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COUNCIL

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REPORT OF THE EIGHTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL MATTERS (CCLM)

Rome, 25 October 2007

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Eighty-second Session of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) was held on 25 October 2007. The Session was chaired by Mr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez (Philippines). The following Members of the Committee were represented:

Czech Republic, Gabon, Guatemala, Philippines, Syrian Arab Republic and United States of America.

II. REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF LEGAL EXPERTS ON THE PROCESS FOR A CHANGE IN THE NATURE OF A STATUTORY BODY UNDER ARTICLE XIV OF THE FAO CONSTITUTION INTO A BODY OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF FAO (POSSIBLE CHANGE IN STATUS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION)

2. The CCLM took note of the report of the Informal Group of Legal Experts on the Process for a change in the nature of a statutory body under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution into a body outside the framework of FAO (Possible change in status of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission) and decided to forward it to the Council as an Annex to this Report.

3. The CCLM noted that while not all legal issues involved had been thoroughly examined, no further legal analysis on the procedure to be followed for the removal of IOTC from FAO and its consequences would be productive at this stage, since fundamental decisions on issues of principle had to be taken by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and its Members.

4. The CCLM also noted that a number of other issues concerning the relationship between FAO and bodies established under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution needed to be examined. In this connection, the CCLM noted that those issues were of a complex nature, that they could not be seen in isolation from extensive past practice of the Organization and decisions of the Governing Bodies and that the matter had also been raised in the context of the Independent External Evaluation (IEE). The CCLM noted that this could be the subject of future review in the light of all pertinent circumstances.

III. OTHER MATTERS

5. The CCLM noted that the issue of access by Members to reports of the Inspector-General was still pending. The CCLM recommended that the Council may wish to provide guidance on the matter taking into account related recommendations contained in the report of the IEE.

ANNEX

COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL MATTERS
Eighty-second Session
Rome, 25 October 2007
REPORT OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF LEGAL EXPERTS ON THE PROCESS FOR A CHANGE IN THE NATURE OF A STATUTORY BODY UNDER ARTICLE XIV OF THE FAO CONSTITUTION INTO A BODY OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF FAO (POSSIBLE CHANGE IN STATUS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION) Rome, 23-24 October 2007

1. A meeting of the Informal Group of Legal Experts on the process of a change in the nature of a statutory body under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution into a body outside the framework of FAO (Possible change in the status of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission), hereinafter referred to as the Informal Group, was held in Rome on 23 and 24 October.
2. The list of participants is given in Appendix II hereto.
3. The Informal Group elected Mr. M. K. Rao (India) as Chairperson.
4. The Informal Group was convened in accordance with a decision of the Council of FAO at its Hundred and Thirty-second Session held in Rome from 18 to 22 June 2007. The Council examined the report of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters which, at its Eighty-first Session in April 2007 had examined a document entitled "*process for a change in the nature of a statutory body of FAO established under Article XIV of the Constitution into a body outside the framework of FAO (change in status of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission)*". The CCLM could not reach a conclusion on options under discussion. The Council endorsed the conclusions of the CCLM that the situation which had arisen was complex and unprecedented and, therefore, that it was essential to make a complete review of the matter, keeping in mind all the implications of any possible option, including the fact that any decision in that respect would set a precedent in international law impacting upon other organizations of the United Nations System. The Council endorsed the CCLM request that an informal group of legal experts of all the IOTC Members, CCLM Members, as well as representatives of relevant organizations of the United Nations System as appropriate, should examine the matter. The CCLM would subsequently review the work of the informal group and provide its advice to the Council.

5. The Council noted the concerns voiced during the debates regarding the efficiency and the effectiveness of IOTC which were the stated reasons for the process under way. The Council concluded that such concerns and reasons should be addressed, as a matter of priority, through discussions between the FAO Secretariat and concerned IOTC Members, and that the Secretariat would report on the outcome of such discussions to the CCLM and any other appropriate body.

6. The Informal Group had before it various documents and reports, including document CCLM/81/2, the report of the Eighty-first Session of the CCLM, the Report of the Hundred and Thirty-second Session of the Council, document CL132/LIM/4 providing information on developments subsequent to the CCLM session, including on the deliberations of the Eleventh Session of IOTC held in May 2007 in Mauritius.

