

On the implementation of the

Regional Plan of Action (RPOA) to Promote Responsible Fishing

Practices including Combating IUU Fishing in the South East Asia Region

December 2012

Introduction

The *Regional Plan of Action (RPOA) to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices Including Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in the Region* was endorsed by Ministers responsible for fisheries in May 2007. Eleven countries¹ from the region are signatories to the RPOA and four regional fisheries organisations² provide technical advice and assistance.

The RPOA is a voluntary arrangement based on the core principles of international agreements and instruments such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*.

A Coordination Committee was then formed to provide strategic advice and direction to RPOA countries on coordinated action and initiatives. It was also decided the Coordination Committee would report back after each annual meeting to advise their respective fisheries ministers about the progress of the RPOA and arising issues.

This document is the Annual Report to Ministers following the 5th meeting of the RPOA Coordination Committee, held in Singapore, 20-21 November 2012. The report summarises the activities of the RPOA from November 2011 to November 2012. Indonesia provided the Secretariat services during this time.

1. Key issues

The objective of the RPOA is to strengthen the overall level of fisheries management in the region and hasten the adoption of responsible fishing practices. Actions cover: conservation of fisheries and the marine environment; managing fishing capacity; and combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Key issues progressed by countries during the past year included:

¹ Member countries comprise: Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Malaysia; Papua New Guinea; The Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Timor-Leste and Vietnam

² Regional organisations (advisory) comprise: FAO/Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission; Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre; InfoFish and Worldfish Center.

- Strengthening fisheries legislation with regard to the FAO Port State Measures Agreement and the European Commission (EC) Regulation 1005/2008 that requires fisheries exports to the EU to be accompanied by documentation to prove it was obtained legally
- Collaborating with other countries in the region and implementing monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures in national, subregional and regional seas
- Licensing and registration of small scale fishing vessels and fishing community surveillance to report illegal fishing
- Collaborating to inspect in regional ports large scale fishing vessels listed as ‘IUU vessels’ by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations/Arrangements
- Developing a strategy towards a regional public awareness/information campaign to target fishers and fishing communities about the long term detrimental impacts of IUU fishing on fish stocks, incomes and food security.

With these key issues in mind, the Coordination Committee reviewed its activities in 2011-2012 and developed its forward work plan for 2012 – 2013. The results of this review and forward planning are summarized in this report.

2. Review of RPOA activity from November 2011 to November 2012

Outcomes from the workshop Assessment of Impacts of IUU Fishing and EC Regulation 1005/2008 on Small Scale Fisheries – Vietnam, 17-19 October 2012

A major outcome was RPOA countries exchanging information and experiences in implementing the EC Regulation 1005/2008 and a much improved understanding of the positive and negative impacts of IUU fishing and the Regulation on small scale fisheries.

The workshop developed a strategic plan of action to: (i) simplify the current Catch Certification Scheme and explore development of a harmonised regional scheme; (ii) encourage more cooperation between countries and among agencies; (iii) develop more capacity in small scale fisheries management and surveillance; and (iv) raise fisher and fishing community awareness about the negative impacts of illegal fishing.

Deterring the activities of IUU fishing vessel

The Coordination Committee considered a report by Malaysia about how it deterred the activities of two internationally listed IUU fishing vessels. The two vessels were the *FV Pion* and the *FV Thunder*; both are vessels on the Non-Contracting Party IUU Vessel List of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Investigations by both Malaysian and Singaporean authorities, respectively in Penang Harbour and Singapore’s territorial waters, highlighted how collaboration between RPOA countries, particularly by exchanging information in quick time, makes it possible to take effective action against IUU fishing vessels.

In response to the case study, the meeting noted: (i) the need to be aware of IUU vessel activity in the wider region and worldwide; (ii) the need to vary inspection and investigation procedures for each type of vessel (e.g. fishing vessel, support vessel or container vessel); (iii) the need to work with other government agencies with a role in domestic maritime law; and (iv) the need for standardised operating inspection and investigation procedures.

Draft procedures for listing and delisting IUU vessels

The meeting considered draft procedures for the RPOA to set up a regional list of IUU fishing vessels. Noting that the RPOA is a voluntary arrangement, each RPOA representative

undertook to consult and clarify their country's legal situation and ability to take enforcement action against any vessel on an RFMO IUU vessel list, and on any vessel on the RPOA IUU list, once it is established.

