

# The Rome Declaration

## The text of the 2005 Rome Declaration on Fisheries and the Tsunami

*We, the Ministers and Ministers' representatives, meeting in Rome at the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries on 12 March 2005,*

*Appreciating* the initiative taken by the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to organize the Meeting, thus providing an opportunity to address the issue of rehabilitation in relation to the tsunami disaster,

*Recalling* that the massive earthquake and subsequent tsunami waves that originated off the west coast of northern Sumatra has caused extensive loss of lives and damage to coastal communities throughout the southern Bay of Bengal and East Africa,

*Acknowledging* that the effects of the tsunami have been particularly devastating for fishers and fish farmers, with heavy loss of lives and homes, damage to fisheries and aquaculture infrastructure and facilities estimated at over US\$500 million, the destruction or damage of more than 100,000 fishing vessels, and the loss of more than 1.5 million gear units,

*Expressing deep concern* that the scale of the damage to coastal areas and communities is threatening the livelihoods of millions of people, many of whom depend on fisheries and aquaculture for income and food,

*Commending* the swift and dedicated response of the peoples and governments in the affected areas, as well as the unprecedented level of assistance being offered for relief and rehabilitation from the international community, including national governments, United Nations organizations, international financial institutions, civil society and

non-governmental organizations, and recognizing the importance of co-ordination of these efforts for effective rehabilitation,

*Recognizing* the role of FAO in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the affected areas and commending the efforts led by FAO in the aftermath of the disaster in advising and supporting the governments of the affected nations,

*Expressing concern* over the medium- and long-term social, economic and environmental impact of the disaster, as well as the risk of negative impacts from rehabilitation efforts if not appropriately designed and duly co-ordinated,

*Committed* to assist with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the damage inflicted by the tsunami disaster and to duly account for the specific needs and requirements of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and related coastal communities, in accordance with the three pillars of sustainable development recognized by the World Summit on Sustainable Development: environmental, social, and economic.

We declare that:

1. We are determined to ensure that the efforts, led by the international community to provide assistance to rehabilitate the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the nations affected by the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami, develop in synergy so that, through co-ordinated action, we provide an effective response to the needs of the affected fishing communities, in particular their poorest members.

## Supporting post-tsunami rehabilitation

Following the presentation by the Secretariat on the impact of the tsunami on countries in the Indian Ocean region, COFI was invited to review and comment on the response by FAO to the disaster and to provide guidance on the Fisheries Department's medium- and long-term strategies to support affected countries in the rehabilitation of their fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

COFI was specifically invited to consider the need:

- ° for fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation to focus on sustainably rebuilding the livelihoods of fishers and fish farmers, giving due importance to improving sectoral governance and efficiency; and
- ° the need to rebuild fishing capacity in line with sustainable resource use, using more appropriate fishing practices and building community processes that strengthen fisheries management and the conservation of the coastal environment.

Member States affected by the tsunami were invited to speak first. The affected Member States present, including India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and Yemen, highlighted the impact of the tsunami on various sectors, particularly fisheries. On the question of replacing damaged vessels, India said that the effort is to replace "like with like", ensuring no

upgradation of technology or expansion of existing capacity. India was not considering using the tsunami as an opportunity to reduce overcapacity. It also stressed that the support for rebuilding the damaged fleet should not be considered as a subsidy. India added that all vessels would be compulsorily registered from now on. It also highlighted the importance of coastal conservation in the post-tsunami phase and the need for "soft armouring". India further requested FAO to undertake an assessment of damage to the fisheries resource base as a result of the tsunami.

The European Union (EU) requested FAO to play a leading role in the assessment of fisheries resources in the post-tsunami phase. The EU stressed that vessel transfers to tsunami-affected countries should not be seen as the export of capacity. In a context where so many fishing vessels have been damaged by the tsunami, it seemed unreasonable that the EU should be destroying vessels that could possibly be used elsewhere. The EU also stressed that there would be no transfer of vessels without specific requests from the affected countries, and unless FAO clears the transfer after a technical analysis of the appropriateness of the vessel for local conditions in the affected country. Also, only vessels of up to 12 m in length would be considered for transfer. EU fishers whose vessels were cleared for transfer would be given premiums. The EU assured affected