7. The Group of 77 and China submitted to the Meeting a position paper (Appendix I forming an integral part of this Report), according to which they hold their view that if the IOTC Members could reach consensus on the withdrawal of IOTC from FAO, the solution proposed below by FAO is the only legally correct option in solving the issue of delinkage. They reiterated that the withdrawal procedure shall be in conformity with FAO Constitution and shall give each Member of IOTC the right to determine its course of action through national ratification procedures.

8. The Informal Group discussed the document prepared by the FAO Secretariat entitled "*Supplementary Observations on the proposals for a change in the nature of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission*".

9. The FAO Secretariat reiterated its legal advice on the procedure for the removal of IOTC from the framework of FAO involving the convening of a conference of plenipotentiaries for the adoption of a new agreement, the implementation of a simultaneous process of withdrawal and termination of the existing agreement and acceptance of a new agreement, as well as the implementation by FAO of such transitional arrangements as required if the Members so wished. While the process could take some time, inconveniences would be minimized by the operation of IOTC by FAO during the interim period and the implementation of transitional measures. If there was indeed consensus as to the removal of IOTC from the framework of FAO there was no reason to consider that the process of entry into force of the new agreement would be a lengthy one.

10. In presenting its legal advice, the FAO Secretariat recalled that the IOTC Agreement was not a "*stand alone*" agreement. It had been concluded by the Council of FAO and placed by the Members within the framework of FAO, an organization of the United Nations System. It was operated under that framework and through FAO. The change in status of the IOTC concerned FAO as a whole and had to be handled as the establishment of a new entity. No procedure had been foreseen, either in the constituent agreement or in the Basic Texts to handle the situation, and the matter could concern potentially other agreements not only within FAO, but also within other organizations of the System. It was essential that the matter be addressed in a proper legal manner, also in order to ensure clarity in the future situation of IOTC in the interest of all concerned parties. Through the proposed procedure every sovereign Member of IOTC, irrespective of its status, would be able to make a determination as to the course of action that it wished to take and this would be materialized through an instrument of withdrawal of the existing agreement and acceptance of the new one. Furthermore, the FAO Secretariat stressed that this procedure was based exactly on the same principles as were followed when agreements outside FAO were brought within the framework of FAO under Article XIV of its Constitution.

11. The FAO Secretariat also recalled that the amendment procedure of Article XX of the IOTC Agreement had an inherent limitation as it could only concern amendments to an agreement within the framework of FAO and retaining that character, and an amendment procedure designed to allow for the modification of an agreement within FAO could not be used to establish a new agreement outside the framework of FAO and set up a distinct legal entity. This was the use of a procedure for a purpose other than that for which it was designed.

12. Subsidiarily, the FAO Secretariat pointed out that it was proposed to follow a simplified amendment procedure applicable to routine, technical amendments not involving new obligations. It recalled, in this connection, that the criteria formulated by its Governing Bodies for determining whether or not amendments involved new obligations had been applied out of context, since they were never formulated for a situation as the one at hand. The proposed amendments seemed to involve indeed new obligations, as confirmed, *inter alia*, by the need for internal ratification procedures that some countries have to follow and which defeated the very purpose of the process under way.

13. The legal experts of the European Community stated that the following option could be considered:

14. Under this option the IOTC was free to amend the IOTC Agreement under Article XX (4) of that Agreement in order to move the organization out of the FAO framework. This view emphasized the sovereign right of Contracting Parties to an international agreement to interpret, apply and amend the agreement within the limits laid down therein. Therefore, it is the sole right of the Contracting Parties to IOTC to interpret the meaning of Article XX of the IOTC Convention and in particular of the notion "*amendments not involving new obligations*". There is nothing in the IOTC Agreement or in the FAO Constitution or Rules which would impair the IOTC members' rights to amend the IOTC Agreement under Article XX (4) in order to delink the IOTC from FAO considering that such amendment does not involve new obligations.

