



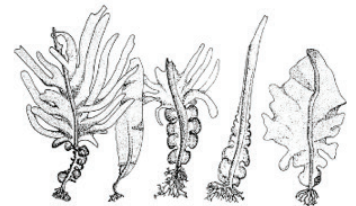
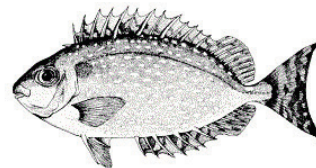
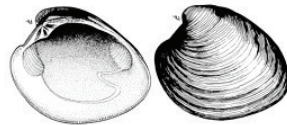
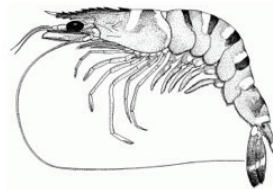
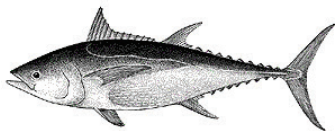
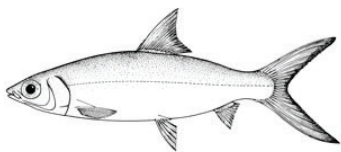
Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



REPORT OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE

ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION (APFIC)

Qingdao, China, 13–15 June 2023



Report of the Thirty-seventh Session of the

ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION (APFIC)

Qingdao, China, 13–15 June 2023

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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Preparation of this report

This is the edited version of the report approved by the Thirty-seventh Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC).

ABSTRACT

This document is the edited version of the report adopted by the Thirty-seventh Session of APFIC convened in Qingdao, China from 13 to 15 June 2023 in hybrid format and hosted by the Chinese Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. The Thirty-seventh Session was attended by 43 registered delegates from 15 APFIC Member Nations and one non-APFIC FAO Member Nation; 4 regional organizations were present as observers.

The Commission reviewed the intersessional activities of APFIC since the Thirty-sixth Session under the endorsed APFIC work programme and the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP) programme activities that contribute to APFIC recommendations. The Commission commended the work of the APFIC Secretariat and the technical support provided by FAO to APFIC Member Nations over the biennium and requested FAO to continue providing technical assistance and advice to APFIC Member Nations through its Regular Programme and field programmes related to regional capacity building in stock assessment, with a particular emphasis on how to address the issue of multispecies and multigear assessments as well as sustainable mariculture development and aquaculture innovation and investment.

The Commission endorsed the report of the Seventy-eighth APFIC Executive Committee Meeting, including the protocols for the conduct of APFIC activities in virtual or hybrid format, to ensure effective outcomes and where decisions need to be made.

The Commission reviewed the outcomes of the FAO workshop on “Improving Understanding on the Status of Regional Stocks and Outcomes of Capacity Building for Regional Assessments”. APFIC Member Nations confirmed their commitment to sustainability, on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), on achieving responsible fisheries and described their national policies and legislation that are being put into place in these contexts. Several Members indicated that the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on fisheries subsidies presents challenges on how to conduct appropriate assessments of fisheries and how to address their small-scale sectors. The Commission requested the development of an FAO-led initiative for capacity building to improve stock assessment for marine application and to provide technical advice, particularly for issues related to small-scale fisheries. Member Nations of the Commission also requested advice from FAO to assist them in operationalizing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to ensure effective management and sustainable use of marine resources and in the application of Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).

The Commission reviewed the outcomes of the “FAO-NACA High Level Meeting on Innovation and Investments for Sustainable Aquaculture” and the related information document *Aquaculture transformation: innovations and investment for sustainable intensification and expansion of aquaculture in Asia and the Pacific region*. Member Nations of the Commission emphasized the importance of sustainable aquaculture development as part of their policies for food security, livelihood and economic development, both in terms of exports and domestic food supply. They emphasized the need for capacity building and guidance on innovation; effective planning measures and investment in the aquaculture sector to address environmental aspects of aquaculture performance; ensuring that aquaculture adapts to climate change; as well as integration of social and equity issues. The Commission recommended priority action on improved resilience of aquaculture to climate change impacts and to develop a regional investment pipeline to stimulate innovation and investment on low-carbon aquaculture. The Commission further requested support from FAO and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA) to develop an action guide for aquaculture transformation in Asia and the Pacific region that would cover the development of national innovation and investment plans and guidance on policies and strategies for upscaling innovation, investment and partnerships.

