

**SUMMARY REPORT OF  
THE 9TH MEETING OF THE MCS SUB REGIONAL  
(TIMOR & ARAFURA SEAS) GROUP  
CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA  
9-11 APRIL 2019**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The 9th MCS Sub-Regional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group meeting was convened in Cairns, Australia from 9 to 11 April 2019 in follow up to the 8th MCS Sub-Regional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group meeting held in Bali, Indonesia 2018.
2. The meeting was attended by delegates from all of the four member countries: Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. The list of participants appears as Annex 1.
3. Mr. Brendan Rayner, Manager of International Compliance Operations, Australian Fisheries Management Authority, as Chair of the meeting welcomed delegates and officially opened the meeting. Mr. Rayner expressed the importance of the strong working relationships and willingness to share information within the MCS Sub-Regional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group. Mr. Rayner highlighted the RPOA-IUU's comments from the Coordination Committee (CC) meeting in November 2018 noting that this Sub-Regional group is setting the standard for other Sub-Regional groups in terms of collaboration and results, though identified that this group needs to share these expertise with the other RPOA Sub-Regional groups. Mr. Rayner finally acknowledged the importance to continually build on the successes of this Sub-Regional group and the significance that the development of the Action Plan has on shaping our approaches to combating IUU fishing in the region.
4. Members discussed and agreed to adopt the agenda. The agenda appears as Annex 2.

**II. CURRENT SITUATION IN THE REGION**

**AUSTRALIA**

5. Mr. Brendan Rayner, with Mr. John Jones, delivered a presentation updating the Group on current activities occurring in Australia waters. Particular attention was made to positive information sharing practices with all Sub-Regional Partners. The presentation appears as Annex 3.

Key issues from Australia include:

- Persisting, though declining, incursions by Indonesian and Papua New Guinean fishing vessels into Australian waters
- Increasing FADs on the boundary of Australia's northern waters particularly within the MOU box area. Australia mentioned that FAD's are a navigation and environmental hazard and made note that FAD retrieval and disposal is an expensive process
- Update on Vietnamese fishing boats and the public information campaign delivered in Vietnam

- Strong cooperation between Australia and Papua New Guinea in the management of Papua New Guinean Banana boats found to be illegally fishing in Australia
- The Dogleg area suspected of increasing illegal activity including emerging trade risks

## **INDONESIA**

6. Mr. Sahono Budianto, along with Mr. Adi Wicaksono, delivered a presentation updating the Group on current activities occurring in Indonesian waters and collaborative work between Indonesia, Australia, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. The presentation appears as Annex 4.

Key issues from Indonesia include:

- Continuing pressure of Vietnamese fishing boats in northern waters
- Unauthorised Foreign Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs/Rumpon)
- Fishing Vessels without license
- Fishing Vessels not complying with the applicable rules and regulations (No Legal Letter/SLO, Sailing Permit/ SPB)
- IUU Fishing Vessel crews and the associated costs
- Fishing using prohibited fishing gears, and operated in unauthorised fishing ground
- Foreign Fishing vessels disguising and operating under Indonesian flag and name with prohibited gear; and
- FADs within Indonesian waters and the discontinuation of FAD permit administering.

Indonesia noted their investigation following Timor-Leste's 2018 presentation relating to Indonesian fishing vessels suspected of fishing in Timor-Leste waters. During a two month period (January-February 2019), 64 Indonesian fishing vessel were observed in Timor-Leste waters, though only 3 were suspected of fishing. These fishing vessels were identified and warning notices were sent to the Owners of the vessels. Indonesia will continue to monitor this activity.

Indonesia is continuing to deliver public information campaigns to deter cross-border trader with Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste.

## **TIMOR-LESTE**

7. Mr. Pedro Rodrigues delivered a presentation updating the Group on current activities occurring in Timor-Leste waters, including a video clip of fishing activity occurring in Timor-Leste waters. The presentation appears as Annex 5.

Key issues from Timor-Leste include:

- Ongoing support to develop small scale fishing industry in Timor-Leste waters
- Development and implementation of Pelagic Data Systems technology to monitor small scale fishing activity
- Continuing request for assistance to develop an MCS framework, including Port State Measures training, VMS, Catch Documentation Schemes, and the review of fisheries legislation and licensing
- Need to deliver public information campaign in conjunction with Indonesia on cross-border trade

## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

8. Ms. Glenda Barry, along with Mr. Gisa Komangin, delivered a presentation outlining the current situation in Papua New Guinean waters. The presentation appears as Annex 6.

