



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels
Interim Secretariat provided by the Australian Government

First Meeting of Advisory Committee

Hobart, Australia, 20 – 22 July 2005

Agenda Item No . 15
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Australia

Observer Report on the FAO Committee on Fisheries
26th Session, Rome Italy, 7 – 11 March 2005

OBSERVER REPORT ON THE FAO COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES 26TH SESSION, ROME ITALY, 7 – 11 MARCH 2005

Background

The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held its 26th Session in Rome from 7 to 11 March 2005. The Session was attended by 117 Members of the Committee, by observers from three other FAO member nations, the Holy See, and one non-member nation of FAO, by representatives from six specialized agencies of the United Nations and by observers from 51 intergovernmental (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The ACAP Secretariat had asked Australia to act as an observer for the meeting and report back on issues of relevance to the Agreement.

Progress Report on the implementation of FAO instruments

The Committee noted that many international fishing instruments had been concluded since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), including the IPOA-Seabirds and agreed that from now on there should be a stronger focus on implementing the instruments concluded since UNCED rather than seeking to conclude new instruments.

The need to adopt the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in a timely and appropriate manner was recognized by many members. It was noted, however, that while there was general recognition of the value and importance of this approach to management, there still needed to be greater understanding of how it could be applied in practice. The Committee encouraged Members and RFMO's to consider introducing and implementing the ecosystem approach to fisheries overcoming the obstacles that it might present in practice.

The meeting reported those countries who had completed the relevant assessments for the IPOA-Seabirds and where required the development of national plans of action had been developed. A copy of that report is Attachment 1. The Committee noted that there was a need for urgent action in some areas where certain albatross species were facing extinction as a result of significant interaction between those species and fisheries. Full implementation of the IPOA-Seabirds was urged.

The Committee expressed strong support for a proposal by Japan that a joint meeting of secretariats of the Tuna RFMOs and their members be held in 2007. The meeting would include all key RFMOs including ICCAT, IOTC, IATTC, WCPFC and the CCSBT. One of the objectives flagged by the Committee could be to review current management measures including incidental catch related measures.

Review of FAO Planned Activities

The Committee was provided with the proposal of works for the period 2006 – 2007. It was noted that there was considerable pressure on the budget but that all activities were too important not to be undertaken. Many members requested further strengthening of specific issues including support for the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the related IPOAs and assistance related to them.

Other Matters

There was considerable discussion at the COFI meeting around the need to review and improve the performance of RFMOs in relation to their management action on

both target species as well as species that were incidentally interacted with. In relation to seabirds the NGO Birdlife International drew the meetings attention to the work it had recently completed reviewing the performance of RFMOs in relation to seabird conservation actions.

The Committee agreed on the importance of establishing principles to review the performance of RFMOs in meeting their objectives and the obligations and principles set forth in relevant international instruments. The Committee agreed that the process could be shaped by consultations among RFMOs, the result of which could be fed back to COFI for further actions.

The Government of the United States sponsored a briefing session specifically on seabird bycatch mitigation action and approaches. This briefing was well attended by COFI participants and provided a valuable additional mechanism by which the US and other experiences in addressing seabird bycatch mitigation could be considered and discussed.

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