

Japan
Fisheries
Association



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Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

U.N. HOLDS INFORMAL MEETING ON OCEANS AND FISHERIES

The sixth meeting of the Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (Consultative Process or UNICPOLOS) was held 6-10 June 2005, at UN headquarters in New York. Over 400 representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academic institutions participated in the UNICPOLOS.

During the week, delegates convened in plenary sessions to exchange views on areas of concern and actions needed. Two discussion panels were held to consider fisheries and their contribution to sustainable development and marine debris. Although the meeting reached agreement on most of the elements relating to fisheries and their contribution to sustainable development, there was no time to discuss the draft elements on marine debris.

The report on the UNICPOLOS discussions will be submitted to the UN General Assembly for consideration at its 60th session, under the agenda item "Oceans and the law of the sea". The JFA newsletter Isaribi highlights some of the discussions and examines the significance of having the discussions in the UN Process.



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ICFA Explains Its Commitment to Sustainable Fisheries

Two representatives from the commercial/large-scale fishing sector explained their commitment to sustainable fisheries, as well as challenges including illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fisheries. The representatives are Patrick McGuinness, Vice Chairman of the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA), and Javier Garat, Secretary-General of Federación Española de Organizaciones Pesqueras. The following is the gist of the presentation by Patrick McGuinness.

ICFA members are deeply committed to science-based and fully participatory fishery conservation and management processes that engage the affected stakeholders. We are challenged on a daily basis by competition from unscrupulous operators operating with cost structures with which responsible fishing

companies cannot hope to compete. These operations undermine the sustainability of many legal fisheries. This problem is irresponsible fishing, not the fishing gear. No gear type is inherently destructive. From experience, we know that all gear types can have some negative impacts. We need to identify where the challenges to fisheries sustainability are occurring and bring together responsible governments, responsible industry organizations, and responsible environmental groups in a partnership spirit, not a confrontational spirit, to jointly develop and implement strategies to solve any problems. We have had a decade of developing a wide range of international fisheries management instruments. We now need a decade of committed implementation of these instruments. There is now a need to develop a consensus model of what powers and tools a RFMO should have in order to be able to meet the task. A global moratorium on a type of fishing gear is not a solution. Illegal fisheries would continue even after a moratorium was adopted, because capital is mobile.

Dr. Suzuki Challenges Dr. Worm's Paper in Nature Magazine

--The Paper Is Exaggerated and Biased--

Dr. Boris Worm of Dalhousie University provided an overview of the global decline of large predatory fish. He is known for his study, published with co-author, Dr. Ransom Myers of the same university, in Nature magazine (May 15, 2003), concluding that large predatory fish biomass today is only about 10% of levels before commercial fisheries began. His study has been repeatedly quoted by irresponsible environmental organizations.

Dr. Jiro Suzuki, tuna biologist from the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries, Fisheries Research Agency, seriously questioned the credibility of the above-mentioned study as follows.

"I have been engaged in the management of tuna species for 30 years in IATTC, WCPFC, IOTC, CCSBT and ICCAT, which cover almost the entire area of the world's oceans. It is my responsibility to point out, on behalf of all the scientists in these regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), that the conclusion of the presentation by Dr. Worm grossly differs from those of every scientist in the RFMOs. None of the studies of these scientists has the same result as that of Dr. Worm. His assessment is derived from simple CPUE (catch per unit effort: the number of fish divided by the number of hooks) data of Japanese longlining. In stock assessment, we used all data available such as CPUE, fish size, catch amount, fishing efforts. We have put them in population dynamic models, which have shown no such decline that is being claimed by Dr. Worm. The figure, 90 % decline, is exaggerated and biased. In his presentation, he should have compared the data of RFMOs with his data."

Dr. Suzuki distributed a copy of the Nature magazine vol. 434 (April 28, 2005) that refutes Dr. Worm's results.

