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Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement  
Accord relatif aux Pêches dans le Sud de l'Océan Indien

MoP-10-INFO-06

## 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties (MoP10)

*Ravenala Attitude Hotel, Balaclava, Mauritius*

03-07 July 2023

MoP-10-INFO-06

# Regional Consultation on the Development of a Coordination Framework among RFBs in the Indian Ocean

Maputo, Mozambique- 22-24 June 2022

## Summary Record

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

<b>Document type</b>	working paper <input type="checkbox"/> information paper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Distribution</b>	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Closed session document <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>FAO convened a Regional Consultation on the Development of a Coordination Framework among Regional Fishery Bodies in the Indian Ocean from 22-24 June 2022 in Maputo, Mozambique. The consultation brought together secretariat and bureau representatives of regional fishery bodies (RFBs) as well as other relevant regional and international organizations that have a role to play in the sustainable use and conservation of shared marine living resources in the Indian Ocean, in particular in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). This first consultation of this kind followed up on the recommendation from the 34th Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) for FAO to strengthen its collaboration with relevant international organizations and RFBs to support sustainable development with an emphasis on promoting RFBs cooperation to ensure common approaches on a number of cross-cutting issues. Five regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), two regional fishery advisory bodies (RFABs), and two regional economic bodies participated in the consultation.</p>

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**Regional Consultation on the Development of a  
Coordination Framework among RFBs in the  
Indian Ocean  
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## Executive Summary

FAO convened a Regional Consultation on the Development of a Coordination Framework among Regional Fishery Bodies in the Indian Ocean from 22-24 June 2022 in Maputo, Mozambique. The consultation brought together secretariat and bureau representatives of regional fishery bodies (RFBs) as well as other relevant regional and international organizations that have a role to play in the sustainable use and conservation of shared marine living resources in the Indian Ocean, in particular in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). This first consultation of this kind followed up on the recommendation from the 34th Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) for FAO to strengthen its collaboration with relevant international organizations and RFBs to support sustainable development with an emphasis on promoting RFBs cooperation to ensure common approaches on a number of cross-cutting issues. Five regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), two regional fishery advisory bodies (RFABs), and two regional economic bodies participated in the consultation.

The purpose of this consultation was to jointly identify critical issues for information-sharing, coordination and cooperation that can significantly improve the sustainable use and conservation of shared fisheries and other living marine resources in the Indian Ocean with a view to develop a Regional Coordination Framework in the Indian Ocean. The consultation focused on geographical connections and overlaps, on species of common interests, both target and bycatch species, on aspects of conservation of

biodiversity and on incoherency regarding conservation and management measures and advice. Particular emphasis was being directed at the critical issue of preventing, deterring and eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing for which regional coordination and cooperation is crucial. The participants identified a range of critical issues, discussed the reasons, objectives and organizations to be involved and ways to best approach and develop improved methods and tools of working together.

The RFBs Regional Consultation agreed to further explore more ways to concretely improve coordination and cooperation based on the areas identified in consultation with RFB Members and in continued discussions across organizations with a view to develop a Regional Coordination Framework in the Indian Ocean. This is the first regional consultation in a series of consultations and therefore provides an example for further ones to follow in other world regions, also inspiring the general global discussion about the value of coordination and cooperation of regional organizations supporting sustainable fisheries.

## 1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the 34th Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) reiterated the key role of regional fishery bodies (RFBs) in the implementation of international fisheries instruments and encouraged these organizations to increase their cooperation with the aim to strengthen actions towards conservation and fisheries management, including action undertaken to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Moreover, COFI noted that RFBs play an important role in mainstreaming biodiversity in the conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources. COFI encouraged FAO to continue to strengthen its collaboration with relevant international organizations and RFBs to support sustainable development and avoid the duplication of efforts. In addition, COFI reiterated its appreciation for the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN)<sup>1</sup> in supporting regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and regional fisheries advisory bodies (RFABs), and stressed that RFBs<sup>2</sup> should cooperate to ensure common approaches on a number of cross-cutting issues.

