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THE WESTERN PACIFIC FISHERIES CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (WPFCC)

AN UPDATE

by

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Introduction

The Western Pacific Fisheries Consultative Committee (WPFCC) is a non-governmental organisation established in December 1988 to coordinate cooperative efforts in fisheries development and management between the ASEAN countries and Pacific Island Nations (PINs). Its members include four ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand) and a number of Pacific Island Nations (Cook Islands, The Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands) and the South Pacific Commission (SPC).

The WPFCC is presently headed by Mr Peniasi Kunatuba of Fiji as Chairman and by the author as Director of the WPFCC Secretariat based in Manila, Philippines. Its adviser is Dr Gordon R. Munro of the University of British Columbia. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provides funds for its operations.

Accomplishments

Since its establishment in 1988, the WPFCC has :

- (i) Coordinated, organised and conducted the following workshops and meetings:
 - WPFCC Tuna Research Workshop in April 1989 in Manila and General Santos City, which has led to a number of significant breakthroughs (like the SPC RTTP tuna tagging cruises to the Philippines and Indonesia) and important initiatives (such as the publication of the WPFCC Newsletter and the exchange of tuna research scientists between the two regions);
 - Second WPFCC Regular Meeting in July 1990 in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, where the request for observer status by the Pacific territories and non-sovereign islands was approved by the WPFCC members, and
 - ASEAN-PINs Technical Workshop on Fisheries Education and Training in cooperation with the South Pacific Commission in April 1992 in Noumea, New Caledonia, which identified fisheries manpower development needs in the PINs, vis-a-vis training and education opportunities in the ASEAN region and planned for the establishment of mechanisms for information flow and exchange of students and faculty between the two regions.
- (ii) Provided financial assistance to enable ASEAN scientists to participate in PIN conferences, meetings and training courses [e.g. meetings of the SPC Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish (SCTB) and of the Western Pacific Yellowfin Tuna Research Group (WPYRG), and training of a BFAR scientist in the analysis of tuna tagging data by SPC] and of PIN scientists in meetings in the ASEAN region (e.g. Southeast Asian Tuna Conference in Bali, Indonesia).
- (iii) Facilitated the conduct of inter-regional tuna research, mainly by way of handling the various coordinative and administrative arrangements required for the SPC Regional Tuna Tagging Project (RTTP) vessel and staff to conduct tuna tagging operations in the Philippines (in July 1990 and March 1991) and Indonesia (February 1991). As a significant sequel to these RTTP cruises, WPFCC successfully 'brokered' the participation of SPC in the ADB-funded Philippine Tuna Research Project (PTRP).

- (iv) Published a Quarterly WPFCC Newsletter starting in April 1990 for distribution to WPFCC members and other interested parties outside the ASEAN and PINs as a medium for information exchange between the two regions.
- (v) Published the following technical reports:
 - Proceedings of the WPFCC Tuna Research Workshop; and
 - Proceedings of the ASEAN-PINs Technical Workshop on Education and Training.

Ongoing and Pipeline Activities

In addition to its regular activities, the Secretariat is now busy making arrangements and finalising plans in connection with two major undertakings, both scheduled for October/November 1992:

- (i) WPFCC Third Plenary Meeting to be held in Manila back-to-back with an international Tuna Management Workshop which WPFCC is co-hosting with the Trans-Pacific Fisheries Consultative Committee (TPFCC).
- (ii) A month-long Study Tour of ASEAN Fisheries Educational and Training Institutes for senior fisheries education and training officials from the Pacific Islands.

Conclusion

For a young organisation with modest funding support, the WPFCC has done quite well, at least in terms of increasing public awareness in the value of inter-regional fisheries cooperation, and of providing some financial assistance to enable fisheries officials to attend technical meetings which they may not have gone to due to budgetary constraints facing government agencies.

The Secretariat has been left rather busy by the continuing stream of activities it has had to attend to lately. This is likely to increase even more after the Third Plenary Meeting where new initiatives are expected to be brought up, which WPFCC will have to respond to operationally.

With CIDA approval of funding support for WPFCC for the next five years and with the full cooperation of its members as well as the kind support and guidance of its Adviser, WPFCC anticipates very dynamic years ahead.