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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

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SAFETY AT SEA IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

1. This document provides a summary of recent FAO activities that support the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (The Code) with regard to safety at sea in the fisheries sector, in particular:

- an Expert Consultation on Best Practices for Safety at Sea in the Fisheries Sector, which was held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy from 10 to 13 November 2008;
- the FAO/NIOSH International Study on Fishing Management Regimes and their impacts on Fishing Safety;
- the Global safety at sea programme for small-scale fisheries in developing countries (GCP/GLO/200/MUL); and
- the on-going cooperation between IMO, ILO and FAO on the subject of fishermen's safety.

2. Fishing is considered to be the world's most dangerous occupation, with more than 24000 casualties per year¹. The issue of the safety in the fisheries sector was raised at COFI 27² where a large number of Members expressed concern about the safety at sea for fishing vessels, especially small-scale fishing vessels. FAO was urged to continue collaboration with IMO and it was suggested that FAO should develop guidelines on best practices for safety at sea and that COFI should consider developing an IPOA on the subject.

¹ ILO.1999. Tripartite Meeting on Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry, Geneva, 13-17 December 1999.

² Paragraph 82 of the report of the Twenty-seventh session of COFI.

Expert Consultation on Best Practices for Safety at Sea in the Fisheries Sector

3. The Expert Consultation on Best Practices for Safety at Sea in the Fisheries Sector was held at FAO headquarters, Rome, from 10 to 13 November 2008. The Expert Consultation considered that the principal objective of the Best Practice Guidelines should be the improved safety and health of those working in the fisheries sector through the development of national strategies and that this objective could be achieved through the use of a set of readily understood guidelines. It was agreed that the Guidelines should emphasise a holistic approach to ensure that all factors having an influence on safety should be comprehensively covered, and that awareness-raising of safety issues should be accorded a high priority. The Expert Consultation deliberated on a broad range of safety and health issues and provided a detailed outline of the Guidelines' contents.

4. It was agreed that success in achieving the objectives of national strategies aimed at improved safety and health could also result ultimately in a higher level of professionalism within the fisheries sector, noting that women and men should have decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. It was acknowledged that safe and health working practices contribute positively to productivity and economic growth.

Identification of appropriate next steps and recommendations

5. The Expert Consultation, noting the recommendation contained in the report of COFI 27 that "FAO should develop guidelines on best practices for safety at sea", recommended that the FAO Secretariat should now proceed with the development of the Guidelines on the basis of the outline and general guidance developed by the Expert Consultation.

6. The Expert Consultation noted with interest the quality of the findings of recent FAO regional workshops on safety at sea and suggested that their outcomes be reflected in the Guidelines³.

7. Following extensive discussion on the draft *International Study on Fishing Management Regimes and their impacts on Fishing Safety: Synthesis of Case Reports*, document EC:BPSAS/2008/Inf.3, the Expert Consultation recommended that FAO should freely distribute the templates used in the development of the case studies to countries wishing to carry out a case study on their own fisheries. The Consultation also recommended that FAO should undertake further research into impacts of fisheries management on safety for the purpose of developing training materials which might lead to an improved and shared understanding between fisheries managers and safety professionals on issues of mutual concern. The Expert Consultation agreed with the main finding of the report that fisheries managers' decisions have indirect and direct effects on safety.

8. Considering the socio-economic and the environmental elements of safety at sea, the Consultation recommended that FAO and regional fisheries management organizations should undertake to promote safety at sea as part of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries.

³ BOBP/FAO Regional Workshop on Sea Safety for Artisanal and Small-scale Fishermen, Chennai, India, October 2001;

FAO Project TCP/RLA/0069 in the Caribbean Region on the Development of Standards for the Construction and Inspection of Small Fishing Vessels, 2000-2001;

FAO/SPC Regional Expert Consultation FAO/SPC Regional Expert Consultation on Sea Safety in Small Fishing Vessels, Suva, Fiji, February 2004;

FAO/SWIOFC Regional Workshop on Safety at Sea for Small-Scale Fisheries in the South West Indian Ocean, Moroni, Union of the Comoros, December 2006;

FAO Regional Workshop on Safety at Sea in Artisanal and Small-Scale Fisheries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Païta, Peru, July 2007.

9. The Experts, aware that Guidelines constitute only voluntary guidance, considered and sought ways and means of ensuring that the Guidelines would lead to the development of national fisheries safety strategies. As a means of providing the Guidelines with additional authority, the Expert Consultation strongly recommended the development of an IPOA on Safety in the Fisheries Sector of which the Guidelines would be an integral component.

FAO/NIOSH International Study on Fishing Management Regimes and their impacts on Fishing Safety

10. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the United States of America (NIOSH) and FAO collaborated to conduct the *International Study on Fishing Management Regimes and their impacts on Fishing Safety* to provide a first empirical review of the effects of fisheries resource management measures on the safety of fishing operations and to provide guidance to fisheries managers on how to make commercial fishing safer. The study was based on 16 diverse case studies sponsored by FAO, and concluded, as outlined in paragraph 7 above, that fisheries managers should acknowledge that their decisions have indirect and direct effects on safety and therefore should consider safety as an explicit management objective. It was recommended that fisheries managers and safety professionals should work together to develop shared understanding on issues of mutual concern.

Global safety at sea programme for small-scale fisheries in developing countries (GCP/GLO/200/MUL)

11. FAO is currently operating a global programme for small-scale fisheries in developing countries. The programme has been implemented in two regions, the West Africa Region (concluded in December 2008) and the South Asia Region (planned to be concluded in June 2009). The programme, which is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) with support from the Swedish Maritime Administration (SMA), is aimed at improving the livelihood of small-scale fishing communities by decreasing the number of accidents at sea and diminish the effects of such accidents.

Cooperation between IMO, ILO and FAO on the subject of fishermen's safety

12. The level of cooperation between IMO, ILO and FAO was recently strengthened with the successful completion of the revision of Parts A and B of the FAO/ILO/IMO Code of Safety for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels and the Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels in which FAO played a major role. Currently, FAO is working together with ILO and IMO in developing new safety standards for small fishing vessels that are not covered by the revised Code and Guidelines. The provisional title of these new standards is "FAO/ILO/IMO Safety recommendations for decked fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length and undecked fishing vessels". The target completion date for this work, which also includes the development of new guidelines to assist Competent Authorities in the implementation of Part B of the Code of Safety, the Voluntary Guidelines and the Safety recommendations, is 2010.

13. FAO took active part in the development of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (No. 188) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 199, which were adopted in 2007. FAO has also been assisting IMO in accelerating the entry into force of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol. The most recent related activity in this regard is the development by IMO of a new Agreement on the implementation of the Protocol. This activity is a follow-up to the Second Joint FAO/IMO ad hoc Working Group on IUU fishing and related matters, which was held at FAO Headquarters in July 2007. The basis for this work is the outcome of the 2004 IMO Beijing Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Protocol where FAO assisted in the preparation and conduct of the Seminar.