

Governing Council of BOBP-IGO Meets in Malé, Reviews Work



The Governing Council of the BOBP-IGO held its third meeting (GCM) on 2-3 May, 2007, in Malé, Maldives.

Representatives of the four member-countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka) took part.

The Hon'ble Abdullah Jihaadh, Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Republic of Maldives, chaired the inaugural session. Three other Ministers also took part – Dr (Ms) Fathin Hameed, Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Marine Resources, Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Marine Resources, Mr Mohamed Zuhair, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Marine Resources, and Ms Dunya Maumoon, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Welcoming delegates, Dr Y S Yadava, Director, BOBP-IGO, urged member-countries to develop collective action to meet the growing challenges of marine resources management and safeguard the livelihoods of millions of small-scale fishers in countries around the Bay of Bengal (BoB). He said that the BOBP-IGO is fast metamorphosing into a full-fledged regional fishery body; the Governing Council has a special role in accelerating this progress.

Mr Zuhair referred to damage caused by the December 2004 tsunami. He said that technical advice and expertise provided through the BOBP-IGO would help the government to streamline its policies for future development of fisheries.

Mr G Piyasena, Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Sri Lanka, and Chairman of the Governing Council, complimented the BOBP-IGO on the excellent



Delegates to the Governing Council meeting.

work done in a short time, and stressed the need for regional co-operation in fisheries management, essential in view of the trans-boundary nature of fish and marine resources.

In his inaugural address, Mr Abdullah Jihaadh, Minister of State for Finance and Treasury, Maldives, said that modern-day fisheries management is a multidisciplinary affair with international and regional implications. Since coastal fisheries are complex, multi-gear and multi-species in nature, participatory and community-based approaches should be promoted. He hoped that the GCM would find common concepts based on regional initiatives and experiences.

The third GCM unanimously selected the representative of Maldives as chairperson.

Presenting the BOBP-IGO's report for Jan 2006-March 2007, Dr Yadava said that much of the effort during the year related to post-tsunami rehabilitation, safety at sea of small-scale fishers and

community participation in marine resources management. The IGO has taken initiatives with international partners to promote safety at sea.

The Maldives delegate said that coastal fisheries in the Maldives are unique because of the coral reefs. In recent years, there has been considerable pressure on reef resources, and this warranted serious interventions. He suggested that master fishermen and crew needed training in multi-day fishing. Maldives would like to see more collaboration with BOBP-IGO in this context.

Responding to a suggestion made by Sri Lanka, the Secretariat said that technical support for strengthening of fisheries cooperatives in Sri Lanka and for sea-safety of small-scale fishers would be taken up during the year. The sea safety project is a FAO-SIDA initiative in the member-countries.

India informed the GCM about a census of marine fisherfolk

conducted recently, which would enable various planning activities concerning small-scale fisheries. India also enquired about the status of work on marine resources management models, assessment of the marine fishing fleet and ornamental fisheries. The BOBP-IGO Secretariat responded that work on resource management models for selected species would be initiated in 2007. This would involve management plans for Hilsa fisheries (of Bangladesh, India and possibly Myanmar) and for shark (India, Maldives and Sri Lanka).

The delegate from Maldives said that his country's national management plans for sharks and groupers and marine ornamental fisheries could serve as resource material for developing the regional management plan on sharks and for finalising the report on the status of ornamental fisheries in India.

On assessment of the fishing fleet, the Secretariat said that this work would be taken up by a proposed regional workshop on monitoring, control and surveillance scheduled during the current year. Data collection on the status of ornamental fisheries in India was complete and a report would be initiated soon.

Following a comment from Bangladesh about the importance of shrimp aquaculture and the shortage of shrimp post-larvae, the delegate from Sri Lanka said that aquaculture contributed 95 percent of the shrimp production in his country. However, shrimp farming in Sri Lanka has been affected by viral disease, resulting in a recurrent loss of crop. To reduce this problem, the National Aquaculture Development Authority of Sri Lanka has developed a crop management plan, which could perhaps help other shrimp farming countries in the region.

The Director of BOBP-IGO pointed out that since aquaculture-related activities are part of the mandate of the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific (NACA), it may not be desirable for BOBP-IGO to take



The Governing Council meeting in progress (above and below).



Mr Syed Ataur Rahman (Bangladesh)



Mr G D Chandrapal (India)



Dr Abdulla Naseer (Maldives)



Mr G Piyasena (Sri Lanka)

up this discipline. The Governing Council resolved that the BOBP-IGO should undertake work on preparing a shrimp broodstock management plan in co-operation with NACA.

The Governing Council complimented the BOBP-IGO on the several activities undertaken by an organisation of its modest size. Maldives said that translation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) documents in local languages would help member-countries to create awareness among fishers about their responsibility towards marine resource management. This will further help in reform of fisheries policy, which Maldives has recently undertaken.

Bangladesh suggested that in future meetings of the Governing Council, the Secretariat should present a matrix of work endorsed by the Governing Council at its earlier meeting and the activities actually carried out by the Secretariat during the period of reporting.

Report on the Second Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting

The Secretariat presented the Report on the second meeting of the TAC held at Chennai, India on 5-6 February 2007.

A detailed overview was presented of some of the programme priorities and thrust areas agreed to by the TAC. It included

- Development of regional management plans for important fisheries such as hilsa and sharks;
- Capacity-building for implementation of MCS programmes; and
- Information dissemination and networking to assess and strengthen as necessary, the present networking capacity in BOBP-IGO member-countries.

