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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Thirty-seventh Session

Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Report of the thirty-seventh Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission

Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

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I. Introduction

1. The Thirty-seventh Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) was hosted by the Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, People's Republic of China.
2. The Thirty-seventh Session was attended by fifteen Members of APFIC, one observer country and four observer regional organizations. Specifically:
 - 43 registered delegates from 15 Members of APFIC;
 - Quorum during the 37th Session:
 - Present, in-person delegation: China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam;
 - Present, virtual delegation: Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste;
 - Not present: France, Japan, Myanmar, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, the United States of America;
 - 1 observer non-APFIC FAO Member Nation: the Lao People's Democratic Republic;
 - 4 observers intergovernmental regional fishery bodies: the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA) and Intergovernmental Organization for Marketing Information and Technical Advisory Services for Fishery Products in the Asia and Pacific Region (INFOFISH);
 - 3 FAO staff (APFIC Secretariat based in the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific).
3. The Commission reviewed the inter-sessional activities of APFIC since the thirty-sixth Session under the endorsed APFIC work programme and those FAO Regional Office programme activities that contribute to APFIC recommendations. The Commission reviewed the report of the seventy-eighth meeting of the APFIC Executive Committee. It considered the outcomes of the FAO workshop on "Improving understanding on the status of regional stocks and outcomes of capacity building for regional assessments" and the FAO-NACA high-level meeting on "Innovation and investments for sustainable aquaculture". The Commission was informed of current limitations to the effective functioning of APFIC, reviewed the findings and recommendations of the ad hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC, and made a decision on the future of APFIC. The Commission was also informed of the work of APFIC members and observers on their work programmes relevant to the work of APFIC, and priorities for the attention of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC).

II. Results

4. The Commission commended the work of the Secretariat and the technical support provided by FAO to APFIC members over the biennium and appreciated FAO's support to initiatives to build capacity and strengthen regional cooperation in both fisheries and aquaculture.

Suspension of the Commission

5. The Commission appreciated the contribution of APFIC to promoting regional cooperation and providing advice to its members over its 75-year history.
6. The Commission welcomed the report and findings of the ad hoc Working Group and commended the work that was undertaken.
7. The Commission acknowledged the increasing financial constraints facing the Commission and that a work programme for the Commission required adequate and sustainable resourcing.
8. The Commission emphasized that there remains a strong need for regional cooperation in fishery management and fishery governance, as well as cooperation for sustainable and responsible aquaculture development.

9. The Commission further emphasized that the suspension of the Commission's activities should not be interpreted as undermining the efforts of FAO and the APFIC members to strengthen cooperation in the fisheries sector in the region, including those related to relevant FAO programmes.

Recommendations of the Commission for the attention of APRC

10. The Commission recognized that APFIC is still the only regionally focused platform of FAO in Asia and the Pacific region that addresses capture fisheries and aquaculture.

11. APFIC members confirmed their commitment to sustainability, on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, and on achieving responsible fisheries, and described their national policies and legislation that are being put into place.

12. Several members mentioned that the World Trade Organization agreement on fisheries subsidies presents challenges in terms of how to conduct appropriate assessments of fisheries and how to address their small-scale sector. The Commission requested the development of an FAO-led initiative for capacity development to improve stock assessment for marine application and to provide technical advice, particularly to address the issues of small-scale fisheries.

13. APFIC members also requested advice from FAO to assist them in operationalizing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to ensure effective management and sustainable use of marine resources and in the application of Other Effective Conservation Measures.

14. APFIC members emphasized the importance of sustainable aquaculture development as part of their policies for food security, livelihoods and economic development, both in terms of exports and domestic food supply. APFIC members emphasized the need for capacity development and guidance on innovation, effective planning measures and investment in the aquaculture sector to address environmental aspects of aquaculture performance and to ensure that aquaculture adapts to climate change, as well as integrates social and equity issues.

III. Decision of the Commission

15. The Commission endorsed the report of the meeting of the Seventy-eighth APFIC Executive Committee, including the protocols for the conduct of APFIC activities in virtual or hybrid format, to ensure effective outcomes and where decisions are to be made.¹

16. The Commission endorsed the report and findings of the ad hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC.²

17. The Commission adopted by consensus the "Resolution for suspension of the activities of the Commission", to suspend the activities of the Commission for a period of five years.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2902en/cc2902en.pdf>

² <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0450en/cc0450en.pdf>