The meeting agreed to further develop intersessionally the RPOA IUU vessel listing procedure for the Coordination Committee's consideration.

RPOA Public Information Campaign (RPOA-PIC)

Countries discussed how the Joint Australia–Indonesia Public Information Campaign (PIC) had succeeded in raising awareness with fishers and fishing communities about the problem of illegal fishing and the benefits of sustainable fisheries management.

The meeting discussed the possibility of similar programs in other RPOA countries and agreed to begin developing the RPOA-PIC concept, including for example, public information campaigns to help each country fulfil the requirements of the EC Regulation 1005/2008. The Philippines offered to host a workshop early in 2013 to further develop the concept of an RPOA-PIC. Interested countries undertook to look at their country's situation and consider what form of RPOA-PIC might take to best suit their needs.

3. Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) network activities

The meeting received a report from the RPOA Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Network. Reports were also received from the three RPOA Subregional MCS networks:

1. Southern and Eastern Area of the South China Sea and the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Network (Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Brunei)
2. Arafura and Timor Seas Network (Australia, Indonesia, East Timor and Papua New Guinea)
3. South China Sea Network or Gulf of Thailand (Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Vietnam).

From the reports it is clear that considerable progress is being made through the networks, with more and better coordination and collaboration on MCS.

4. Regional advisory body reports

The meeting received reports from the regional advisory bodies present, namely the South East Asia Fisheries Development Centre and the WorldFish Centre. A representative from the FAO provided a comprehensive report on development of the *Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels*, which encouraged many questions and was duly noted.

5. Seminar – Regional Fisheries Management Organisations

A seminar, organised by RPOA countries, on the *Responsibilities of States with respect to Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)* was conducted on the day after the Coordination Committee meeting.

6. RPOA Workplan 2012-13

The following Work Plan was endorsed by the Coordination Committee:

1. **Strengthening legal, administrative and policy frameworks**

Each country will to continue to review its 'Model Fisheries Legislation' report and identify the **actions it needs to take to strengthen its fisheries legislation.**

2. **Capacity Building**

Countries continue to review and promote the findings of the report *Net Returns* and the RPOA MCS Curriculum and Training Program. Countries to also facilitate internal inspector training consistent with that provided at the Inspector Training Workshop (June, 2011).

3. **Strengthening regional/international cooperation**

- 3.1. Countries to continue to consult internally on implementation of the FAO Agreement Port State Measures and report to the Coordination Committee on action taken.
- 3.2. Countries to continue to designate and publicise on their national websites ports to which foreign fishing vessels may request entry, consistent with international instruments such as the FAO Port State Measures Agreement.
- 3.3. Countries to identify action, both nationally and regionally, with regard to illegal transshipments of fisheries products at sea/in port and report to the Coordination Committee on action taken.
- 3.4. Countries to continue providing data and information on IUU fishing vessels to the Secretariat. A subgroup, working intersessionally, will further develop the draft procedures for identifying suspected IUU fishing vessels.
- 3.5. Countries will undertake to refuse entry to their port (s) of a vessel on an RFMO IUU Fishing Vessel List. Countries will endeavour to inspect and/or investigate any suspected fishing vessel that enters its port(s), and where evidence is found to confirm IUU activities, take further action as appropriate.
- 3.6. Countries to continue to provide information on experiences, regulations and IUU listed vessels (surveillance and inspection reports) for sharing on the RPOA website.
- 3.7. For reporting by RPOA countries, the Secretariat will develop a draft standardised reporting template.
- 3.8. The Philippines will host a workshop to continue development of an RPOA Public Information Campaign (RPOA-PIC), back-to-back with the FAO Workshop on the Global Record of Fishing Vessels.
- 3.9. RPOA countries will continue to collaborate with regional advisory bodies to ensure that the best available scientific information is used in fisheries management decision making.
- 3.10. With particular regard to the needs of small scale fisheries, the Secretariat will liaise with the appropriate regional bodies for the purpose of developing a Catch Certification Scheme relevant to the needs of the region.
- 3.11. The Secretariat will coordinate preparation of draft communication procedures for application in the RPOA Regional MCS Network.

7. Next meeting

The next (6th) meeting of the RPOA Coordination Committee meeting will be in Malaysia in November 2013

- it was agreed that both Myanmar and the ASEAN Secretariat would be invited to attend the meeting as observers.

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