

Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism



**High-Level Roundtable on
International Cooperation for Sustainable Development
in Caribbean Small Island Developing States
(Sustainable Management of Fisheries)**

**Perspectives for the Development of the United
Nations University (UNU) Fisheries Training
Programme for the Caribbean**

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Mission of the CRFM

The Mission of the CRFM is to promote and facilitate the responsible utilisation of the Region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.

Vision of the CRFM

The sustainable use of the fisheries and aquaculture resources in and among Member States, by the development, management and conservation of these resources in collaboration with stakeholders to the benefit of the people of the Caribbean region.

Introduction

The total land area of the Caribbean ACP states is 484,716 km² whereas the total area of the maritime waters under our jurisdiction is 2,205,470 km². On average our maritime waters is over 4.5 times the total land area, and presents both challenges and opportunities to the people of the Caribbean.

Caribbean countries face two main challenges with sustainable development and management of fisheries and aquatic resources. The first is to acquire data and information to better understand the complex and inter-related environmental, biological, and ecological processes which determine the abundance and distribution of the resources, together with the economic, sociological and technological factors related to their exploitation and conservation. The second challenge is how to develop, use and protect fisheries and aquatic resources in a way that provide optimal benefits to society, while ensuring their continuation as functional, self-sustaining components of the ecosystem.

Sustainable development and conservation of the fisheries and aquatic resources of the region is constrained by a number of factors which are either directly or indirectly related to inadequate human and institutional capacity for planning and management, inadequate knowledge of the resource systems and of the behaviour and needs of those who are dependent on the resources for their survival, lack of appropriate harvesting and processing technology, limited range of products and inadequate marketing and trade arrangements for fish and fishery products.

The Fisheries Sector is strategically important to the CARICOM region and will be increasingly so in the future for the following reasons:

- It employs over 142,000 persons, directly or indirectly, who are mostly from remote rural communities which lack other income earning opportunities;
- It earns over US\$150 million per year from export and saves the region at least three times as much in foreign exchange since the volume of production is four times the volume of export.

- It accounts for up to 8% of GDP in some Member States. (Guyana 8.3% and Belize 3.97%).
- It is a major source of protein especially in rural communities which usually exhibit a higher percentage of poverty than the national average.
- It complements and enhances the region's tourism through its use as a vehicle for fishing excursions and fishing tournaments.
- Shrimp, conch, reef fishes, deep slope and bank fisheries, offshore and coastal pelagics make up the marine capture component, which is by far the most important economically in the Fisheries Sector. Annual fish production in CARIFORUM countries is approximately 200,000MT, with an estimated value of over US\$700 million.

Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM)

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM):

Inaugurated: March 26, 2003 in Belize

Mission:

to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the Region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.

Members:

Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Strategic Plan:

a consensus of Member States priorities, for implementation over a period of about seven years commencing in the year 2003.

Priority Programme Areas

Nine priority programme areas have been identified in the Strategic Plan, namely:

1. Research, information, and organizational systems.
2. Enablement for global competitiveness.
3. Enhancement of mechanisms for assuring the management of resources.
4. Human resource development and institutional strengthening.
5. Strengthening of fisher folk organizations and improving community participation.

- Promotion of expansion and utilization of unutilized and underutilized aquatic resources.
- Development and promotion of risk reduction.
- Development and promotion of aquaculture.
- Development and promotion of mechanisms for prevention and resolution of conflicts affecting the fisheries sector.

Guiding Principles

The CRFM is guided by principles derived mainly from the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries which code is an international instrument that promotes, globally, the adoption of practices and standards for the sustainable use, management, development, and conservation of all fisheries and aquaculture resources through the voluntary compliance of governments, fishing industries, non-governmental organizations and other entities associated with fisheries.

In pursuance of its objectives, the Mechanism is guided by principles such as:

- Maintaining bio-diversity in the marine environment using the best available scientific approaches to fisheries management supported by comprehensive data collection and the networking thereof;

- Managing fishing capacity and fishing methods so as to facilitate resource sustainability;
- Encouraging the use of precautionary approaches to sustainable use and management of fisheries resources;
- Protecting and rehabilitating critical fisheries habitats and the environment generally through, *inter alia*, establishment of effective mechanisms for monitoring, control and surveillance;
- Promoting the use of post-harvest practices that maintain nutritional value and quality of products;
- The fostering of the co-management philosophy in all aspects of fisheries management planning and development as well as transparency in fisheries decision-making processes;

- Conducting trade in fish and fishery products according to applicable agreements;
- The fostering of cooperation with States in order to prevent disputes or resolve them in a peaceful manner;
- Promoting awareness of responsible fisheries exploitation through education and training;
- Ensuring safe, healthy and fair working and living conditions for fishery workers;
- According due recognition to the contribution of small scale and industrial fisheries to employment, income and food security, nationally and regionally; and
- Promoting aquaculture as a means of enhancing employment opportunities and food security, nationally and regionally.

CRFM – UNU Relationship

At a meeting in January 2006, Dr. Tumi Tomasson of UNU expressed to Milton Haughton of the CRFM a willingness to establish collaborative relationship with the CRFM. We interpreted his interest as an opportunity to establish long term institutional relationship between our two institutions for the purpose of building national and regional capacities for fisheries development and management and established formal contact with UNU. In March 2008, two CARICOM nationals, Ms. June Masters of Jamaica / CRFM Secretariat and Ms. Dawn Maison of Guyana completed training at UNU. The CRFM Secretariat has also concluded a Mission to Iceland to finalize the drafting of the MOU.

Memorandum of Understanding

We are agreed (and this has been captured in Article I of the MOU) that the overall purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter referred to as the “MOU”) is to facilitate closer cooperation and collaboration between CRFM and UNU - FTP in fulfilling their common goals and objectives by providing a framework which outlines the main areas and procedures for collaboration between the CRFM and UNU - FTP. The main areas of cooperation and collaboration shall be any which contribute to the fulfilment of the mandate and goals of the CRFM and UNU - FTP, including, *inter alia*, the effective and efficient development and implementation of projects and activities in the following areas:

- 1.1. Institutional strengthening and capacity building in the areas offered by the UNU-FTP which are consistent with the priority programmes agreed by Member States and identified in the CRFM's Strategic Plan for the purpose of developing skills, expertise and experience appropriate to the Caribbean reality in realizing sustainable fisheries development.
- 1.2 The provision of technical assistance in support of the CRFM's mandate to developing sustainable fisheries.
- 1.3. Training under the UNU-FTP Sixth Month Fellowship Programme as well as the Scholarship Programme for Graduate Studies at Universities in Iceland and the development and delivery of short courses in fisheries and related areas.
- 1.4. Any other related areas of operation or expertise deemed to be of mutual benefit to both Parties.

Conclusion

We have developed the MOU in draft as a guide to our future relationship.

Today, the Director of UNU – FTP, Dr. Tumi Tomasson and I will sign a Letter of Agreement which sets out the terms of a commitment under which not less than nine (9) fellowships per year for 3 years will be extended to Fisheries Professionals from CARICOM Member States. (This commitment is the largest ever received by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism).

- The LOA is part of a draft MoU developed by our two organizations and is now being vetted by the Legal Unit of CARISEC.
- In addition to the fellowships, short term training for fisheries scientists and managers will take place in the Caribbean under a joint FTP / UWI / CRFM cooperation agreement.
- Mr. Chairman, I now invite you to bear witness as Dr. Tomasson joins me in signing this agreement.

We can look forward to building this relationship with confidence, grounded in the belief that the commitment displayed by UNU – FTP officials over the past year (and especially over the past fort-night) will redound to the benefit of the Caribbean people.