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Preparation for expansion of domestic fisheries for large pelagic species by CARICOM countries

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Large pelagic fishes are important for many CARICOM countries for small-scale, commercial and recreational fisheries. They are seen as an area in which fisheries growth can occur. As most are transboundary, their management requires collaboration among countries. This should be in the context of international fisheries agreements. This project sought to assist CARICOM countries with formulating an approach to the development and management of large pelagic fisheries. This was seen as having two thrusts for the two groups of large pelagics; oceanic and coastal. The need for, and modes of direct involvement in ICCAT for oceanic species were identified and explored. The need for a regional arrangement for coastal large pelagic species contained largely within the Western Central Atlantic emerged. This could be a subsidiary of ICCAT or a separate entity with close collaboration if ICCAT is willing to delegate responsibility for coastal species for which it presently has a mandate. The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), recently established by CARICOM, can play a key role in both thrusts. For oceanic species it can coordinate and provide technical support for member country participation in ICCAT. It can also explore possible approaches to collective representation. For coastal species, the CRFM can take the lead in establishing the regional arrangement and in pursuing the linkages among CARICOM member countries, other regional fishing countries and distant water fishing countries that will be essential for such an arrangement to be successful.

Key words: Fish Stocks Agreement, Law of the Sea, shared stocks, migratory stocks, tuna, billfishes, dolphinfish, mackerel



INTRODUCTION

The fisheries sector is important to the economies of CARICOM countries for food, employment and foreign currency earnings. Many of the fisheries in this region are carried out by small-scale and rural fisherfolk, often representing the only possible source of income for them, thus reinforcing the importance of the sector to food security. Most coastal resources are over-exploited or fully exploited while the demand for fish products continues to grow. As a result, attention has turned to the stocks of large pelagic fishes, of which some are considered to be under-exploited.

Large pelagic fishery resources (tunas, billfishes, dolphinfish, kingfish, swordfish, wahoo, etc.) occur to varying extents in the waters of all Caribbean countries. Several are expanding their fisheries for these species, some are exploring this option. Others see benefits from them through sport fisheries in support of tourism. All large pelagic resources of importance to Caribbean countries are shared to some extent by two or more countries. Most have widespread distribution and migration, in some cases Atlantic Ocean-wide. Most of these stocks are managed through the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and are already fully exploited or over-exploited. CARICOM countries are latecomers to these fisheries and to their management. In March 2003, CARICOM countries established the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), for which management of shared resources will be the highest priority activity.

This paper provides an overview of an FAO Technical Cooperation Programme Project carried out between May 2001 and May 2003 to assist CARICOM countries in determining their approach to developing fisheries for large pelagic species in their waters. The project aimed to build on the efforts of the CARICOM Fisheries Resource Assessment and Management Programme (CFRAMP) and to give the CRFM a head-start on its top priority area.

THE PROJECT

The objectives of the project were:

- (a) Acquire and synthesise information on large pelagic fisheries in CARICOM countries and their relation to other Caribbean countries,
- (b) Develop a CARICOM strategy for management of large pelagic resources including relations with non-CARICOM regional and extra-regional fishing countries and organisations,
- (c) Formulate and agree upon a regional fishery management arrangement that reflects the strategy.

These objectives were pursued through the following activities:

- Acquisition and synthesis of existing information and knowledge on the nature of the fisheries in the participating states, and their social and economic importance;

- Review of this information at a workshop at which options for the way forward would be outlined;
- National consultations within CARICOM countries to consider and refine, at the national level, the proposed way forward;
- A final workshop to agree on common approaches and a common position in relation to the fisheries for the large coastal and oceanic pelagic species;
- Presentation to the Caribbean Fisheries Forum and Ministerial Councils for consideration for formal adoption by the CARICOM Member States.

THE REVIEW OF EXISTING INFORMATION

The initial compilation and synthesis of data and information was based on a review of literature, analysis of data on landings of large pelagics from ICCAT and FAO, and a structured interview of a wide range of stakeholders from all participating countries. The report identified a number of issues in four topic areas and provided suggestions for dealing with them (FAO 2002).

Status and assessment of the large pelagic resources

For management purposes, the large pelagic fish stocks of the region need to be considered in two separate groups:

(a) The large coastal pelagics, including wahoo, blackfin tuna and mackerel species *Scomberomorus* spp; and

(b) the more widely distributed oceanic species such as yellowfin tuna, skipjack tuna, swordfish, billfish and others.

