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Reduction of Environmental Impact from Tropical Shrimp Trawling through the introduction of Bycatch Reduction Technologies and Change of Management

<http://www.fao.org/fi/gefshrimp.htm>

Nigeria

Meeting on the Harmonization of Laws in the Gulf of Guinea States

20 – 25 March 2007

Lagos, Nigeria

Coordinated by:

**The Nigerian Federal Department of Fisheries &
Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research**

Summary

Title of project:	EP/GLO/201/GEF "Reduction of Environmental Impact of Tropical Shrimp Trawling through the introduction of by-catch reduction technology and change of management" (the Project).
Purpose of mission	The mission was for the Reporting Officer (RO) to participate in the "Meeting on the Harmonization of Laws in the Gulf of Guinea States" planned by the Nigerian Federal Department of Fisheries and the Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research under the Project. The aims of the meeting are for the invited States to deliberate on and adopt the best means for cooperation with a view to harmonize laws relating to shrimp trawling and to facilitate action on related matters.
Results	<p>5 States including the host out of the original 7 invited States attended the meeting. The meeting adopted recommendations to be acted upon by the States in the immediate to long term to achieve the objective of harmonizing laws and ultimately effective management of the shrimp trawl fisheries. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries data bank/Exchange of Information – there will be a fisheries data bank to facilitate harmonization of laws and MCS action by individual states; • Fishing Effort - The use of the FAO format in the assessment of fishing effort; • Fisheries Conservation Measures - harmful effects of pair trawling in certain countries were noted. It was also noted that not all countries prohibited pair trawling. It was agreed that in the long term, it would be necessary to achieve a total ban of harmful fishing methods and offending vessels throughout the Gulf; • MCS – It was agreed that there was a need to urgently establish an effective sub-regional marine fisheries MCS in view of the lack of capacity in the individual Gulf States. Assistance from FAO or from other donor agencies should be sought; • Penalty Regimes – States should exchange compendium of fishing offences penalties. This will assist States to determine appropriate penalties commensurate with those of other countries within the sub-region; • Trawl Cod-end Mesh Sizes - Information on cod-end mesh sizes are required to be exchanged to ensure that appropriate gear specifications are prescribed; • Regional Vessels Monitoring System (VMS) - It was agreed that a sub-regional VMS was a sine qua non for effective MCS within the Gulf of Guinea. FAO was requested to assist the sub-region in realising this initiative. <p>The Meeting also issued a communiqué.</p>
Issues arising/outstanding	<p>While the meeting was meant to "harmonize laws", the recommendations on cooperation are wider in scope and fall under other thematic areas e.g. conservation and management and MCS. The relevant divisions and services within the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (the Department) should be involved in the initiative at some point in the future if not immediately.</p> <p>The States who attended the meeting are keen to begin sub-regional cooperation albeit under an informal arrangement. Benin, Cameroon and Nigeria are already exchanging information on licensed vessels. It seems that the other countries are eager to follow suit through exchange of information at a technical officers' level. However, at some point in the future, it might become necessary to legitimise the initiative by basing or annexing the cooperative initiative on formal arrangements. To this end, existing international/regional/sub-regional frameworks (e.g. COREP and the new sub-regional entity proposed for the West Central Gulf of Guinea) may have to be involved. Alternatively thought should be given to how the initiative on MCS could be facilitated.</p>
Recommendations/Follow-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the utility of having the MCS officer within FIIT and the Division responsible for resource management making some input or becoming involved in the cooperative initiative under the Project (LEGN/FIIT/FIRM); 2. The Project officers should consider whether there is a need to formalise the initiative for cooperation. The officers responsible for COREP or the new entity for the West Central Gulf of Guinea should note the initiative with a view to inform/assist the Department and the States on how the cooperation can be facilitated/enhanced where appropriate (LEG/FIIT/FAO-RAF). 3. There is need for synergy with on-going (and new) projects such as the Gulf of Guinea LME and the Cannery Current LME Projects.

Back to Office Report

The Reporting Officer (RO) travelled to Lagos Nigeria to participate in the “Meeting on the Harmonization of Laws in the Gulf of Guinea States” from 22 – 23 March 2007 convened under EP/GLO/201/GEF “Reduction of Environmental Impact of Tropical Shrimp Trawling through the introduction of by-catch reduction technology and change of management” (the Project). The meeting was planned and organised by the Nigerian Federal Department of Fisheries and the Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research as part of the national activities under the Project. The aim of the meeting, as reflected in its title is for the invited Gulf of Guinea States to deliberate and adopt the best means for cooperation with a view to harmonize laws relating to shrimp trawl fisheries as well as to facilitate action on related matters.

1. The RO’s detailed itinerary is as follows:

	Arrival	Departure
Rome		21/03/2007
London	21/03/2007	21/03/2007
Lagos	21/03/2007	24/03/2007
London	25/03/2007	25/03/2007
Rome	25/03/2007	

The Mission and its outcomes

The Meeting was chaired by Nigeria as the host State. Only five States (Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Nigeria, and Sao Tome & Principe) out of the original seven invited States attended the meeting. Togo and Equatorial Guinea did not attend the meeting. The list of participants is attached as Annex 1. The agenda for the meeting is attached as Annex 2.

During the first part of the meeting, the participants deliberated on whether to adopt the matters discussed and the results arising from the discussion during a meeting between Nigeria and Cameroon in 2006 as participants in the Project. The Minutes of the Meeting (attached as Annex 3) reports that the minute of the 2006 meeting was adopted but it should be noted that only Cameroon and Nigeria who were privy to that meeting endorsed the 2006 meeting minutes. The other States nevertheless agreed to adopt the issues arising from the 2006 minutes and make related decisions and recommendations as appropriate.