Marine Protected Area

--Conservation measure or a threat to global food security?--

Callum Roberts, Professor, University of York, detailed the possible future contribution of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to sustaining ecosystem services and fisheries. He further noted the importance of creating high seas MPAs in vulnerable areas for mobile species and called for a large-scale international network of MPAs that would target 30% of the oceans, including

the high seas.

Many participants pointed out the lack of clarity in the objectives and definition of the MPAs that the panelist promoted, especially in relation to distinctions between specifically designated areas for stock enhancement, and a marine reserve to exclude fisheries.

Some also pointed out that the successful implementation of MPAs requires involvement of all stakeholders, including fishermen. Others further argued that sovereign states can introduce closure measures, such as, those to protect spawning areas, and this is not something that is part of the mandate of the UNGA.

As the discussion unfolded, there appeared to be poor support for the establishment of MPAs on the high seas advocated by the Professor Roberts. There was a sense of skepticism about the intention behind the establishment of MPAs on the high seas. The question is whether the proposal is intended to conserve marine resources for the promotion of sustainable fisheries, or simply to turn the global ocean into an aquarium, at the expense of food security.

The future of high seas MPAs called for by certain members of the environmental community can be predicted from the present situation of the whaling moratorium and sanctuary. Commercial whaling has not resumed for 18 years, despite indisputable scientific evidence showing the abundance of whale populations. This is because the objective of the moratorium is not really stock enhancement for promotion of sustainable whaling, as initially claimed by environmental groups, but the advocacy of whale protection and animal rights. And this is what the future MPAs would be.

Isaribi would like to caution nations, especially developing countries, that once MPAs are established all over the high seas, there will be little chance for anyone to participate in high sea fisheries, even after fishing technology has been transferred to developing countries.

BOTTOM TRAWLING

--FAO Has Already Taken Steps to Address the Issue--

The issue of management of bottom trawling was discussed in relation to the UN resolution adopted last year. Although NGOs and a few countries called for the adoption of a global ban on high seas bottom trawling, there was overwhelming opposition to such a hasty action. The current resolution, 59/25, adopted in 2004, calls for review of progress on action taken in

response to the requests made in the resolution by 2006. Also, the 26th session of COFI (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Committee on Fisheries) has already taken steps to address the issue.

Actions agreed in the COFI meeting include the following.

The Committee called upon Members, directly and through RFMOs, as appropriate, to implement as a matter of priority, paragraphs 66 to 71 of the UNGA Resolution 59/25. The Committee requested FAO to cooperate with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the development of the report, as called for in paragraph 70 of UNGA Resolution 59/25.

Further, the Committee called upon Members

conducting deep sea fisheries on the high seas, individually and in cooperation with others, to address adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems, and to sustainably manage the fishery resources being harvested, including through controls or limitations on new and exploratory fisheries.

The Committee requested FAO, when revising the FAO Technical Guidelines on Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management, to consider appropriate measures regulating destructive fishing practices

The Committee encouraged the meeting of regional fisheries bodies (RFBs), that will immediately follow the Twenty-sixth Session of COFI, to consider the issue of deep sea fisheries conservation and management.

MORE FISHERY OFFICIALS SHOULD ATTEND UNICPOLOS

--Serious Lack of Fishery Experts Distorts UN Decisions--

Why should the issue of fisheries be discussed in the UN?

Mr. Golitsyn, Director of DOALOS (Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea), shared his view on this very fundamental question, saying that the mandate of the FAO is restrictive, and when an issue is not within its mandate, it needs to be discussed in a broader sense. So the presumption is that on a certain fishery issue, the UN better addresses the problem than FAO meetings.

The reality is, though, that out of 107 participating governments, no more than 25 had participation by fishery officials. Clearly, this is not the appropriate body to discuss important fisheries issues.

It seems that anti-commercial fishing organizations have found it to be a good place to introduce a global ban on fisheries, or MPAs making 30% of the ocean into marine parks, without giving any thought to the contribution of fisheries to food security, promotion of responsible fisheries, and the regulation of illegal fishermen, or any matters of complexity or of a technical nature. Is this what is meant to be “discussion in a broader sense?” And who will benefit from such discussions besides advocates of non-use?