The Commission reviewed the report and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC. It was informed of current limitations to the effective function of APFIC. The Commission recognized that APFIC is still FAO's only regionally focused platform that addresses capture fisheries and aquaculture. The Commission appreciated the contribution of APFIC to promoting regional cooperation and providing advice to its Member Nations over its 75-year history. It endorsed the report and findings of the Ad Hoc Working Group and commended the work that had been undertaken. It also acknowledged the increasing financial constraints facing the Commission and that a work programme for the Commission required adequate and sustainable resourcing.

The Commission adopted by consensus the "Resolution for suspension of the activities of the Commission", i.e. to suspend the activities of the Commission for a period of five years. Following the period of suspension, the procedure for convening a special session will apply and is appended to the report of the Thirty-seventh Session.

In adopting the resolution, the Commission emphasized that there remains a strong need for regional cooperation in fishery management and fishery governance, as well as cooperation for sustainable and responsible aquaculture development. The Commission further underscored that suspension of the Commission's activities should not be interpreted as undermining efforts of FAO and APFIC Member Nations to increase cooperation in the fisheries sector in the region, including those related to relevant FAO programmes.

As the Commission has suspended its activities for the next five years and the Thirty-eighth Session and the Seventy-ninth Executive Committee Meeting have not been scheduled, there was no requirement for a biennial APFIC workplan or budget. This matter will be reopened at the special session should the Commission wish to resume activity and convene the Thirty-eighth Session. The officers of the Commission remain unchanged and will remain incumbent should the special session be convened in 2028 (Chairperson: China; Vice-chairperson: Thailand; Executive Committee: India, Malaysia, the Philippines).

The report of the Thirty-seventh Session of APFIC was adopted on 15 June 2023.

Distribution:

Session participants, members of the Commission
Other interested nations and international organizations
FAO Fishery and Aquaculture Division (NFI)
Fishery officers in FAO Regional Offices

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ABBREVIATIONS

APFIC	Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission
BOBLME	Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem
BOBP-IGO	Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation
FAO RAP	FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF-IW	Global Environment Facility International Waters
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated
MARA	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, China
MMSY	Multispecies maximum sustainable yield
NACA	Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific
OECSs	Other effective area-based conservation measures
SEAFDEC	Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center
WTO	World Trade Organization

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) held its Thirty-seventh Session from 13 to 15 June 2023 in Qingdao, China using hybrid format. The session was hosted by the Government of the People's Republic of China.
2. The Thirty-seventh Session was attended by representatives of 15 Member Nations of the Commission and the APFIC Secretariat. There was one FAO Member Nation observer and representatives from four regional organizations were present as observers. Appendix B provides the list of participants.
3. The delegates were welcomed by Mr Carlos Watson, FAO Representative to China. Mr Watson expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA), Government of China for hosting the Thirty-seventh Session and for the arrangements that had been made. He noted that the Commission would deliberate on two substantive technical activities, conducted under the workplan of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP), but that the important decision to be made by the Commission would be regarding its future. He concluded by encouraging the Members to seek consensus on the options for a sustainable solution to this important matter.
4. Dr Jin Xianshi, APFIC Chairperson and Director of the Yellow Sea Fishery Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Fishery Science, also welcomed the delegates to the Thirty-seventh Session, thanking them for their support over the past two years while he was Chairperson. In particular, he appreciated the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC and the Seventy-eighth Meeting of the Executive Committee. As Chairperson of APFIC, he expressed his wish for the Commission to reach a clear decision on its future.
5. The inaugural speech for the Thirty-seventh Session was provided by Ms Zhao Liling, Councillor II, Bureau of Fisheries, MARA, People's Republic of China. Ms Zhao informed the Commission that China was honoured to host the Thirty-seventh Session and extended a warm welcome to the delegates. Emphasizing the importance of aquatic foods for Asia and the Pacific region, she noted the rapid growth of the aquaculture sector and its increasing contribution to nutrition and economies across the region. Acknowledging the long history of APFIC as an advisory body to the region, Ms Zhao commended its work and support to regional cooperation and sustainable development of the capture fishery and aquaculture sectors in the region. Ms Zhao concluded that the Commission was now at a stage where a clear decision could be made regarding its future. She noted that regardless of the outcome, there would still be a need for effective cooperation in the domains of fisheries and aquaculture in the region and that this would remain a priority for China.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

6. The APFIC Secretariat presented the "Protocols for the conduct of virtual or hybrid events of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission requiring decisions" (APFIC/23/Inf-01).
7. The Commission adopted the agenda and agreed on the arrangements for the Thirty-seventh Session. The adopted agenda appears in Appendix A.
8. The documents considered and reviewed by the Commission are listed in Appendix C.

INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION SINCE THE THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION

9. The APFIC Secretary introduced document APFIC/23/02 supported by information document APFIC/23/Inf-04. This summarized the main events and activities undertaken under the APFIC programme of work and FAO programme activities that have been of relevance to the work of APFIC since the Thirty-sixth Session of APFIC, which was convened in Bangkok, Thailand from 5 to 7 May 2021.

Intersessional activities under the endorsed work programme of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission

10. The Commission was informed that there had been no substantive technical work programme of the Commission during the current biennium and that activities of the Commission had been restricted to the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group. The findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group are covered under Agenda item 5: "The future of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission: findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC".
11. The Commission was informed of the development of protocols aligned to the APFIC rules of procedure to ensure effective outcomes of virtual or hybrid format workshops and decision-making events (APFIC/23/Inf-01). These were developed by the APFIC Secretariat at the request of the Thirty-sixth Session and endorsed by the Seventy-eighth Executive Committee meeting. The need for the protocols is due to the increasing number of virtual webinars and workshops that use virtual or hybrid format and to facilitate the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group. The protocols provide guidance on the process for convening the regular session of the Commission, the Executive Committee and working group activities, where decisions are to be made.

FAO RAP programme activities that contribute to recommendations of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission

Organization of regional meetings and workshops

12. The Commission noted that under its Regular Programme, FAO RAP had convened five technical workshops, five webinars and one high level meeting, in line with recommendations of the Commission, during the current biennium.
13. The Commission was informed of an FAO-led initiative for capacity building to improve stock assessment for marine applications. Two regional training workshops on stock assessment were co-organized by FAO and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) from 13 to 17 December 2021 and 30 May to 7 June 2022. FAO also convened a "Regional Workshop for a Network of Practitioners on Fishery Stock Assessment" from 23 to 25 January 2023 as a follow-up activity. These activities are covered under Agenda item 3: "Improving understanding on the status of regional stocks and outcomes of capacity building for regional assessments".
14. The Commission was further informed of the FAO RAP and the NACA virtual high level meeting on "Aquaculture transformation in Asia and the Pacific region", convened from 22 to 23 November 2022. The outcome of this process and the associated White Paper are discussed under Agenda item 4: "Outcomes of the FAO-NACA High Level Meeting on Innovation and Investments for Sustainable Aquaculture".

Direct assistance and advice to Member Nations

15. The APFIC Secretariat, through its functions within FAO RAP, has provided direct technical assistance and policy advice to Members in addressing country-level and regional-level fisheries and aquaculture development issues. Overall, there are 10 FAO technical cooperation projects and 13 Trust Fund national and regional projects currently being supported.
16. The Commission noted that the regional projects offer considerable opportunities for closer cooperation among Member Nations, often within the framework of a regional fishery body.
17. In addition, the APFIC Secretariat has been active in developing new projects, including one regional Global Environment Facility International Waters (GEF-IW) project "Promoting the blue economy and strengthening fisheries governance of the Gulf of Thailand through the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, GoTFish" project and two GEF Food-System Integrated Programme projects related to aquaculture.

18. The APFIC Secretariat has also cooperated in the development of a global mariculture programme proposal, which it is anticipated will be of considerable interest to APFIC Members if it receives funding support.

Responses of the Commission

19. The Commission welcomed the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group and the development of the protocol for virtual or hybrid events of the Commission requiring decision.
20. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the FAO Regular Programme activities that aligned with the recommendations of the Commission and requested some clarifications on the programmes that were under development.
21. The APFIC Secretary informed the Commission on the development of a global mariculture programme proposal that was strongly linked to unfed/low footprint aquaculture and to addressing the challenges of reducing dependence on fishmeal in mariculture. He also noted that the regional GEF-IW large marine ecosystem projects which are being developed, offer the opportunity to promote sustainable fishery management. He concluded that FAO welcomed Member Nations to approach FAO RAP regarding potential for engagement in these initiatives.
22. The Commission requested FAO to continue providing technical assistance and advice to APFIC Members through its regular and field programmes in the areas of:
- capacity building in stock assessment in the region with particular emphasis on how to address the issue of multispecies and multigear assessments;
 - sustainable mariculture development and aquaculture innovation and investment.

REPORT OF THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

23. The Commission was informed of the activities of the APFIC Executive Committee and the report of its Seventy-eighth Meeting (APFIC/23/03, APFIC/23/Inf-05) which was convened in Qingdao, China in virtual format from 21 to 23 June 2022 and hosted by the People's Republic of China.