Key issues from Papua New Guinea include:

- Illegal fishing for Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) and Bêche de Mer (BDM/Trepang) in the Australian/ Papua New Guinean jurisdiction by nationals
- Border crossing of Foreign Fishing Vessels between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea
- Growing lucrative black market trade of Fish Maw (Swim Bladder)
- Continued illegal fishing by Indonesian fishing vessels
- BDM trading in the north/south Papua New Guinea/Indonesian border

## **III. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING RELATED TO THE MCS SUB-REGIONAL (ARAFURA AND TIMOR SEAS) GROUP**

9. A summary of the outcomes and the Action Plan for 2018 resulting from the 8th MCS Sub-Regional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group meeting, held in Bali, Indonesia was presented by Mr. Rayner and endorsed by the Group. This is included at Annex 7.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FORWARD WORKING PLAN**

10. The meeting had extensive discussion in relation to possible actions for the reduction of IUU activities in the region. As a result of discussions, action agreed to be taken by the Group are detailed in the 2019 Key IUU Issues and Action Plan in Annex 8.
11. While strong progress had been made in reducing IUU activities in the Arafura and Timor Seas, some key issues identified at previous MCS Sub-Regional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group meetings were continuing to occur though the approach was modified to reflect the current situation.

These key issues are:

- Foreign nationals targeting PNG's fishing and trade industry, to illegally harvest and distribute product. This includes but is not limited to dried fish and animal products
- Increasing sightings of Fish Aggregation Devices (FAD/Rumpon) in Indonesian waters north of the Australian maritime boundary
- Suspected IUU fishing activity in the PNG Dogleg Area
- There is a need to provide further support and development of MCS capabilities within the Sub-Regional Group
- There is an ongoing need to support and facilitate cooperation within the Sub-Regional Group

## **V. OTHER BUSINESS**

12. Mr. Rayner noted that as the Sub-Regional Group we are obliged to assist the other RPOA Sub-Regional Groups and will attempt to again invite other Sub-Regional Group as observers to attend the next meeting. It was noted that this approach was supported by all delegations.
13. Australia provided an update regarding their trials of Garmin inREACH explorer + device. This trial was initiated in light of Papua New Guinea's 2017 and 2018 introduction of the device within the agency.
14. Papua New Guinea noted that the MT ANGEL 33, vessel unlawfully sighted in Timor-Leste, is currently licensed by Papua New Guinea. Australia shared an information report relating to this vessel to the Group. Papua New Guinea noted that they will investigate this further.
15. Timor-Leste stated that a Chinese Company has expressed interest to invest in Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste noted their apprehension towards this following previous experience with Chinese investment. Timor-Leste will share Company information and the Group will investigate this further and share information with Timor-Leste. Australia noted the importance of utilising other networks, such as INTERPOL, to assist in cross-checking this Company.

## **VI. COORDINATION OF THE MCS SUB-REGIONAL (ARAFURA AND TIMOR SEAS) GROUP**

1. There has been significant reduction in IUU activities in the Arafura and Timor Seas, though some key issues identified at previous MCS Sub-Regional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group meetings continuing to occur. The approach to address these were modified to reflect the current situation.
2. The hosting of the 10<sup>th</sup> MCS Sub-Regional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group meeting is pending decision from Timor-Leste.
3. Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Timor-Leste requested that Australia continue in the role as the MCS Sub-Regional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group Secretariat. Australia has agreed to hold the position for another year.
4. The outcomes of this meeting will be reported to the RPOA members through the RPOA-IUU Secretariat. Activities undertaken throughout 2019 will also be reported to the Coordination Committee at the next RPOA Coordination Committee meeting.

## **VII. CLOSING OF THE MEETING**

5. Mr. Brendan Rayner as Chair thanked all participants for their active contribution and willingness to discuss complex matters. He noted that the agreed outcomes and recommendations from this meeting will go a long way to combating IUU fishing in the Arafura and Timor Seas.
6. Mr. Brendan Rayner as Chair declared the meeting closed.

**List of Annexures**

Annex 1 – List of Participants

Annex 2 – Agenda

Annex 3 – Australia Presentation

Annex 4 – Indonesia Presentation

Annex 5 – Timor-Leste Presentation

Annex 6 – Papua New Guinea Presentation

Annex 7 – Review of 2018 Key IUU Issues and Action Plan

Annex 8 – 2019 Key IUU Issues and Action Plan