

News Round-up

ILO Standard

SAMUDRA Report has reliably learnt that the 283rd Session of the International Labour Organization (ILO) General Body, held in Geneva between 7 and 22 March 2002, has made a historic decision: for the first time, the scope of fisheries has been broadened to include large- and small-scale fishing operations.

The Session decided to include, in the agenda of the 2004 International Labour Conference, a “comprehensive standard (a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation) on work in the fishing sector”.

According to the ILO, such standards are proposed because, while the fishing sector shares many of the special characteristics of the shipping sector, there are enough differences to warrant separate consideration and

distinct standards. ILO believes that it is also important to convene a tripartite meeting of experts to help in the preparation of such fishing sector labour standards.

Tuna deal

The **Philippines** and **Indonesia** have come up with a new tuna deal. Filipino fishermen can now, for the first time in history, fish in certain parts of the Sulawesi Sea and the Pacific Ocean in the east and portions of the Indian Ocean in the west, which form part of **Indonesia's** exclusive economic zone.

Philippine boats can now dock and land their catch at the Indonesian ports of Bitung, Manokswari, Sorong, Biak and Jayapura, all towards the Pacific Ocean, as well as the ports of Sabang, Bungus, Jakarta, Surabaya and Bahyuwangi, all towards the Indian Ocean. The ports of Bitung, Biak, Sorong, Surabaya and Jakarta are especially important for the Indonesian tuna canning industry.

By signing this agreement, the Indonesian government has been able to secure the

supply of competitive raw material for the local canning industry.

Label babel

If a new law is passed, all seafood sold in US supermarkets—domestic and imported—will soon have to carry new labels indicating whether the fish or shellfish is

farm-raised or wild-caught and the country of origin of the product.

Alaska Senator Ted Stevens' provision, part of the Farm Bill passed earlier in the Senate, builds on Senator Paul Wellstone's country-of-origin labeling amendment. The Farm Bill passed by the House contains a country-of-origin labeling provision for fruits and vegetables but not seafood.

According to *WorldCatch News Network*, fish products harvested by US flag fishing

vessels on the high seas are not eligible to be labeled 'Product of the USA', nor are fish products harvested in the US and partially processed in another country.

The National Fisheries Institute (NFI), the US seafood industry's largest trade association, opposes mandatory country-of-origin labeling for seafood. NFI officials argue such requirements convey no unique health or safety information to consumers.

The fisheries association cites a report by the General Accounting Office—released in April 1999—that raised numerous questions about the effectiveness, cost, and enforceability of mandatory country-of-origin labels.

Citizens only

Trawling for fish in territorial waters of **Ghana** is now reserved solely for Ghanaians under a new fisheries law recently passed by the country's parliament.

The law also stipulates that 50 per cent of investment in tuna fishing is reserved for Ghanaians, instead of 25 per cent, as in the past. Foreigners can invest in the remaining 50 per cent. The Ghanaian

government has already promised to bring in some fishing vessels to enable Ghanaians to produce fish locally this year.

The government hopes that foreign participation will increase annual tuna production from

70,000 to 100,000 tonnes. The country's exports of frozen whole round tuna to the European Union has increased over the past three years to 45,000 tonnes.

Sea cops

Hundreds of fishermen on the island of Batam, neighbouring Singapore, in **Indonesia** have set up a private task force to combat illegal fishing, smuggling and piracy.

In an effort to end the rampant sea-crimes in the waters surrounding Batam, 855 km northwest of Jakarta, an association of Batam fishermen has launched a special patrol task force that will operate with volunteers.

Initially, the volunteers at sea will

receive training from Indonesian marine police and the navy.

Their targets will include foreign fishing boats engaging in illegal fishing in Indonesian territorial waters, or in other illicit activities such as smuggling and piracy.

Shrimp embargo

After a decade of litigation, the **United States** Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has reversed an opinion of the Court of International Trade that would have expanded the present US embargo on imported shrimp in violation of international trade agreements, according to *WorldCatch News Network*, quoting press statement from the National Fisheries Institute.

NFI, the US' largest

seafood trade association, had battled the suit by the Turtle Island Restoration Network, the ASPCA, the Humane Society and the Sierra Club, in what the court called a long and tortured history of litigation.

In its decision, the Court upheld the view supported by the NFI that a country may export shrimp to the US by requiring Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) on those vessels catching shrimp destined for the US market.

This position is consistent with a recent WTO decision that such a policy is permissible under international trade agreements.

Concluding that the US State Department's interpretation of US law is the correct one, the court said in its final decision, "We therefore reverse the Court of International Trade's judgement that the government's decision to permit the importation of TED-caught shrimp from uncertified nations is not in accordance with Section 609(b) of Pub. L. 101-162, and affirm the Court of International Trade's denial of injunctive relief and attorney fees."

NFI President Richard E. Gutting, Jr said, "The court ruling ensures that US shrimp vessels will continue to have a level playing field with foreign shrimpers, and that the many companies around the nation that export seafood will not face foreign retaliation for what might have been an illegal US trade barrier.

Charter

At its General Body meeting, held from 6 to 19 December 2001, at Arjappally, Orissa, **India**, the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) brought out a 42-point Charter of Demands that seeks to bring about a true development of the fishing communities in India.

The charter calls for regulations on deep-sea fishing, subsidies for the small-scale fisheries sector, controls on aquaculture, and the implementation of

the Coastal Regulation Zone notification of 1991.

NFF has also demanded lifting of the recent ban on fishing certain species of shark, imposed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The charter also calls for welfare and social security measures for fishworkers and their families. It further demands the release of innocent fishermen being held in different jails of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.