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Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Agricultura y la
Alimentación

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy

Fax: +39 0657053152

Tel: +39 0657051

www.fao.org

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Your Ref.:

Rome, 19 September 2011

Communication from the Chairperson of the Committee on Fisheries

Dear Sir/Madame,

I have the honour to convey the communication from Mr Mohammad Pourkazemi, Chairperson of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), dated 14 September 2011.

As per the Chairperson's request, his communication is being sent to all the Heads of Delegations which attended the Twenty-ninth session of COFI from 31 January to 4 February 2011 as well as to the Permanent Representations in Rome. Should you no longer be the person dealing with COFI-related matters, I would be grateful if you could kindly forward this missive to your successor.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the assurance of my highest consideration.

Hiromoto Watanabe
Secretary of COFI
Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Economics Division
Fisheries and Aquaculture Department

Mohammad Pourkazemi
Director
International Sturgeon Research Institute
P.O. Box: 41635-3464, Rasht, Iran
Tel: +98 132 574 3721
Fax: +98 132 574 3722
Email: pkazemi_m@yahoo.com

14 September 2011

Invitation to provide feedback on issues discussed by the Bureau of the 29th Session of the
FAO Committee on Fisheries

Dear Distinguished Members of the FAO Committee on Fisheries,

The Bureau of the 29th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) has been in the process of inter-sessional consultation in particular for reviewing the COFI practice including its rules of procedures in order to prepare for the discussion at the Thirtieth Session in July 2012 according to Paragraph 66 of the report of the last session. The first inter-sessional consultation with the Bureau took place at the FAO Headquarters on 6 May 2011. The background and summary of the meeting is attached.

The role of the Bureau is to be a mechanism for focused consideration of ideas and concerns of all COFI members as a way to provide advice to the COFI Secretariat, including the Assistant Director-General, in preparing for the next session of COFI. The Bureau reviewed several issues related to the functioning of COFI, in an effort to identify areas for improvement, including in relation to the recommendations of the Open-Ended Working Group on Measures Designed to Increase the Efficiency of Governing Bodies, including Representation (OEWG), as well as other ideas proposed by Bureau members.

On behalf of the Bureau, I would like to request your comments on the meeting minutes as well as your input on the following questions that the Bureau will further consider at its next inter-sessional meeting scheduled in early December 2011 during the week when the 143rd Session of the Council is scheduled:

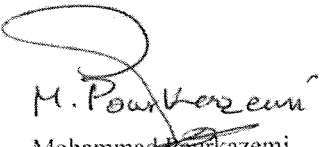
1. It is proposed that the current practice for the selection of Bureau members (officers) be reviewed, so that each Regional Group nominates a representative, instead of the current practice of nominating three Vice-Chairpersons (other than the Chairperson) from the G77 Group and OECD+ Group, respectively. Do you agree with this change? What concerns might there be with this change?
2. It is proposed that the timing of the election of the Bureau members (officers) change from the beginning of the session, to the end of the session. This would allow the officers to start their mandates by planning the upcoming session, with the end of their mandate culminating with the COFI session itself. Do you agree with this change? What concerns might there be with this change?

3. A number of changes were considered for the functioning of COFI in order to create a more dynamic discussion and to facilitate clear decision-making of the Committee for the purposes of reporting its decisions. Do you have any further suggestions, other than 1. and 2. above, to offer for the Bureau members to consider?
4. Do you have any questions and comment about the Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPOW)?

I should be grateful if you could kindly send your feedback to the COFI Secretary, Hiromoto.Watanabe@fao.org, by 31 October 2011. Your feedback on these issues will help the Bureau in its advisory capacity to help the COFI Secretariat plan the upcoming 30th session of COFI.

I would appreciate your kind consideration and cooperation in advance.

Sincerely yours,


M. Pourkazemi
Mohammad Pourkazemi
Chairperson of the Committee on Fisheries

Copy for information:

COFI 29 Bureau Members
Mr Árni M. Mathiesen, Assistant Director-General, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department
Mr Hiromoto Watanabe, Secretary of COFI

Background and Summary of the First Inter-sessional Meeting of COFI 29 Bureau

6 May 2011, FAO Headquarters

Backgrounds

1. According to the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) developed based on the recommendations made by the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE) and the consequent discussion on working arrangements and rules of procedure of the Technical Committees at the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) as well as at the Open-ended Working Group on Measures Designated to Increase the Efficiency of Governing Bodies, Including Representation (OEWG) established by the Conference at its session in November 2009, there has been broad agreement on enhancing the function of the Steering Committee or Bureau for, *inter alia*, (i) setting of the agendas for future sessions, in consultation with Regional Groups; and (ii) information sharing on new developments during inter-sessional period, and on possible follow-up actions.
2. During the 29th session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), Mr Mathiesen, Assistant Director-General of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, proposed that the Secretariat and the Bureau of COFI start working on potential new arrangements for the Committee during the interim period in preparation for a thorough discussion on the topic during its next session in July 2012. The Committee agreed on the proposed way forward and took note that the Bureau, jointly with the Secretariat and in consultation with Members, would carry out the necessary preparation and coordination.