The Governing Council discussed the role of the TAC and how it can more effectively assist BOBP-IGO in implementing its programme of work. Responding to a query from Bangladesh, the Secretariat said that



the TAC (set up under Article 11 of the Agreement on the Institutionalisation of the BOBP as an Inter-Governmental Organisation) advises the Governing Council. The Council recommended that the Secretariat should present a thorough assessment of the TAC's mandate and functions to the next GCM. It further suggested issue-specific meetings between the Governing Council and the TAC.

About the proposed Regional Workshop on MCS in Bangladesh, the Governing Council advised the Secretariat to present a formal request to the Government of Bangladesh.

The Governing Council accepted the report of the second TAC meeting, subject to the comments above.

Proposed Programmes and Priorities for BOBP-IGO for 2007

Salient features of the proposed programme and priorities of the BOBP-IGO for May - December 2007:

(I) Capacity-Building and Information Services for Fisheries Development and Management in the Bay of Bengal Region.

- Translation and printing in national languages of the FAO-CCRF Technical Guidelines on Marine Fisheries. Plus circulation of printed copies to concerned institutions/ agencies/ fishermen associations, etc.

- Setting up of a regional information network to strengthen national capabilities in development and management of coastal fisheries. The network will provide information for development, planning, research and training.

- Training programme for junior and middle-level fisheries staff of member-countries on implementation of the CCRF. The training will be conducted in collaboration with the Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai, India.

- Organisation of a fisherfolk week to promote and institutionalise a participatory and community-based system of management of fisheries and aquatic resources. The fisherfolk week will educate, sensitise and influence public opinion, in particular stakeholder opinion, on responsible behaviour in resource management and conservation.

- Information dissemination through the *Bay of Bengal News* and other publications. Reports of activities completed during the period will also be published and disseminated.

(II) Fisheries Resource Management

- Organisation of a regional workshop on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance.
- Preparation of regional management plans for hilsa and shark fishery.

In response to a query from Bangladesh, the Secretariat said that activities relating to awareness-creation could be supported during the fisherfolk week, besides logistics for organising a programme. The Governing Council suggested that information materials produced by the BOBP-IGO on awareness-creation could cover both inland and marine fisheries, as fisherfolk in most member-countries belong to both areas.

About the training programme for junior and middle-level fisheries staff on implementation of the Code of Conduct, the Governing Council suggested that intake of staff from each member-country should be increased to four from the proposed two.

Responding to another query from Bangladesh, the Secretariat said that issues related to food safety in marine fisheries would be addressed in a limited manner in the proposed fisheries management plans for hilsa and shark fisheries. But the Governing Council felt that the BOBP-IGO should include this aspect in its work programme during 2007, in view of rising global concerns on the quality of fish.

The Governing Council suggested the following programmes and priorities for BOBP-IGO in 2007:

- (i) Capacity-building and information services for fisheries development and management in the BoB region.
- (ii) Fisheries resource management.
- (iii) Capacity-building for improving food safety in marine fisheries.

The Governing Council decided that

- Bangladesh's suggestion for a programme on alternative income generation for small-scale fishers in member-countries should be reviewed and submitted to the Third Meeting of the TAC, and also to the next GCM.
- The BOBP-IGO's activities should be linked with funding available

from member-countries, also with funds for specific activities from other sources. It cautioned that some activities might be limited in scope and size because of lack of resources.

- To optimize the efforts of the BOBP-IGO, focal points should be established in each member-country and liaison officers designated to deal with BOBP-IGO activities.

Administrative Matters

- The Auditors' report for 2003 and 2004: Bangladesh suggested that auditing should be more rigorous, including reporting on the performance side too. Sri Lanka remarked that the present audit report was fully in line with audits generally conducted for UN agencies and IGOs. The GCM suggested that a fresh list of auditors be presented to the next GCM. The list should be drawn up after a press advertisement.
- The GCM unanimously agreed to the reappointment of Dr Yugraj Singh Yadava as director of BOBP-IGO for a second term of three years starting from 01 October 2007, on existing terms and conditions. The GCM felt this was essential to maintain the present momentum of the organization. The terms of reference proposed for the post of Senior Programme Advisor were also approved. The Secretariat was urged to circulate information about this vacancy widely.

- Secondment of technical personnel from member-countries to the BOBP-IGO Secretariat for 12 to 18 months – this was agreed to in principle. The Secretariat was asked to provide a detailed proposal to member-countries outlining disciplines, emoluments and other terms and conditions.
- The proposal for a 'living allowance' for staff recruited from India: This was agreed to in principle, but most delegates felt that the proposal did not provide enough details on the increased cost of living. The Secretariat was asked to prepare a detailed proposal for the next GCM.

Other matters

- Tuna fisheries. Some member-countries have started harvesting tuna in significant quantities. Maldives and Sri Lanka suggested that a right forum should be identified to discuss matters relating to tuna fishing, marketing and trade. Recommendations should be made about such a forum at the next GCM.
- Agenda papers for the GCM should be circulated sufficiently in advance.
- The third GCM deeply appreciated the generous hospitality for the meeting provided by Maldives. Bangladesh's kind offer to host the next meeting early in 2008, subject to its government's approval, was accepted.

