

The Chennai Declaration

The Chennai Declaration on Sea Safety for Artisanal and Small-scale Fishermen was adopted at a recent BOBP/FAO workshop

Conscious that fishing is the world's most dangerous occupation with more than 24,000 deaths per year attributable to weaknesses in the institutional and regulatory environment, a declining resource base, and poor socioeconomic conditions in the sector;

Realizing that sea safety regimes are weakest amongst the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors, particularly in developing countries;

Realizing that more than 80 per cent of the world's artisanal and small-scale fishers are concentrated in Asia, where many of the coastal target stocks are over- or fully exploited;

Recognizing that the consequences of loss of life fall most heavily on the surviving families, for whom alternative sources of livelihood may not exist;

Concerned about the inadequacy of social and political will to address the issue of fatalities amongst artisanal and small-scale fishermen;

Accepting that the issue of safety for the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors is not fully recognized, or acknowledged, by fisheries policy objectives and further, that the focus is more on economic and resource management issues than the safety of artisanal and small-scale fishermen;

Concerned that current fisheries management regimes for coastal fisheries in the region may lead to increased levels of operational risk for artisanal and small-scale fishermen;

Concerned that safety measures, together with supporting regulations and standards relevant to the needs of artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors, remain inadequately addressed by fisheries and maritime administrations in the region;

Recognizing that neither the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of

Fishing Vessels, 1977, as amended by the 1993 Protocol, and the 1995 Convention for the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel are in force, nor are they applicable to fishing vessels under 24 metres in length;

Recognizing the limitations in institutional capacity of fisheries and maritime administrations in the region to undertake all responsibilities associated with their mandate;

Realizing that fishing operations are carried out in a hostile and hazardous environment from vessels often having weaknesses in their design, construction and equipment, thus being prone to failure;

Accepting that fishermen in both traditional and diversified fisheries are exposed to inherently high levels of risk and resulting accidents, for which there are few survival or rescue strategies;

Emphasizing the urgent need to address the multi-dimensional issue of sea safety for artisanal and small-scale fishermen on a regional basis and in a holistic manner; and

Recognizing that the problem is not insurmountable;

We, the representatives of Fisheries and Maritime Administrations, Coast Guard/ Navy and Fishermen's Associations, nominated by the Governments of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand, having participated in the BOBP/FAO Regional Workshop on Sea Safety for Artisanal and Small-scale Fishermen held in Chennai, India from 8th to 12th October 2001, now therefore:

Resolve to address, as a matter of urgency, the issue of safety at sea for artisanal and small-scale fishermen;

Recommend that sea safety issues be comprehensively integrated into member country's fisheries policy and management

frameworks. This would include associated commitments under the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and other regional, inter-regional or global instruments and initiatives;

Recommend measures, which would result in a harmonized and holistic fisheries management framework for the Bay of Bengal;

Emphasize the need to rationalize institutional mandates, legislation, regulation and enforcement at the national level, in order to enhance sea safety in artisanal and small-scale fisheries;

Ensure the incorporation of FAO/IMO/ILO Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels and the FAO/IMO/ILO Document for Guidance on the Training and Certification of Fishing Vessel Personnel into regulatory frameworks, as appropriate;

Recommend that fisheries and maritime administrations enhance their knowledge of the operations and constraints of the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors in order to formulate effective guidelines, standards and regulations for the safety of fishing vessels, including the certification and training of crews;

Recommend the development and implementation of education, training and awareness programmes, which satisfy regulatory requirements, while also building a culture of sea safety within artisanal and small-scale fishing communities;

Recommend that mandatory requirements for improving sea safety be supplemented by other strategies, which involve the participation of the fisher communities, families, the media, and other stakeholders in order to promote the adoption of a wide range of safety measures;

Recommend that member countries undertake measures directed towards ensuring enhanced economic viability of artisanal and small-scale fishing enterprises as an essential element of the sea safety issue;

Recommend that administrations consider the provision of financial and other incentives to encourage and ensure the widespread use of safety equipment, together with training in the use of such equipment;

Recommend that a programme of applied research and development be initiated, focusing on the development of cost-effective safety-related equipment relevant to the needs of the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors;

Strongly recommend the formulation and implementation of a regional sea safety programme, employing a consultative and participatory approach, building upon institutionally derived data, together with the operational experience of artisanal and small-scale fisher communities;

Recommend that the issue of sea safety be addressed on an urgent basis. This could be achieved through a regional mechanism such as the Inter-Governmental Organization proposed by the BOBP member countries during the 24th meeting of the BOBP Advisory Committee at Phuket, Thailand. (The Phuket Resolution - October 1999);

Agree to seek the support of the donor community for the development of a sea safety programme, and also request FAO to seek such assistance on our behalf.

Adopted on Friday, 12th October 2001 in Chennai, India 

The Chennai Declaration was adopted by participants from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand, at the BOBP/FAO Regional Workshop on Sea Safety for Artisanal and Small-scale Fishermen held in Chennai, India from 8th to 12th October 2001