

Ecosystem-based management

Be participatory and consultative

The following Statement was presented to the Seventh Meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS)

Many delegations have referred to managing human activities as the key element in ecosystem-based management (EBM) of the oceans and coastal areas. These human activities could range from subsistence, artisanal and small-scale fishing to extraction of minerals from the seabed.

Given this range, EBM should consider applying the proportionality principle. Human activities that are most detrimental to the ecosystem should be dealt with on an urgent basis before taking up less threatening ones.

EBM should also take into account how best to address the problems of poverty and lack of food security in many coastal developing nations. There should be a strong impetus to meet the first Millennium Development Goal, namely, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

It should further be ensured that moving towards an EBM does not exacerbate social conflicts in coastal areas and that there are effective intra- and inter-sectoral conflict resolution mechanisms in place at different levels.

The implementation of marine protected areas (MPAs) has been mentioned by several delegations as an EBM measure in their coastal areas.

While some MPAs are created in consultation with coastal stakeholders, including traditional fishing communities, and make provisions for their participation in sustainable fishing, there are others that are designed to exclude fishers from their fishing grounds. Some of the no-take MPAs in developing countries have, in particular,

been causing severe hardship to artisanal fishers by displacing them from, or denying them access to, their traditional fishing grounds. It is, therefore, important to consider creating MPAs in a participatory and consultative manner, sensitive to the needs and aspirations of coastal fishing communities, within a sustainable fisheries framework.

An important hindrance to realizing EBM goals in many tropical marine ecosystems would be the negative impact of bottom trawling within national waters, especially in the nearshore areas, which are the spawning and nursery grounds for many fish species.

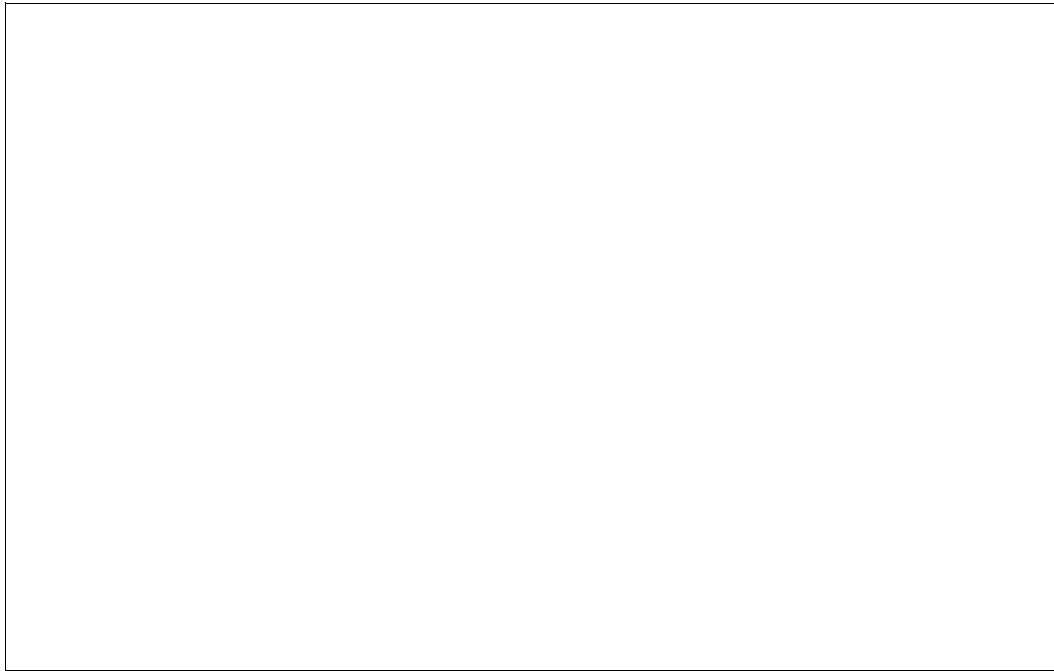
The efficiency of bottom trawls not only has adverse implications for marine biodiversity, but it also diminishes the benefits of fishing in coastal waters to traditional fishing communities who employ selective fishing gear and practices.

Phasing out bottom trawling in tropical waters would be consistent with priority setting in marine fishing to move towards EBM. In this context, the example set by Mauritius in proscribing bottom trawling in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is worth emulating by other countries.

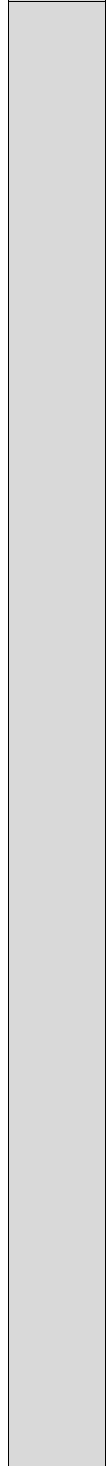
There should, simultaneously, be attempts to minimize the social impact of such a measure by providing alternative employment to fishers on board bottom trawlers, and by developing social safety nets for fishworkers.

Labour intensive

The development of labour-intensive and selective artisanal and small-scale fisheries in the EEZs and beyond, within an equitable and sustainable fisheries



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framework, should be seen as an enabling factor in moving towards EBM. 

This Statement was made on behalf of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) at the Seventh Meeting of UNICPOLOS in New York on 16 June 2006