



FIRST MEETING OF THE HIGH SEAS TASK FORCE: SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

Meeting of the High Seas Task Force
Paris, 9 March 2005

The document contains a summary of the main conclusions and outcomes of the first meeting of the High Seas Task Force, which took place in Paris on 9 March 2005. The next meeting of the Task Force will be in February 2006, at which final recommendations and proposals will be adopted.

HSTF/10
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A. INTRODUCTION

The first substantive meeting of the Ministerially-led Task Force on IUU Fishing on the High Seas (High Seas Task Force (HSTF)) took place in Paris on 9 March 2005.

The purpose of the meeting was to enable the members of the HSTF (Ministers from Australia, Canada, Chile, Namibia and New Zealand and the Directors-General of WWF, IUCN and the Earth Institute) to consider specific proposals for action that could form an interlinked set of solutions in the fight against IUU fishing on the high seas.

To inform its discussions, the HSTF had before it six working papers prepared by the Secretariat. The HSTF was also provided with a preliminary analysis of the impacts of IUU fishing on developing countries based on the results of a study commissioned for the HSTF by the Department for International Development (United Kingdom). The working papers outlined the proposals for action and contained specific questions and issues for discussion on each proposal. Each of the proposals is designed in some way to:

- (a) Sharply increase the risk of exposure of IUU operations and the potential for successful interdiction; or
- (b) Increase operating costs of IUU activities; or
- (c) Reduce revenues from IUU fishing.

The following were the main conclusions and outcomes of the meeting. It was also agreed that the next meeting of the HSTF should take place in February 2006. The purpose of that meeting will be to adopt the final report and recommendations of the HSTF and agree on a way forward. The need to elaborate the proposals in sufficient detail to enable them to be swiftly implemented following the publication of the final report was emphasized, as well as the need to obtain broad support for the measures and adopt a clear strategy for continued support and advocacy.

B. HIGH SEAS MCS

- HSTF members agreed that the existing MCS Network should be transformed into an international unit with dedicated resources, its own analytical capacity and the ability to provide training and technical support to fisheries enforcement agencies in developing countries.
- HSTF members agreed that the best way to progress the Network would be to build a coalition of like-minded countries and organizations that could potentially share the costs of and benefits from an enhanced MCS Network.
- HSTF members directed the Secretariat to elaborate the steps that would be needed to transform the MSC Network and commence the coalition-building process by establishing a virtual working party drawn from like-minded countries.

C. GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON HIGH SEAS FISHING VESSELS

- HSTF members agreed to establish a global information system on high seas fishing vessels in the form of a publicly-available international database of information relating to the global high seas fishing fleet. It was noted that this might form one of the core activities of the proposed MCS Network. However, in developing the proposal further it was suggested that the Secretariat also consider the feasibility of building on *Equasis*.

D. FLAG STATE PERFORMANCE

- HSTF members agreed to develop guidelines on flag State performance in relation to high seas fishing vessels that may be used as criteria for evaluating flag State performance. The proposed guidelines, and an evaluation of the performance of flag States against them, would be considered and adopted at the next meeting of the HSTF in February 2006.

E. PORT STATE CONTROLS

- HSTF members agreed to promote the notion of a responsible port State as “a State that is committed to making the fullest possible use of its jurisdiction under international law in furtherance of its own rights and interests as well as the international community’s interest in conservation and management of high seas marine living resources.”
- HSTF members committed to acting as responsible port States.
- HSTF members committed to advocating the strengthening of port State control within RFMOs of which they are members.
- HSTF members decided to endorse the FAO Port State Model Scheme and agreed to actively promote its widespread application.
- As a practical demonstration of their commitment, HSTF members agreed to:
 - Commission an inventory and analysis of the current practice of States and RFMOs with respect to port State controls, which could then form a good basis for the development of the proposed FAO database on port State measures, to be kept updated by FAO; and
 - Take the initiative to adopt between themselves by 2006 an MOU on Port State Control which would require them to apply port State control for all foreign fishing vessels visiting their ports, regardless of the type of vessel, the type of fishing technique and the type of species that are to be landed.

F. CONTROL OVER NATIONALS

- HSTF members decided to endorse the recommendations of the IPOA-IUU Fishing relating to control over nationals and committed to implement these recommendations to the extent permitted by national law.
- HSTF members directed the Secretariat to conduct a more detailed analysis of how “long-arm” approaches based on the Lacey Act might be adapted to support enforcement of internationally-agreed conservation and management measures.

G. HIGH SEAS GOVERNANCE

- HSTF members agreed to take active steps to encourage participation by the key States mentioned in HSTF/09 in UNFSA.
- Recognizing that a key obstacle to improved governance is inadequate implementation of existing international fisheries instruments at the regional level, including lack of institutional standards, lack of coordination between regional bodies and inadequate harmonization of measures, HSTF members agreed to the following specific measures and positions that they will commit to advocate internationally:
 - HSTF members directed the Secretariat to conduct an assessment of the performance of high seas RFMOs against objective criteria (to be developed by the Secretariat) based on the standards established by relevant international agreements.
 - HSTF members agreed that they will support efforts to develop greater harmonization of measures between tuna RFMOs and that they will explore further the areas in which there is scope for better coordination between other related RFMOs, with a view to greater efficiency and consistency in conservation and management measures.
 - HSTF members agreed that they will support the idea of a mechanism for global oversight of RFMOs to promote a more systematic approach to the implementation of UNFSA, including through giving a greater role to the annual meeting of States Parties to UNFSA, and directed the Secretariat to prepare a more detailed proposal for consideration in February 2006.
 - HSTF members agreed that they will support initiatives to bring presently unregulated high seas fish stocks under international management.
 - HSTF agreed that the scope of application of the UNFSA should be expanded to include all high seas fish stocks.

H. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- Recognizing that an effective public education campaign will be an important factor in the development and implementation of the proposals, HSTF members agreed to develop a detailed plan by February 2006 which will draw attention to the problem of IUU fishing on the high seas, the work of the HSTF and improve knowledge of the social, economic and environmental consequences of IUU fishing on the high seas.