Against this background, the FAO convened a regional consultation initiative with Secretariat and Bureau representatives from seven RFBs and two regional economic organizations (RECs) relevant to the western Indian Ocean. The overall objective of this initiative is to promote and establish effective regional cooperative frameworks among RFBs to develop concerted approaches on matters of common concern, including on combating IUU fishing.

A pre-meeting survey and the working document “Indian Ocean regional fisheries governance overview-possible priority areas for cooperation and coordination” (hereinafter the Overview) was prepared by FAO Secretariat and circulated ahead of the consultation. The Overview had the purpose to pre-identify priority areas for technical cooperation and coordination among RFBs and sub-regional organizations. The survey was intended to gather initial inputs and feedback from participants. The survey findings were shared at the beginning of the meeting and used as baseline for the discussion.

The two and a half day meeting was attended by 28 participants (Annex 1) from the following organizations and institutions: the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI), International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) and the Bay of Bengal Programme-Intergovernmental Organization (BOBP-IGO), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the African-Union InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), and the Mozambique Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries (MIMAIP). In addition, an independent fishery expert and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) were invited to present recent research results on the extent of IUU fishing in the Indian Ocean area.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/rsn>

<sup>2</sup> RFMOs and RFABs are collectively referred to as RFBs.

The Regional Consultation on the Development of a Coordination Framework among Regional Fishery Bodies in the Indian Ocean was organized in the framework of the initiative “*Follow-up action to the 34<sup>th</sup> FAO Committee on Fisheries*” funded by the European Union, with additional funding by the Common Ocean Programme.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. OPENING OF THE MEETING (Agenda item 1)

The Regional Consultation started with an introductory speech and remarks made by the FAO Representative in Mozambique, Mr. Hernani Coelho da Silva, followed by His Excellency Henriques Bongece, Deputy Minister of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, who opened the meeting.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Coelho da Silva, highlighted that the FAO recognizes that the sustainable use and conservation of marine living resources of the world’s oceans is a priority, particularly taking into account that about 10 percent of the world’s population directly depend on fisheries for their livelihoods. He added that there are challenges surrounding the international governance of shared fishery resources and emphasized that regional fishery bodies (RFBs) are the main mechanism through which cooperative management and collective actions may be developed and implemented. Hence, he highlighted that RFBs, such as those attending the regional consultation are international institutions established by States that identify common gains in cooperating to address and overcome problems related to internationally shared fisheries, therefore highly instrumental to achieve SDG 14. Finally, he concluded by remarking that the FAO stands ready to assist regional fishery bodies’ work contributing to the sustainability of regional fisheries resources and the wealth of fishing communities depending on them.

His Excellency Henriques Bongece, Deputy Minister of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, acknowledged the importance of the fishery sector for a country like Mozambique, with the two to three percent of the Gross Domestic Product, produced from capture fish and aquaculture, with artisanal fishery landings representing 90 percent of this production. The Deputy Minister noted that the sustainable management of fisheries resources is a priority for the Government, and that there is a continuous effort to strengthening the policy, legal and institutional frameworks to implement international instruments. As part of such effort, Mozambique has been preparing a series of management plans for artisanal fisheries, which adopt the Ecosystem Approach, safeguarding the rights of fishing communities. In addition, the Deputy Minister highlighted the collaboration between Mozambique and regional organizations in the area, such as RFBs (SWIOFC and IOTC), as well as regional economic communities/organizations (RECs) such as the SADC.

Mr. Benedict Kiilu, Assistant Director of Fisheries at Kenya Fisheries Service and Chair of the IOTC Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures, was selected as the

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<sup>3</sup> The Common Oceans Program is a global partnership funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and led by FAO, promoting sustainable fisheries and conservation of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) <https://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en/>.

Chairperson of the Regional Consultation based on his experience of chairing meetings. The provisional agenda was approved and is attached in Annex 2.

### 3. MEETING STRUCTURE AND SURVEY RESULTS (Agenda items 2 and 3)

The FAO Secretariat provided a brief Overview of the consultation rationale recalling COFI 34 outcomes and recommendations that formed the basis for conceptualizing regional coordination frameworks. This meeting in Maputo is the first of a series of regional consultations with the aim to identify stakeholders, objectives and areas of cooperation for the development of a regional coordination framework in the Indian Ocean, particularly in the WIO region.