15. Furthermore, no legal texts contain provisions which limit the use of the simplified amendment procedure to routine, technical amendments. Finally, ratification requirements under domestic law have no bearing on the interpretation of provisions of the IOTC Agreement.

16. The fact that IOTC has administrative links with FAO does not prevent the change of status through an amendment of the IOTC Agreement. However, the existence of those links necessitates the involvement of FAO in the process, in particular through the conclusion of an agreement between FAO and IOTC in which transitional administrative arrangements in relation to the change of status are made.

17. The advantage of this procedure is that no new agreement has to be concluded nor a new legal body to be established. Therefore, it avoids a lengthy negotiating and ratification procedure with grave risks for the effective conservation of tuna species in the Indian Ocean.

18. The Group of 77 and China considered that the above, presented from paragraphs 14 to 17, did not constitute a valid option.

19. The Informal Group took note of the position paper of the Group of 77 and China States Members of IOTC declaring, *inter alia*, their commitment to address actively the issue of the efficiency and effectiveness of IOTC within the framework of FAO. The Informal Group also noted that many participants had made repeated statements that this should be done as a matter of urgency. The Informal Group noted that the FAO Secretariat will be holding discussions with all concerned IOTC Members in order to devise an appropriate formula for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of IOTC for consideration by the IOTC at its forthcoming session.

Appendix I**Informal Group of Legal Experts on change in the nature of a statutory body under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution into a body outside the framework of FAO (Possible change in the status of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission)****Position of the G-77 and China States Members of IOTC**

1. The Group of 77 and China, Rome Chapter (G-77) Members of IOTC support the proposal of the FAO secretariat to the 81st Session of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters regarding the process for a change in the status of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission should the Members wish that IOTC be removed from the framework of FAO. They note that there is clearly no consensus as to whether IOTC should be removed from the framework of FAO.
2. For the G-77 Members of IOTC the change in the nature of IOTC as a statutory body of FAO into a body outside FAO cannot be treated as a mere amendment to the existing IOTC Agreement. It should involve the convening of a conference of plenipotentiaries for the adoption of a new IOTC agreement; the implementation of a concomitant process of withdrawal and termination of the existing agreement and, more importantly, the entry into force of the new agreement through the deposit of instruments to that effect by each Member. The G-77 Members of IOTC emphasize that a process along such lines safeguards the right of each sovereign State, irrespective with its size, status, stage of development or nature, as coastal or non coastal State, and in accordance with the principle of sovereign equality of the United Nations, to make a determination as to the course of action that it wishes to take. They note that under this scheme FAO could implement such transitional arrangements as required thus allowing IOTC to operate smoothly during the interim period.
3. The G-77 Members of IOTC also hold the view that a qualification of the proposed amendments as not involving new obligations is erroneous and not in accordance with the criteria established by the Governing Bodies of FAO, which are being used out of context, as confirmed by additional research. They hold the view that obligations of the legal personality of FAO will have to be borne by the members. The G-77 Members of IOTC note, furthermore, that a number of Members have indicated that the proposed amendments need to be referred for internal ratification procedures which are incompatible with the process of adoption of amendments not involving new obligations.
4. **In conclusion, the G-77 Members of IOTC support the approach which gives each Member the right to determine its course of action through national termination and ratification procedures. This is a legally correct approach, based on applicable principles of international law, past practice of FAO and is consistent with the status of IOTC as a statutory body of FAO. It is furthermore a solution that will avoid setting a negative precedent for the United Nations System.**
5. The G-77 Members of IOTC are mindful that the meeting of the Informal Group deals with legal issues only regarding the process for the change in nature of IOTC. They cannot lose sight of the policy implications of the process under way and, in this context, wish to emphasize three points.

