

BOBP-IGO's Governing Council Meets in Colombo

The Governing Council of the BOBP-IGO, which met in Colombo on 12 and 13 December 2005, laid the ground map for the IGO's work next year, endorsed work done the previous year, and discussed and approved the report of the IGO's Technical Advisory Committee.

Representatives of the IGO's four member-countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka) took part at the Governing Council meeting, besides observers from the FAO, INFOFISH, NACA (Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia and the Pacific) and SACEP (South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme.)

Mr E Jinadasa, Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Sri Lanka, chaired the inaugural session. In the second session, Mr G Piyasena, Director-General, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Sri Lanka, was unanimously elected the new chairperson of the Governing Council.

The participants were welcomed by Mr Jinadasa, Mr A Hettiarachchi (Director-General, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Sri Lanka), Mr Ajay Bhattacharya (outgoing chairman of the Governing Council and Joint Secretary, Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India) and Dr Y S Yadava (Director of the BOBP-IGO).

Dr Yadava pointed out that three years earlier, plenipotentiaries from the erstwhile BOBP had met at the same venue to finalise the setting up of the IGO.

Mr Jinadasa described the BOBP-IGO as an infant among sub-regional and inter-governmental groups. It was a matter of pride that within a brief period the IGO had planned numerous programmes –



Delegates at the Governing Council Meeting.

such as safety at sea of small-scale fishermen, resource assessment, capacity-building, information networking, and popularization of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. He said member-countries had the “will and capacity” to work closely with the BOBP-IGO. He hoped its membership would expand. He thanked the secretariat of the IGO for organizing two activities in Sri Lanka along with the Governing Council meeting – an art contest for school children and a workshop on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The BOBP-IGO's activity priorities for 2006 as agreed on at the meeting:

- Capacity-Building and Information Services for Fisheries Development and Management in the Bay of Bengal Region.
- Translation and printing of the FAO CCRF Technical Guidelines on Marine Fisheries and their supplements in the national languages of member-countries.

- Adaptation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to meet regional requirements.
- Third International Conference on Fishing Safety and Health and the Regional Workshop on Review of Post-Tsunami Fishing and Safety Assessment at Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, 1- 7 February 2006.
- Setting of a Regional Information Network to provide appropriate information for development, planning, research and training. This will assist member-countries in strengthening their national capabilities in development and management of coastal fisheries.
- Organisation of a Fishermen's Week to promote and institutionalise a participatory and community-based system of management of fisheries and aquatic resources.
- Information dissemination through the *Bay of Bengal News* and other publications and the BOBP-IGO's website to inform, enthuse and bind governments and other fisheries stakeholders of the region.

(II) Women in Fisheries:

- Review of the Status of Fisherwomen in Coastal Fishing Communities of member-countries (Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka), and preparation of reports based on the reviews.
- National Workshops in member-countries to discuss the findings of the review and formulate an action plan.

(III) Fisheries Resource Management

- Assessment of the marine fishing fleet of member-countries.
- Organisation of a Regional Consultation on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS).
- Preparation of a management plan for one commercial fishery in each member-country.

BOBP-IGO's report for 2004-2005

Dr Y S Yadava presented the organisation's report for the period October 2004 - December 2005. He pointed out that some of the regular activities suffered because of the tsunami, which demanded immediate attention. The Governing Council complimented the BOBP-IGO on the number and variety of activities undertaken by a body of its modest size. Some comments on the report:

- The delegate from Bangladesh expressed his government's interest in resource assessment models for coastal and deep-sea fisheries and in alternative livelihood strategies for fisherfolk who collected shrimp post-larvae. Bangladesh was not hit directly by the tsunami; but in view of reports about the changing composition of fish species, and of coastal fish migration taking different patterns after the tsunami, participation in tsunami-related consultations would be useful.
- The Indian delegate said the recent census on marine fisherfolk would help planning processes relating to small-scale fisheries. He enquired whether BOBP-IGO could provide training and technical support in ornamental fisheries. (In

response, Dr Yadava said that IGO could do so. A report on the status of ornamental fish trade in India is being finalized.)

- The delegate from Maldives said his country would like to see more collaboration with BOBP-IGO. He said the increasing pressure on reef resources in recent years called for serious interventions.
- The delegate from Sri Lanka suggested that BOBP-IGO should update publications produced during the first and second phases of BOBP. Assistance was requested for a detailed survey on the marine fisherfolk of Sri Lanka.
- The Secretariat said a Regional Workshop on MCS was proposed to be conducted in Bangladesh during mid-2006.
- The FAO would soon publish Technical Guidelines on Small-Scale Fisheries, the FAO delegate said.
- Observers from INFOFISH and SACEP welcomed closer co-operation with the BOBP-IGO. The SACEP representative expressed her organisation's interest in issues related to coastal livelihoods and

marine and coastal protected areas.