Finally, the meeting participants agreed to use a preliminary simple matrix to identify priority issues for which cooperation and coordination among RFBs in the region would be beneficial, including possible ways to address such issues. The proposed matrix was structured in four entries:

<b>WHAT</b>	conceptualization, identification of issues
<b>WHY</b>	motivation, justification for coordination and cooperation
<b>WHO</b>	the regional organizations/entities/stakeholders involved
<b>HOW</b>	concrete ways and actions to address the issue through coordination and cooperation of RFBs

The cross-cutting issues requiring improved coordination and cooperation by RFBs and identified by the participants in the meeting can form the basis for the concrete development of a regional coordination framework in the WIO after discussion with the respective memberships of the individual organizations.

After the introduction made by the Secretariat, all participating organizations were given the opportunity to present themselves with their mandates, objectives, activities, as well as with examples of existing cooperation and coordination efforts and formal arrangements in place (e.g. Memorandum of Understandings, MoUs). These presentations triggered an initial exchange of views on matters and issues of common interest and concern, and potential areas where it could be possible to explore a concerted approach. As a general observation, it is worth mentioning that all the organizations underscored the critical importance of coordination and cooperation in general and the necessity to avoid duplication of efforts.

To further inform the discussion, the Secretariat introduced the survey results. They may be summarized and itemized under sub-headings, as follows:

#### **Data collection and sharing of information**

- Shared stocks and transboundary resources, are regarded as being an underlying matter of interest to all the organizations involved.
- Two thirds of the responding organizations reported that there are overlapping responsibilities related to collection of data, provision of scientific advice and appraisal of the status of the resources.

### **Regional coordination and cooperation**

- Coordination and cooperation at regional level exists or is in the process of being established, particularly through MoUs.
- However, areas remain where coordination and cooperation still need to be developed or where inconsistencies may be found.

### **Emerging issues**

- The “unregulated” squid fishery in the ABNJ/High Seas of the North Western Indian Ocean is not managed by any of the existing RFMOs (i.e. not included in either regulatory area or species).
- The need for strengthening regional bodies work to support and assist its members with policy and management tools, and development of artisanal and small-scale fisheries.

### **Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing**

- Major gaps/critical issues, among others: weak flag State control and compliance; undetected IUU fishing activities, and trade with fish/fisheries products derived from IUU fishing particularly by non-members; lack of transparency; limited cooperation related to monitoring of vessels; decentralized vessel tracking; insufficient effective actions taken against vessels and flags engaging in IUU fishing/ no sanctions scheme for non-compliance in place; and risk of transshipment activities at-sea supporting IUU fishing (for further details, see agenda item 5).

## **4. PRIORITY AREAS FOR IMPROVED COORDINATION AND COOPERATION AMONG RFBs IN WIO (Agenda item 4)**

To prompt the discussion the Secretariat encouraged participants to consider the map enclosed to the Overview to visualise geographical coverage of RFBs and focus on those adjoining each other and with overlaps and existing implications, with respect to conservation and management of common species, biodiversity, including incoherency and loopholes in existing recommendations and management tools. With that in mind, participants engaged in a fruitful and comprehensive discussion, which ranged over a number of shared issues and common concerns as well as on the need to expand and enhance coordination and cooperation on identified priority areas in the WIO.

Key discussion highlights are provided below and the full list of priority areas are included in table 1 at the end of this section.

### **1. The North West Indian Ocean squid fishery**

The emerging significant squid (*Sthenoteuthis oualaniensis*) fishery occurring in the North West Indian Ocean (NWIO) is unregulated. The species would fall within the mandate management of SIOFA, but the fishery occurs outside of the SIOFA Agreement area. Although the fishing activities are taking place in the area of competence of IOTC, the species of concern falls outside the IOTC mandate, which covers tuna and tuna-like species, leaving the emerging significant squid fishery occurring in the NWIO unregulated.

