

# **REPORT OF BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE ON MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BIMSTEC) WORKSHOP ON FISHERIES COOPERATION**

**8-10 MAY 2007  
PHUKET, THAILAND**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. At the invitation of the Department of Fisheries, Thailand, the Bay of Bengal Initiative on Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Workshop on Fisheries Cooperation was held from 8 to 10 May 2007 in Phuket, Thailand.

2. The Workshop was attended by delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Representatives from Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA), and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand also attended the Workshop as observers. The list of participants appears as **Annex 1**.

3. The Workshop was held with the objectives to review status of fisheries and priority areas of needs in the Member Countries, to discuss implementation of the three approved projects including clarification on operational plan for the project on ecosystem-based fishery management in the Bay of Bengal, to review area of cooperation and activities approved since 2001 as well as Terms of Reference of Sectoral Committee on Fisheries 20007, and to formulate future programs (2008-2010). TOR and 3-year fisheries action plan (2008-2010).

## **II. OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP**

4. On behalf of the host country and the lead country for fisheries sector, Dr. Somying Piumsomboon, Deputy Director-General, Department of Fisheries, Thailand, welcomed the participants and observers to the Workshop. She reiterated a privilege for Thailand to host this Workshop. She was envisaged that the synergy of fisheries and aquaculture cooperation both in marine and inland areas and prospective directions of area cooperation among the BIMSTEC member countries in the next 3 years (2008-2010) could be achieved. After completing the opening statement, which appears as **Annex 2**, she declared the Workshop officially open.

## **III. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN**

5. Dr. Somying Piumsomboon, Deputy Director-General, Department of Fisheries, Thailand, was unanimously elected as the Chair of the Workshop.

## **IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE WORKSHOP**

6. The Agenda and arrangement of the Workshop, which appears as **Annex 3** was adopted.

## **V. PROGRESS OF BIMSTEC FISHERIES COOPERATION**

7. The Workshop took note of the on-going progress of BIMSTEC Fisheries Cooperation as presented by the Secretariat. The presentation outlined the historical background and progress of fisheries cooperation of the BIMSTEC since its establishment and endorsement in the 2nd BIMST-EC Ministerial Meeting held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 17-19 December 1998. Two BIMSTEC Fisheries-Related Meetings were organized in 2001 and 2005 respectively. Many joint activities and areas of cooperation had been discussed and endorsed for implementation.

8. It was noted that this Workshop was convened in response to the decision made at the 9th Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi, India in 2006 to welcome the offer of Thailand to host the Workshop on Fisheries Cooperation. The Meeting noted the main objectives of this Workshop which are consideration of the endorsed 3 projects, development of 3 years plan for fisheries cooperation among the member countries in the next 3 years, and consideration of the Terms of Reference of the BIMSTEC Sectoral Committee on Fisheries. The presentation appears in **Annex 4**.

## **VI. FISHERIES PROFILES AND PRIORITY NEED OF THE MEMBER COUNTRIES**

9. The representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand presented their fisheries profile summarizing the status and potential of fisheries and aquaculture development, the policies and institutional arrangements, as well as the constraints for further development and improvement. They emphasized the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in terms of food security, economic contribution, poverty alleviation, and foreign exchange earnings. Fisheries profiles and priority need of the participating countries appear as **Annex 5, 6, 7 and 8**, respectively.

10. The Workshop noted priority needs of respective countries of which common priorities need for fisheries cooperation among the participating countries can be summarized as follows:

- Awareness building of potential expansion of aquaculture and application of appropriate technology and new cultivable species for aquaculture;
- Development of infrastructure and its accessibility;
- Organized database and information system;
- Development of hatchery for seeds;
- Inland and rivers fisheries conservation and management;
- Regulation of fisheries and uncontrolled fishing practices;
- Quarantine and fish health;
- Market development and facilitation;
- Knowledge exchange program through training and seminar;
- Development of fish processing and improvement of product quality;
- Development of fisheries in the deep seas and improvement of fisheries management; and
- Fisheries joint venture and technical cooperation.