Nature and Scope of the Inter-sessional Meetings

3. While the current inter-sessional process, endorsed by COFI and conducted among the Bureau members elected by COFI, is recognized as a formal process between the sessions of COFI, the nature of the Inter-sessional Meetings is agreed to be in a small-group among the Bureau members as a preparatory process for the broader inter-sessional consultation, if necessary and appropriate, subject to discussion and decision to be made during the next session of COFI. However, it is also underscored that communication with other member States through the Bureau members is also essential for transparency of the process.
4. While maintaining continuous communication by e-mail between the Bureau members and the Secretariat, the following occasions are agreed for face-to-face meetings among available Bureau members and the Secretariats:
 - First Inter-sessional Meeting: at the margin of the Technical Consultation on Flag State Performance in May 2011 in Rome
 - Second Inter-sessional Meeting: in December 2011 in Rome in conjunction with 143rd Session of Council with tele-conference arrangements, if necessary
 - Third Inter-sessional Meeting: in conjunction with either the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade in February 2012 in India or the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture in March in South Africa (with preference to the latter, considering the timing).
 - Fourth Inter-sessional Meeting: prior to and back-to-back with the next session of COFI in July 2012 in Rome.

5. According to the on-going discussion of OEWG and subject to further guidance to be provided by the Bureau members, agenda items may include agenda for COFI 30, information sharing on new developments during the inter-sessional period and possible follow-up actions, potential changes in Rules of Procedures of COFI, MYPOW (Multi-year Programme of Work) and any other matters.

Summary of the First Inter-sessional Meeting

6. The first Inter-sessional Meeting was held in the FAO Headquarters on Friday, 6 May 2011, at the margin of the Technical Consultation of Flag State Performance. Mr Pourkazemi (Iran), Chairperson, Mr Williams (Norway), First Vice-Chairperson, and Representatives from three Vice-Chair, namely Canada, Chile and India, as well as the FAO Secretariat attended the meeting. The provisional agenda was adopted as follows:

- a. Opening of the Session;
- b. Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Session;
- c. Setting the Stage: Role and function of inter-sessional meetings of the COFI Bureau;
- d. Rules of Procedure of COFI;
- e. Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of COFI;
- f. General considerations for future inter-sessional meetings of the COFI Bureau; and
- g. Any other matters; and
- h. Date and place of the next inter-sessional meeting of the COFI Bureau

7. Setting the Stage: Role and function of inter-sessional meetings of the COFI Bureau

- It was agreed that the Bureau, being elected by all COFI Members, has the mandate to discuss and advise COFI on a number of important issues related to substance and process. Among the issues to be discussed in this and following sessions of the Bureau meetings are: suggested agenda items for the 30th session of COFI, possible amendments to the rules of procedure of the Committee, and the Multi Year Plan of Work of COFI (MYPOW), which is part of the ongoing FAO reform efforts for all the Technical Committees.
- The meeting underlined the importance of communication so that all COFI Members are kept well informed of the activities of the Bureau in the inter-sessional period and in order to underscore the legitimacy and transparency of the Bureau's activities.

8. Rules of Procedure of COFI

(1) Role of the Bureau

With regard to a role of the Bureau in general, it was proposed to provide advice on (i) planning of work of COFI and Sub-Committees, or a roadmap for COFI, in full consultation with member States as well as both divisions of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, and (ii) a more strategic plan of outreach.

With regard to the inter-sessional functions of the Bureau, in addition to the functions already proposed, namely (i) contributing to the setting of the agendas for future sessions, in consultation with Regional Groups, and (ii) information sharing on new developments during the inter-sessional period and on possible follow-up actions, it was proposed to include

broader consideration on how the FI Department can raise the profile of fisheries and aquaculture within the FAO in cooperation with member States.

(2) Number and composition of officers

It was agreed to review the current practice for the selection of the Bureau. Currently, the G77 Group and the OECD+ Group nominate members of the Bureau. A possible alternative to be discussed would be to follow the practice of other technical committees and have each Regional Group nominate one representative.

(3) Timing of the election of officers

It was generally agreed that a change in the timing of the COFI Bureau election should be proposed to the 30th session of COFI for decision. Currently, Bureau members are elected at the beginning of each COFI session. The recommendation from the Open Ended Working Group on Measures Designed to Increase the Efficiency of Governing Bodies, including Representation (OEWG) is that technical committees should select Bureau members at the end of the session, so that the Bureau can actively plan for the upcoming session. There was, however, no agreement on when to recommend that COFI start applying this new timing (either during the 30th Session in 2012 or during the 31st Session in 2014).

(4) Other matters to be considered with regard to efficiency of COFI

A number of potential changes were proposed for further discussion in terms of better functioning of COFI such as more dynamic discussion, clear decision-making and reporting of its decisions. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a list of all proposed changes with regard to the procedural matters and efficiency of the meeting and to ask the Legal Office to examine the necessity of changing the current Rules of Procedures, if these proposed changes were accepted. This legal examination shall be undertaken prior to the discussion of the proposed changes at the second inter-sessional meeting.

9. Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of COFI

- The COFI Secretariat made a presentation on the Multi Year Plan of Work of COFI (MYPOW). The MYPOW is a planning tool being implemented by all Technical Committees. It is designed to focus and order future work of COFI, by identifying objectives, timelines, milestones and targets in order to help the Committee fulfill its mandate. The MYPOW is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary.
- It was agreed that the Secretary would prepare the first draft MYPOW for feedback from the second inter-sessional Bureau meeting. It will be presented at the 30th session of COFI for discussion and adoption.