However, the meeting reported that tuna constitutes bycatch of vessels catching squid and also underscored the importance of squid as prey for tuna species, which results in the need to promote an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in this regard.

This is a critical matter to be flagged within appropriate fora with the aim of finding a solution and prevent that such activities continue to occur outside of a regulatory framework to avoid the overexploitation of the squid stocks.

## 2. The Narrow barred Spanish mackerel or kingfish

The Narrow barred Spanish mackerel or kingfish (*Scomberomorus commerson*) a species under the mandate of IOTC, has also been identified as a priority species by RECOFI, and for the conservation of which RECOFI Members have adopted a binding recommendation on imposing an annual closed season on fishing activities in the RECOFI area of competence. So far, the exchange of information and collaboration has been very limited between the two RFMOs.

Hence, collaboration and coordination are required to avoid inconsistency between RECOFI and IOTC conservation and management measures targeting the narrow barred Spanish mackerel.

## 3. Other shared stocks and non-highly migratory species: the Oilfish

Other existing cases were identified where shared stocks and non-highly migratory pelagic species, such as oilfish (*Ruvettus pretiosus*) are under the mandate of one organization (i.e. SIOFA) and being harvested as bycatch by fisheries managed by a different organization (i.e. IOTC) sharing the same fishing areas.

It was highlighted that oilfish, by volume, is one of the most commonly exploited fish in the SIOFA area, and considerable volumes are caught by IOTC authorized vessels, as bycatch. Bycatch information gathered by IOTC is shared with SIOFA through the IOTC *Online Data Querying Service*. However, there is a significant risk of under-reporting and non-reporting of oilfish catches.

## 4. Ecologically related species and endangered, threatened and protected species

It is essential to address cooperatively the negative impacts of fishing activities on endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species (e.g., cetaceans, sea birds, sea turtles) and to work jointly on monitoring the implementation of mitigation measures to reduce such interactions.

The issue of shark conservation and management is particularly exemplary of the need for coordination and cooperation among RFBs. Sharks, both targeted and bycatch species are recognized as an ecologically related species (ERS) to tuna fisheries; at the same sharks fall under the mandate of several RFBs and are regulated by few heterogeneous legal provisions for conservation and protection.

## 5. Ecosystem approach to fisheries

An ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) should be pursued to address the interaction between small-scale/artisanal and industrial fisheries activities related to certain stocks and species (e.g., demersal coastal fishery and transboundary species) and to minimize possible detrimental effects, particularly on coastal small-scale/artisanal fisheries.

## 6. Scaling up regional cooperation and coordination



Regional fisheries advisory bodies have an important role to play for regional fishery governance, and for the responsible and sustainable use of shared fisheries resources, regardless of their limited mandate. The promotion of regional cooperation and support to the implementation of international fisheries instruments by RFABs can be extremely beneficial for coastal States to review their policies and legislative frameworks and incorporate international and regional requirements and standards into their national laws and procedures.

There are a number of areas where regional cooperation already exists. This is the case for tuna RFMOs, including IOTC and CCSBT in the Indian Ocean region, for IOTC and SIOFA with a large overlapping area, or between RFMOs and RFABs, as in the case of SWIOFC and IOTC, all SWIOFC members are also members of IOTC.

The regional economic communities/organizations have an important role in supporting their members to develop and implement regional policies and to do that they have created and may create regional partnerships with regional fishery bodies on specific areas and/or topics. One example is the Regional MCS Coordination Center established by SADC and hosted by Mozambique that is incorporating a shared communication platform for SADC members to gather, share and use information to effectively combat IUU fishing.

#### 7. Role of RFB Secretariats

The meeting noted that it is among the tasks of RFB Secretariats to provide advice, or even to flag issues to Members on technical matters concerning species and stocks of competence and to advise on the implementation of conservation and management measures. In order to fulfil their duties towards their Members, there is a need to improve information sharing also within RFBs, among their Members, and from Members to the RFB Secretariats. Furthermore, RFB Secretariats' staff should be invited to participate in other organizations' meetings and report back on any relevant topic, as needed.