Responses of the Commission

24. The Commission noted that the meeting had endorsed the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group and that this had also been brought to the attention of the FAO Committee on Fisheries.
25. The Commission endorsed the report of the meeting.

IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING ON THE STATUS OF REGIONAL STOCKS AND OUTCOMES OF CAPACITY BUILDING FOR REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS

26. The Commission reviewed the working document APFIC/23/04 (Rev1), informed by the draft review "Status of marine fishery stock assessments in the Asian region and the potential for a network of practitioners" (APFIC/23/Inf-06).
27. The Commission was informed of FAO's work to improve the assessment of global fish stocks and the results of the pilot for Area 57.
28. The Commission was informed that that marine fish stock assessment has been undergoing a quiet revolution in Asia and that there is a wide variety of stock assessments being conducted in the region. The findings of the assessment workshop suggested that very few fisheries in the region appear to be underfished and preliminary results are in line with the FAO assessments.

29. An important conclusion of the regional workshop was that the results of stock assessments were, in general, not well connected to management decision-making and action and that this needed to be strengthened.

Responses of the Commission

30. The Commission welcomed the organization of the FAO assessment workshop and the high level of participation both physical and virtual. It expressed appreciation for the high quality output and noted its relevance to the region.
31. The Commission was informed about several programmes and priority areas of the Member Nations related to stock assessment, including initiatives that use Multispecies maximum sustainable yield (MMSY) approaches and near-real-time multispecies assessments.
32. Highlighting the relevance to reporting on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) and the recent WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies, the Commission highlighted the importance of understanding the status of fish stocks in the region.
33. The Commission noted that there is a strong need for collaboration among the APFIC Member Nations in stock assessment.
34. China informed the Commission that it was currently providing capacity building and training in various fields, including stock assessment.
35. The Commission recommended that capacity building should cover:
- the application of multispecies and multigear assessment methods, in particular the application of MMSY approaches;
 - the application of bioeconomic and ecosystem modelling;
 - addressing assessment and management of small-scale fisheries;
 - incorporation of climate change effects into stock assessment;
 - development of simplified guidelines for choosing appropriate data collection and modelling systems;
 - sharing of approaches and networking to support the adoption of common approaches among countries with similar fisheries.
36. The Commission requested FAO to assist in developing a regional project or programme to provide such capacity-building support.
37. The Commission was informed of the activities and programmes of SEAFDEC and the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO) in support of the outcomes of the regional workshop and their programmes to their Member Nations in improving stock assessment. These organizations welcomed further cooperation with FAO to further promote the regional network and best practices in the region.

OUTCOMES OF THE FAO-NACA HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON INNOVATION AND INVESTMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE

38. The Commission considered the working paper and White Paper on “Aquaculture transformation: innovations and investment for sustainable intensification and expansion of aquaculture in Asia and the Pacific region” jointly prepared by the FAO RAP and NACA (APFIC/23/05 and information paper APFIC/23/Inf-07).

39. The Commission was informed that governments and industry were already taking actions to make aquaculture more sustainable. This was being driven by innovation and entrepreneurship but that to maintain growth, there was a need for increased access to public and private financing for sustainable aquaculture development, especially for de-risking research and development investment. There is a need to promote both socioeconomic and climate resilience in the aquaculture sector and to ensure equitable benefit sharing. The Commission was also informed that there are considerable benefits from purposeful, precompetitive collaboration among aquaculture sector actors.

Responses of the Commission

40. The Commission welcomed the outcomes of the FAO-NACA high level meeting and noted that this was a milestone for engaging governments, the private sector and investment bodies. It was agreed that there is a need for greater awareness of the opportunities for investment and innovation for aquaculture development in the region.

41. The Commission also appreciated the high technical quality of the White Paper and took note of its recommendations for Blue Transformation of the aquaculture sector in the region. Some Member Nations noted that actions were already being taken to align policies and development strategies with the guidance.

42. The Commission emphasized the importance of aquaculture to the region and that it was a priority area for most Member Nations. It was informed of Member Nations' actions in support of sustainable aquaculture development and noted the following key areas:

- reduction of fishmeal use in aquaculture feeds and improved resource use efficiency and alternatives to fishmeal;
- genetic improvement and diversification of strains;
- improved circularity and reduction of greenhouse gas footprints;
- strengthened biosecurity and prudent use of antibiotics;
- development and use of "smart" aquaculture systems;
- promotion of investment and enabling policies.

43. The Commission recommended priority action on climate change (under Target 2 of the White Paper) and to look at improved resilience of aquaculture to climate change impacts. The Commission also recommended a regional investment pipeline to stimulate innovation and investment on low-carbon aquaculture.