11. The Workshop considered that the above-identified needs of fisheries cooperation could provide a basis for seeking close communication, more interaction and collaboration among the BIMSTEC member countries.

## **VII. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THREE APPROVED PROJECTS**

### **Project on Eco-system-based Fishery Management in the Bay of Bengal**

12. The Workshop took note of the status of the project proposal by Thailand, which appears as **Annex 9**. The presentation highlighted on the planned joint survey of BIMSTEC Member Countries on assessment and management of marine resources in the Bay of Bengal planned from 25 October to 21 December 2007 as well as the list of nominated scientists for the joint survey. The Workshop also noted the proposed logistic arrangement during the Port of Call at Chittagong. (The workshop recommended that Bhutan should participate in the joint survey, the Delegates from Bhutan assured to communicate the issue to the Ministry of Agriculture, Royal Government of Bhutan and respond accordingly.)

13. The Workshop reaffirmed interest in taking part in the joint survey and requested Thailand as the lead country to send an official letter informing the proposed survey plan to all 7 Member Countries in order to facilitate necessary arrangement. With regards to the logistic arrangement, the representative from Bangladesh welcomed the selection of Chittagong as the Port of Call and also offered Challa as an alternate Port of Call in case of unforeseen inconvenience. He further requested Thailand to send an official letter soonest informing the Ministry of Fisheries and Thai Embassy in Dhaka in order to facilitate necessary arrangement for the proposed Port of Call in Bangladesh.

### **Project on Impact of Oil and Gas Extraction on Fisheries and the Bangladesh Marine Environment**

14. The Workshop took note of the status of the project proposal by Bangladesh, which appears as **Annex 10**. The presentation highlighted on the importance of study on impacts from oil and gas extraction on fisheries resources, habitats and the environment as well as identification of mitigation measures of the identified impacts.

15. The Workshop noted that the proposal currently focused on activities in Bangladesh for the initial phase. Considering the rationale proposed by the project, which is also in line with common interests of other Member Countries, the Workshop suggested Bangladesh to consider widening the scope of the project to have regional objectives. Suggestions were also made that the project should be further developed in consultation with other relevant agencies such as those working on energy, environment and natural resources.

### **Project on Marine Fish Stock Assessment and Development of New Fishing Grounds**

16. The Workshop took note of the status of the project proposal by Bangladesh, which appears as **Annex 11**. The Workshop viewed that the project has close linkages with the Project on Eco-system-based Fishery Management in the Bay of Bengal and therefore suggested activities of the two projects could be harmonized particularly making use of the joint survey for marine fish stock assessment and development of new fishing grounds.

## **VIII. STRATEGIC FORMULATION FOR FISHERIES COOPERATION**

### **Draft Terms of Reference of Sectoral Committee on Fisheries 2007**

17. The Workshop considered and endorsed the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) of

Sectoral Committee on Fisheries 2007, which appears as **Annex 12**. The Workshop took note that the revised TOR accommodates Bhutan and Nepal as the new members as well as to include inland fisheries in fisheries cooperation.

18. Regarding the “Working Arrangement” of the TOR, the Workshop suggested that a format of report should be clearly defined and synthesis of progress, achievement and problems related to the fisheries sector should be submitted to BIMSTEC Senior Officials Meeting.

19. In the “Area of Cooperation of the TOR, the Workshop identified additional areas of cooperation under the item 5 on Other Areas of Mutual Interests. These additional areas include poverty-focused small-scale fisheries covering both inland and marine waters, aquatic eco-system impact assessment and mitigation, etc. The Workshop also stressed the need for the BIMSTEC member countries to consider promote fisheries cooperation with relevant international/regional organizations including Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), SEAFDEC.