**Table 1: Identified areas for improved coordination and cooperation among RFBs and other regional and international organizations in the WIO region.**

What	Why	Who	How	Notes
<b>Agenda item (4.a): RFBs adjoining each other and geographical overlaps</b>				
EEZ/ABNJ continuity	Ecological connectivity to minimize the separation of EEZ and high seas marine ecosystem	RFABs and RFMOs	Secretariats permanently invited as observers to RFBs' sessions, ensure that observer status is applied for	Subject to resources
Occurrence of unregulated fisheries in ABNJ, i.e. squid fisheries in NWIO	Indian Ocean region/s not included in the regulatory areas/species of any generic RFMO  Squid and tuna fishery are connected: (squid is prey for tuna, tuna may be illegally caught in the squid fishery)	States, Stakeholders involved in the fishery, Indian Ocean RFB Members	Coastal States and international community awareness  Collect and share information on unregulated fisheries, as available (e.g. the EAF Nansen Programme)	Towards finding a solution to regulate the fisheries
Interactions of small-scale and large scale/industrial fisheries	Transboundary resources;  Species lifecycle  Conflicts between small-scale and large scale/industrial fisheries  Socio-/economic relevance for coastal fishing communities  Fishing gear and devices that may have negative impact on the small-scale fisheries	RFABs, RFMOs, RECs	Dedicated RFABs/RFMOs cooperation	

What	Why	Who	How	Notes
Other non-highly migratory pelagic species, e.g. oilfish	<p>Shared stock/s</p> <p>Direct relation with tuna stocks</p> <p>Large amounts caught and transshipped in tuna fisheries</p>	RFMOs, RFABs, stakeholders	Knowledge and information exchange	Species managed by SIOFA; caught in fisheries managed by SIOFA and IOTC
Demersal species/fisheries	<p>Very important fisheries for some RFABs, e.g. SWIOFC</p> <p>Transboundary nature of the fisheries resources, and environmental aspects/interactions of these fisheries</p> <p>Some potential overlap between small-scale and industrial fisheries in the high seas</p> <p>Transboundary nature of the fisheries resources, common and transboundary nature of the environmental issues (ecosystem approach), some overlap between SSF and high seas</p>	RFABs, RFMOs	<p>Common focused plan of work/activities</p> <p>Increase information sharing</p>	
<b>Agenda item (4.b): Species of common interest, either target species or bycatch species</b>				
Gaps in knowledge  Mapping of shared stocks occurrence	<p>Limited scientific research/survey</p> <p>Lack of comprehensive overview of geographical occurrence of recognized shared stocks</p>	RFMOs, RFABs, relevant research organizations and programmes	Joint research programmes, regular sharing of technical/scientific information	Requires adequate/dedicated funding

What	Why	Who	How	Notes
Knowledge of RFBs' priority species	Lack of information	RFABs, RFMOs	Update and share information on species regarded as priority in the work plan of RFABs and RFMOs.	
Pelagic sharks	Lack of information	RFMOs, RFABs	Research and information exchange	IOTC focus on surface longline caught species
Deep water sharks	Potentially sensitive species to fishing mortality Overlap of area competences between RFMOs	RFMOs, RFABs, relevant research organizations and programmes	Increase knowledge on fisheries and species to support management	There is some risk assessment and relevant CMMs in place in SIOFA for demersal sharks
Coastal sharks	Sensitive species to fishing mortality, ecologically important and subject to IUU fishing and trade	RFMOs, RFABs, relevant research organizations and programmes	Increase knowledge on fisheries and species to support management	
Fishery interactions with protected species	Impacts on stocks of protected species  Loss or damage to fishing gear, and lost time  Lack of data	RFMOs/RFABs , IWC and other Global and regional protected species organisations, and stakeholders	Information sharing  Collaborate on design, testing and implementation of monitoring and mitigating measures.	Towards finding practical solutions to minimize fishery impacts on protected species  Cetaceans Sea birds Sea turtles Other Chondrichthyes Some species of sharks, whale shark

