

## **International Symposium on Multiple Roles and Functions of Fisheries and Fishing Communities**

### **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS**

Approximately 130 delegates from 17 different economies participated in a Symposium at Aomori, Japan in February, 2003, to discuss the multiple roles and functions of fisheries and fishing communities. Ten presentations were given, illuminating different aspects of how fisheries and fishing communities have important values beyond solely fishing.

The following understanding emerged with respect to fisheries and fishing communities in the world:

**1. Whereas,**

- (i) coastal fishing communities and fishing activities play valuable and sometimes indispensable functions for:

  - transmitting distinct local traditional cultures (knowledge, skills, rituals, etc) from one generation to another;
  - conserving coastal ecosystems and coastlines (through, for instance, protecting mangroves and organizing coastal clean-ups);
  - promoting responsible fishery resource managements;
  - assisting marine rescue activities; and
  - contributing to border patrols;
- (ii) in view of the fact that these functions of fisheries are not well recognized by non-fishery sectors of society, and market prices of fishery products do not usually reflect the benefits from these functions, costs associated with these functions are unrecoverable and therefore suggest the possibility of market failure;
- (iii) such communities exist in both developing and developed economies, and many of them are located in economically disadvantaged regions;
- (iv) many fishing communities face critical problems with regard to their continued existence because of aging populations (caused in part by increased early departure of younger community members who seek life in cities) and decreasing incomes (caused by various factors including slower growth of production of fish from both capture fisheries and aquaculture) compared with that of other industrial sectors;

- (v) such communities also face hardships in sustaining themselves because of unsustainable resource exploitation or degradation of fishing grounds; and
- (vi) developed economies should cooperate with developing economies by aiding (for example, through the provision of technical assistance) the development of sustainable and responsible management regimes.

**2. The participants, therefore, observed that governments and relevant authorities could:**

- (i) promote increased understanding of the important roles and functions of fisheries and fishing communities to urban residents and society at large;
- (ii) take into account regional/sector adjustment factors when introducing a new policy and, where appropriate, consider financial and technical supports for continued existence of fishery communities in rural areas;
- (iii) evaluate the potential for transferring competences related to resource management from central governments to local authorities and to seek more sustainable and responsible management frameworks, and to this end, developing economies may develop organizational arrangements such as creating fishery cooperatives, and developed economies may provide technical advice and necessary assistance for capacity building;
- (iv) encourage the development of participatory organizations, for example, fisheries cooperatives etc., to engage in fisheries decision making processes and community economic development;
- (v) seek possibilities to encourage and support additional means to grow local economies through non-fishery activities such as tourism;
- (vi) make appeal at FAO, OECD, WTO, and other fora, that proper attention should be given to the importance of fishery communities worldwide, and that stakeholder involvement (by fishers or members of communities) to major decision making processes should be secured, as appropriate;
- (vii) ensure that adequate means exist to alleviate impacts caused by market failures (as suggested in 1.(ii) above) and, in this context, include consideration of more appropriate

use of subsidy or other measures; and

(viii) research, and if appropriate apply, the concept of property rights to local communities for the coastal sea and land areas.

3 . Further, we request the meeting secretariat to send this paper to relevant international organizations and governments.

Aomori, Japan  
February 13, 2003