- 5.1. The Council at its session of June 2007 took note of the concerns voiced regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of IOTC which were the stated reasons for the process under way. The Council concluded that such concerns and reasons should be addressed through discussions between the FAO Secretariat and concerned IOTC Members, and that the Secretariat would report on the outcome of such discussions to the CCLM and any other appropriate body. The G-77 Members of IOTC note that because of constraints associated with this particular period of a Conference year, it has not been possible to hold such discussions, **but urge the Secretariat and all IOTC Members concerned to initiate them as soon as possible**. They note that informal arrangements within IOTC were developed a few years ago and believe that there might be room for improvement of such arrangements.
- 5.2. The G-77 Members of IOTC view with concern a proposal which, although presented as a means of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of IOTC, would in fact place the high value Indian Ocean Tuna stock under the direct control of a limited number of Members carrying out large-scale operations in the region. They note that a commission outside the United Nations System would not offer the same guarantees of sovereign equality of all Members, independence, impartiality, objectivity and multilateralism.
- 5.3. The G-77 Members of IOTC consider that their participation in the meeting of the Informal Group, as well as their proposals regarding the process to be followed, are without any prejudice to their position of principle that they do not wish IOTC to be removed from the framework of FAO and that any concerns regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of IOTC must be addressed under its current status.

Appendix II**INFORMAL MEETING OF LEGAL EXPERTS (IOTC)
ROME, 23 -24 OCTOBER 2007****LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****AUSTRALIA**

Judy Barfield
Counsellor Agriculture
Alternate Permanent Representative
to FAO
Embassy of Australia
Via Antonio Bosio, 5
00161 Rome

Phone: 06 852 723 76
Fax: 06 852 723 46
E-mail: judy.barfield@dfat.gov.au

CHINA/CHINE

Ms Liling Zhao
Senior Consultant
Division of Distant Water Fisheries
Bureau of Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture
No. 11 Nongzhanguan Nanli
Beijing 100026
CHINA

Phone: + 86 10 641 929 66
Fax: + 86 10 641 929 51
E-Mail: bofdwf@agri.gov.cn

Mr Yang Li
Deputy Division Director
Department of Treaty and Law
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
No. 2, Chaoyangmen Nan Av.
Beijing 100701
CHINA

Phone: + 86 10 659 632 68
Fax: + 86 10 659 632 76
Email: yang_li@mfa.gov.cn

Ms Zhang Ming
Second Secretary
Permanent Representation of the
People's Republic of China to FAO
Via degli Urali, 12
00144 Rome

Phone: 06 591 931 1
Fax: 06 591 931 30
E-Mail: chinamission@chinamission.it

Mr Pang Yuliang
Third Secretary
Permanent Representation of the
People's Republic of China to FAO
Via degli Urali, 12
00144 Rome

Phone: 06 591 931 1
Fax: 06 591 931 30
E-Mail: chinamission@chinamission.it

Qian Yu
Permanent Representation of the
People's Republic of China to FAO
Via degli Urali, 12
00144 Rome

Phone: 06 591 931 1
Fax: 06 591 931 30
E-Mail: chinamission@chinamission.it

COMOROS/COMORES

M Hassani Ahamada Soilihi
 Conseiller juridique
 Ministère de l'agriculture, de la pêche et
 de l'environnement
 B.P. 2027
 Moroni
 COMORES

Phone: + 269 346 321
 E-Mail: hassani.ahamadas@gmail.com

Mr Friedrich Wieland
 Head of Unit
 Legal Issues
 European Commission
 Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime
 Affairs, Office J-99 06/11
 Rue Joseph II
 Bruxelles B-1049
 BELGIUM

Phone: + 32 2 296 32 05
 Fax: + 32 2 295 19 42
 E-mail : friedrich.wieland@ec.europa.eu

CZECH REPUBLIC

Dr Vladimír Balaš
 Partner, Rowan Legal
 v Jámě , 1
 CZ-110 00 Prague 1
 CZECH REPUBLIC

Phone: +420 224 216 212
 Fax: +420 224 215 823
 E-Mail: balas@rowanlegal.com

Mrs Daniela Moyzesová
 Counsellor
 Embassy of the Czech Republic
 Via dei Gracchi, 322
 00192 Rome

Phone: 06 360957/36095758-9 3609571
 Fax: 06 3244466

E-Mail: rome@embassy.mzv.cz

ERITREA

Mr Tewolde Woldemikael
 Director-General of Fisheries Resources
 Development Department
 Ministry of Fisheries
 PO Box 27
 Massawa
 ERITREA

