


**Role of RFMOs in the Conservation and  
Management of Marine resources  
Presentation made By Driss MESKI  
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- Sustainable Management of marine resources requires a set of provisions to ensure rational and optimal use.
- My presentation concerns the institutional role of the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) in the conservation and management of marine resources

- There is direct relationship between the management tools and actions carried out by RFMOs and those for which individual countries are responsible for.
- The gap between demand for fish and fisheries resources is growing rapidly.
- There is an urgent need for actions to support the sustainability of marine resources.

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- Actions must be taken at the national, regional and international level.
  - Importance of understanding how RFMOs intervene function and how they operate or act to minimize depletion of fish stocks in their Convention areas,

- RFMO is an intergovernmental organisation created by interested and concerned government representatives.
- RFMOs are generally established in response to serious problems detected in a specific fishery or a variety of fisheries of a given geographic area.

- They can be species specific as in the cases of salmon and halibut, among others.
- They can involve several species from the same species group such as tuna RFMOs or be more general in character looking at all management aspects of the fisheries sector in a specific area.
- There are close to 50 RFMOs worldwide, covering the different seas and oceans: approximately 20 in the Atlantic, about 15 in the Pacific and around 10 in the Indian Ocean

- First tuna RFMOs established more than 50 years ago in response to an overfishing of tuna stocks and signs that this specie was endangered.
- The objectives and their actions are to maintain fisheries populations at levels which permit the maximum sustainable catch.
- Their objectives in line with the provisions of the 1982 Law of the Sea and those of 1995 UNFSA established after some tuna RFMOs.

- Article 7 of the UFSA stipulates States party to the Agreement must ensure compatibility between measures established for the high seas and areas under their jurisdictions for straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.
- The same article requires States party to cooperate closely for the purpose of implementing these measures.
- For this purpose, Articles 8 to 17 of this Agreement set out mechanisms of international cooperation, in particular, within the RFMOs framework.



- RFMOs are committed to eliminate any illegality in the fisheries, including in the context of trade and any transactions.
- Measures start from fishing operations, catch to trade. They may entail the imposition of trade sanctions against States acting illegally and in contravention to regulations in force.

## **Organisation of Tuna RFMOs**

Each RFMO has

- A Commission which is comprised of the delegations of the Contracting Parties, and operate to reach the objectives set out in the Convention.
- A scientific Committee which provides advice on stock status and recommends to maintain these stocks at a sustainable level. The Scientific Committee develops and recommends to the Commission lines of actions and procedures for collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of fisheries statistics.

- RFMO is able to create as many committees as needed to address technical, compliance issues administrative and financial matters.
- May establish at any time during its regular or special meetings working groups to respond to a specific need.
- The Secretariat assumes numerous administrative and coordination tasks for the functioning of the Commission

## **Example of Management measures taken by RFMOs**

RFMOs had to confront in the late 1990s the illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing,

- The scourge of IUU fishing undermines any action aiming to preserve marine resources. It continues to pose a serious constraints to any move that is not backed by the international community.
- For more than 40 years, international bodies, in particular the United Nations and its agencies, have developed legal instruments to regulate the marine environment, however it is unfortunately clear that IUU fishing remains commonplace today.

## ***Port State Measures (PSM)***

The FAO Agreement on Port State Measures is an important reference. Several RFMOs have recently addressed the issue of PSMs and adopted a recommendation on minimum standards for port inspection, even though full implementation of this measure is slower than envisaged. Cooperation has been sought to find ways to improve compliance with this measure, designed to prevent the landing and transshipment of IUU catches through port inspection programmes. Prior notification enables port authorities to ensure that vessels are authorised to land/tranship the transported species.

## Conclusions

- With regard to the marine resources status plan, significant progress has been made, in particular in terms of stocks recovery. The long fight against IUU activities has also been successful. However, much remains to be done. In my view, much could be achieved through greater compliance with existing international instruments, as well as the following:
  - Encouraging ratification of international agreements such as UNFSA, PSM, etc.
  - Assistance for developing countries that are at greater risk of being exploited by IUU operators if they do not have the necessary resources to implement strict control measures;
  - Further cooperation and exchange of information between RFMOs, as well as enhanced harmonisation of measures in some regions.