To be sure, the issue of marine debris can better fit this process, because significant source of debris is from land-based activities, which will require discussions of a broader scope than just fisheries. Unfortunately, however, no time was left for the discussion of this important and more appropriate subject. In any discussion to deal with the regulation



FAO (26th session of COFI)
Countries with participation of fishery officials:120
Countries without participation of fishery officials:4



UN (the 6th Meeting of the UNICPOLOS)
Countries with participation of fishery officials: 25
Countries without participation of fishery officials: 82

of fisheries, we must have input from officials and scientists who are directly knowledgeable about fisheries, and who are engaged in fisheries

management. This, however, brings us to the first question - why can't we do this in the FAO?

Interview of FAO Expert in Fisheries (from FAO Website)

Many of the World's Poorest People Depend on Fish

--Fisheries and aquaculture crucial to food security, poverty alleviation--

(7 June 2005, Rome) - In this interview with an FAO expert, Ichiro Nomura, Assistant-Director General for Fisheries, discusses how fishing and aquaculture help millions of people around the world by supporting development, alleviating poverty, and putting food on the table.

QUESTION: How are fishing and aquaculture important to development, food security, and poverty alleviation?

NOMURA: Over 852 million people on this planet don't have enough to eat. That certainly doesn't promote sustainable development. Millions of medium- and small-scale fishers and fish farmers, often very poor, depend on fishing and aquaculture. For FAO, fishing and aquaculture are first and foremost about people earning a living and putting food on their tables, and we do think it can be done sustainably.

Fishing and fish farming contribute to food security in three main ways. They directly increase people's food supplies, providing highly nutritious animal protein and important micronutrients while doing so. Fish food also "fill in the gaps" during times when other food is scarce. Finally, fishing and aquaculture provide jobs and income that people use to buy other foods

QUESTION: How much food are we talking about?

NOMURA: Just over 100 million tonnes of fish are eaten world-wide each year, providing two and a half billion people with at least 20 percent of their average per capita animal protein intake.

This contribution is even more important in developing countries, especially small island states and in coastal regions, where frequently over 50% of people's animal protein comes from fish. In some of the most food-insecure places -- many parts of Asia and Africa, for instance -- fish protein is absolutely essential, accounting for a large share of an already-low level of animal protein consumption.

QUESTION: You also mentioned the livelihood aspect...

NOMURA: Yes. By providing employment, fisheries and aquaculture alleviate poverty and help boost people's food security.

Remember, around 97 percent of fishers are in

developing countries. Fishing is especially important there.

Also, in the absence of social security or unemployment schemes, fishing can be an activity of last resort, a "safety net" provided by nature. Ironically, this characteristic of fisheries, which gives it particular value, can also, unfortunately, lead to excessive fishing and depletion of the resources.

There is also the economic activity resulting indirectly from fisheries and aquaculture, which supports around 200 million people, we estimate. International trade in fish is creating a lot of jobs in related industries like processing or packing.

QUESTION: Trade in fish?

NOMURA: Yes, it's quite extensive. The octopus carpaccio that you enjoy at a tapas bar near Barcelona could have been caught by a European union fishing vessel crewed by Ukrainians fishing off Mauritania, block-frozen there, and sold through a fish market in Vigo on Spain's Atlantic Coast before arriving 'fresh from the sea' at your table.

All in all, about 38 percent of all fish is traded internationally. The total world export value for fish and fish products is nearly US\$60 billion! Significantly, the volume share of developing countries in fishery exports represents just over half, about 55 percent, of the total.

That is a significant source of foreign currency earnings for poor countries. Net receipts of foreign exchange by developing countries through fish trade is now around US\$17 billion a year, more than what they earn from exports of tea, rice, coffee together.

But here again, there is a risk that the higher income possible via exporting fish potentially could reduce local fish supplies and possible create incentives for over-fishing. There is both an opportunity and a risk -- which is why responsible management is so important.