44. The Commission requested support from FAO and NACA to develop an action guideline for aquaculture transformation in Asia and the Pacific Region, which would contain two main components:

- guidance for the development of a National Innovation and Investment Plan;
- guidance on policies and strategies for upscaling innovation and investment and partnerships.

45. NACA highlighted key achievements from the high level meeting and indicated commitment to continue working with Members and investment partners to advance the aquaculture transformation agenda and monitoring of progress.

46. The Commission looked forward to the outcomes of the follow-up FAO-NACA high level meeting in November 2023.

THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF APFIC

47. The Commission deliberated the outcomes of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group, informed by working document APFIC/23/06 (Rev1) and supporting information documents: APFIC/23/Inf-08 Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC; APFIC/23/Inf-09 Financial Estimate; APFIC/23/Inf-10 Procedure for Convening the Special Session; APFIC/23/Inf-11 APFIC Agreement.

Responses of the Commission

48. The Commission appreciated the contribution of APFIC in promoting regional cooperation and providing advice to its Member Nations over its 75-year history. The Commission acknowledged the legacy of APFIC in supporting sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the region and thanked FAO for its support to the Commission, through its programmes and Secretariat functions.
49. The Commission welcomed the report and findings of the Ad Hoc Working Group and commended the work that had been undertaken. The Commission thanked the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Working Group and the Secretariat for the comprehensive process which saw excellent participation of the APFIC Member Nations and for the documentation that was provided to support this work.
50. The Commission acknowledged the increasing financial constraints facing the Commission and that a work programme for the Commission required adequate and sustainable resourcing. It further noted that the responses of Member Nations to the question of providing voluntary or assessed contributions in the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group indicated that few, if any, Members were currently in a position to commit to a contribution mechanism.
51. The Commission took note of the principal recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group and took into consideration the cost implications for a work programme funded through a contribution mechanism for Member Nations (APFIC/23/Inf-09).
52. The Commission recognized that the emergence of competent regional fishery bodies and regional fishery management organizations now adequately covers the geographical and technical thematic competence of APFIC at regional and subregional levels.
53. The Commission emphasized that there remains a strong need for regional cooperation in fishery management and fishery governance, as well as cooperation for sustainable and responsible aquaculture development. It noted the strong expressions of commitment by the APFIC Member Nations in this regard.
54. The Commission endorsed the report and findings of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the future of APFIC (APFIC/23/Inf-08).
55. The Commission adopted by consensus the "Resolution for suspension of the activities of the Commission", to suspend the activities of the Commission for a period of five years. The text of this resolution appears in Appendix D of this report.
56. The Commission further emphasized that suspension of the Commission's activities should not be interpreted as undermining the efforts of FAO and APFIC Member Nations to increase cooperation in the fisheries sector in the region, including those related to relevant FAO programmes.
57. The Commission further agreed that steps should be taken during the five-year period of suspension to explore mechanisms for the establishment or strengthening of subregional arrangements for the management of marine capture fisheries for resources that are not covered by the competence of existing regional fishery management organizations.

58. In adopting the resolution to suspend its activities, the Commission recommended that:

- FAO ensures that the extensive collection of documents of APFIC sessions, Executive Committee meetings and technical meetings, that form the 75-year APFIC web-based archive, should be properly curated and maintained within the FAO knowledge management system.
- FAO continues to seek resources and programmes to sustain the effective ongoing programmes and activities in fisheries and aquaculture in the region.
- FAO establishes a regional network of fishery and aquaculture country focal points to facilitate technical communication and sharing of best practices in the region, in line with the existing APFIC focal point mechanism.

MEMBER NATION STATEMENTS ON PROGRESS ON SUSTAINABILITY IN CAPTURE FISHERIES AND DEVELOPMENT OF RESPONSIBLE AQUACULTURE AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO FAO FOR THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

59. The Members of the Commission presented statements regarding national developments and priorities in the fishery and aquaculture sectors for the attention of the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference and which might be addressed under FAO RAP's regular or field programmes.

