

The Phuket Resolution

Conscious of the importance of fisheries and aquatic resources as an essential sector of development of nations surrounding the Bay of Bengal and the unique and relatively high dependence of millions of fishers and coastal peoples on the ocean and coastal environment for their food and livelihood security;

Realizing that the fisheries sectors of the countries around the Bay of Bengal have to in the future 1) increase or, at least, stabilize fisheries production to ensure food and livelihood security for a large number of people, 2) ensure quality fish and fish products in order not to jeopardize trade, which earns valuable foreign exchange, 3) protect themselves from non-trade tariff barriers on fisheries, 4) fulfil requirements of agreed-to Conventions and Codes, and 5) better manage their fisheries and conserve their aquatic environments to provide sustainability;

Recognizing that, while fisheries is primarily a national concern driven by a country's needs, there are a large number issues in fisheries that can be more appropriately and efficiently addressed in a regional context through collective action;

Recognizing that the Bay of Bengal Programme of the FAO of UN has provided valuable and noteworthy services to the countries in the Bay of Bengal region in enabling and facilitating the development and management of small-scale fisheries over the last twenty years and the fact that the project is coming to an end in December 1999;

Realizing that that there is a need for technical and management advisory services in the areas of fisheries development and management, conservation of aquatic resources, quality assurance of fish and fish products, fair and free trade of fish, fish marketing development, human resources development and building the capacity of national fishery agencies and that the promotion and success of such services can be facilitated through regional cooperation;

Considering that the said cooperation can best be achieved through the establishment of an inter-governmental organization in the Bay of Bengal region carrying out its activities in collaboration with countries, organizations and commissions that may be able to provide financial and technical support;

We, the Representatives of the Fishery Agencies of the Governments of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand, having met in Phuket, Thailand, 13-16 October 1999 for the 24th Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Bay of Bengal Programme of the FAO of UN, now therefore:

Resolve to come together to consider the establishment of an Intergovernmental Organization for Technical and Management Advisory Services for Fisheries Development and Management in the Bay of Bengal Region.

Request the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN for advisory and financial support in the formulation and establishment of such an intergovernmental organization.

Suggest that senior representatives of the fishery agencies of the member-countries of the Bay of Bengal Programme of the FAO of UN meet at their earliest convenience to design and develop the constitution and by-laws of the proposed intergovernmental organization, specifying its mandate, its management and staffing, its fund requirements, and evolve mechanisms and guidelines for cost-sharing.

Phuket, Saturday the 16th day of October 1999.