

UNICPOLOS-7 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE 2006

On Wednesday, delegates to the seventh meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS-7 or Consultative Process) reconvened in a Discussion Panel on ecosystem approaches and oceans to address lessons learned from implementation of ecosystem approaches at the national level in developing States and international cooperation to implement ecosystem approaches at the regional and global levels. The Friends of the Co-Chairs group chaired by Renée Sauvé (Canada) met in the evening.

DISCUSSION PANEL ON ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES AND OCEANS

LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN DEVELOPING STATES: Presentations: Cristian Canales, Institute of Fisheries Development, Chile, described the ecosystem approach in the research and management of Chilean fisheries. He highlighted: research into trophic predator-prey interaction; the incorporation of ecosystem elements into studies to establish recommended catch quotas; and biodiversity protection policies. He highlighted protection plans for sharks, rays, and seabirds, and the creation of three MPAs. On the utilization of the ecosystem approach in fisheries, he underscored the imbalance in available knowledge and the number of hypotheses to be considered.

Noah Idechong, House of Delegates, Palau, described the Micronesian sea tradition and Palau's marine conservation initiatives. He highlighted traditional practices including *bul*, a prohibition on entry and fishing in certain areas that has been revived recently in response to unsustainable practices. He added that while traditional knowledge is strong, severe coral bleaching events have also made fishers receptive to modern science. He outlined domestic fisheries and MPA legislation, and international collaboration between regional island States for joint MPA development. Reporting that Palau bans bottom trawling in its waters, and globally by Palauan vessels, nationals and licensed business entities, Idechong advocated a moratorium on bottom trawling beyond national jurisdiction where no RFMO has competence to regulate the activity, and the rapid adoption of conservation and management measures where a competent RFMO exists.

Tonny Wagey, Arafura and Timor Seas Experts Forum, Indonesia, presented the Bali Plan of Action, which was adopted at the second Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) ocean-related ministerial meeting. He noted that the Plan aims to: ensure the sustainable management of the marine environment and its resources; provide sustainable economic benefits from the oceans; better understand and manage the impacts of aquaculture on marine sustainability; and enable the sustainable development of coastal communities. He reported that leaders of APEC member economies endorsed the Plan in November 2005.

Porfirio Alvarez Torres, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Mexico, explained that his government is in the process of drafting legislation for sea use planning for the Gulf of California which aims to promote sustainable development and use of coastal and marine resources. He outlined the region's characteristics and the environmental threats it faces, including lack of planning of coastal land use for aquaculture, tourism, urban development, agrochemical pollution, overexploitation of fisheries resources, and excess fishing capacity. He described the process for developing a legal framework for the region, stressing the engagement of all stakeholders in the various stages and bodies involved.

Discussion: On traditional knowledge, MAURITIUS and INDONESIA underlined the importance of incorporating such knowledge into development of management plans. JAPAN noted its long history of community-based conservation measures. AUSTRALIA said cultural traditions for maintaining marine resources can provide the tools for addressing regional and global issues.

On implementing the ecosystem approach, Idechong cautioned against allowing resources to be depleted while undertaking work to balance economic and ecological sustainability. Noting the dominant energy sector, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO highlighted the challenge of balancing national development and sustainable livelihoods in coastal fishing communities. Noting efforts in the Gulf of California to protect sharks and other species, the OCEAN NOISE COALITION stressed the need to adopt a precautionary approach and to account for the intrinsic value of ecosystems.

The RAMSAR CONVENTION stressed developing countries' needs for education and strengthening of local communities as a means for implementing effective marine management. INDONESIA emphasized the need to identify

an agreed set of factors defining marine ecosystems, develop a set of indicators for monitoring changes in these ecosystems, and agree on which of these changes are acceptable. CHINA stressed the need to adopt guiding principles, despite the lack of a consensus definition.

On stakeholder engagement, Alvarez noted that achieving full stakeholder participation can be time consuming, adding that forming a single management approach from the varying views of multiple sectors is difficult but enriching. CHILE and THAILAND called for raising awareness not only of stakeholders, but also of the wider public.