All of these stocks are transboundary, occurring or migrating in the EEZs of all or most of the coastal states. The coastal large pelagics are largely confined to the WECAFC area. In contrast, the distribution of oceanic large pelagics goes beyond the WECAFC area and, in some cases, is trans-Atlantic. Fisheries for these stocks therefore need to fall under an arrangement with much wider jurisdiction, as provided by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

For the coastal large pelagics in the sub-region the status of the stocks is generally unknown, although there is evidence that the Atlantic Spanish mackerel and the Gulf of Mexico king mackerel stocks are both over-exploited. For the oceanic stocks there is better information on stock status from ICCAT assessments. Yellowfin, albacore and bigeye tuna are estimated to be fully exploited, the status of the skipjack tuna and sailfish is unknown, while swordfish, blue marlin and white marlin are over-exploited. Therefore any expansion permitted by the CARICOM States in the fisheries for any of these stocks needs to proceed with caution.

Analysis of FAO and ICCAT landings for oceanic pelagics indicated that for most stocks, catches by CARICOM countries are a small part of the total catch. This reflects the ocean-wide distribution of these stocks and of exploitation by large-scale commercial fleets. In contrast, for

the coastal pelagics, and possibly for western Atlantic sailfish, Caribbean waters appear to represent a large fraction of the catch area, and presumably the biomass of these stocks. An analysis of FAO catch data has shown how uncertain these catch estimates are. Given that landings are the main information needed to help CARICOM evaluate the status of oceanic and coastal pelagic stocks within their waters it is imperative that the uncertainty in landing estimates is reduced. It should be a priority for countries to improve their data collection systems to reduce this uncertainty as much as possible.

The harvest sector

The majority of vessels that target large pelagics in CARICOM countries are small, open and outboard powered. Vessels, even larger ones, are multipurpose and pursue multispecies fisheries. Such fleets of large numbers of small vessels present substantial management problems regarding communication with the fishers as well as monitoring their activities. Thus it will be difficult to enforce ICCAT regulations and quotas with any certainty.

In order to be able to present a comprehensive picture of the fleets in CARICOM countries, there is the need for a vessel classification scheme, including recreational vessels, that works for CARICOM or preferably the Caribbean region as a whole. Ports in CARICOM countries are also multipurpose. Just as for vessels, there is the need for a classification scheme for landing sites in CARICOM countries. This would also require a small, focused project.

The majority of fishing for large pelagics by CARICOM countries remains within tens of kilometres from port. Countries are not yet utilising their EEZs extensively due to lack of vessels with appropriate capability. Charter boat fishing does not appear to be promoted by the tourism authorities in many countries.

Estimates of the value of the fishery, including recreational fishing, are not available in a systematic way. There is the need for estimates of value compiled regionally. There is also the need to better document the role of large pelagic fishing in the social and economic structures of rural communities, households and representative fishing enterprises.

Consistent categorisations and reporting formats among CARICOM countries for vessels, landing sites and many other types of information are needed so that data can be more easily compiled across CARICOM countries. This is needed if management and development are to take place on a regional basis. The information will be needed to quantify the importance of fisheries to CARICOM countries themselves to justify expenditure on regional level initiatives and to prepare regional level proposals for donors, as will be a main function of the CRFM.

Foreign flagging of vessels by CARICOM countries is perceived internationally by States and management organisations to be uncontrolled fishing. CARICOM countries, individually or collectively, should consider and implement the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU) as a

framework for addressing IUU fishing both within the region and in distant waters.

The region is dependent on importing most of its larger vessels. Here, and in other areas of supply, there are opportunities to develop industries to serve the local and regional needs of CARICOM fisheries (boats, rope, gear, etc). There may be the potential to develop an intra-regional bait industry and trade to provide bait for longliners.

Subsidies or incentives are common among CARICOM countries. There is a need to look more closely at the impacts of subsidies to determine if they are having the intended effect on the development of the industry and/or food security or just providing a free ride. This is especially critical in the light of World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations on fishing subsidies. These negotiations may have serious implications for the CARICOM countries.

Availability of vessel and crew insurance are development issues in CARICOM countries. Most countries have national insurance schemes that are available to fishers, even as self-employed individuals. However, there is a need to promote these social and economic safety schemes among fishers.

