling of the next meeting, Dr Pernetta suggested that the September date may be too early, and it may be wise to suggest an alternative date in November, given the project timing of production of the outputs from the fisheries component. It was agreed to revise the date to the 11 to 14 November.

13. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

13.1 Mr Noel Barut, the Rapporteur presented the draft report of the meeting for consideration and adoption by the members. The report was considered, amended and adopted as it appears in this document.

14. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

14.1 The Chairperson expressed his sincere thanks on behalf of the Officers of the Working Group for the hard and constructive work that had enable the meeting to conclude its business on schedule.

14.2 There followed an exchange of courtesies following which the Chairperson closed the meeting at 1730 pm on Friday 2nd May, 2003.

ANNEX 1**List of Participants****Focal Points****Cambodia**

Mr. Ing Try, Deputy Director
Department of Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
186 Norodom Blvd., P.O. Box 582
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tel: (855 23) 219256; (855) 11 957 884
Fax: (855 23) 219256; 427048; 215470
E-mail: tmmp.cam@bigpond.com.kh

Philippines

Mr. Noel Barut
National Fisheries Research and Development
Institute, Department of Agriculture
940 Kayumonggi, Press Building
Quezon Avenue
Quezon City, Philippines

Tel: (63 2) 373 6336; 372 5063;
63 917 8385701
Fax: (63 2) 372 5063
E-mail: noel_barut@hotmail.com

Viet Nam

Dr. Dao Manh Son, Vice Director
Research Institute for Marine Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries
170 Le Lai Street
Haiphong City, Viet Nam

Tel: (84 31) 837 898; 836 135; 84 91 3329782
Fax: (84 31) 836 812
E-mail: daoson@hn.vnn.vn

Indonesia

Dr. Johanes Widodo
(Designated alternate for Ir Salim)
Research Institute for Marine Fisheries
Jl. Muara Baru Ujung
Jakarta Utara 14440, Indonesia

Tel: (62 21) 660 2044; 62 8129244479
Fax: (62 21) 661 2137
E-mail: jwidodo_uw88@cbn.net.id

Thailand

Mr. Pirochana Saikliang, Senior Fishery Biologist
Upper Gulf Marine Fisheries Research and
Development Center
49 Soi Phrarachaveriyaporn 16
Phrarachaveriyaporn Road
Bangphueng Sub-district, Phrapradeang District
Samut Prakarn 10130, Thailand

Tel: (66 2) 816 7635-8 ext. 15; 661 843 9887
Fax: (66 2) 816 7634
E-mail: pirochas@fisheries.go.th

Regional Expert

Mr. Somsak Chullasorn
Department of Fisheries
Kasetsart University Campus
Chatujak, Bangkok 10900
Thailand

Tel: (66 2) 561 3150; 669 833 3934
Fax: (66 2) 562 0561
E-mail: somsakc@fisheries.go.th

Project Co-ordinating Unit Member

Mr. Kelvin Passfield, Expert - Fisheries
UNEP/GEF Project Co-ordinating Unit
United Nations Environment Programme
9th Floor, Block A, United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel: (66 2) 288 1116
Fax: (66 2) 288 1094; 281 2428
E-mail: passfield@un.org

Project Co-ordinating Unit

Dr. John Pernetta, Project Director
UNEP/GEF Project Co-ordinating Unit
United Nations Environment Programme
9th Floor, Block A, United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel: (66 2) 288 1886
Fax: (66 2) 288 1094; 281 2428
E-mail: pernetta@un.org

Ms. Unchalee Kattachan
Secretary, UNEP/GEF Project Co-ordinating Unit
United Nations Environment Programme
9th Floor, Block A, United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel: (66 2) 288 1670
Fax: (66 2) 288 1094; 281 2428
E-mail: kattachan.unescap@un.org

