



BOBP-IGO Technical Advisory Committee Meets in Maldives

The BOBP-IGO held the first meeting of its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) at the Marine Research Center, Malé, Maldives, on September 4 and 5, 2005. Representatives of the four member countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka) took part. Dr Shiham Adam, Executive Director of the Marine Research Centre (MRC), Government of Maldives chaired the meeting.

The Technical Advisory Committee is the body that discusses and makes recommendations for the BOBP-IGO's work. Those that are approved by the BOBP-IGO's Governing Council become a part of the organisation's work plan.

In his welcome address, Dr Adam complimented the BOBP-IGO on the remarkable quality of its publications, some of which had been prepared in collaboration with the MRC. He said that all the four major programme areas of the BOBP-IGO were very relevant to the Maldives. He cited in particular Maldives's concern about the sustainability of export-oriented reef fishery resources. He hoped that BOBP-IGO would work closely with MRC, which faced limitations in human resources and in institutional mechanisms.

In his inaugural address, the Chief Guest, Mr Abdullah Kamaaludheen, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Marine Resources, remarked that BOBP-IGO had a significant role to play in the area of marine fisheries management.

Summarising the BOBP-IGO's work in 2004-2005, Dr Y S Yadava referred to the IGO's co-operation with CONSRN (see pages 8-10), the one-day Consultation on tsunami rehabilitation with fisher communities of Tamil Nadu and

Pondicherry (pages 5-7), a translation of seven Technical Guidelines prepared by the FAO Rome on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, a comprehensive post-tsunami survey of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, the on-the-spot art contests for school children from tsunami-affected countries, and the preparations for IFISH 3 (page 36). The BOBP's emphasis on Information Services continued – an example was the website developed for IFISH 3 (www.ifish3.org), updating of the BOBP-IGO website, and digitization of the huge photo resource. The TAC appreciated the children's art contests, which represented a unique approach to awareness-building.

Member countries described their proposals and priorities. Dr Md. Khalilur Rahman, representative of Bangladesh, said that constraints impeding the sustainable development of marine fisheries in Bangladesh are pollution, illegal fishing both by nationals and by the foreign fishing fleet, under-exploitation of commercially important species, lack of infrastructure and facilities, lack of

trained manpower, and lack of knowledge on stock assessment of commercially important species.

Some of the urgent national priorities for Bangladesh: stock assessment of commercially important species, maintaining the ecological balance, conserving biodiversity, prevention of habitat destruction, mariculture of commercially important species, control and prevention of shrimp diseases, improving research capabilities, developing trained manpower needed to address urgently.

The Bangladesh delegate proposed that a networking system should be established among member-countries. Development of a directory of scientists of member countries working on fisheries could be a first step towards coordination and co-operation among scientists of member countries.

The TAC urged the Secretariat to develop a directory of scientists and organisations in member countries. Such a directory could begin with the four member countries. It would help strengthen networking activities.

Participants at the Technical Advisory Committee Meeting.



The TAC felt that the BOBP-IGO should focus on issues under the mandate of the IGO and avoid duplicating the work of other IGOs such as NACA.

Following a presentation by India's representative, Mr K N V Nair, the TAC noted that fisheries management is one of India's priorities. This included a review of the ban on fishing during monsoon months, regulation of fishing effort and access, a ban on destructive fishing gear, identification of fish stocks that need rejuvenation, stock assessment of selected demersal resources. Overexploitation of coastal fisheries and its open-access nature; inadequate mechanisms for monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS); operation of destructive fishing gear; weak linkages between research and development institutions –these were also major issues. As regards welfare measures, rehabilitation of fisherfolk during calamities, alternative vocations when a fishing ban was imposed, and training of fisherwomen in handling crisis like the tsunami were some priority areas.

Dr Adam from the Maldives said that tuna and coastal fisheries (particularly the bait fishery) were the most important in the Maldives. The bait fishery generates a catch of 15 000 -20 000 tonnes per year but is difficult to monitor; the actual catch is possibly higher.

The TAC noted that suggestions from the Maldives included taking the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to the grassroots level, assistance in implementing the management plan for grouper species, and activities to initiate co-management practices in fisheries.

Mr H S G Fernando, the delegate from Sri Lanka, said that exploitation of offshore and deep-sea fisheries in the Island had crossed sustainable limits. Most coastal resources too have been over-exploited; the stocks of some species are on the decline. Of the other major fishery resources in Sri

Lanka, lobsters have been highly exploited, leading to decline in production.

Sri Lanka's national fisheries priorities relate to access to rights and resources, fishing technology improvements, fisheries management, stock assessment and enhancements. The TAC noted the need to improve labour relations and conditions of employment, capacity development in areas such as MCS, and training for fisherwomen. Tsunami rehabilitation was of course a prime concern.

After listening to presentations by country representatives, the Secretariat of BOBP-IGO presented an overview of some of the thrust areas for consideration by the TAC. These included:

- 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. (Major fisheries institutions of member countries could be tapped for this programme.)
- Developing management plans for important fisheries of member countries.

The Secretariat informed the Committee about its approach to Information and Networking:

a) Assess and strengthen as necessary the present technical networking capacity in BOBP-IGO member countries; b) Build and expand the capacity of member countries to integrate the use of electronic media into their day-to-day operations; c) Develop networks between and among BOBP-IGO stakeholders at the regional level for sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices; d) Help coordinate and mobilise appropriate resources from the international community, as well as those available nationally

and regionally and e) Support capacity- building required for this.

The TAC also noted the broad components of the programme, which includes maintenance of the website (www.bobpigo.org) and initiation of discussion platforms on subjects of topical concern in the region. The Secretariat will continue to produce easy-to-use manuals, leaflets, brochures, pamphlets, flipcharts, calendars, periodicals, newsletters, videos, posters and books.

- The TAC appreciated the Secretariat's initiative to organise IFISH 3 and the deployment of a FAO/ BOBP-IGO Consultant to member countries to prepare a report on the status of safety measures in the fishing boats and implementation of standards and regulations to safeguard the safety and health of small-scale fishermen.
- The TAC advised the Secretariat to organise the first Regional workshop on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance during the middle of 2006, preferably in conjunction with some other activity to optimise on the costs.
- The TAC agreed to the suggestion of the Secretariat that the translation of CCRF guidelines into the local languages of all member countries should be given priority. The Committee also urged a review on the status of fisherwomen in member countries. The findings of such a review could lead to specific gender-related activities.
- The TAC welcomed the Secretariat's proposal that member countries second suitable professionals to work with the BOBP-IGO Secretariat for a specified time-period.
- The Committee agreed to convene the second meeting of the TAC during mid- 2006 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, subject to the concurrence of the Government of Bangladesh. A regional workshop on MCS would also be held along with this meeting.