

Asia-Pacific Countries Meet in Thailand to Decide a New Role for APFIC

Representatives of 15 member-countries and 10 Regional Organisations met at Chiang Mai, Thailand, during 3-5 August 2004. The occasion was the Twenty-Eighth Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC). The agenda included an overview of the status and potential of fisheries and aquaculture in Asia and the Pacific; APFIC's potential as a consultative forum for fishery issues; regional arrangements for fisheries – an analysis of gaps and opportunities; and APFIC's work plan for 2004-2010. Dr. Y S Yadava represented BOBP-IGO at the session.

Inaugurating the Session, Mr Sitdhi Boonyaratpalin, Director-General of the Department of Fisheries, Thailand said the decline in capture fisheries production in many coastal fisheries in the region was alarming. He urged effective action to address management needs in small-scale fisheries.

Dr Derek Staples, Secretary, APFIC (and Senior Fishery Officer, RAP-FAO, Bangkok) presented an overview of the status and potential of fisheries and aquaculture in Asia and the Pacific. He said the Asia-Pacific region continued to be the largest producer of fish and fishery products in the world, with 92 millions tonnes or approximately 69 percent of global production in 2002. He also said that despite the significance of fisheries and aquaculture in the region, this sector is often overlooked in national policy development and given less priority than other agriculture production sectors.

The Commission agreed that a more holistic approach to fishery management was needed that balanced the needs of different parts of the fishery sector, and also balanced human well-being against ecological well-being.

Making an important decision on the future role of APFIC, the Commission unanimously agreed that APFIC should function as a Regional Consultative Forum (RCF). It should provide a framework for members to discuss fisheries issues which affect groups of States across the wider Asia-Pacific region and to formulate recommendations for action. APFIC could act as a platform to discuss emerging issues relating to fisheries, trade and sustainable management facing its members. In its work plan for 2004-2010, the Commission agreed

What is APFIC?

The Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission was established in 1948 as Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council (IPFC). The name changed to Indo-Pacific Fishery Commission in 1976, and its present name in 1994. Set up under the aegis of FAO (Article XIV of FAO Constitution), the Commission works from the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand. The Commission covers the Indo-Pacific area (including inland waters). The members are Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China PRC, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea RO, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, UK, USA and Viet Nam. The Commission is mandated to “promote the full and proper utilization of living aquatic resources by the development and management of fishing and culture operations and by the development of related processing and marketing activities in conformity with the objectives of its members”.



to hold two regional consultative workshops possibly in 2005 –one on “Trash fish and discards in the Asia-Pacific region”, and the other on “Coastal and inland fishery co-management in the Asia-Pacific region”.

The Session also saw the release of a CD archiving the reports and technical papers of past sessions of APFIC, the launching of the APFIC website (www.apfic.fao.org) and a handbook on “Regional fishery bodies and arrangements in Asia and the Pacific (RAP Publication: 2004/12)”.

The Commission agreed to hold its 29th session in August 2006. Malaysia and Indonesia were unanimously elected Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Commission respectively. The Republic of Korea, India and Thailand were unanimously elected to serve as members of the Executive Committee. The full report of the session is available from the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok (RAP Publication 2004/19)

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