What	Why	Who	How	Notes
<b>Agenda item (4.c): Conservation of biodiversity including bycatch</b>				
Ecosystem/habitat approach	Promote Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, holistic approach	RFABs, RFMOs, Regional Sea Organizations/Conventions (Jeddah Convention, Kuwait Convention, and Nairobi Convention)	Establishment of Joint EAF Working Group	
Participation of relevant regional scientific institutions	Need for increased synergy between scientific, advisory, and management bodies.	RFABs, RFMOs, scientific institutions	Participation of and coordination with relevant scientific institutions, as appropriate	
<b>Agenda item (4.d): Incoherency regarding conservation and management measures and advices/recommendations</b>				
Awareness of CMMs including RFABs' technical/management advice	Support consistency of CMMs also including advice formulated by RFABs	RFABs, RFMOs	Established system of information sharing on CMMs and technical/management advice	
Information exchange/sharing on fishery and fishery-related data	Management of fisheries resources in a shared region	RFABs, RFMOs	Creation of information sharing framework Capacity building in data collection, analysis and management  Data sharing frameworks	Consider confidentiality issues and sensitivities, as well as transparency requirements

What	Why	Who	How	Notes
			Sharing of aggregated data and/or indicators	
Confidentiality rules	Need to follow existing rules/confidentiality rules in place	RFMOs, RFABs	Establish the bounds within which specific rules are to be applied in specific cases for information/data sharing	Consider transparency requirements
Collaboration with RECs	Support member States in adopting and implementing relevant international instruments, as well as, in developing and implementing fisheries conservation and management measures and cooperate on shared stock management	RFABs, RFMOs, RECs	Coordination and collaboration between RFMOs and RFABs  Technical advice, scientific information  RECs developing and informing policy and integrative actions at regional level  Capacity development initiatives at national and regional level	
RFBs to consult and align their calendar, as appropriate	Optimization of regional calendars to facilitate participation/timely information flow	RFABs, RFMOs	Regular consultations	

## 5. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION TO COMBAT IUU FISHING (Agenda item 5)

The identification of specific areas to improve coordination and cooperation among RFBs to combat IUU fishing was chosen as a pilot case for regional coordination and cooperation among RFBs and other regional and international organizations in the Indian Ocean. Preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing requires access to timely information on fishing operations and vessels involved as well as concerted action among national agencies within a State and among States to be able to effectively identify IUU fishing activities, to deploy appropriate means for monitoring, control and surveillance and, in the case of sufficient proof that a vessel has been engaged in IUU fishing or related activities, to coordinate and execute enforcement actions. Regional information-sharing, coordination and cooperation play a crucial role in this regard.

To inspire the discussion, Jessica Ford of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) gave an introductory presentation on their ongoing research project to estimate the extent of IUU fishing in the Indian Ocean, integrating the research findings of a previous project for the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) commissioned by the FAO which also included parts Northern and Eastern parts of the Indian Ocean. The studies concentrate on the illegal part of IUU fishing and was based on a comprehensive survey, interview with fisheries officers in the region and a literature and media analysis and concluded with identified hotspots, characteristics, an estimation of the extent of illegal fishing (by value) and recommendations for addressing illegal fishing in the region. CSIRO encouraged participants from RFBs and RECs to support the study and share their insights through the survey and interviews.

The Secretariat introduced the agenda item by giving an overview of international instruments and regional mechanisms that lay out the international obligations of flag, port, coastal and market States to combat IUU fishing and referred in more detail to the survey results for a pre-identification of areas where regional coordination and cooperation can support States in fulfilling their responsibilities to effectively prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing in the Indian Ocean. The critical issues related to combatting IUU fishing mentioned by participants in the pre-meeting survey included:

- Weak flag State control and weak compliance with measures to combat IUU fishing;
- Undetected IUU fishing activities, particularly activities carried out by non-members of RFBs;
- Undetected trade with fish/fisheries products derived from IUU fishing, also with involvement of non-members of RFBs;
- Limited capacity for monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) in port and coastal States in the Indian Ocean;
- A general lack of transparency, limited cooperation related to monitoring of vessels and decentralized vessel tracking;
- Limited capacity and cooperation for risk assessment (pre-inspection, pre-licensing);
- Insufficient effective action taken against vessels and flags engaging in IUU fishing and lack of sanction scheme for non-compliance;
- A risk of transshipment activities at-sea supporting IUU fishing activities and leading to fish derived from IUU fishing entering the supply chain;

- Containerization on the rise and increased utilization of container vessels and bonded storage – with the risk of circumventing the effective implementation of port State measures as a potent and cost-effective means to combat IUU fishing.
- The unregulated squid fishery in the Northwest Indian Ocean was mentioned as a concrete emerging issue with apparent links to the tuna fishery.

