

Istanbul conference on Somalia
21 – 23 May 2010
Draft discussion paper for Round Table “Fisheries”

Sector Overview

a. An underdeveloped sector

Somalia has the longest coastline in continental Africa (3300 km). However, the importance of the fishery sector within the overall Somali economy remains extremely limited and its potential is yet to be capitalized. Only 30,000 people (of an estimated 8 million population) depend on fishing as their principal livelihood and an additional 60,000 use fishing as a supplementary livelihood. Fish consumption at the household level is one of the lowest in Africa. This is predominantly for cultural reasons, though consumer attitudes are slowly changing, as witnessed by an increasing number of fish markets and restaurants in urban areas.

In view of the length of its coastline, Somalia’s lack of an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) established in accordance with the United Nations Law of Sea Convention (UNCLOS) is very significant. The area that would fall within Somalia’s EEZ, if this were established, would represent one of the richest fishing grounds off the African continent. It is also an area that suffers heavily from Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, particularly for tuna but also for inshore species. It has been estimated that about US\$ 95 million in export revenue each year is lost due to IUU activities. Conservative estimates put the country’s sustainable annual marine fisheries production in the range of 300,000 metric tons.

The main challenges affecting the Somali fisheries sector are:

- The lack of domestic maritime zones legislation drafted in accordance with the UNCLOS (in particular, the lack of an EEZ).
- The absence of governance and a regulatory fisheries management framework.
- The lack of capacity and the poor level of infrastructure.
- The lack of internal and external marketing outlets.
- Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

Despite the potential, the fisheries sector has up to date received negligible attention from the international community. There was a boost of external resources after the tsunami in December 2004, but little additional funding from 2007 onwards. More recently, from late 2009, increased interest in land-based and alternative livelihoods responses in counter-piracy have started to generate interest in fisheries.

b. What could be done?

If developed and managed in a sustainable manner, the Somali fisheries sector has great potential to contribute significantly to national development and the economy at large through food security, foreign exchange earnings and creation of employment opportunities. Joint efforts should be in four main directions:

i. Support to the development of local small-scale fisheries

Supply of high-value fish product is likely to exceed the limited local demand underlining the need for export (mainly in the region: Dubai, Yemen, Kenya or beyond). In that respect, some major constraints need to be addressed.

- Lack of basic fish landing and first-sale marketing infrastructures.
- Very poor public services or infrastructures in the coastal region (water, electricity, feeder road, ports/jetties, airstrips).
- Lack of suitable fish processing facilities for cured and frozen fish products.
- Lack of knowledge about fish trade opportunities.
- Need for the implementation of suitable fish inspection and quality assurance programme.

This will necessitate some private investment and the development of industrial capacity (e.g. fish mills) to process fish and fish by-products. So far, such investments are limited with a few exceptions such as a tuna canning factories in Berbera, Habo and Las Qorey.

ii. Support to the adoption of domestic maritime legislation in conformity with UNCLOS.

The authorities in Somalia (TFG, Somaliland, Puntland), with the support of the international community, should take steps towards the adoption of domestic maritime zones legislation in accordance with UNCLOS as a precondition to exert its territorial sovereignty and enact legislation pertaining to its natural resources and the protection of the marine environment as well as in the enforcement of any such domestic legislation (see point iii below).

iii. Support to the establishment of fisheries governance and a fishing licensing system.

Steps are being taken towards the establishment of transparent and legal regulatory frameworks to control and enforce licensing of all vessels (international and national) fishing in Somali waters for revenue collection and sustainable control of this resource. Licenses have been issued in the past, but with a range of levels of transparency. More importantly, licensing needs to be seated within a more complete governance and regulation structure, linked to sustainable support of the fisheries sector. A series of meetings, known as the Kampala Workshops has brought together fisheries authorities from Garowe, Hargeisa and Mogadishu. This will form the platform for future efforts on governance and licensing, so should be supported by all parties.

iv. Development of a Somali commercial fisheries sector.

While the artisanal fisheries sector provides many opportunities for community engagement and development, increasing incomes at household level, national foreign earnings will also benefit from the re-invigoration of a Somali commercial fishing capacity, geared around private sector investment. A larger scale fleet

existed in the past and could operate again, once the enabling environment is in place.

How could the fisheries sector contribute to peace and security?

Contribution of fisheries to revenue earnings and employment generation.

- Investment in the fisheries sector will inherently increase local revenues, tax collection and provision of job opportunities in the coastal regions.
- Fisheries access agreements could enhance opportunities for sustainable development by including commitments for improving conservation and management of fishery resources, including the provision of assistance in collection and exchange of fisheries data; stock assessment and scientific research; monitoring, control, surveillance, compliance and enforcement in areas under national jurisdiction, such as training and capacity-building and the supply of relevant technology and equipment.
- A system for issuing of fishing licenses and the development of access agreements with third countries, implemented fully and transparently, would generate income for the authorities. This income could be used to support the functioning of the institutions but also could be invested directly for the benefit of coastal communities. Such a system could also reduce the perception that international fisheries companies want to fish illegally in Somali waters. Many of these companies would be indeed ready to pay fees to the authorities provided that the level of legality and transparency would be sufficient and that security arrangements could be found against the risk of piracy.

Reduction of piracy through intensification of fishery activities.

- Development of the fisheries sector would contribute to poverty alleviation, provide employment, and reduce piracy activities. While not being perceived as potentially lucrative, fishing is a less risky activity and a more socially acceptable behaviour.

Key Issues for discussion

Support to institutions

- What kind of support could be provided to the Somali authorities in order to enable them to adopt a maritime zones legislation in accordance with UNCLOS (in particular with regard to the EEZ)?
- What kind of support could be provided to and by the regulatory authorities, as well as by the international community in order to boost the fisheries sector?
- Should the international community, through financial assistance, human resource development, technical assistance, transfer of technology, including

through joint ventures, and advisory and consultative services carry out the following activities:

- (a) enhance the ability of Somalia to conserve and manage its fishery resources and develop its own fisheries for such resources;
- (b) assist Somalia to participate in high seas fisheries, including for tunas;
- (c) facilitate its participation in regional fisheries organizations such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)?

Strategic Infrastructure

- What are the specific areas for priority strategic infrastructure development?

Role of the international legal and policy framework enhancing sustainable fisheries

- How could the international legal and policy framework contribute to the development of fisheries and the economies of coastal communities (e.g., UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, UN Fish Stocks Agreement, FAO Compliance Agreement, FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and UNGA resolutions on sustainable fisheries)?

Public private partnership in fisheries sector

- What public private partnerships are most appropriate for the development of the fisheries sector?
- How can we promote private international and local investments?

Fisheries access agreements, fishing licenses and regulations

- How do we support and strengthen governance, regulatory and licensing systems, such that revenues generated and collected are used effectively, for sustainable sector development and investment in fisheries communities?
- How can we build on the Kampala Meetings to strengthen the existing, good degree of cooperation between the different fisheries authorities in Garowe, Hargeisa and Mogadishu?

Coastal and marine environmental assessment

- There is a need for a comprehensive coastal and marine environmental assessment for the development of sustainable fishing standards.

Maritime Security Arrangements

- What kind of security arrangements could be explored to mitigate piracy and armed attacks on legally registered international and local fishing vessels?
- Is the development of coast guard services to monitor fishing practices realistic and feasible in the short/mid term?