There is potential for exchange among countries to provide training and apprenticeship opportunities for fishers. In particular there is the need for training in fish quality if large pelagics are to have their potential economic impact through export.

It is notable that much of the information provided regarding large pelagics is qualitative, based on the expert judgement of the national fisheries staff. As countries seek to take part in management of shared resources through international or regional organisations, higher standards of data management providing information in more consistent formats are likely to be required. At the same time, the constraints of small countries regarding the acquisition and provision of data on small-scale fisheries must be recognised. Countries should be aware of current trends in assessment and management in some fisheries towards simpler indicator or trend-based approaches, and towards reference directions rather than quantitative targets.

The post-harvest sector

For large pelagics, the postharvest sector is less developed and specialised than the harvest sector, except for some exported species in the main catching countries. Few postharvest facilities cater mainly for pelagics, but most are suitable for handling them at least for the domestic and perhaps regional markets. However, upgrades of physical facilities and quality assurance procedures are necessary in most places if fish export is to be emphasised and Caribbean seafood is to be globally competitive.

Further processing of the lesser-valued pelagics for local or regional markets could be explored to increase value added without much increase in catches. There is not much need to consider value added for exported fish since market preference is for fresh chilled fish, but lack of efficient handling and air transport can be constraints.

The issue of by-catch from resident foreign industrial fleets could become an important one if by-catch grows to become a large proportion of the intra-regional fish trade upon which small entrepreneurs depend.

Regarding the international markets, better market intelligence on export markets and the cost of meeting the criteria for entry seem warranted. Systematic benefit/cost analyses could assist governments and private investors to decide how best to approach the indisputable need for quality assurance. Estimates of value added are additional information urgently needed if arguments about the importance of pelagic fisheries are to be substantiated.

In summary, while the postharvest sector in a few countries is almost as efficient as one can expect for small-scale exporting, in all countries more attention has to be paid to the various means of improving quality assurance, and the development of innovative marketing, in order to add value and ensure competitiveness.

National Management and development of large pelagic fisheries

There is readiness in CARICOM countries to address the fisheries management aspects of participating in the activities of a competent regional or subregional organisation for shared resources as per the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, but the countries still require considerable guidance and capacity-building in order to be both ready and able. Improved legislation seems required everywhere to keep up to date with international agreements.

Optimism about opportunities for expanding large pelagic fisheries remains high, but perhaps the trends and difficulties of fishery expansion are not as fully appreciated at the policy levels as at technical levels. More specifically, the understanding of investment constraints is good, but perhaps there is not enough attention to the constraints brought on by the absence of a subregional or regional fisheries management arrangement or organisation in which the majority of Member States are active. Every attempt should be made to engage national fisheries authorities in the work of the CRFM, and indeed this will be essential if the regional picture is to be complete from data collection to policy and legislation. The Fish Stocks Agreement and the Compliance Agreement were examined in detail in a sub-regional workshop arranged by the OECS and FAO, but there has been little follow-up.

Most countries have a realistic perspective on expansion of pelagic fishing through their domestic fleet rather than arrangements for foreign fishing or joint ventures. However, the importance of establishing intra-regional fisheries access schemes for the expansion of domestic fleets is apparently underestimated. Little attention is being paid to achieving economies of scale in harvest and trade through regional harmonisation.

The present emphasis on upgrading fishing facilities in each country to meet international standards is desirable. However the links between the status of the resources and decisions to construct more shore facilities are weak.

The newer skills such as conflict management and strategic planning must be enhanced and brought to bear on management of large pelagic fisheries. Where these skills should reside is a difficult question, given that fisheries authorities are unlikely to suddenly acquire elevated status and resources within the context of the public sector and relative to the other agencies managing powerful sectors of the economy.

Progress has been made with national level data collection and management, but this is still probably insufficient for most countries to be comfortable with meeting all of the obligations of the Fish Stocks Agreement. National systems for catch and effort monitoring may be present, but are typically not actively managed and used to produce information for management.

Implementation of the precautionary approach will place even further demands on data collection systems, if CARICOM countries are to be full participants in developing and applying the technical basis for management. CFRAMP has demonstrated that such sharing and collective analysis is possible, but that national and regional modifications to information generation and use will be necessary for greater accuracy and efficiency. Even if it is not possible to set numerical targets and limits for management, it must be feasible to determine directions or trends and assess the magnitude of changes.

