Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)

By Raymon van Anrooy, Secretary
The WECAFC was established in 1973 by Resolution 4/61 of the FAO Council under Article VI (1) of the FAO Constitution. The WECAFC is the oldest Regional Fishery Body (RFB) in the Caribbean region and has the broadest mandate and membership. 34 states.
Area of competence

WECAFC’s mandate area

Covering FAO Area 31 and northern part of Area 41

51% High Seas

9.4 million sqkm of ABNJ covered
Regional interests in the ABNJ

- Protection of the marine environment and ecosystems – marine pollution reduction
- Transboundary fish stocks management
- Safeguarding regional interests for natural resources (oil, gas, minerals, energy) for the future
- Science access – unknown area
- Ownership/governance issues?

86% Deep Sea
Issues that affect those interests

- **Institutional**: problems with delimitations of sea boundaries/EEZs between states in the region
- **Environmental**: overfishing, dying of reefs in coastal waters, pollution of tourist beaches by sargassum, climate change/DRM, garbage/waste problem
- **Social**: food source, employment, CO2 capture/oxygen, unknown areas/scientific
- **Economic**: energy (oil, gas, wind, water) options and needs, fisheries DWFNs
Global status of marine stocks

Percentage of stocks assessed

- Percentage: 31, 47, 37, 27, 51, 87, 57, 21, 61, 48, 58, 88, 71, 37, 41, 47, 34, 31

- Fishing areas:
  - Atlantic, Western Central
  - Atlantic, Eastern Central
  - Atlantic, Southeast
  - Atlantic, Southwest
  - Mediterranean and Black Sea
  - Atlantic, Northeast
  - Indian Ocean, Western
  - Pacific, Southeast
  - Indian Ocean, Eastern
  - Atlantic, Northwest
  - Pacific, Northwest
  - Southern Ocean
  - Pacific, Western Central
  - Pacific, Southwest
  - Pacific, Northeast
  - Pacific, Eastern Central

Legend:
- Non-fully exploited
- Fully exploited
- Overexploited
National and regional initiatives put in place to address those issues

- **Environment:** Regional Seas (UNEP Caribbean Environmental Programme) - Cartagena convention (oil spills, land based pollution, SPAW), Sargasso Sea Commission, Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME –SAP)
- **Fisheries:** WECAFC/FAO, ICCAT, CRFM, OSPESCA, CFMC/NOAA
- **Economic:** CARICOM, ACS/CSC, CELAC
- **Natural resources:** ISA
Factors that constrain the effectiveness of those initiatives

- Many SIDS – financial crisis – no funds, small “kingdoms” and island mentality, insufficient capacity to cooperate
- Overseas territories left alone – limited interest or funding
- ABNJ – BIG UNKNOWN – no info, limited immediate economic impact
- No RFMO in the area – WECAFC process ongoing – lengthy – CCCFP took 10 years for CARICOM – bilateral fishing agreements – monkey business
- ICCAT not interested in region – limited tuna catch from Area 31
- Cartagena Convention – important member countries missing – US interests – no funding – no teeth – non-binding protocols
- Political dysfunctional groupings (ACS, CELAC, ALBA/PetroCaribe)
Ideas and perspectives

- Continue inviting Environment stakeholders (e.g. Sargasso Sea Commission, CLME, UNEP, IUCN, PEW, WWF, etc)
- Establish formal relationships with:
  - UNEP-CEP – (through CLME+ mechanism + MoU – research, biodiversity, conservation)
  - CBD (for EBSA description + capacity building on biodiversity)
  - ISA (for coordination of VME issues and SEAs)
  - ICPC (for awareness raising of fishers - trawlers)
  - IMO (for safety at sea/port state measures promotion, PSSA info exchange)
- Continue towards promoting establishment of RFMO – using experiences/best practices from other regions
- Seek collaboration from CARICOM and other economic groupings on ocean governance – combining EEZ and ABNJ interests
Lessons drawn from coastal management/EEZ and governance

• Implementation/enforcement of international agreements is very limited – continued capacity building + integration in national legal and policy frameworks is needed

• Environment sector “silo” difficult to involve in fisheries management – more efforts are needed (e.g. no involvement of fishers in MPAs, Sargasso Sea Commission)

• Capacity and knowledge of most SIDS partners on ocean governance is limited – awareness + capacity should be increased

• Secretariats (e.g. UNEP-CEP, CRFM, WECAFC, ICCAT) recognize needs to collaborate, costs implications?
Thank you for your attention