### **Area Cooperation and Activities Approved Since 2001**

20. The Workshop reviewed the “Area Cooperation and Activities Approved since 2001” and made adjustment to the area cooperation matrix, of which the “Revised Area Cooperation and Activities” appears as **Annex 13**.

## **IX. PROGRAM CONSIDERATION FOR 3 YEARS (2008-2010)**

### **Marine Capture Fisheries**

21. The Workshop considered and supported new proposals related to marine capture fisheries as follows:

- Adaptive Learning in Tsunami Early Warning System (ALTEWS) for Fishermen and Marine Occupations (**Annex 14**) proposed by Thailand
- Harvesting of Under-exploited Fishery Resources along the Continental Shelf in the Bay of Bengal by Bottom Vertical Longline and Deep-sea Traps (**Annex 15**) proposed by Thailand

22. In the discussion on the ALTEWS project, the Workshop welcomed the proposal particularly from the view point of coastal states bordering the Bay of Bengal. The Workshop encouraged other BIMSTEC Member Countries to take part in the implementation of the project including demonstration of ALTEWS. The Workshop suggested any interested Member Countries to communicate with Thailand for any further comments and intended participation in the project.

23. Under the Harvesting of Under-exploited Fishery Resources project, the representative from Sri Lanka commended the proposal as in case of his country no fisheries resources survey has been conducted over the past 25 years. However, concern was expressed on the cost implication and requested Thailand to consider sourcing of additional funding sources to support the project.

24. The Workshop suggested that the latter project shares similar nature to the joint survey discussed earlier. The Workshop therefore suggested Thailand to consider making links

among activities of various projects.

## **Inland Fisheries**

25. The Workshop considered and supported the concept paper of Nepal in the capacity of the lead country on inland fisheries (**Annex 16**) as well as new proposals related to

- Exchange of Improved Strain of Freshwater Fish (**Annex 17**) proposed by Thailand
- Exchange of Improved Strain of the Giant Freshwater Prawn (**Annex 18**) proposed by Thailand
- Study Visit of Expert for High Land Aquaculture (**Annex 19**) proposed by Thailand

26. In the discussion, the representative from Bhutan made observation on the scientific evidence for the in-breed of the Indian major carps. Scientific studies including comparative studies on the growth rate of IMCs in various countries should be conducted to verify the extent of this problem. He further supported the exchange of research information particularly those of scientific/technical in nature in order to support his country in future development of freshwater fish aquaculture. He also suggested that promotion of wider fish consumption could also be considered when planning future projects.

27. The representative from Thailand pointed out that each Member Country could lead in conducting training on freshwater aquaculture species of their respective competence and technology advancement.

28. While noting the importance of IMCs in Bangladesh, the representative from Bangladesh suggested that species of focus should not be limited only to IMCs but also other native strains. He further suggested that the promotion of freshwater aquaculture should be made in the context of addressing poverty alleviation and food security. In financial arrangement and budget required in the three proposed projects, he sought clarification on explicit benefits as well as the financial implication to each Member Country in taking part in the implementation of the projects. Improvement of logistics for fisheries should be considered and coordinated with the other Sectoral Committee. He also requested Thailand through TICA to consider inclusion of training scholarship on fisheries in future work plan. He also pointed out the need for future work to be done on fish feeds.

29. In response, the representative of Thailand clarified that the project does not only focus on IMCs but also other indigenous fish species. However, IMCs were identified as ones of the focused species as they are common and indigenous species in the BIMSTEC Member Countries, which is fast growing species and appropriate for extensive promotion. As for the financial arrangement, the proposals were developed under the cost-sharing scheme, which only cover the cost of activities conducted by in Thailand. Other participating countries are requested to bare their own cost in taking part in the projects. Suggestions were also made that the three proposed projects are inter-related and the projects should be further elaborated under one umbrella.