International arrangements and agreements

Signing/ratification of the various instruments is an indication of good intentions to take part in international management as specified by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and related instruments. Of these, only the 1982 UN Convention, the 1993 FAO Compliance Agreement and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, are legally binding. Both have major implications for countries engaging in fisheries for shared stocks. Relatively few CARICOM countries have ratified the latter two agreements. Evidence of actual participation in collaborative management of shared fish stocks is generally low. Most of the collaborative activity is in the area of stock assessment.

WECAFC itself is another general forum for collaboration in which CARICOM countries have taken part. All but two wider Caribbean countries are members; most participate at one time or another. WECAFC currently has no mandate to do more than review and exchange information, but its members could opt to take on a stronger management role. Large pelagics has not been a topic discussed at WECAFC very often.

There has been much less emphasis on the broader assessment of fisheries from the point of view of providing management advice to the countries. The harmonisation of legislation by the OECS in the 1980's was followed by various initiatives towards the establishment of a common fisheries zone or zones, and efforts at joint surveillance. Otherwise, there has been little activity regarding cooperation in management at the regional level, either within CARICOM or among the countries of the wider Caribbean. This is not surprising given the lack of a competent organisation for management of shared stocks.

Most CARICOM countries participated indirectly through CFRAMP in international level management of large pelagics as carried out by ICCAT, but this was with observer status only. Two CARICOM countries are members, two more have indicated their intention of joining. Recently, CARICOM countries collaborated electronically to provide input to the ICCAT Allocations Working Group (Singh Renton et al. 2003). This exercise, and the differences between the agreed CARICOM position and those of many of the major fishing countries, provide a good indication of the importance of participation in ICCAT or any other organization that deals with shared stocks of interest to CARICOM.

Indications from negotiations thus far, suggest that CARICOM countries will have difficulty in getting their interpretation of the provisions of the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement accepted in ICCAT. Therefore, the pursuit of increased allocations upon which to base expansion of fisheries for large pelagics is likely to require a substantial and persistent presence in the negotiation process as well as supporting analyses and arguments.

Institutional arrangements for management of large pelagics fisheries of interest to CARICOM countries

CARICOM countries are faced with a variety of options regarding their possible participation in collaborative management of shared fishery resources that they exploit. These options must be evaluated within the context of existing arrangements, through ICCAT, for management of 'Tunas and tuna-like species' in the Atlantic, as well as in the context of the need for more geographically specific collaboration among the countries of the Western Central Atlantic for stocks that occur primarily within that region and presently receive little attention from ICCAT.

Two parallel and interlinked sets of questions must be addressed and resolved in order for the countries to meet their obligations under the agreements that most have signed. The first question is that of the most appropriate institutional arrangement for management of shared large pelagics. Should regional and ocean-wide species be managed by the same organisation? If so it must be ICCAT. If not, what should be the structure and affiliation, if any, of the regional organisation? What changes would be required in existing or planned institutions to accommodate the role of competency for regional species?

The second question is more CARICOM specific. It concerns the arrangements that these countries will make to take part in whatever institutional arrangement is considered to be most appropriate. That there should be a CARICOM regional approach was already agreed in principal in the establishment of the CRFM, but the details of what this means remain to be elaborated.

CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS AND STRATEGY

The First Workshop

The first workshop was attended by participants from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and

Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba and Netherlands Antilles (Curaçao) participated as observers.

Participants reached consensus regarding the way forward. There was agreement that this should include direct involvement in ICCAT for countries with significant fisheries on oceanic pelagics. It was also agreed that there was the need for some form of regional arrangement for coastal large pelagic species that were either not within ICCAT's mandate or that currently received little attention from ICCAT.

The countries also identified a number of activities that need to be carried out in preparation for expansion and effective management of large pelagic fisheries by CARICOM countries (FAO 2002b)(Table 1).

Table 1. Activities to carry forward in preparation for expansion and effective management of large pelagic fisheries by CARICOM countries.