Phone: + 291 712 614
 E-mail: tsofanit@yahoo.com

Mr Yohannes Tensue
 First Secretary
 Embassy of Eritrea
 Via Boncompagni, 16 - 3rd Floor
 00187 Rome

Phone: 06 427 412 93
 Fax: 06 420 86 806
 E-mail: segreteria@embassyoferitrea.it

**EUROPEAN COMMUNITY /
COMMUNAUTÉ EUROPÉENNE**

Mr Thomas van Rijn
 Directeur
 Conseiller juridique principal
 Service Juridique
 Commission européenne
 BERL 04/23
 Brussels B-1049
 BELGIUM

Phone: + 32 2 295 1818
 Fax: + 32 2 295 24 85
 Email: thomas.van-rijn@ec.europa.eu

FRANCE

Mr Frédéric Lepez
 Juriste auprès de la sous-direction du droit de la
 mer, des pêches et de l'Antarctique à la
 direction des affaires juridiques du ministère
 des affaires étrangères et européennes
 57, Bld. des Invalides
 75700 Paris 07
 FRANCE

Phone : +33 1 536 936 57
 Fax : +33 1 536 936 76
 E-mail: frederic.lepez@diplomatie.gouv.fr

Mr Michel Trinquier
Sous-directeur du droit de la mer, des pêches et
de l'Antarctique à la direction des affaires
juridiques du ministère des affaires étrangères
et européenne
57, Bld. des Invalides
75700 Paris 07
FRANCE

Phone: +33 1 536 936 53
Fax: +33 1 536 936 76
E-mail: michel.trinquier@diplomatie.gouv.fr

GABON

Son Excellence
Monsieur Noël Baïot
Ambassadeur
Ambassade de la République gabonaise
Via San Marino, 36-36A
00198 Rome

Phone: 06 85358970
Fax: 06 8417278
E-mail: ambassadedugabon1@interfree.it

M Louis Stanislas Charicauth
Conseiller
Ambassade de la République gabonaise
Via San Marino, 36-36A
00198 Rome

Phone: 06 85358970
Fax: 06 8417278
E-mail: ambassadedugabon1@interfree.it

Mme Elise Nang
Conseiller
Ambassade de la République gabonaise
Via San Marino, 36-36A
00198 Rome

Phone: 06 85358970
Fax: 06 841727 8
E-mail: ambassadedugabon1@interfree.it

GUATEMALA

Sr Francisco Bonifax
Embajador
Representante Permanente ante los
organismos de Naciones Unidas con
sede en Roma
Embajada de Guatemala
Via dei Colli della Farnesina, 129
00194 Roma

Phone: 06 3629 9091
E-Mail: embaguante.italia@tin.it

GUINÉE/GUINEA

Mr. Bangaly Diakhaby
Juriste, Conseiller juridique
Ministère de l'agriculture, de l'élevage,
de l'environnement, des eaux et forêts
BP 576
Conakry
GUINÉE

Phone: + 224 304 113 61
Mobile: + 224 646 790 51

INDIA/INDE

Mr M. Koteswara Rao
Senior Legal Officer, Legal & Treaties Division
Ministry of External Affairs, Government
of India
ISIL Bdg. 9, Bhagwan Dass Road,
New Delhi – 110 001
INDIA

Phone: +91 11 23382109
Fax: +91 11 23389724
Mobile: +91 9891594306
E-Mail: mkrao_prime@yahoo.com

INDONESIA

Ms Siti Mauludiah
 First Secretary
 Alternate Permanent Representative
 to FAO
 Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
 Via Campania 55
 00187 Rome

Phone: 06 42009150 06 4200911
 Fax: 06 4880280 48904910
 E-Mail: indorom@uni.net

**IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)/
REPUBLICUE ISLAMIQUE D'IRAN**

Mr Mehdi Nasrollahzadeh Shirazi
 Deputy Director-General
 Public Relations & International Relations
 Iran Fisheries Organization
 Ministry of Jihad - e – Keshavarzi
 250, Fatemi Avenue
 Teheran IRAN

E-Mail: mnshirazi@gmail.com

Mr Ali Asghar Mojahedi
 Director-General for fisheries management
 Ministry of Jihad - e – Keshavarzi
 250, Fatemi Avenue
 Teheran
 IRAN