On applying ecosystem approaches beyond areas of national jurisdiction, ARGENTINA noted RFMOs' limitations and advocated further consideration of how to ensure the legitimacy of management, calling for the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Marine Biodiversity to address this matter.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO IMPLEMENT ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES AT THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVELS: Presentations: Alan Simcock, OSPAR Commission, stated that an ecosystem approach concerns the management of human activities that may affect the marine environment. Discussing OSPAR's incremental build-up from a sectoral approach to an ecosystem approach, he highlighted: the need to integrate sectoral strategies and policies; the challenge of addressing cross-cutting ecosystem aspects, living components of the marine environment, and the full range of human activities in an integrated fashion; and the role of ecological quality objectives in making an ecosystem approach operational. He described how ecosystem quality objectives have been used within the North Sea Pilot Project.

Andrew Constable, Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre, Australia, outlined implementation of the ecosystem approach by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), which he said demonstrates that international ecosystem-based management can be achieved on the high seas. He explained that CCAMLR features, *inter alia*: collaboration between policy and science; ongoing evaluation of management strategies; and an adaptive regulatory framework. Warning that regional organizations will fail without global support, Constable emphasized the need for: monitoring, control and surveillance; observer programmes for data gathering; and options to address non-compliance, including incentives for non-members to join and comply.

Tim Adams, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), provided an overview of the intergovernmental agency system in the Pacific Islands region and noted activities to assist countries in implementing the ecosystem approach, particularly to fisheries management. He said the Pacific Plan is the main linking mechanism in the region and noted that the SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency are beginning to implement the ecosystem approach to fisheries. He addressed other activities contributing to the ecosystem approach and called for balancing the needs of the fishing, ocean farming, transport and mineral extraction sectors.

Chua Thia-Eng, Partnership in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), outlined the operational strategies and tools used in integrated coastal management (ICM) practices in the East Asian seas. He explained that showing all stakeholders the benefits of ICM on the ground helps to replicate efforts, involve local communities and promote investments.

He added that ICM national demonstration sites have mobilized local resources to work collectively in identifying site-specific issues and developing solutions for wide-ranging and multi-sectoral problems. He illustrated the socioeconomic advantages of ICM through the example in the Yuandang Lagoon clean-up.

Discussion: On implementing the ecosystem approach, the HELSINKI COMMISSION highlighted efforts for the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea area, including the use of ecological objectives, data gathering and monitoring programmes, the Baltic Sea Action Plan, and the coordination of the scientific community with policy makers. Simcock called for further resources for the monitoring and assessment of marine ecosystems. Where science gaps exist, the EU suggested a prior assessment of all human impacts on a given area, and the subsequent application of precautionary decision-making.

NORWAY underscored the importance of political will in the protection of high seas areas. The INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION (IMO) outlined how various IMO conventions can strengthen the protection of specific ecosystems, and stressed States' responsibility to implement and enforce these conventions.

On high seas governance, ARGENTINA highlighted that CCAMLR must not be viewed in isolation from a greater institutional framework, and that given CCAMLR's specific context and history, its success may not be replicable. CANADA noted that some elements of the CCAMLR approach, including those dealing with uncertainty, are widely applicable. Constable stated that CCAMLR can be joined by non-Parties to the Antarctic Treaty. AUSTRALIA suggested applying CCAMLR's regulatory framework for new and exploratory fisheries to RFMOs and high seas areas not covered by RFMOs.

On cooperation, Chua Thia-Eng described the framework for cooperation between Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam in tackling oil spills, noting the effectiveness of experience sharing within the region. CANADA and NORWAY stated that the success of regional bodies depends upon the actions of its members.

Chua Thia-Eng and Adams underscored that "one size does not fit all" in implementing the ecosystem approach and Adams noted the advantages of having a diverse set of alternatives. UNEP called for better harmonization of ocean-related strategies within the UN system, suggesting UN Oceans as a coordinating body.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While some delegates enjoyed side events on Wednesday night, others spent the evening getting to grips with new procedures in the Friends of the Co-Chairs' drafting group. Many delegates advocated immediate preparation of draft UN General Assembly resolution language, while others preferred to start with an inclusive document reflecting all views, leaving to plenary the tougher task of reaching consensus on actions and recommendations.

Noting slow progress, one delegate suggested that the process was sound, but that it was too early in the week to expect much momentum in the drafting. Others questioned whether the Friends of the Co-Chair process would really facilitate Friday's negotiations. Nonetheless Tuesday's lengthy text was considerably streamlined by Wednesday night and the Group moved onto substantive topics, demonstrating the will to make the new procedure work.