Action	Rationale
a) Within the mandate and time frame of this project	
Estimate the costs of participation ICCAT for the different CARICOM states, and explore alternative options with ICCAT Secretariat	Provide information for basis of support
Evaluate and document the importance of the large pelagic fisheries of the CARICOM states	Provide information on which support for fisheries can be based
Sensitise decision-makers and stakeholders to the role of ICCAT, the legal obligation to participate in it, and the implications of not participating in it.	Trade sanctions and exclusion from quotas and fisheries decisions may otherwise result
b) Beyond the mandate and time frame of this project	
Undertake a cost/benefit analysis of expanding large pelagic fisheries of the CARICOM states, distinguishing between coastal and oceanic pelagics	Provide information for basis of support
Incorporate the key issues identified in this project into the national fisheries management process	Begin national FMP
Sensitise the public to the national socio-economic importance of large pelagic fisheries and the need for their responsible management	To encourage broad based support for (possible) further development of large pelagic fisheries
Strengthen national monitoring, assessment and management systems	Meet international fishery management obligations

National consultations

Following the first workshop, most countries carried out local consultations with stakeholders to obtain their views on how to approach involvement in ICCAT, and on what regional arrangement would be considered most appropriate. In particular, countries considered the possible role of the newly established CARICOM CRFM.

The Second Workshop

The Second Workshop, held in February, 2003, was attended by participants from Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The CRFM presented their proposal for “Options for Achieving Successful Sustainable Management of Large Pelagic Fish Resources in the CARICOM Region”. For oceanic large pelagics, it was proposed that CARICOM countries become fully involved in ICCAT’s activities, noting that revision of the ICCAT membership contribution calculation scheme is likely to take place in the very near future, and that this will make membership in ICCAT more affordable for developing countries.

To achieve this, it was noted that CARICOM countries, particularly those with a clear interest in developing fisheries for oceanic large pelagic resources, should strive to gain either ICCAT Contracting Party or Co-operating Party status as soon as possible. In this regard, the role of the CRFM Secretariat would be to provide technical and legal support to each CRFM Member State, to assist those countries to evaluate the options and apply for the status at ICCAT most suited to their needs, and to assist each country in catch share negotiations at ICCAT.

The CRFM Secretariat would also be responsible for coordinating the development and presentation of common positions on ICCAT management issues, to ensure, for example, that ICCAT management and conservation measures do not impose a disproportionate burden of action on developing states within the CARICOM region. However, the submission and final verbal presentation of common positions would have to be made by those CARICOM countries that are Members of ICCAT. National representation at ICCAT would not be necessary each year, as detailed assessments are not normally repeated for all species annually, and hence catch allocation schemes are not usually negotiated every year for all species. This would substantially reduce national costs pertaining to ICCAT meeting attendance.

With regard to coastal large pelagics, the establishment of a Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) was proposed. The establishment of a Regional Working Group (RWG) was proposed as an interim or alternative measure.

The proposed Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) would coordinate statistics, research and management of the coastal large pelagic resources occurring within the Caribbean region. To achieve this task, the proposed RFMO would have to:

- maintain a regional database on the fisheries concerned;
- coordinate research and assessments of the stocks concerned; and
- develop and implement appropriate management measures.

Owing to the inclusion of many of the same fish stocks within the ICCAT mandate, the proposed RFMO would work in partnership with ICCAT. Consequently, the proposed RFMO would, on behalf of its member states, submit data to ICCAT in accordance with ICCAT reporting requirements. The proposed RFMO should also be responsible for reporting to ICCAT on its developments in research and the adoption and implementation of agreed conservation and management measures in respect of the stocks concerned. It was proposed that the CRFM could serve as the required RFMO, but it was recognised that this would require the support of relevant non-CARICOM countries as well.

The alternative or interim proposal was to establish a Regional Working Group (RWG) with a specific mandate for assessment of western Atlantic/Caribbean coastal large pelagic fish resources, including those resources not included in the ICCAT mandate. Ideally, this RWG should be a Working Group within ICCAT. However, as many of the countries concerned are currently not ICCAT Member States, a CRFM or WECAFC Working Group may be more appropriate for the purpose. The RWG would hold all its assessment meetings at venues within the Western Atlantic or Caribbean region, making attendance and participation easier and less costly for the countries concerned.

Recognizing ICCAT's management authority, the RWG would report either directly to the ICCAT 'Small Tunas' Working Group, or to the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS). By either means, the results of stock assessments and management recommendations of the RWG would be forwarded to the ICCAT Commission for adoption. It would then be necessary to obtain support by ICCAT Member States, to facilitate ICCAT adoption of the RWG's proposed management measures.