E-mail: a_mojahedi@hotmail.com

JAPAN/JAPON

Mr Tetsuya Kawashima
 First Secretary
 Alternate Representative to FAO
 Embassy of Japan
 Via Quintino Sella, 60
 00187 Rome

Phone: 06 48799411
 Fax: 06 4885109
 E-Mail: tetsuya.kawashima@mofa.go.jp

KENYA

Mr Mathias Wafula
 Deputy Director of Fisheries
 Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries
 Development
 P.O. Box 58187
 Nairobi
 KENYA

Email: mwafula@hotmail.com

Ms Jacinta M. Ngwiri
 Alternate Representative
 Ministry of Agriculture
 Kenya Embassy
 Via Archimede, 164
 00197 Rome

Phone: 06 8082714
 Fax: 06 8082707
 E-Mail: kenroma@rdn.it

Ms Ann, B. Nyikuli
 Permanent Representative
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Via Archimede, 164
 00197 Rome

Phone: 06 8082714
 Fax: 06 8082707
 E-Mail: kenroma@rdn.it

MADAGASCAR

M Monja
 Conseiller
 Ambassade de la République de Madagascar
 Via Riccardo Zandonai, 84/A
 00194 Rome

Phone: 06 36300183 36307797
 Fax: 06 3294306
 E-Mail: ambamad@hotmail.com

MALAYSIA/MALAISIE

Mr Mohd Ghazali Mohamad Taib Bin
 Legal Advisor
 Fisheries Department
 Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based
 Industry
 Precint 4, 4G2, Wisma Tani
 62628 Putrojaya
 MALAYSIA
 Phone: 03 88704000
 Fax: 03 88892460
 E-Mail: kcu01@dof.gov.my

Mr Johari Ramli
 Agricultural Attaché
 Embassy of Malaysia
 Via Nomentana, 297
 00162 Rome
 Phone: 06 8415808
 Fax: 06 8555040
 E-Mail: mw.rome@embassymalaysia.it

MAURITIUS/MAURICE

Mr Shaheed Bhaukaurally
 Assistant Solicitor General
 5th floor, R. Seeneevassen Bldg.
 Jules Koenig Street
 Port Louis
 MAURITIUS
 Phone: + 230 203 475 0
 Fax: + 230 212 674 2
 E-Mail: sbhaukaurally@mail.gov.mu

Mr Denis Cangy
 Consul of the Republic of Mauritius
 and Alternate Permanent Representative to
 FAO
 Via G.B. Morgagni, 6-a
 00161 Rome
 Phone: 06 44245652
 Fax: 06 44245659
 E-mail: consmaur@libero.ir

OMAN

H E Nasser Al Harthi
 Ambassador to Italy
 Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman
 Via della Camilluccia, 625
 00135 Rome
 Phone: 06 36300545 36300517
 Fax: 06 3296802
 E-Mail: embassyoman@virgilio.it

Mr Rasmi Mahmoud
 Technical Advisor
 Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman
 Via della Camilluccia, 625
 00135 Rome
 Phone: 06 36300545 36300517
 Fax: 06 3296802
 E-Mail: rasmimahmoud@gmail.com

PHILIPPINES:

Emmanuel R. Fernandez, Ph.D.
 Second Secretary and Consul
 Embassy of the Philippines
 Viale delle Medaglie d'Oro, 112-114
 00136 Rome
 Phone: 06-39746621
 Fax: 06-39740872
 E-Mail: erfernandez8888@yahoo.com

SEYCHELLES

Mr Andre Clifford
 Director, Legal Affairs
 Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources
 and Transport, c/o Transport Division
 3rd Fl., International Conference Centre
 Victoria, Mahe
 SEYCHELLES
 Phone: +248 611 100
 Fax: +248 225 414
 Email: clifford_andre@yahoo.co.uk

SRI LANKA

Mrs Hasanthi Dissanayake
Minister Counsellor and Alternate Permanent
Representative of Sri Lanka to UN Agencies
in Rome
Embassy and Permanent
Representation of Sri Lanka
Via Adige 2
00198 Rome
Phone: 06 855 45 60
Fax: 06 842 41670
E-Mail: saranyahu@hotmail.com