Resulting from the analysis of the survey, broad areas of coordination and cooperation to support the fight against IUU fishing were pre-identified, including (1) Aligning and harmonizing procedures and minimum standards, (2) developing strategies and responding to challenges; (3) effectively exchanging information, e.g., for risk assessment; (4) organizing mutual MCS support; and (5) capacity development for States to fulfil their international obligations as flag, port, coastal and market States.

During the consultation, participants from RFBs and other regional and international organizations in the Indian Ocean identified nine priority areas for coordination and cooperation that would support Member States in fulfilling their international obligations as flag, port, coastal and market States to combat IUU fishing. These priority areas are listed in Table 2 below.

Inspired by the presentation from CSIRO, participants also discussed the value of data to be able to better understand the extent, nature and patterns of IUU fishing and to use this knowledge effectively and strategically to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing activities. This discussion included methodological aspects for estimating the extent of IUU fishing as well as questions of independent data sources to verify information. The issue of primary role of flag States to ensure that their flagged vessels comply with conservation and management measures wherever they operate was discussed in much detail, highlighting aspects of flag State action within own waters and beyond.



**Table 2: Identified areas for improved coordination and cooperation among RFBs and other regional and international organizations in the region to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.**

What	Why	Who	How	Notes
Harmonizing/Updating IUU vessel listings, cross-listing	Outdated information, different times of listings	RFMOs that keep an IUU vessel list	Coordination, more regular updates, information sharing	It should be considered that each RFMO has its own varied meeting times and procedures which must be agreed by its own Members.
IUU fishing in artisanal /small-scale fisheries, including through creating awareness among the small-scale fishers (SSFs) on the importance of co-management and supportive systems for sustainable fisheries and on the impact of IUU fishing on the overall fishery	Ecosystem considerations, socio-economic relevance, community-based approach / co-management process to combat IUU fishing. SSFs, though not significantly contributing to large-scale IUU fishing, bear its consequences.	RFABs, RFMOs, NGOs, and Members	Capacity development, sharing best practices, partnerships, sensitization/education, possibly learning from RFMOs	SWIOFC-Nairobi Convention Partnership Project supporting co-mgt at local sites in Madagascar, Mozambique and Tanzania in collaboration with FAO SSF umbrella programme. Assessment of SSF IUU fishing is also raised within Nairobi Convention linked to environmental impacts.
Aligning and harmonizing measures to national context	Improving flag State performance	RFABs, RFMOs	Capacity building, sharing best practices.	
Information-sharing/reporting on transgressions into EEZs	Improve transparency, improve risk assessment, awareness creation across the region	RFMOs, RFAB, Members	Database development and strengthened information sharing	
Supporting effective implementation of the FAO Agreement on Port State	Addressing implementation challenges in port States to	RFBs, RECs	Capacity building, e.g., on document verification, risk assessments,	

What	Why	Who	How	Notes
Measures, including through harmonized standards and procedures	effectively combat IUU fishing		development of harmonized inspection procedures	
Harmonizing of compliance observer standards and procedures <sup>4</sup>	Ensuring compliance of authorized vessels with CMMs	RFMOs, RFAB, Members	Developing harmonized compliance observer standards	Observer programmes already exist in the Indian Ocean region, many of which, however, are for scientific purposes: The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) has harmonized observer standards; IOTC regional observer programme is strictly limited to at-sea transshipments and is shared with CCSBT for transshipments involving SBT; SIOFA is in the process of establishing an observer framework mostly geared towards scientific observation.
Sharing of licensed vessel lists among coastal States	Improve transparency, improve risk assessment, ensuring compliance	RECs with RFBs, and member coastal States	Harmonized coordination, information sharing	Sharing of license vessel lists has already been initiated in the Indian Ocean region: SADC MCSCC integrating FISH-i Africa license vessel lists