In the reports on their national consultations and in discussion of the above proposal participating countries expressed their general support for the role of the CRFM in liaison with ICCAT. There was little concern regarding this role for oceanic large pelagic species for which there was clear recognition that ICCAT was the most appropriate regional fishery body. Some countries, however, were concerned about the cost of joining ICCAT when it was unclear as to whether additional catch allocations would be made available.

There was some concern about the proposal for the establishment of a RFMO. ICCAT's present mandate for all of these species with the exception of dolphinfish could pose a problem. There could be inconsistency with relevant international law for there to be two bodies with overlapping mandates over a certain geographical area or part thereof for the conservation and management of highly migratory fish stocks if the membership of the proposed RFMO is not open to all interested coastal and fishing States.

There is the need for clarification regarding two aspects of membership in the CRFM: (1) whether the CRFM is constituted in such a

way as to permit membership by non-CARICOM Caribbean countries at a level for them to participate adequately for management (2) whether there was scope for non-Caribbean fishing countries to be members as required by the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the conclusion of the project, the recommended approach for CARICOM countries was outlined with regard to the two categories of large pelagics. This approach will be taken forward by the new CRFM. The Secretary of WECAFC presented the recommendations of the project to the first meeting of the Forum of the CRFM, Belize City, Belize, 27 March 2003. The Forum discussed the approach and agreed that it should be presented to the CRFM's Ministerial Council for approval. These are also communicated to countries in the project Terminal Statement (FAO 2003b).

SUMMARY OF THE CARICOM APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LARGE PELAGIC FISHERIES

Management Of Oceanic Large Pelagic Resources

Each country, with an interest in developing fisheries for oceanic large pelagic resources, should become either an ICCAT Contracting Party or an ICCAT Co-operating Party. To do this, national fisheries administrations should: (i) evaluate the needs of the fisheries concerned, (ii) develop the justification for the selected level of ICCAT participation, and (iii) present a proposal for approval by the appropriate authority.

The CRFM should establish a working group to provide technical and legal support to country delegations prior to and during ICCAT meetings, and during catch share negotiations. This working group should also be responsible for coordinating the development and presentation of common positions on ICCAT management issues.

National fisheries administrations should develop active management cycles for these resources. In the first instance, the CRFM could be asked to provide advice and support to identify and assist in implementing required changes in policy directions, and legislation, as well as advice on the development or refinement and activation of the required management cycles.

National fisheries administrations should incorporate participation time and costs of ICCAT meeting into national work schedules and budgets respectively.

Management Of Coastal Large Pelagic Resources

In regard to the potentially conflictual situation identified above, the CRFM should initiate a dialogue with ICCAT on the options that are available, with the aim of obtaining their endorsement for the desired approach.

With regard to the possible Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO), if the preferred option:

- Coastal States and other interested countries should identify the organization to serve as RFMO. The CRFM appears to be a logical starting choice for a RFMO, recognizing that its membership rules would have to change in order to properly serve the function of an RFMO;
- CARICOM should liaise with non-CARICOM countries from the region, and other interested States, to gain agreement on the development of an RFMO.
- Countries should develop or refine the mandate and structure of the RFMO leading to a proposal for establishment, in consultation with ICCAT;
- Agreement or resolution for establishment of the RFMO should be developed and submitted for adoption at the appropriate forum;
- The RFMO and countries concerned should establish management objectives and management cycles for handling these resources;
- The RFMO should establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ICCAT;
- The RFMO should establish communication and working linkages (MOUs) with related institutions and organizations within the region, for the purposes of coordinating the development of statistics, research, resource assessment, and management.

With regard to the possible Regional Working Group (RWG), if the preferred option:

- Countries should identify the appropriate RWG linkage, preferably a CRFM large pelagics working group (LPWG) or a WECAFC LPWG;
- Countries should develop or refine the mandate and structure of the RWG leading to a proposal for its establishment, including terms of reference;
- An agreement or resolution for establishment of the RWG should be developed and submitted for adoption at the appropriate forum;
- The countries concerned should establish management objectives and management cycles for handling these resources;
- The RWG should establish communication and reporting linkages with ICCAT.
- The RWG should establish communication and working linkages with related institutions and organizations within the region, for the purposes of co-ordinating the development of statistics, research, and resource assessment.

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