

First Meeting of Governing Council Takes BOBP-IGO Forward



The work of the BOBP-IGO came in for generous praise at the first meeting of the Governing Council of the BOBP-IGO, held in Chennai on September 7 and 8, 2004. The Council discussed and approved the IGO's workplans for the current year as well as its report for the previous year, and appointed a director for the IGO for the next three years.

Representatives of the four member-countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka) attended the meeting, besides observers from the FAO and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA). Mr P M A Hakeem, Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Agriculture, was in the chair.

Dr Y S Yadava, Director *a.i.* of the BOBP-IGO, welcomed the participants and noted that 2004 is a historic year, since it marks a quarter century of the BOBP. Mr V S Shegaonkar, Secretary for Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, said the Government of Tamil Nadu is proud of its association with the BOBP as host. The State has benefited substantially from the BOBP; he hoped the IGO would continue the Programme's record of service.

Inaugurating the meeting, Mr P M A Hakeem, Secretary to the Government of India, hailed the "significant achievements" of the BOBP. He said "regional cooperation is even more important than international since member-countries of the region share



Participants at the Governing Council Meeting: left to right, front row: Mr S R Madhu, Dr V S Somavanshi, Mr Fakhru Islam, Mr P M A Hakeem, Mr P K Pattanaik, Dr Sepalika Jayamanna, Dr Abdulla Naseer. Second row: Mr V S Shegaonkar, Dr M A Mazid, Mr G D Chandrapal, Dr Y S Yadava, Dr K Kapila C K Perera, Dr Simon Funge-Smith.

common resources. He described the following programmes as priorities for the BOBP-IGO – resource conservation and implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, avoiding discard and wastage of fish, stock assessment programmes, safety of fishermen at sea, and effective communication with fishermen at sea.

After an overview of the status of fisheries in the Bay of Bengal and of issues confronting the sector, Dr Yadava made a presentation of the BOBP-IGO's report for the period June 2003-August 2004. He briefly

discussed the IGO's activities (the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Women in Fisheries, the Information Service including the IGO website) and described fisheries management as the single most critical issue before member-countries.

Comments on the Report of the BOBP-IGO

Commenting on the report, Dr M A Mazid, Director-General, Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, Mymensing, stressed the importance of the BOBP-IGO in organising training and cost-effective study tours. (He said major



Lighting the traditional lamp.



Mr P M A Hakeem delivering the inaugural address at the meeting.

training areas included “best management practices”, stock assessment and marine pollution). He complimented the IGO on the many workshops it had conducted on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. He also suggested preparation of a directory of fisheries experts and institutions in the Bay of Bengal region. The Maldives representative, Dr Abdulla Naseer, Director, Marine Research Centre, Malé praised the publication “Fishes of the Maldives” and said “Such work must go on.” He urged that regional fisheries organisations in the BOB region (such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, NACA and the BOBLME) should avoid duplication and work in close association and co-operation with each other.

Dr K Kapila C K Perera, Chairman, National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency, Sri Lanka, said that improvements to traditional fisheries, post-harvest technologies and employment generation are some of the areas in which Sri Lanka can benefit from the IGO. Studies on climate and temperature change and their effect on fish production and migration would be useful.

Mr P K Pattanaik, Joint Secretary (Fisheries), Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, and vice-chairman of the Governing Council, said that the Ministry has looked upon the BOBP as an “Information Bank” that provides revealing inputs. Subjects stressed by India for IGO interventions included: stock

assessment, studies on socio-economics and on the livelihoods of traditional fishermen, revalidation of earlier studies concerning small-scale fisheries, harmonization of standards and conventions for traditional fisheries throughout the region, reduction of post-harvest losses.

Dr Simon Funge-Smith, Aquaculture Officer representing FAO, expressed appreciation of the IGO’s efforts to raise awareness of the CCRF. He recalled his Organization’s “historic relationship” with the BOBP and said the BOBP-IGO was unique in its emphasis on small-scale fisheries; its work would be particularly relevant to the FAO during the next two years, because of a special focus on small-scale fisheries during this period.

In a message, Mr Pedro B Bueno, Director-General of NACA, said the BOBP-IGO joins two other inter-governmental bodies in the region fathered by FAO - INFOFISH and NACA. He said NACA and the IGO could co-operate in several areas such as the Asia-Pacific Marine Fish R & D Network, and the Fish Health Management Program. “NACA will very be happy to come to the table to develop ideas for joint projects or complementary activities. These would provide more and better services to the countries and the region as a whole”.

The Governing Council agreed that the following agencies be nominated to the Technical Advisory Committee of the IGO: Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, Mymensing, Bangladesh; Fishery Survey of India, Mumbai, India; Marine Research Centre, Malé, Maldives; and the National Aquatic Resources Research & Development Agency, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Maldives will host the First Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee in early 2005 and Sri Lanka will host the next Meeting of the Governing Council in November 2005, subject to the confirmation of their respective Governments.