Mr H.S.G.Fernando
Director-General (Development)
Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
Maligawatta
Colombo 10
SRI LANKA
Phone: +94 11 232 966 6
Fax: +94 11 247 219 2
E-Mail: hsgfernando@fisheries.gov.lk

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Ms Souha Jamali
Minister Plenipotentiary
Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic
Piazza dell'Ara Coeli, 1
00186 Rome
Phone: 06-6749801
Fax: 06-6794989
E-Mail: uffstampasyem@hotmail.it

SUDAN

Mr Abdul Majeed MOHAMED
Director of Natural Fisheries
Marine and Riverine Fisheries of Sudan
Ministry of Animal Resources
and Fisheries
PO BOX 293
Khartoum
SUDAN
Phone: + 249 912 82 183
Fax: +249 834 761 28
E-Mail: Majeedbeder@hotmail.com

TANZANIA/TANZANIE

Ms Janet Samuel Uronu
Ag Assistant Director of Fisheries
Ministry for Natural Resources and Tourism
PO Box 2462
Dar Es Salaam
TANZANIA
Phone: +255 22 212 293 0
Fax: +255 22 211 035 2
E-Mail: fisheries@accesstanzania.com
janeturonu@yahoo.co.uk

Mr Meinrad Rweyemamu Tindatumire
Senior State Attorney
Ministry for Natural Resources and Tourism
PO Box 9372
Dar Es Salaam
TANZANIA
Phone: +255 22 2122930
Fax: +255 22 2110352
E-Mail: fisheries@accesstanzania.com
tindatumire@yahoo.co.uk

THAILAND/THAÏLANDE

Mrs Pongthong Onoora
Chief, International Law Group
Fisheries Foreign Affairs Division
Department of Fisheries
Kasetsart University Campus
Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900
THAILAND
Phone: +662 5797941 ext.1101
Fax: +662 579 7941
E-mail: poungtho@fisheries.go.th

Ms Oracha Tanakorn
Minister-Counsellor
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Treaty Division
Department of Treaties and Legal Affairs
443 Sri Ayudhaya Road
Bangkok 10400
THAILAND
E-mail: plemfa@hotmail.com

Mr Thanachai Wachiraworakam
 Legal Affairs Division
 Department of Treaties and Legal Affairs
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 443 Sri Ayudhaya Road
 Bangkok 10400
 THAILAND

E-mail: thanachaiw@gmail.com

Mr Smith Thummachua
 Fishery Biologist, and Chief
 Overseas Fisheries Management and Economic
 Cooperation Group, Fisheries Foreign Affairs
 Division, Department of Fisheries
 Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
 Kaset Klang, Phaholyotin Rd.
 Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900
 THAILAND

Phone: +660 579 6216

Fax: +662 579 7947

E-Mail: thuma98105@yahoo.com

USA

Mr. David Hegwood
 Agricultural Minister Counsellor
 United States Mission to the United
 Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture
 Alternate Permanent Representative
 via Vittorio Veneto, 119/A
 00187 Rome

Phone: 06 467 43507

Fax: 06 467 43520

E-Mail: USUNRome@State.Gov

Specialized Agencies:

WHO

Mr Gianluca Burci
 Legal Counsel
 World Health Organization
 20, avenue Appia
 1211 Geneva 27
 SWITZERLAND

Phone: +41 22 792189814

Fax: +41 22 7914158

E-Mail: burcig@who.int

ILO

Mr Drazen Petrovic
 Office of the Legal Adviser
 International Labour Office
 4, route des Morillons
 CH-1211 Geneva 22
 SWITZERLAND

Phone: +41 22 7997905

Fax: +41 22 7998570

Email: petrovic@ilo.org

WIPO

Ms Christine Castro Hublin
 Head of Legal and Constitutional Law Section
 World Intellectual Property Organization 34
 Chemin des Colombettes
 CH-1211 Geneva 20
 SWITZERLAND

Phone: +41 22 338 9111

E-mail: christine.hublin@wipo.int