

PRESS RELEASE

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Regional Fisheries Bodies Sign MOU to Improve Coordination for Sustainable Fisheries in the Western Central Atlantic Region

Cartagena, Colombia, 27 January 2016— Three Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs): the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM); the Organization of the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (OSPESCA); and the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations - Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (FAO-WECAFC) on Wednesday 27 January signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate, support and strengthen the coordination of actions among the three RFBs to increase the sustainability of fisheries.



At the signing of the MOU, from left to right: Raymon van Anrooy, Secretary of WECAFC; Mario González Recinos, Executive Director of OSPESCA; and Milton Haughton, Executive Director of the CRFM

This initiative to improve coordination for sustainable fisheries is supported through the *UNDP/GEF-Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+)* Project. This 5-year regional project seeks to support the implementation of a 10-year politically endorsed *Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Shared Living Marine Resources of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+ SAP)*; through the full implementation of ecosystem based management/an ecosystem approach to fisheries (EBM/EAF) within the CLME⁺ region.

The 3 RFBs agreed to work on a number of priority areas such as the provision of advice in support of management of fisheries of spiny lobster, queen conch, shrimp and groundfish, recreational fisheries, flyingfish, FADs fisheries, sharks, spawning aggregations, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fisheries. Joint Working Groups on these species and fisheries have been established in recent years and are now better coordinated. The 3 RFBs have also agreed to work on areas and actions identified in the CLME+ Project and CLME+ Strategic

Action Programme that are of relevance to the scope of work. The 3 RFBs have also committed to working towards the harmonization of their respective fisheries policies and legal frameworks.

The Interim Coordination Mechanism, to be tested through this MOU, will increase the uptake of information and fisheries management advice generated at national and sub-regional level to the regional level. This will support dissemination of best practices, improve harmonization and boost the impact of measures, decrees and regulations adopted within the frameworks of these RFBs. It will provide a pilot structure that may lead at some point to the establishment of one or more Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in the Western Central Atlantic Ocean.

The Executive Director of the CRFM, Milton Haughton, said, “This is a strategically significant development that should produce significant tangible benefits for our countries, coastal communities and other stakeholders in the fisheries sector. It will ensure that our policies, programmes and plans for sustainable use, management and conservation of the living marine resources are more coherent, integrated and holistic, and hence more appropriate for addressing the challenges we face in the Caribbean Sea and adjacent Atlantic Ocean.”

“I am very happy with this MOU which formalizes collaboration between OSPESCA, CRFM and WECAFC that started some 4 years ago through joint working groups. This is good for the region’s fisheries. The members of the three RFBs will benefit hugely from this development,” said Raymon van Anrooy, Secretary of WECAFC.

The Executive Director of OSPESCA, Mario González Recinos, said, “The signing of this MOU responds to the objectives of the new Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Integration Policy (2015-2025), and the Central American region’s commitment to promote better coordination frameworks at both national and regional levels, with the idea of harmonizing management strategies, especially for species of high commercial value that are characterized by their migratory nature in the Caribbean Sea.”

The MOU between the 3 RFBs was signed during the First Steering Committee Meeting of the Project which took place in Cartagena, Colombia from 26-28 January 2016.

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CRFM social media links:

You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheCRFM>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/CarFisheries> and

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CaribFisheries>

ABOUT THE CRFM:

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) was officially inaugurated on 27 March 2003 in Belize City, Belize, where it is headquartered, following the signing of the “Agreement Establishing the CRFM” on February 4, 2002. It is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is “to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.”