Mr. Chatchai Silpsoonthorn, Intern
UNEP/GEF Project Co-ordinating Unit
United Nations Environment Programme
9th Floor, Block A, United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel: (66 2) 288 2606
Fax: (66 2) 288 1094; 281 2428
E-mail: chaisilp@oepp.go.th

ANNEX 2

List of Documents

Discussion documents

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/1	Provisional agenda
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/2	Provisional annotated agenda
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/3	Report of the meeting
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/4	Consideration of the consequences of the non-participation of Malaysia in the work of the Regional Working Group on Fisheries.
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/5	Current status of budgets and reports from the Specialised Executing Agencies in the participating countries.
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/6	Update of blast fishing detection trial proposal.
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/7	Schedule of meetings and current workplan for the Regional Working Group on Fisheries.
CD-ROM	National reports and GIS Questionnaires for fisheries (see Appendix 1 of the Provisional list of documents for the list of fisheries related reports).
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RSTC.2/8	Draft proposal for regional criteria and procedures to be used in ranking and selecting demonstration sites in the framework of the UNEP/GEF Project entitled: <i>"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand."</i>
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RSTC.2/10/Amend.1	Guidance to the PSC on the nature and types of potential demonstration sites to be established within the Framework of the UNEP/GEF Project

Information documents

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/INF.1	Provisional list of participants
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/INF.2	Provisional list of documents
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.3/INF.3	Draft programme
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-W.2/3	Second Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Wetlands Sub-component for the UNEP/GEF Project <i>"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"</i> . Report of the meeting. UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-W.2/3 Shenzhen, China, 4 - 7 September 2002.
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-M.2/3	Second Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Mangroves Sub-component for the UNEP/GEF Project <i>"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"</i> . Report of the meeting. UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-M.2/3 Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, 10 - 13 September 2002.
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-LbP.2/3	Second Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Land-based Pollution Component for the UNEP/GEF Project <i>"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"</i> . Report of the meeting. UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-LbP.2/3 Batam, Indonesia, 18 - 21 September 2002.

- UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.2/3 Second Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Fisheries Component for the UNEP/GEF Project “*Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand*”. *Report of the meeting*. UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.2/3 Phuket, Thailand, 7 - 11 October 2002.
- UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-CR.2/3 Second Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Coral Reef Sub-component for the UNEP/GEF Project “*Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand*”. *Report of the meeting*. UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-CR.2/3 Sihanoukville, Cambodia, 23 - 26 October 2002.
- UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.2/3 Second Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Seagrass Sub-component for the UNEP/GEF Project “*Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand*”. *Report of the meeting*. UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.2/3 Hue, Viet Nam, 28 - 31 October 2002.
- UNEP/GEF/SCS/RSTC.2/3 Second Meeting of the Regional Scientific & Technical Committee for the UNEP/GEF Project “*Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand*”. *Report of the meeting*. UNEP/GEF/SCS/RSTC.2/3 Nha Trang, Viet Nam, 11 - 13 December 2002.
- UNEP/GEF/SCS/PSC.2/3 Second Meeting of the Project Steering Committee for the UNEP/GEF Project “*Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand*”. *Report of the meeting*. UNEP/GEF/SCS/PSC.2/3 Hanoi, Viet Nam, 16 - 18 December 2002.
- WWF Australia. Great Barrier Reef Campaign. August 2002. Scraping the bottom: Seafloor trawling in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- EJF. 2003. Squandering the Seas. How shrimp trawling is threatening ecological integrity and food security around the world. Environmental Justice Foundation, London, UK.

Appendix 1

List of Substantive Reports Relating to the Fisheries Component, Received by the Project Co-Ordinating Unit as of April 16th 2003.

Supplied to the Third Meeting of the Regional Working Group on Fisheries,
as pdf files on cd-rom and as hard copies.

Cambodia

Fish Stocks and Habitats of Regional, Global, and Transboundary Significance in the South China Sea, Cambodia. 48pp, plus 13pp appendices, 24th Feb., 2003.

