Draft NWIFCA Principles for the Management of Sustainable Marine Fisheries

Introduction

The Principles are designed to embrace the economic, environmental and social elements of fisheries. Their successful implementation depends upon a system of management which is open, fair, based upon the best information available and which incorporates all relevant legal obligations. A sustainable fishery in the NWIFCA District should be based upon:

1)   Maintenance and re-establishment of healthy populations of targeted species and ecosystem structure;

2)   Effective fisheries management systems, taking into account all relevant biological, technological, economic, social, environmental and commercial information; and

3)   The engagement and involvement of local communities and stakeholders who are dependent on fishing for their livelihood.

4)   Established local, national and international laws and standards.

The principles are based on the following definition of a sustainable fishery:

-       it can be continued indefinitely at a reasonable level;

-       it maintains and seeks to maximise, ecological health and abundance;

-       it maintains the diversity, structure and function of the ecosystem on which it depends as well as the quality of its habitat, minimising the adverse effects that it causes;

-       it is managed and operated in a responsible manner, in conformity with local, national and international laws and regulations;

-        it maintains present and future economic and social options and benefits;

-       it is conducted in a socially and economically fair and responsible manner.

PRINCIPLE 1

A fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted, the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery

The intent of this Principle is to ensure that in the NWIFCA District, the productive capacities of resources are maintained at high levels and are not sacrificed in favour of short term interests. Where the exploited populations are depleted, the fishery will be executed such that recovery and rebuilding is allowed to occur. Fishing should be conducted in a manner that does not alter the age or genetic structure or sex composition to a degree that impairs reproductive capacity.

PRINCIPLE 2

Fishing operations should allow for the maintenance of the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem (including habitat and associated dependent and ecologically related species) on which the fishery depends or that the fishery may impact.

This principle aims to ensure that NWIFCA fisheries are conducted in a way that maintains natural functional relationships among species and takes a whole-ecosystem approach. Fisheries will be managed in a way that does not threaten biological diversity at the genetic, species or population levels. The fishery should minimise mortality or injuries to protected species, and damage to protected or sensitive habitats. Where exploited populations are depleted the fishery will be executed such that recovery and rebuilding is allowed to occur.

PRINCIPLE 3

NWIFCA fisheries should be managed to include the full range of stakeholders including all relevant authorities, local communities and those dependent on fishing for their livelihoods.

The NWIFCA recognises the need to respect the long-term interests of people dependent on fishing for their livelihood, in a manner consistent with ecological sustainability. It aims to engage and consult with stakeholders over all management approaches.

PRINCIPLE 4

NWIFCA fisheries are subject to management approaches that conform to local, national and international laws and standards.

1. NWIFCA management should flow from long-term objectives consistent with the principles above. It will contain transparent consultation and consider all relevant information including local knowledge. The impact of fishery management decisions on all those who depend on the fishery for their livelihoods should be a key factor in decisions. An appropriate mechanism for the resolution of disputes should be incorporated. Where possible management approaches should create economic and social incentives that promote sustainable fishing.

2. Where there are sustainability concerns, the NWIFCA should act in a timely and adaptive fashion. It should receive the best available information using a precautionary approach when dealing with scientific uncertainty.

3. A research plan is required to define the information needs of management and disseminate research results to interested parties in a timely fashion. The plan should provide for assessments and surveys of stock and fishery impacts.

4. Management should identify measures and strategies to regulate exploitation of the resource, including setting catch levels, defining fishing methods that minimise adverse impacts and promote recovery from impacts, limiting or closing fisheries when required, establishing protected areas or no-take zones to promote recovery or scientific study.

5. Management should include appropriate procedures for effective monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement to maintain compliance with regulations in force and specify corrective actions as required.

6. Fishing operations should use fishing gear and practices designed to avoid the capture of non-target species and undersize fish. Gear should aim to minimise mortality of the catch and reduce discards and should avoid or minimise adverse impacts on habitats particularly

sensitive areas such as spawning and nursery grounds. Gear should not be discarded into the environment.

7. Fisheries should be conducted in compliance with the fishery management system and all legal and administrative requirements; and fishers should assist and co-operate with management authorities in the collection of catch and discard data, and other information important to effective management of the resources and the fishery.

[1] Adapted from: MSC Fishery Standard: Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing. Marine Stewardship Council. 2010.