2. We therefore, encourage the international community, including donor countries, international financial institutions and relevant international organizations, as well as the private sector and civil society organizations, to deliver such assistance in a co-ordinated manner under the leadership of the countries affected.
3. We call upon donor nations and international financial institutions to fulfill the pledges that they have made in this regard so that relief and rehabilitation efforts can be sustained.
4. We emphasize the need for fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation to focus on rebuilding the livelihoods of fishers and fish farmers, providing adequate protection from this and other environmental threats, and improving sectoral efficiency, sustainability and governance.
5. We recognize that environmental degradation of critical habitats caused by the tsunami in affected coastal areas, such as coral reefs and mangroves, may continue to affect the productivity of inshore fishing grounds and the potential for aquaculture rehabilitation for some time.
6. We emphasize the need to protect the rights of fishers and fishworkers, particularly those

countries that it would be able to respond immediately to requests for vessel transfer.

Japan too said that it could, on request, send either tailor-made or used vessels to tsunami-affected countries. However, it stressed that Japanese vessels would under no circumstances be forced on affected countries. As a country often affected by tsunamis itself, and having received much international assistance during such disasters in the past, Japan was keen to “pay back”.

Norway said that post-tsunami rehabilitation of the fisheries sector should stress restructuring the fleet, and strengthening institutional capacity. It is imperative to pay attention to monitoring and co-ordination of aid, Norway added, stressing the important role of FAO in post-tsunami rehabilitation.

Afghanistan emphasized the importance of ensuring the participation of fishing communities in the design and implementation of rehabilitation initiatives, drawing attention to the reference on this in the NGO statement. Afghanistan also highlighted the importance of increasing South-South dialogue in post-tsunami rehabilitation, while stressing that this should not be at the expense of North-South co-operation. It added that assistance should focus on technical and policy support.

Senegal wanted to ensure that the post-tsunami rehabilitation strategy should be based on the real needs, aspirations and

involved in subsistence and small-scale and artisanal fisheries, to a secure and just livelihood, as well as preferential access, where appropriate, to fishing grounds and resources of affected areas.

7. We also emphasize the need for fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation to be in line with the principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Rehabilitation efforts, including transfers of vessels, must proceed under the leadership and control of the affected nations and must ensure that the fishing capacity that is being rebuilt is commensurate with the productive capacity of the fisheries resources and their sustainable utilization. We

cultures of the affected populations. The United States (US) said that there should be no transfer of overcapacity and inappropriate aquaculture technology in the post-tsunami phase. Mauritania and Canada too cautioned against the transfer of overcapacity. Canada emphasized the need to maintain status quo on the issue of capacity. It also expressed appreciation for FAO’s approach of co-ordination, and suggested that FAO should also collaborate with other financial institutions. Australia highlighted its support to Indonesia in the post-tsunami phase, particularly focusing on fisheries and aquaculture development.

In response to the discussions, FAO’s Fisheries Department said it has developed a joint project, in collaboration with competent national organizations, to assess the impact of the tsunami on the fisheries resource base.

Several observations were also made by the co-ordinator of FAO’s rehabilitation activities. The large funds available with NGOs — in contrast to the limited funding available with UN agencies such as FAO — was highlighted. Also noted was the difficulty of co-ordinating large NGOs who were not interested in being co-ordinated. Attention was also drawn to the imbalances in aid flows, with countries like Maldives and Seychelles receiving comparatively little support.

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8. recognize the benefits associated with re-establishment, within affected nations, of the capacity that is required to rebuild infrastructure, including vessel building, fish processing and fishing port facilities.
8. We support the provision of greater assistance toward a co-ordinated assessment of fisheries resources in the affected region so that relief and rehabilitation efforts can proceed in a sustainable way, recognizing that the assessment must not delay the progress of relief and rehabilitation efforts.
9. We emphasize the need to rebuild and strengthen the capacity of the affected fisheries sectors, including

in the areas of fishing abilities, data collection, scientific analysis, assessments of fisheries resources and effective fisheries management, as well as to enhance the capacity of relevant communities and stakeholders to engage in this process, to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

10. We welcome the steps taken by FAO, jointly with development and research partners from the region, for the development of a strategic framework and the creation of collaborative arrangements for fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation and the restoration of marine habitats.

We support the need for FAO to play a leading role in advising and supporting the international community in matters relevant to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation and the restoration of marine habitats.

This declaration was adopted by the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries at Rome on 12 March 2005