

Partnership Dialogue 4: Making Fisheries Sustainable

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My brief presentation this morning will focus on building sustainable fisheries & healthy marine ecosystems from the perspective of Caribbean SIDs, with a focus on governance and partnerships arrangements.

1. The fish stocks are very important sources of food and livelihoods, particularly for some of the poorest and most vulnerable members of our countries.
2. To date, initiatives by the global community to achieve sustainable fisheries have not, by and large, successfully delivered the desired results. But there are, in my opinion, a growing number of success stories that we can learn from going forward.
3. Long-term sustainable benefits depend on the extent to which States and other stakeholders can implement the Governance and management reforms necessary to **effectively manage** fisheries and conserve and protect the marine environment & its biodiversity. – this is undoubtedly the single most important challenge in fisheries for this generation.
4. The fisheries and marine ecosystems in the Caribbean are very complex and dynamic systems. The Caribbean Sea is a **semi-enclosed sea** and is really one inter-connected, **Large Marine Ecosystem**.
5. An important characteristic of fish stocks in the region is that they are shared between 2 or more states and in some cases, extend beyond national jurisdiction onto to the high seas where they are exploited by other states and entities.
6. For this reason, international and **regional cooperation is a fundamental requirement** for effective management of the fisheries and living marine resources in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem.

Let me now say a little the Governance Arrangements for Fisheries in the Caribbean, which are also quite complex.

7. In 2002, CARICOM Countries established the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), a regional fisheries body, to coordinate & facilitate cooperation in conservation, management & development of the fisheries resources.
8. The CRFM is made up of 3 bodies -First – the **Ministerial Council**, which is the main decision-making body;
9. Second, the Caribbean Fisheries Forum, comprising Heads of national Fisheries Administrations, together with key stakeholders including, smallscale fishers, NGOs, academic institutions and regional and international development partners. The Forum is the main technical deliberative body of the organization and makes recommendations to the Ministers.
10. Thirdly, there is the Permanent Secretariat that coordinates the work of the organization. There are also a number of technical & scientific working groups.

11. Governance bodies & working groups meet regularly each year to plan, undertake stock assessments, develop and adopt management measures and review implementation of decisions at the national and regional levels. Implementation is done largely at the national level.
12. Given our focus today on partnership – I want to note in passing that CRFM was established through a 10 year partnership programme, funded by the Gov of Canada.
13. There are 3 other regional fisheries bodies with a significant presence and **ongoing activities in the Caribbean**.
14. First there is the FAO WECAFC, which is made up of 34 countries in the Wider Caribbean and a few distant water States and the EU.
15. Then there is OSPESCA, the fisheries body of the Central American Integration system, which is made up of 8 Central American States.
16. There is also ICCAT which is responsible for conservation and management of Tunas and tuna like species in the Atlantic and adjacent seas.

What is the State of fisheries in Caribbean Region?

17. Fishing operations in the Caribbean SIDs, are mainly small-scale, multi-species fisheries conducted from small open boats. Small semi-industrial and industrial fisheries exist in a few countries.
18. Most of the traditional commercially important species are either fully developed or over-exploited. These include queen conch, spiny lobster, shrimp, reef-fishes and some of the highly migratory and straddling pelagic species which are managed by ICCAT. But there are also a few species that are under-utilized.
19. The Wider Caribbean Region, that is the area under the mandate of the FAO WECAFC, has been reported to be one of the most over-fished” in the world, with catches over the past 10 year being 30% below the average for the past 30 years.
20. However, when you look at the CARICOM Sub-region the picture is very different. Overall Production trend has been positive.
21. In respect of Fisheries management, at the sub-regional level, the CRFM and OSPESCA countries and stakeholders are working much more closely together and investing more, of their own resources, on a per capita basis, in strengthening harmonized approaches to fisheries management, than is the case at the Wider Caribbean level. And we have seen progress in these sub-regional blocks in moving towards sustainable fisheries of key species, as confirmed by independent studies done by FAO.
22. At another level, among fishers, particularly smallscale operators including persons involved in processing and marketing, we also have significant networking and partnerships, through the

activities of the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO). These primary stakeholders are now working much more closely with each other, and are key partners with national governments, academic institutions, NGOs, and the regional fisheries bodies working to make fisheries sustainable while addressing livelihood concerns.

23. A third level interaction that I want to highlight is the **partnerships between and among** the RFBs.
24. The 3 RFBs (CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC) have executed formal cooperation agreements and we are working closely together to coordinate and conduct joint activities to strengthen fisheries management. We have established several joint working groups.
25. In recent years, we have collectively adopted and are implementing a number of cooperative policy instruments at the sub-regional and Wider regional levels – based on precautionary and ecosystem approaches, and transparent and participatory processes. These instruments are aimed at strengthening fisheries management and promoting food security and sustainable livelihoods.
26. These instruments include, among others, at the **CARICOM/CRFM level** the: (i) Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy; (ii) Castries Declaration on IUU Fishing; (iii) St. Georges Declaration on Conservation, management and sustainable use of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster; and the Sub-regional Fisheries Management Plan for the Flyingfish fishery.
27. At the wider WECAFC level - in 2016, Regional Fisheries Management plans were adopted for Queen Conch, and Caribbean Spiny lobster.
28. A number of other Fisheries Management Plans are being prepared for others stocks, such as, Blackfin tuna, billfish, shrimp and ground fish.
29. In addition to these there is the 10 year Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the Sustainable Management of the shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and the North Brazil Continental Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems, produced by the UNDP/CLME Project which has been endorsed at the political level by 34 ministers from 25 countries. The 3 RFBs worked closely with other partners to develop this important instrument.

What are the key lessons?

30. One of the key messages I want to leave with you is to highlight the extent of cooperation and partnership that is taking place among the CARICOM Countries, including collaboration with fisherfolk organizations, academic institutions, NGOs, and development partners. This has helped enormously in transitioning us on the path to making fishing sustainable.

31. Secondly, I want to highlight the significant collaboration and partnership that has emerged in recent years between the 3 most active regional fisheries bodies in the Caribbean – FAO/WECAFC, CRFM and OSPESCA.
32. Thirdly, I want to highlight the very important numerous partnerships with other regional and international organisations focused on capacity development, research, financing, and implementation of various projects aimed at improving fisheries management - without which progress would not have been possible.
33. In a context of limited funding, and human and institutional capacity - - **these partnerships are indispensable** in updating information on the status of the stocks, conducting assessment studies, developing and supporting the implementation of integrated FMPs in the region; and eliminating IUU fishing from the region.
34. In closing - The challenges are great, the variables that must be taken into consideration in making fisheries sustainable are numerous - integrated management plans, based on multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder engagement using the ecosystem and precautionary approaches & science is required. The support of all stakeholders - local communities, private sector, environmental groups, academic institutions and other interests. Is necessary.
35. Long-term commitments and partnerships with international partners and donors is indispensable for SIDs going forward in addressing the numerous challenges to making fisheries sustainable.

Thank you very much.

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