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05 May, 2007 A GEM Departs

Tribute to the Memory of Ms. Catherine Isebor

By
Executive Secretary and Staff
of The Executive Secretariat, IGCC

"Death is a necessary end. It will come when it will come"

Shakespeare in Julius Caesar



Late Catherine Isebor

The morning of May 07, 2007 seemed like a normal day at the Executive Secretariat of the IGCC until the devastating news of Ms. Catherine Isebor's transition was broken to us. It appeared the whole world had come to a stand still. The news soon spread like wild fire to all 16 countries of the IGCC and messages of condolence began to fill our mail boxes.

The Executive Secretary and staff of the IGCC found it difficult to come to terms with the sudden demise of a Gem in the Fisheries sector.

Ms. Catherine Isebor worked as a Research Scientist at the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research and rose to the rank of Chief Research Officer having specialized in the area of coastal and marine ecology and Fisheries of the Nigerian and other coastal waters in West and Central Africa.

Among her achievements are:

- The conduct and evaluation of fish stocks in Nigerian waters and the Gulf of Guinea;



Catherine in a discussion with colleague scientists during a GCLME Regional Workshop

- Coordination/implementation of sub regional fisheries survey for the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem Project;
- Cruise coordinator and team leader for the fish trawl survey of the GCLME on board MV Fridtjof Nansen cruise of 2004, 2005 and 2006.
- Member of Presidential Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture Development in Nigeria.

Ms. Isebor has authored and co-authored over 27 publications.



Ms. Isebor's (right) last appearance at a Workshop at the IGCC Executive Secretariat. To her right, Ms. Foluke Areola. Behind is Ms Akwaugo Amadi.

The last time Catherine visited the Executive Secretariat was in February when she participated in the Biodiversity Workshop of 26 February-02 March, 2007.



At the workshop she demonstrated her usual commitment and deployed her knowledge and experience in fisheries as usual to the success of the workshop.

She was as usual the smiling, friendly sister that we all cherished.

But little did we know that was the last time we were going to see our dear sister and friend.



Catherine and her colleague scientist during laboratory work, analyzing stomach contents in the Regional Fisheries Centre, Luanda, Angola

She joined her colleague fisheries Experts from Angola, Ghana, Sao Tome et Principe and Sierra Leone in Angola from 26th - 30th March, to analyze stomach contents of samples from the 2006 Fisheries Resources Survey.

The vacuum that the absence of Catherine has created will be difficult to fill, but we find solace in the fact that she has left her footprints in the sands of time.

Her untimely departure should encourage and motivate us to work hardest each day as she did. It should remind us of our own inevitable destiny and to perform our allotted task while it is still "day" for the "night" comes when no one can work.

Catherine will be greatly missed by the Executive Secretary, Staff of IGCC and the entire IGCC Community.



Rest In Perfect Peace Catherine !!!



Highlights of the 1st Leg of the 2007 GCLME / FAO Survey in the Guinea Current Region 4 - 31 May, 2007

One of the long-term developmental goals of the GCLME project is to ensure recovery and sustainability of depleted fishery and marine living resources in the region. To achieve this goal, regional fishery resource surveys have been planned. The main aim of the surveys is to collect the necessary information for formulating management strategies for sustainable exploitation of the fishery resources. It is in light of this that the GCLME in collaboration with the FAO and IMR has since 2004 been executing fishery research surveys in the Gulf of Guinea using the research vessel, Fridtjof Nansen.



The RV Dr. Fridtjof Nansen arriving in Tema port after the first leg

Commencement of 2007 Fishery Survey

The 2007 GCLME/FAO Survey in the Gulf of Guinea was planned in 3 Legs. The 1st Leg was executed between 5th and 29th May 2007 and covered the waters of Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. In line with the capacity building programme of the GCLME, 2 scientists each from the afore-mentioned countries participated in the survey. In addition plankton and benthos experts from the region also participated in the survey. All the participants from the region embarked the vessel on 4th May 2007 at Bissau Port and the survey commenced from Guinea Bissau on 5th May 2007.

Pre-Survey Meeting

The Cruise Leader for the survey was Sigborn Mehl of Norway. Mr. Ibrahim Turay of Sierra Leone was appointed the Co-Cruise Leader on 20th April 2007 and was provided with the sampling protocol for benthos, plankton and stomach content. A pre-survey meeting held between the regional scientists and the Norwegian scientists discussed sampling protocols and survey objectives.