Review Status of the Current Marine Fisheries Management and Legislation, Cambodia. 19pp. undated.

Indonesia

Fish Stocks and Habitats of Regional, Global, and Transboundary Significance in the South China Sea of Indonesia. 53pp. 2003 (file dated 24th March).

Philippines

No report received

Thailand

Fish Stocks and Habitats of Regional, Global, and Transboundary Significance in the South China Sea. Case Study: Gulf of Thailand. 28pp, plus 23pp tables and maps. (First draft, partial only, October 2002). Second draft tabled at the meeting.

Viet Nam

Country Report: Fish Stocks & Habitats of Regional, Global and Transboundary Significance in the South China Sea. 115pp. March, 2003.

ANNEX 3

Agenda

- 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**
 - 1.1 Welcome address**
 - 1.2 Introduction of members**
- 2. ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING**
 - 2.1 Election of Officers**
 - 2.2 Documents available to the meeting**
 - 2.3 Organisation of work**
- 3. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING AGENDA**
- 4. OPENING REMARKS FROM THE FOCAL POINTS FOR FISHERIES FROM EACH PARTICIPATING COUNTRY**
- 5. CONSIDERATION OF THE PARTICIPATION OF MALAYSIA AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP**
 - 5.1 Participation of Malaysia**
 - 5.2 Participation of Regional organisations**
- 6. REPORTS FROM THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATING UNIT (PCU) REGARDING OVERALL PROGRESS TO DATE**
 - 6.1 Status of end-year progress reports, expenditure reports, and budgets**
 - 6.2 Status of planned substantive outputs from the national level activities**
- 7. REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF NATIONAL OUTPUTS ACCORDING TO WORKPLAN**
 - 7.1 National Country Reports**
 - 7.2 Status of meta-database, and national inputs into the regional GIS database**
- 8. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE SELECTION OF DEMONSTRATION SITES FOR THE HABITAT COMPONENT OF THE PROJECT**
- 9. UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE PROPOSAL FOR A BLAST FISHING DETECTION TRIAL**
- 10. REVISION OF THE WORKPLAN AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES**
- 11. DATE AND PLACE OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES**
- 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
- 13. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING**
- 14. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

ANNEX 4

Statement Regarding the Non-participation of Malaysia in the Fisheries Component of the UNEP/GEF Project entitled: “Reversing Environmental Degradation trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand”

At the third Meeting of the Regional Working Group on Fisheries for the above project, held in Siem Reap, Cambodia, from the 29th April - 2nd May 2003, the government nominated focal points for fisheries from Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam all expressed concern at the non-participation of Malaysia in the Fisheries Component.

Members noted that the project has been running for nearly 18 months, and it was becoming a matter of some considerable concern that Malaysia had still not designated a focal point for fisheries nor indicated formally whether the government would participate in this component of the Project. Members noted that, at the time of endorsement of the full project document by the GEF Focal Point for Malaysia¹, the Government of Malaysia had raised no objection to, nor expressed reservations, regarding this component of the project.

The government nominated focal points for fisheries from Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam feel strongly that the non-participation of Malaysia in the fisheries component of this project, seriously jeopardises the prospects for achieving one of the primary objectives, namely the development of a sub-regional management agreement regarding fisheries habitats in the Gulf of Thailand. This would have impacts for all countries participating in the South China Sea Project, including Malaysia, which is participating in other components of the project.

It was agreed that the Project Director would communicate these concerns to the National Focal Point and National Technical Focal Point for the Project in Malaysia and that individual members of the Regional Working Group would raise these concerns formally and informally with their Malaysian colleagues, as the opportunities arise.

¹ Nadzri Yahaya, pp Secretary General, Ministry of Science Technology & Environment, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 2nd endorsement received 18 September 2000. Original signed by K. Nagulendran, pp Secretary General, Ministry of Science, Technology & Environment, Malaysia. received 25 March 1999.

