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Critical issues facing the fisheries sector in the region high on the agenda of the upcoming 18th Session of The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)



21 July, 2022 - Bridgetown, Barbados – An important list of high priority matters plaguing the fisheries sector across the region will be tabled for discussion when the 18th Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), convenes virtually in Managua, Nicaragua, from 26 to 29 July 2022. Matters such as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the region and responses for recovery, Caribbean Regional Management Plan for the Moored Fish Aggregating Device (MFAD), Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, Rays and Chimaeras in the WECAFC area, Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fishery Management Plan: Focus on Nassau Grouper and Mutton Snapper (FSAMP) and Regional Strategy on the management of bycatch and discards in Latin American and Caribbean bottom trawl [shrimp and ground fish] fisheries and a set of conservation and management recommendations will get the attention of the delegates.

The meeting will be attended by an estimated **80 delegates from 21 members of the WECAFC Commission including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, European Union (Member Organization), France, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, The Netherlands, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom The United States of America, Venezuela**, and hosted by The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of the Republic of **Nicaragua**.

At the last 17th Session of WECAFC held in Miami, Florida, 15-19 July 2019, The Commission issued 12 regional fisheries management recommendations, including those for the conservation and management of sharks and rays in the WECAFC area and the queen conch conversion factor. These recommendations, as well as two regional fisheries resolutions, that have since received significant follow-up by the WECAFC Commission, and particularly its 11 Working Groups, and scientific advisory group (SAG) that have made considerable progress. Conservation and management measures discussed during the intersession will also be tabled at the upcoming Session in Nicaragua.

Iván León FAO Representative in Nicaragua stated the relevance for FAO to be a strategic partner of Nicaragua and the countries and the importance of progressing towards the development of a model for a regional fisheries management as a unique opportunity to catapult the sector as a main axis of the countries development.

Yvette Diei Ouadi, FAO Caribbean Sub-regional Fishery and Aquaculture Officer and Secretary of WECAFC stated that in addition to the progress made since the 17th WECAFC Session, and the scene setting presentation of the state of fisheries and aquaculture in the WECAFC region, topics on core reforms of the Commission will also be at the centre of the deliberations. These are connected to the strategic reorientation, the new Rules of Procedure of WECAFC, the 2022-2027 strategic plan, and the reform of SAG. The efficiency and transparency in the way the Commission makes decision, the subsidiary bodies discharge their functions, the modernization for quality and effective deliverables and monitoring framework are at stake. Another important agenda item will discuss how to strengthen the coordinated actions and collaboration with key partners organizations, such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and partner agencies within the framework of the 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). She stated that despite the challenges encountered due to COVID-19 global pandemic, tireless adaptation efforts were deployed which resulted in the implementation of more than 80% of the 2019-2021 programme of work.

The WECAFC 18th Session will be held during an important year for the fisheries sector; the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022) as declared by The United Nations General Assembly. While the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has the distinct honour of leading the celebrations for the year, The WECAFC IYAFA steering committee selected 24 small-

scale fisheries and aquaculture champions from across the region representing academia, civil society, policy-makers, small-scale fisheries and aquaculture (SSF/A) leaders, and organizations. The champions include, The Honorable Saboto Caesar, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry & Labour of St. Vincent & The Grenadines.

The champions will play an active role in the celebrations participating in regional and national activities and will be recognized during the upcoming meeting. A specific agenda item on the progress in this celebratory year in the region and a dedicated side event on the enabling policy and practice environment for a post-IYFA 2022 celebration are slated that will also feature these champions.

For more information:

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