

News Round-up

Boundary fights

The **Pakistan** Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) has urged South Asian countries to stop fishermen from becoming victims of maritime boundary disputes.

The PFF, which is a non-governmental organization, also calls on countries to make working arrangements to provide fishermen access to grounds to sustain their livelihoods, reports *The Dawn*.

In its statement, the PFF said, "It is important that legislation to deal with the arrest and detention of fishermen in other coastal States' waters should not violate the spirit of Article 73 of the 1982 Fisheries Convention, the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights."

The PFF pointed out that if illegal operations were conducted within State territorial waters rather than the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), fishermen should not be more severely punished than they would for a similar violation within the EEZ.

In recent months Pakistan's fisheries sector has been dogged by a series of vessel detentions by different States. In September, Balochistan fisheries authorities said over 80 Karachi-based vessels had been detained for operating within their territorial waters.

Guns 'n fishes

Fifteen Kenyans were among the 34 seamen detained in **Somalia** since July by Somali militiamen for allegedly fishing in Somali waters.

They were forced to spend 99 days in captivity under gun-wielding pirates.

"We were like prisoners during captivity without even freedom to question ill-treatment," one of the seamen told *The Nation* of Nairobi.

According to the Kenya Ports Authority acting merchant shipping superintendent, the crew members included 15 Kenyans, five Italians, one Romanian, 10

Senegalese, one Gambian and two Somalis. All were now safely back home, after being set free on 3 November. The vessel and the crew members were fined more than US\$750,000 by the Somali militia for fishing in Somali territorial waters. But the vessel owners insisted that they had a licence to fish in Somalia.

Subsidies die

Jim Sutton, **New Zealand's** Minister of Trade Negotiations, has called for an end to fish subsidies. He was talking at the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting at Qatar. Sutton believes that eliminating subsidies will help nations who manage their fish stocks sustainably, as well as consumers, and the environment.

To achieve this goal New Zealand convened the 'Friends of Fish' committee at the WTO meet.

In supporting his plea, Sutton said the global fisheries trade was worth about US\$50 billion a year. Of this, about 20 per cent of the income comes from subsidies and transfers. "Those subsidies encourage overfishing and exploitation of stocks. It is not sustainable and if the system is not changed, fishing will be ruined, and the fishermen along with it," he said.

New Zealand has long been in the forefront of the effort to get nations to agree on ending harmful subsidies in the fisheries sector, working through the WTO. "This group had its first major success when the call for negotiations on fishing subsidies was included in the final draft declaration text in Geneva last month. Now the challenge is to ensure that the clause on fishing subsidies remains in the text if and when a final version is agreed on," said Sutton.

He pointed out that there was opposition to the current text from a few delegations—Japan, Korea, Canada, and the European Union. "But interest in maintaining the clauses is broadly based, and many

developing nations are particularly keen to see an end to fishing subsidies which devastate the markets on which their own fishing interests depend," he added. References to eliminating fishing subsidies was in the text at the Seattle WTO meeting two years

ago, when a bid to launch a new round of world trade negotiations failed.

"Ending fisheries subsidies is a critical environmental issue," said Sutton. "The scale of fishing industry subsidies is one of the reasons global fish stocks are in such a perilous state. Getting rid of those subsidies would be a win-win-win situation: a win for nations who manage their fish stocks sustainably because the price for fish would not be artificially driven down by subsidies. It would also be a win for consumers who will be able to buy the fish they want; and a win for the environment."

Toothy deal

Japan seems to have got a fair deal at the 20th Convention for

the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), held from 29 October to 2 November in Hobart, Australia.

The request for an increase in the country's exploratory toothfish (*mero*) quota in each of the six areas of the Antarctic between December 2001 and November 2002 was granted and the quota was increased 60 tonnes to 560 tonnes. In addition, similar applications from other countries were agreed, on the condition that measures are taken to protect sea birds.

Japan's application to increase the southern king crab (*centolla*) pot fishing quota in the Antarctic to 1,300 tonnes between December 2001 and November 2002 was also approved.

However, the quota for Antarctic krill adopted at last year's annual meeting remains unchanged:

preventive fishing quota: 4 million tonnes; total fishing quota for year 2000/01: 98,000 tonnes; fishing quota granted to Japan

(three vessels) for 2000/01: 67,000 tonnes.

In addition, some technological improvements were discussed for the Toothfish Catch Documentation Scheme, which was initiated in May 2000.

And finally, the Scientific Committee reported abnormally high catches of toothfish in FAO Area 51 (SW Indian Ocean adjacent to the Antarctic).

It was thus decided that a flag country should confirm vessels' position via Vessel Monitoring Services (VMS), if requested by a country where toothfish are landed.

Losing credibility

The credibility of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) is at stake following the body's failure to agree on management regimes for a number of species in international waters, claims Scottish Fishermen's Federation president Alex Smith.

He said that NEAFC was in danger of proving a completely toothless body after third countries vetoed **European Union** moves to have control measures agreed for blue whiting and haddock fisheries. This

occurred at the Commission's AGM in London.

UN Agreement

The UN Fish Stocks Agreement (1995) or the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks was adopted without a vote by the 56th session of the UN General Assembly on 28 November 2001.

The Final Act of the Conference follows the opening for signature of the Conference's

outcome: the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10th December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The UN Fish Stocks Agreement will enter into force on 11 December 2001, that is, 30 days after the deposit of the thirtieth instrument of accession to the Agreement by Malta on 11 November 2001.