The main part of the meeting focussed on issues concerning the harmonization of laws and related matters. The RO, upon request, provided information where available and helped to facilitate the deliberations of the meeting.

The meeting made certain decisions and adopted recommendations to be individually acted upon by the Gulf States in the immediate to long term to achieve the objective of harmonizing laws and ultimately effective management of the shrimp trawl fisheries in the Gulf.

The decisions and recommendations are summarised as follows:

- Name of the cooperative arrangement – the Meeting decided that the cooperative arrangement (the Meeting) which forms the basis for decisions on matters for cooperation among the Gulf States will be called the “Sub-regional Cooperation in Marine Fisheries

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance in the Southern Gulf of Guinea”. The secretariat of the meeting will be domiciled in Nigeria.

- Fisheries data bank/Exchange of Information – It was agreed that there will be a fisheries data bank to facilitate harmonization of laws, management and monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) action by individual states. It should be noted that while the meeting refers to a data bank, the main thrust of this recommendation is for the exchange of relevant information through the secretariat of the meeting. The secretariat will then circulate the submitted information to the other Gulf States.
- MCS – It was agreed that there was a need to urgently establish an effective sub- regional marine fisheries resources monitoring, control and surveillance system in view of the lack of capacity in the individual Gulf States. FAO was invited to assist this initiative through the Project where possible or secure the assistance of other donor agencies;
- Assessing Fishing Effort – It was noted that the means of assessing fishing effort by reference to the number of fishing vessels was not reliable. It was agreed that the FAO format in assessment of fishing effort should be utilised by all countries;
- Fisheries Conservation Measures - Harmful effects of pair trawling in certain countries were reported and noted. It was also noted that not all countries of the Gulf prohibited pair trawling. It was agreed that in the long run, it would be necessary to impose a total ban throughout the Gulf of prohibited fishing methods such as pair trawling and vessels who violated conservation and management measures. The countries who did not ban pair trawling at this time undertook to study the use of this fishing method with a view to determine its impact on the resources and the environment and to make decisions to discontinue its use.
- Penalty Regimes – The participants agreed to submit compendia of fishing offences penalties through the secretariat of the meeting for circulation to other countries. These will assist States to determine penalties that would be commensurate with those of other countries within the sub-region;
- Trawl Cod-end Mesh Sizes - Delegates were informed that information on cod-end mesh sizes were part of the information required to be exchanged to ensure that appropriate gear specifications are prescribed;
- Regional Vessels Monitoring System (VMS) - It was agreed that a sub-regional VMS was a sine qua non for effective MCS within the Gulf of Guinea. FAO was requested to assist the sub-region in realising this initiative.

A communiqué was agreed to and issued after the Meeting. The communiqué is attached as Annex 4.

Issues Arising

It should be noted that while the title of the meeting was for the “harmonization of laws”, the recommendations on cooperative action are wider in scope and fall under other the thematic areas particularly conservation and management and MCS. The Development Law Service of the FAO Legal Office (LEGN) has been providing assistance to the Project due to the need for supervision and technical support for achieving the anticipated outcomes of the meeting that have legal overtones. However, in view of the fact that the Meeting or the initiative of Cameroon and Nigeria endorsed by the other Gulf of Guinea States emphasises other issues in addition to “harmonization of laws”, it may be timely for other relevant divisions and services (FIIT and FIRM) within the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (the Department) to become involved in the implementation of the Project and in particular to support the cooperative initiative of the Gulf States of Guinea.

It should also be noted that the States who attended the meeting are admirably keen to begin sub-regional/international cooperation albeit under an informal arrangement. Benin, Cameroon and Nigeria are already exchanging information on licensed vessels. It was sensed at the meeting that the other countries are enthusiastic in joining the initiative for the exchange of information at a technical officers' level as agreed. It should be observed that international cooperation of this type might enter an involved phase which would necessitate endorsement by higher levels of government and oversight. While this was not raised as an issue at the meeting, it is the RO's view that it may be prudent to anticipate that at some point in the future, it would be necessary to legitimise the initiative by basing or annexing the cooperative initiative on formal arrangements.

Facilitating the cooperative initiative in the sub-region through or by annexing it to an existing multilateral arrangement such as the Regional Fisheries Committee for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP) or the new entity/arrangement for the West Central Gulf of Guinea may give the initiative a more formal character. This could become relevant if the initiative is to be sustained beyond the Project life. It remains to be seen whether the Gulf of Guinea States who initiated the cooperation for the harmonization of laws and related matters under the Project are keen on a more formal framework for their initiative.

Follow-up and Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- the MCS officer within FIIT and the Division of the Department responsible for resource management consider making some input or become involved in the cooperative initiative under the Project (FIIT/FIRM). The recommendations of the Meeting relating to a sub-regional MCS and VMS should be of particular concern to FIIT. Some thought should be given to the kind of response that could be issued, if any, to the request by the Meeting for support from FAO on establishing a sub-regional MCS and VMS;
- the Project coordinating team/officers and the Department should consider whether the Gulf of Guinea States involved in the initiative should be encouraged to consider a formal framework for sub-regional cooperation. The officers responsible for COREP and the new sub-regional entity proposed for fisheries in West Central Gulf of Guinea should also note the cooperative initiative with a view to inform/assist the Department and the Gulf States on how the cooperation could be facilitated and enhanced where appropriate (FIIT/FAO-RAF).
- There are on-going projects such as the Gulf of Guinea LME and Cannery Current LME Projects that are relevant to fisheries management in the Gulf of Guinea States. New projects may also be approved for provision of technical assistance in fisheries to the States in the Gulf. The need for synergy between these Projects and the EP/GLO/201/GEF Project is vital in order to avoid duplication of effort and to enhance collaboration where appropriate on common issues for maximum anticipated benefits for the States of the Gulf of Guinea.