Responses of the Commission

60. The interventions highlighted the importance of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to APFIC Member Nations and that there was strong affirmation by Member Nations to their commitment to the international frameworks for fishery governance, such as the binding and voluntary international agreements.
61. APFIC Member Nations confirmed their commitment to sustainability, on meeting the SDGs and achieving responsible fisheries. They also described their national policies and legislation that are being put into place. These include national regulatory frameworks for addressing zoning, addressing the capacity of fleets, combating Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, ensuring that the small-scale fishery sector is adequately integrated in fisheries management as well as harmonizing with the blue economy concept, to ensure that their national commitments are achieved.
62. Several Members mentioned that the WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies presents challenges in terms of how to conduct appropriate assessments of fisheries and how to address their small-scale sector. Noting that this is linked with the recommendations under Agenda item 3 on strengthening capacity in stock assessment, the Commission requested FAO to assist Member Nations with technical advice, particularly on issues related to small-scale fisheries.
63. Member Nations also requested advice from FAO on how to operationalize the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to ensure effective management and sustainable use of marine resources and in the application of OECMs.
64. APFIC Member Nations emphasized the importance of sustainable aquaculture development as part of their policies for food security, livelihood and economic development, both in terms of exports and domestic food supply. They have set ambitious targets for the expansion of aquaculture, both for finfish as well as seaweed, with a focus on sustainability, environmental performance, reduction of the carbon footprint and increased economic value. They particularly highlighted the emerging role of mariculture development.

65. APFIC Member Nations emphasized the need for capacity building and guidance on:

- innovation and investment in the aquaculture sector;
- effective spatial planning measures and carrying-capacity determination;
- addressing environmental aspects (e.g. reducing fishmeal requirements and feed improvements; the use of extractive or low-input aquaculture; promoting the utilization of seaweed for aquaculture feed; offshore aquaculture development);
- ensuring that aquaculture adapts to climate change such as improving resilience of aquaculture systems, development of low carbon footprint aquaculture production and improved circularity in resource use;
- the integration of social and equity issues, particularly in areas where there are interactions with other resource users such as small-scale fishers and assisting small-scale aquaculture farmers to organize and improve their production systems.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS FROM REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

66. The Chairperson invited observers and regional organizations to take the floor to make short statements of their regional priorities and ongoing programmes.

67. In their interventions, regional organization partners recognized the long and productive cooperation with the Commission and with FAO headquarters and FAO RAP. The APFIC Secretary informed the Commission that FAO is committed to strengthening regional cooperation and appreciated the productive collaboration that exists between FAO RAP and the regional organizations.

Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific

68. NACA acknowledged the contribution of FAO RAP in implementing programmes that align with APFIC recommendations, as well as implementing actions, supporting capacity building, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, and that these actions have contributed to enhancing the sustainability and resilience of fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the Asia-Pacific region. NACA highlighted several activities in which it has collaborated with FAO RAP, particularly in the area of aquaculture transformation (under FAO's Blue Transformation agenda), including the FAO-NACA high level meeting and the White Paper (covered under Agenda item 4). NACA expressed gratitude for FAO RAP's continued collaboration and looked forward to active engagement with FAO RAP and Member Nations in the future.

INFOFISH

69. INFOFISH acknowledged the wealth of activities carried out by APFIC since its inception for the benefit of its members and also noted the challenges presented related to its future, particularly with regard to funding, and the need to have a specific budget to fund activities. INFOFISH highlighted the services they provide which are focused on trade and markets (highlighting the flagship INFOFISH World Tuna Trade Conference, and the Pacific Tuna Forum) and how they complement fisheries management.

The Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation

70. The BOBP-IGO congratulated APFIC for successfully organizing the Thirty-seventh Session, and congratulated APFIC on its work, noting the collaboration in the regional consultative forum meetings that were organized at previous APFIC sessions. The BOBP-IGO noted the ongoing collaboration with FAO RAP for the development of the stock assessment network, the development of national plans of action on IUU fishing, and other activities, such as the execution of the second phase of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) project and the related work on the ecosystem approach to fisheries management plans.

Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center

71. SEAFDEC noted the ongoing collaboration with FAO RAP and the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI), in the implementation of activities to promote sustainable fisheries and combat IUU fishing in Southeast Asia. These included the regional training workshop on stock assessment, the workshop on reporting on SDG 14 indicators and development of recommendations for management measures related to the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Other areas of collaboration which were highlighted include: capacity development on Monitoring Control and Surveillance, the FAO Port State Measures Agreement, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment and participation in the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture throughout 2022. SEAFDEC also noted its cooperation as part of the GEF international waters projects, such as the BOBLME and GoTFish projects.

THE 2023–2024 PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

72. In view of the uncertainty regarding the future activities of the Commission, the Secretariat did not present a proposed budget for activities during the 2023 to 2024 biennium.

73. Following the adoption of the “Resolution for suspension of the activities of the Commission”, there are no proposed activities, until the Director-General invites the Commission to convene the special session in 2028.

