



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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TSUNAMI RELIEF AND EFFORTS TO REDUCE ILLEGAL, UNREGULATED AND UNREPORTED FISHING DOMINATE INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN ROME

Declarations on tsunami relief efforts and Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) Fishing topped the agenda of the March 12 Rome ministerial meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator, represented the United States. Ministers and ministers' assistants from 121 nations attended the session. NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The morning session of the Ministerial meeting focused on FAO's Tsunami Rehabilitation Plan, which places particular emphasis on small-scale fisheries and the aquaculture sector. The meeting participants discussed: the situation of the fisheries sector following the disaster; the FAO's strategy for medium and long-term fisheries and aquaculture rehabilitation and reconstruction activities; and the coordination of international efforts to fund and implement such activities.

The adopted Tsunami Declaration emphasizes a commitment to assist with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the fisheries and aquaculture sections in the nations affected by the December 2004 earthquake and resulting tsunami.

"Our efforts must provide long-term sustainable solutions, must be consistent with an ecosystem approach, and should take into consideration the need for structural reform," Lautenbacher said. "The United States was working to help these nations before the tsunami struck, and we remain committed to helping those affected by this terrible disaster to recover and rebuild. We want to work with the affected nations there as they restore their fishing capacity in a manner that yields long term ecosystem benefits."

The second half of the Ministerial meeting focused on Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) Fishing and Vessel Monitoring System developments. The resulting Rome Declaration on Fisheries, adopted at the meeting, reaffirms the participants' commitment to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. It focuses on enhanced responsible and effective fisheries management, preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing and to strengthening, improving and establishing programs to develop and implement national and regional plans of action to combat IUU fishing. In addition, the Declaration commits to adopting, reviewing and revising, as appropriate, relevant national legislation and regulations to encourage compliance with fisheries management.

The United States finalized its own National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing in late 2004.

While in Rome, Lautenbacher also participated in a meeting of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Roundtable On Sustainable Development High Seas Task Force on IUU Fishing on March 11.

The Ministerially-Led Task Force is designed to engage ministers in the battle against illegal fishing in the high seas and to address the complaint that political will is lacking to combat IUU fishing. The meeting was an opportunity for participants to exchange information and participate in important discussions on proposals to confront the challenge of IUU fishing on the high seas.

“The United States is working with our partners around the world to improve the management of the ocean's valuable fisheries resources through international efforts such as this,” Lautenbacher said.

NOAA's Mission is to “describe and predict changes in the Earth's environment, and conserve and manage wisely the Nation's coastal and marine resources to ensure sustainable economic opportunities.” To achieve this mission, NOAA is committed to working globally and internationally, in support of NOAA's overarching mission goals.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

Information on the U.S. IUU plan can be found at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/international/NPOA_IUU_files/FinalU.S.NPOAonIUUFishing.pdf

Information on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) can be found at: <http://www.fao.org/fi/body/cofi/cofi.asp>