<sup>4</sup> Please note that this recommendation on harmonization of observer standards is for the purpose to monitor compliance with CMMs (not for scientific purposes) as is the case in at-sea transshipment observer programme

What	Why	Who	How	Notes
Strengthening the implementation of the UNFSA	Strengthening at-sea boarding and inspections	RFMOs	Harmonized at-sea boarding and inspection procedures	May need a framework or resolution at regional level
Shared repository of information of actions taken against vessel operators / owners engaged in IUU fishing and related activities in the Indian Ocean (sanctions), divided into activities in the waters of the flag State and in areas beyond national jurisdiction of the flag State	Improve transparency, improve risk assessment, ensuring compliance	RFABs, RFMOs, and their members	Harmonized coordination and information sharing	

## 6. TOWARDS A RFBs COORDINATION FRAMEWORK IN THE INDIAN OCEAN (Agenda item 6)

The format proposed at the meeting outset to organize the summary tables, for agenda items 4 and 5 (what/why/who/how), allowed the identification of the critical issues to be addressed through improved coordination and cooperation among RFBs in the WIO, the reason why this is important, the relevant regional organizations who should be part of finding a solution, and as a way forward, how the issues could be addressed.

The tables' content was then re-discussed and integrated on the last day of the consultation to reflect the topics that emerged over the first two days and is reported in Table 1 and 2.

Bearing in mind that this consultation aimed at laying the foundation for a regional coordination framework in the Indian Ocean, the meeting decided that as follow up actions the RFBs Secretariats and Bureau representatives who had attended the meeting, will present the outcomes (summary tables and meeting summary report) of the regional consultation to their Contracting Parties constituencies and seek for their approval and possible commitment on the topics identified. Further, it was recommended that regular meetings of RFBs and other relevant regional and international organizations in the Indian Ocean be held once a year and that more ways of regular information sharing should be explored, starting with the areas identified for improved coordination and cooperation (see Tables 1 and 2).

Finally, and following up the outcome of the discussion at the Regional Consultation, the participants suggested the following next steps to move towards a regional coordination framework in the Indian Ocean:

- I. Explore ways to concretely improve coordination and cooperation on the identified areas (see tables 1 and 2) in consultation with Members in organizations and in discussions across organizations;
- II. Report back to group in follow-up meeting;
- III. Explore developing tools for the improved information-sharing and cooperation with the aim to ensure sustainable fisheries in the Indian Ocean;
- IV. Share and discuss results of the first RFB Regional Consultation with other world regions; and
- V. Develop a regional coordination framework through advancing on concrete initiatives of coordination and cooperation.

To conclude, the Regional Consultation thanked the Government of Mozambique (MIMAIP) for graciously hosting the meeting in their country, and expressed the appreciation to the FAO for organizing the meeting as it was the first time RFBs in the WIO discussed matters of common interest, exchanging information and views towards establishing regional coordination and cooperation framework. The participants concur on the merit to hold such regional consultation on a regular basis.

## ANNEX 1

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**ANNEX 2**

**AGENDA**

**Wednesday, 22 June**

- Item 1. Opening of the meeting and introduction of the background of the consultation.
- Item 2. Presentation of the RFBs and regional organizations participating in the consultation.
- Item 3. Presentation and discussion of findings of the RFBs survey exercise.
- Item 4. Overall considerations and preliminary identification of cooperation/coordination areas, with focus on:
  - a. RFBs adjoining each other and geographical overlaps.
  - b. Species of common interest, either target species or bycatch species.
  - c. Conservation of biodiversity including bycatch.

**Thursday, 23 June**

- Item 4 (cont'd)
  - d. Incoherency regarding conservation and management measures and advices/recommendations.
- Item 5. Pilot case: Identification of coordination and cooperative actions to combat IUU fishing.
- Item 6. Conceptualization of a regional coordination framework including next steps.

**Friday, 24 June**

- Item 6 (cont'd)
- Closure of the meeting