

WCC-2012-Rec-169-EN
Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)

RECALLING that the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) has been endorsed in many overarching policy documents related to fisheries and to conservation of marine biodiversity;

NOTING that reviews of marine fisheries management practices, including by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Expert Meeting on impacts of destructive fishing practices, unsustainable fishing, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing on marine biodiversity and habitats (Rome 2009), the FAO Review of progress on United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 61/105 (Pusan 2010), the UNGA Open Review of regional and national actions to protect deep-sea species and ecosystems on the high seas from the harmful impacts of fishing have all concluded that although substantial progress has been made in many jurisdictions at implementing components of an ecosystem approach to fisheries, substantial work remains to be done;

RECALLING further that the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Plan of Implementation (para. 31c) foresees *inter alia* the development and use of diverse approaches and tools, to promote the conservation and management of oceans, including the ecosystem approach and the establishment of networks of marine protected areas;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), through the Malawi Principles, the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the 2001 Reykjavik Declaration on EAF provide a coherent framework for reaching the EAF objectives and Aichi Target 6 of the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020*;

ACKNOWLEDGING FURTHER that efforts should be made to better understand the impact of the present fisheries selectivity patterns on the ecosystem structure and functioning; and

RECOGNIZING that due to information gaps and resource limitations, the adoption of a fully integrated ecosystem approach will entail an adaptive management approach whereby fishery management systems will evolve over time in response to increasing experience and stakeholder adoption;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea 6–15 September 2012:

1. CALLS ON national and regional fisheries management agencies and organizations to increase their efforts to achieve full implementation of the principles and practices of an ecosystem approach to fisheries, making full use of appropriate operational guidance available in various scientific and technical documents;
2. CALLS ON the Director General to fully cooperate with FAO, the CBD, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, Regional Seas organizations, and other relevant environmental international governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, including conservation and industry associations, and the Global Environment Fund (GEF), to accelerate progress on all aspects of EAF implementation;
3. URGES fishing States and RFMOs to fully acknowledge that in order to improve sustainability, implementation of an EAF should include:
 - a. minimizing the effects of external drivers and associated uncertainty, including oceanographic conditions and climate variability and change, on the dynamics of harvested stocks;

- b. reducing the impact of a fishery on non-targeted stocks, habitats and ecological communities, and reducing the risk to the targeted stock from overfishing;
 - c. adopting and implementing an inclusive, participatory and transparent governance of fisheries on scales appropriate to the ecosystem or ecosystems where the specific fishery operates; and
 - d. promoting coherence in decision making through improved cooperation between sectors and with agencies competent for regulating fisheries and other industry sectors and for conservation of biodiversity, where actions of one jurisdiction may have consequences for the ability of other jurisdictions to achieve their objectives;
4. URGES States and RFMOs in implementing an ecosystem approach to fishing, to give particular attention to:
- a. the human dimension of EAF, especially the importance of fisheries to food security and poverty elimination and the value of fishers' knowledge and institutions;
 - b. the potential role of spatial and temporal planning and management measures in improving fisheries management and protecting nursery areas, vulnerable life stages of species or habitats and mitigating and reducing the ecological impact of fishing;
 - c. the need for better documentation of the costs and benefits of various approaches to EAF governance and implementation and of their allocation;
 - d. the need for better understanding of how various types of legal, economic and social incentives may work for or against implementation of an EAF;
 - e. the effectiveness of various strategies, risk assessment methodologies and measures for managing fisheries in information-poor situations;
 - f. how EAF considerations can be incorporated into fisheries management harvest control rules and procedures, as well as in private sector/fishing industry's business models;
 - g. how various harvesting strategies may contribute to improved conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in an equitable way to provide sustainable yields while maintaining ecosystem services, structure and functioning; for example:
 - i. targeting harvests on particular species groups versus balancing harvests across ecosystem components; and
 - ii. tracking environmental variation directly with harvest adjustments versus adopting more stable harvest strategies that are robust to environmental variation;
 - h. the need for capacity building, including capacity for scientific and technical support, field management and operations, processing standards and traceability of seafood products, and policy development and governance; and
 - i. the important role of a national Ecosystem Approach (EA) framework nesting efforts of all sectors in applying the approach, insuring coherence and equity in implementation; and

5. As knowledge of the opportunities and constraints on EAF implementation grows, CALLS ON competent fisheries management jurisdictions to:
 - a. develop and apply management procedures that address sustainable fishing practices and ecosystem considerations;
 - b. develop indicators and apply monitoring and management strategies to allow for precautionary and adaptive management of fisheries; and
 - c. document and share experiences, including both successes and failures, and the lessons learned, and build a collection of good EAF practices.