OTHER MATTERS

74. There were no other matters.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

75. Following the adoption of the “Resolution for suspension of the activities of the Commission”, and according to the guidance in information document APFIC/23/Inf-10 “Procedure for convening the special session”, the officers of the Commission remain unchanged during the period of suspension. This document is found in Appendix E.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

76. Following the adoption of the “Resolution for suspension of the activities of the Commission”, and according to the guidance provided in information document APFIC/23/Inf-10, the Director-General of FAO will invite the Member Nations of APFIC to convene a special session at FAO RAP to consider the future of the Commission.

77. The Chairperson of APFIC concluded by expressing his appreciation of the active participation of the delegates and declared the Thirty-seventh Session of APFIC closed.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

78. The Report of the Thirty-seventh Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission was adopted on 15 June 2023.

APPENDIX A: SESSION AGENDA

June 2023

APFIC/23/01 Rev1 **E**



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Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

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ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

Thirty-seventh session

Qingdao, China 13–15 June 2023

Agenda

TUESDAY, 13 JUNE	09.00
Opening	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Welcome remarks by FAO’s Representative to China – Welcome and introductory remarks by the APFIC Chairperson, Yellow Sea Fishery Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Fishery Science – Introductory remarks by a representative of the Bureau of Fisheries, China – Inaugural speech by a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, China 	
Adoption of the agenda and arrangements for the session	
<i>APFIC/23/01 (Rev1), APFIC/23/Inf-01 (Procedures for hybrid/virtual sessions)</i>	
Agenda item 1: Intersessional activities of APFIC	
<i>APFIC/23/02, APFIC/23/Inf-04</i>	
Agenda item 2: Report of the 78th Executive Committee meeting	
<i>APFIC/23/03; APFIC/23/Inf-05 (Report of the 78th Executive Committee); APFIC/23/Inf-04 (Report of the 36th session of APFIC)</i>	
TUESDAY, 13 JUNE	13.00
Agenda item 3: Improving understanding on the status of regional stocks and outcomes of capacity building for regional assessments	
<i>APFIC/23/04 (Rev1), APFIC/23/Inf-06 (The status of marine fishery stock assessments in the Asian region and the potential for a network of practitioners – draft)</i>	

Agenda item 4: Outcomes of the FAO-NACA High Level Meeting on Innovation and Investments for Sustainable Aquaculture

APFIC/23/05, APFIC/23/Inf-07 (White Paper)

WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE

09.00

Agenda item 5: The future of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission: Findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC

APFIC/23/06 (Rev1); APFIC/23/Inf 08 (Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC); APFIC/23/Inf-09 (Financial Estimate); APFIC/23/Inf-10 (Procedure for Convening the Special Session); APFIC/23/Inf-11 (APFIC Agreement)

WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE

13.00

Agenda item 6: Member Nation statements on progress on sustainability in capture fisheries and development of responsible aquaculture and recommendations to FAO for the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference

Agenda item 7: APFIC's programme of work in the coming biennium

Agenda item 8: Other matters

Agenda item 9: Election of officers

Agenda item 10: Date and place of the Thirty-eighth Session

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE

09.00

Report available to delegates

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE

14.00

Adoption of the report

Closing of the session

Appendix B: List of participants

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ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

Thirty-seventh session

Qingdao, China 13–15 June 2023

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Opening	Adoption of the agenda and arrangements for the session (working paper)	APFIC/23/01
	<i>Protocols for the conduct of virtual or hybrid events of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission requiring decisions</i>	<i>APFIC/23/Inf-01</i>
	<i>List of documents</i>	<i>APFIC/23/Inf-02</i>
	<i>List of participants</i>	<i>APFIC/23/Inf-03</i>
Item 1:	Intersessional activities and work under FAO programmes of relevance to the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (working paper)	APFIC/23/02
	<i>Report of the Thirty-sixth Session of APFIC</i>	<i>APFIC/23/Inf-04</i>
Item 2:	Report of the Seventy-eighth Meeting of the Executive Committee (working paper)	APFIC/23/03
	<i>Report of the Seventy-eighth Meeting of the Executive Committee</i>	<i>APFIC/23/Inf-05</i>
Item 3:	Improving understanding on the status of regional stocks and outcomes of capacity building for regional assessments (working paper)	APFIC/23/04 Rev1
	<i>The status of marine fishery stock assessments in the Asian region and the potential for a network of practitioners (draft)</i>	<i>APFIC/23/Inf-06</i>
Item 4:	Aquaculture transformation in Asia and the Pacific region (working paper)	APFIC/23/05
	<i>Aquaculture transformation. Innovation and investment for sustainable intensification and expansion of aquaculture in Asia and the Pacific region</i>	<i>APFIC/23/Inf-07</i>