The Survey Objectives were:

- * To map the distribution and estimate the acoustic abundance of the pelagic species/groups.
- * To describe the distribution, composition and estimate the abundance of the main demersal species/groups on the continental shelf by the swept-area method.
- * To collect stomach content samples of commercial important fish species to increase knowledge on their trophic interactions through food and feeding habits.
- * To collect bottom sediments samples to map the benthic biodiversity in the region.
- * To collect plankton samples for distribution and abundance estimation of the productivity of the marine environment of the GCLME.
- * To map the general hydrographic regime by using a CTD-sonde to monitor the temperature, salinity and oxygen.
- * To offer on the job training for regional scientists

Sampling Protocol

Fisheries

The fish trawl transects were 20 NM (nautical mile) apart and on each transect were stations at 20 -30 m, 31 - 50 m and 51 - 100 m depths. Bottom trawl surveys were carried-out during daytime while pelagic trawls were carried-out at night time.

Plankton

Plankton transects were 50 NM apart and sampling were done at 30 m and 50 m depths with the 1 meter diameter ICITA net in step oblique hauls and Hydrobios Multi-net plankton sampler. Plankton sampling was done during daytime.



Part of the team disembarking at Tema from the first leg of the survey.

Benthos

Benthos transects were 50 NM apart and sampling were done at 30, 50 and 100 m depths using the Grab and sampling done mainly during night time.

Summary of Data Collected

During the survey, 127 bottom-trawl hauls, 19 pelagic-trawl hauls; 34 benthic grabs; 31 plankton hauls and 126 CDT casts were made. The fish trawl and CDT data were entered into the computer and analysed onboard. The plankton and benthos data were offloaded at Tema for analysis at the Regional Productivity Centre, University of Ghana, Legon.

End of Survey

The survey work ended on 29th May 2007 off the Liberia - Cote d'Ivoire border and the vessel berthed at Tema Port on 31st May 2007.

Post- Survey Meeting

A post survey meeting was held between the scientific crew and the Coordinator of the 2007 Survey on board the vessel on 1st June 2007.



Debriefing session after the first leg of the cruise. At the extreme right is the Co-ordinator of the Cruise, Mr. Samuel Quaatay. On his right are Mr. Napoleon Gbolonyo, Administrative Officer, IGCC and Mr. Ibrahim Turay, First Leg Co-leader.

A Short Tribute to Catherine Isebor

I met Catherine about two years ago when I had the opportunity to accompany my Minister, Hon. Mrs. Gladys Asmah to the opening of a long research in Guinea Current Region by the Fridtjof Nansen team. Catherine, a Principal Research Fellow of the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography & Marine Research, was then a Co-Cruise Leader for the GCLME/FAO on the Nansen's Surveys.

She struck me to be a hard working fellow who despite the difficulties the job offered daily, always carried herself about coolly and took things easy as they came. On board the Fridtjof Nansen I felt the chill that wet Saturday morning on the final day of the research team. I asked Catherine how she could cope with the unfriendly non-African weather. She smiled one of those captivating reassuring smiles, I noted to be her trademark, and said conditions could be worse at times since to preserve fuel the European crew who were used to cold weather never switched on the heating system. She assured me that it was okay with her since she was used to those conditions.

This was an example of a dedicated, hardworking African woman noted for sacrificing comfort to achieve the best for the community.

My wife Georgette whom Catherine struck off a good relationship with at a cocktail on the grounds of the Interim Guinea Current Commission, is at the moment in a state of shock after she heard of Catherine's death.

My wife and I have indeed lost a friend whom we were hoping the opportunity would come for us to visit each other's home in our sister countries.

My wife and I mourn the loss of a dear sister and friend and the pain of seeing this wonderful woman go is too much to bear. We both share the pain of this loss with the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography & Marine Research; we share the pain with the Fridtjof Nansen team.

We share the pain with the Interim Guinea Current Commission; we share the pain with our dear brother and friend, Prof. Chidi Ibe.

We share the pain with Catherine's family and friends and with the good people of Nigeria.

Not only have Nigeria lost a good woman but indeed Ghana as well and I may not be wrong if I say that the whole of Africa has lost a female role model who offered her services for the well being of the entire continent.

May the Good Lord who gave Catherine to Africa and saw it fit to take her back grant her eternal rest in His Heavenly Kingdom.

Yours,



Hon. Daniel Christian Dugan
DEPUTY MINISTER/FISHERIES



L-R: Hon. Daniel Dugan, Late Catherine and Prof. Chidi Ibe on board the Fridtjof Nansen in 2005.

Upcoming Events

- June 15-23: Executive Secretary/Regional Director, Prof. Chidi Ibe will accompany Hon. Asamoah-Boateng, Minister for Local Govt., Rural Devt. And Environment, Ghana, To Vienna, Austria, on project-related visit to UNIDO Director-General.

- June 25 -29 : High Level Meeting for the Finalization and Adoption of the LBA Protocol for the Abidjan Convention and the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) , in Accra, Ghana
- The Environment Expert, Dr. Jacques Abé will represent the GCLME, at the Forum of LME projects and the bureaux of the Abidjan and Nairobi Conventions for preparation of COP in South Africa, 30 June to 04 July, 2007.