30. The representative from Nepal, echoed by Bangladesh underlined the importance of high land/cold area aquaculture for the purposes of local food security and premium-price commercial species. Considering the market demand on these types of fishes, activities supporting the promotion of aquaculture on these species should be further explored. He also pointed out the importance of inland fisheries particularly in riverine resources and suggested activities on such areas. He also raised the need to work on aquaculture of high-value

indigenous coal water fish species including mahseer in high land areas. Along this line, he informed the Workshop that he would submit the concept proposals to Thailand for further compilation and comments by the BIMSTEC Member Countries.

31. The Workshop requested Thailand to coordinate with any interest Member Countries to revise the three project proposals for further submission to the Sectoral Committee for Fisheries.

32. The Workshop reaffirmed the fact that all BIMSTEC Member Countries could still submit any other proposals or inputs for fisheries work plan for 2008 to 2010. The Workshop requested Thailand as the lead country to incorporate the proposals made and prepare a comprehensive fisheries work plan for 2008 to 2010 for circulation to all BIMSTEC Member Countries for comments and finalization before submitting to the Sectoral Committee for Fisheries. The Workshop also requested SEAFDEC for any possible assistance in packaging the work plan. (a timeframe/deadline for submission of proposals can be reflected in order to ensure timely facilitations)

## **X. OTHER MATTERS**

### **Facilitation of Regional Fisheries Cooperation: Experience of SEAFDEC in Southeast Asia**

33. At the request of the BIMSTEC participating countries, Dr. Siri Ekmaharaj, Secretary-General of Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) made the presentation on the above topic. The presentation appears as **Annex 20**. In the presentation, he emphasized on the importance of linkages among sustainable resource utilization, people livelihoods, trade, improved management and multilateral economic cooperation as they provide direct impact to national economic development on one hand, and influence to the manner of achieving sustainable development on the other. He introduced the cooperation with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which was formalized since 1999 as a process towards closer regional fisheries cooperation in Southeast Asia.

34. Dr. Siri outlined major roles and contribution of SEAFDEC in facilitation of regional cooperation, highlighting the policy and advisory services and support through research & development, capacity building and information dissemination as well as the formulation and implementation of regional fisheries collaborative programs covering aspects related to fisheries resources, fisheries management, capture fisheries technologies, aquaculture, post-harvest processing and trade.

35. Considering that Myanmar and Thailand are common members of BIMSTEC and SEAFDEC, Dr. Siri outlined the following possible strategies for collaboration between the two organizations on areas of mutual interests:

- Expanding activities of SEAFDEC under existing programs through coordination with SEAFDEC member countries in BIMSTEC;
- Ad-hoc tailored made activities/projects by mobilizing SEAFDEC expertise, competence and facilities requested by non-SEAFDEC members of BIMSTEC; and
- Development of joint collaborative programs on areas of mutual interests.

36. The Workshop welcomed SEAFDEC for future collaboration with BIMSTEC recognizing its past experience and competence in fisheries and the role in facilitating

regional cooperation. The Workshop noted the proposed possible strategies and requested Thailand as the lead country to further explore possible collaboration with SEAFDEC on areas of identified priority needs. The Workshop also supported SEAFDEC role in facilitating among Regional Fisheries Bodies in raising profile and importance of small-scale fisheries, appeal for stronger support from international society and donor agencies, and develop a global initiative supporting small-scale fisheries in the future.

## **XI. ADOPTION OF THE WORKSHOP REPORT**

37. The Workshop Report was adopted by ad referendum by the end of May 2007 based on the draft report circulated to the participants at the end of the Workshop. The Workshop was held in an amicable and friendly atmosphere demonstrating seriousness and willingness of the BIMSTEC Members to work hand-in-hand in order to ensure that fisheries in the Bay of Bengal is sustained for present and future generations.

## **XII. CLOSING OF THE WORKSHOP**

38. Dr. Somying Piumsomboon, the Chair of the Workshop expressed appreciation for the active participation and contribution from Member Countries to the Workshop. She wished all participants and observers a safe trip back home and then declared the Workshop close.