Item 5: The future of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission: findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of APFIC **APFIC/23/06 Rev1**

Report of the First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of the APFIC – Virtual meeting, 18–19 August 2021 and Report of the Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Future of the APFIC – Virtual meeting, 24–25 February 2022 APFIC/23/Inf-08

Financial implications to Member Nations of funding the work programme activities of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission APFIC/23/Inf-09

Procedures for the convening of a Special Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission following a period of suspension APFIC/23/Inf-10

APFIC Agreement APFIC/23/Inf-11

APPENDIX D: RESOLUTION FOR SUSPENSION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION

CONSIDERING that the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) was originally established as the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council (IPFC) under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, through a Resolution approved by the FAO Conference, at its fourth session in 1948, with the purpose of “promoting the full and proper utilization of living aquatic resources by the development and management of fishing and culture operations and by the development of related processing and marketing activities in conformity with the objectives of its Members”;

NOTING that the Agreement of APFIC came into force on 9 November 1948, upon acceptance by sixteen Member Nations of the Organization, and that at present 21 Member Nations have deposited instruments of acceptance of the Agreement, thus becoming Members of the Commission;

RECALLING the recommendation of the Thirty-sixth Session of the Commission that the future of APFIC should be assessed by its Members;

CONSCIOUS of the continuing need to enhance the efficiency of APFIC and BEING AWARE OF the lack of an autonomous budget or other dedicated voluntary contributions to conduct activities under a work programme to be directed by the Commission and to inform its deliberations and decision-making;

RECOGNIZING that the Commission has assiduously pursued and fulfilled the objectives for which it was established in 1948;

EXPRESSING ITS APPRECIATION for the work accomplished over the years by the Commission, its Members and FAO;

RECOGNIZING that the APFIC area and, functions and responsibilities, as set out in the APFIC Agreement, overlap the area of competence of two Regional Fishery Management Organizations (IOTC and WCPFC), two inter-governmental Regional Fishery Bodies competent in fisheries in Southeast and South Asia (SEAFDEC, BOBP-IGO), one intergovernmental network competent in Aquaculture in Asia (NACA) and intergovernmental organizations related to fishery trade in Asia (INFOFISH), as well as a wide range of fora, programmes, specialized meetings and networks dealing exclusively with fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia and Pacific region;

DECIDES that the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission shall suspend all its activities and operations for a period of 5 years, following which the Members will convene a Special Session to again consider the future of APFIC;

UNDERScores that the suspension of the activities should not be construed as a reduction in the commitment of APFIC Members and FAO to ensure efficient implementation of responsible fisheries and aquaculture in the APFIC area and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal targets in relation to these sub-sectors.

APPENDIX E: PROCEDURES FOR THE CONVENING OF A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF SUSPENSION

Following the APFIC decision to suspend the activity of the Commission for a period of five years, the procedure for the convening of special session of the Commission, following the completion of the suspension period, shall be as follows:

RECONVENING OF THE COMMISSION

- i. According to the draft resolution, in the case of suspension of the activity of the Commission, the Members of the Commission will agree to convene a Special Session after a period of 5 years [APFIC Rules of Procedure Rule II.2].
- ii. The purpose of the Special Session [APFIC Rules of Procedure Rule III.4] will be to discuss the next steps for the Commission, whether that is to be (i) a further period of suspension or (ii) reactivation and commencement of the process of determining a sustainable financing mechanism.
- iii. The procedure for convening the 'Special Session' following the completion of the suspension period is that an invitation on behalf of the Director-General is circulated to members, signed by ADG RAP. The letter invites the APFIC members to participate in a Special Session of the Commission following the period of suspension.

VENUE OF THE SPECIAL SESSION

- i. The 'Special Session' will be held at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand. This means there is no obligation or cost for hosting the Special Session by the incumbent Chair country.
- ii. Should the Commission decide to convene a Regular Session, the next Regular Session would also be held at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand.

OFFICERS

- i. The chair and vice-chair of the commission will remain as the incumbent countries during the period of suspension. These are currently China (Chair) and Thailand (Vice-chair) of the Commission [APFIC Agreement Article II.3].
- ii. China, as incumbent will act as Chair of the Special Session, recalling that it is not a Regular Session. This facilitates the process of convening the Special Session as there would be no need for the election of officers.
- iii. At the Special Session, the Commission would not elect officers for the next Regular Session. Officers would be elected at the beginning of the next Regular Session, should the members agree to reconvene the Commission.

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