- The Governing Council suggested that the Secretariat engage some more qualified staff to meet the many requirements stated by member-countries.

Presentations by Observers

The representative of NACA said his organisation could work together with BOBP on socio-economic uplift of small-scale fishers and fish farmers. The representative of SACEP said her organisation's priorities related to marine and coastal protected areas and natural disaster management. SACEP could work with BOBP on sustainable livelihoods.

The FAO representative described the progress of FAO-related projects on tsunami rehabilitation, the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem and the Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission (APFIC). He said that FAO was the lead organisation for tsunami rehabilitation activities in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Reconstruction programmes included aquaculture, harbor infrastructure and improved livelihoods.

The Governing Council of the BOBP-IGO

The Governing Council is the supreme body of the BOBP-IGO. Every member-country is represented on the council; it meets every year; special sessions can be convened at the request of two-thirds of the members.

The First Meeting of the BOBP-IGO's Governing Council was held in Chennai from 7 to 8 September 2004.

The Governing Council determines the organisation's policy, its work programme, budget. Decisions are taken by a two-thirds majority, with due weight given to the recommendations of a Technical Advisory Committee. The Governing Council lays down standards and guidelines for management of the BOBP-IGO. It evaluates activities, including the accounts, appoints the director of the organisation and determines his conditions of service, formulates and adopts financial and administrative regulations, approves formal arrangements with governments and other institutions.

The Technical Advisory Committee established by the Governing Council advises the Council on all technical aspects relating to the organisation's activities. It will have one representative from every member-country, known for special competence and expertise in coastal fisheries. It will meet at least once a year, also at any time as requested by the Governing Council, and adopt a report which will be submitted to the Governing Council for its endorsement.

He said the proposed Regional Consultative Forum to be organised from 16 to 19 August 2006 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, would discuss “Reforming Fisheries and Aquaculture”, and cover areas such as the future of fisheries, co-management and governance and policy changes.

The Governing Council accepted in principle the proposal on secondment of technical personnel from member-countries to the Secretariat for a period ranging from 12 -18 months. But some delegates felt it might be difficult for their Governments to pay salaries for staff seconded to the BOBP-IGO.

Report of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Governing Council endorsed the report of the first meeting of the IGO’s Technical Advisory Committee (held in Maldives on September 4-5, 2005) as presented by the Secretariat. The TAC had agreed on a set of long-term thrust areas for the BOBP-IGO, as follows:

- Capacity-building for long-term interventions and strategies for safety at sea of artisanal and small-scale fishermen;
- Capacity-building for implementation of MCS programmes;
- Joint assessment of fish stocks through collaborative and participatory arrangements among member-countries. Assistance of major fisheries institutions in the member-countries could be availed for such a programme. The BOBP-IGO could provide an input to initial costs, and external funding could be sought.
- Development of management plans for important fisheries such as hilsa (*Tenualosa ilisha*) and shark fisheries.
- Information and Networking to assess and strengthen the networking capacity of the



BOBP-IGO’s member-countries; build the capacity of member-countries to integrate electronic media into their day-to-day operations; and develop networks among BOBP-IGO stakeholders at the regional level to share knowledge, experiences and best practices.

During discussions on the TAC report, the Indian delegation suggested that Bangladesh and India could cooperate on disease prevention in shrimp aquaculture, learning from each other’s experiences. They could also reduce the spread of aquatic animal diseases from one country to the other. NACA could assist as necessary.

India also pointed out that the recent meeting of the BIMSTEC Technical Committee had suggested a role for the BOBP-IGO in two activities — assessing coastal fisheries stocks, and development and testing of a pilot-scale programme on a vessel monitoring system. Such a system

could be a model for member countries in future. India also suggested FAO support for the proposed Regional Workshop on MCS in mid-2006 in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh suggested that issues related to safety at sea of poor fishermen be given priority. On fisheries surveys, India’s fisheries institutions could be a role model and they could help train other member-countries. BOBP-IGO could initiate such training.

Sri Lanka described India’s VMS programme as a good initiative. The BOBP-IGO could organise a visit by representatives of other member-countries to observe the working of the programme.

The FAO delegate complimented BOBP-IGO on highlighting the problems of member-countries in coastal marine fisheries through a prioritized list of activities. He suggested that FISHCODE could be approached to fund the MCS Regional Workshop.

Responding to a query from Bangladesh, Secretariat said that the IGO would support Fishermen’s Week through awareness-creation activities and logistics.

The Governing Council proposed to hold its next meeting in late 2006 in the Maldives, subject to the government’s approval.

