



**REPORT OF THE
FIFTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

(Teleconference Session on 19 May 2020 and *Ad Referendum* Session)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Fifty-second Meeting of the Council of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) was convened through unconventional procedures due to the unusual situation brought about by the onslaught of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that impeded the gathering of the SEAFDEC Council of Directors. The Meeting was therefore arranged to comprise the *Teleconference Session*, which was held on 19 May 2020 at 09.00-11.00 hrs (UTC+7) in order to obtain the Council's views and directives for Agenda items that require urgent consideration, and the *Ad Referendum Session*, which was subsequently convened to obtain the Council's views and directives for the remaining Agenda items.

2. The Teleconference Session was participated by the SEAFDEC Council Directors for Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam together with their respective delegations, as well as the SEAFDEC Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General and the senior officials from the SEAFDEC Secretariat and Departments. The List of Participants of the Teleconference Session appears as **Annex 1**. The views and directives of the Council Director for Myanmar, who was unable to join the Teleconference Session due to technical constraints, were provided to the SEAFDEC Secretariat prior to the Teleconference Session for inclusion in the Report of the Meeting.

3. Subsequent to the discussions during the Teleconference Session, the views and directives of all SEAFDEC Council of Directors on the remaining Agenda items were sought *ad referendum* through the Reply Form provided by the SEAFDEC Secretariat.

I. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

I.1 Opening of the Meeting

4. The Chairman of the Agency for Marine and Fisheries Research and Human Resources of the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) and current Alternate Council Director for Indonesia, *Prof. Sjarief Widjaja*, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Council for 2019-2020 welcomed the participants to the Teleconference Session. He expressed regrets for convening the Fifty-second Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council on-line instead of a face-to-face meeting, the first time in the history of SEAFDEC, as it is being called for during this period of crisis brought about by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

5. Citing that one of the most affected sectors of the impacts of the pandemic is the fisheries sector, specifically the fishers whose socio-economic conditions have been affected, *Prof. Widjaja* suggested that it would be imperatively necessary during this time of crisis, to pool collaboration and support towards the implementation of the programs of SEAFDEC that endeavor to help the fishers cope with the difficulties. After thanking SEAFDEC and the Member Countries for their support and commitments during his stint as the Chairperson of the SEAFDEC Council, he expressed the hope for a much strengthened cooperation among all concerned for the realization of SEAFDEC role in

assisting the fisheries sector to enable the fishers to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. His Statement appears as **Annex 2**.

I.2 Election of the Chairperson for the Year 2020-2021

6. The SEAFDEC Council Director for Japan, *Mr. Shingo Ota* was unanimously elected as the Chairperson of the SEAFDEC Council for 2020-2021, in accordance with Article 5, Paragraph 4 of the Agreement Establishing SEAFDEC.

7. In his Statement, *Mr. Ota* extended his sympathy to those affected by the COVID-19 and expressed the gratitude to medical personnel and all concerned people who have been in the frontline for combating this pandemic. He also expressed the appreciation to the SEAFDEC Secretariat for facilitating the conduct of this Teleconference Session of the Fifty-second Meeting of the Council despite the difficult situation due to the pandemic, for although the Meeting was originally planned to be convened in Fukuoka, Japan in April 2020, it was necessary to postpone the Meeting for the safety of the delegations. Nevertheless, he expressed the hope that this COVID-19 situation would be overcome soon so that the activities of SEAFDEC could be pursued for the benefit of fisheries sector in the region, and confirmed the commitment of the Government of Japan to sustain its assistance to the ASEAN Member States through SEAFDEC. He then urged the Council Directors to exchange views and ideas on the Agenda items tabled for discussions at this Session of the Meeting that require urgent consideration, as these are fundamental for the function of SEAFDEC in promoting the sustainable development of fisheries in our region. His Statement appears as **Annex 3**.

I.3 Adoption of the Agenda and Arrangements for the Meeting

8. The Council was informed by the representative from the SEAFDEC Secretariat of proposed procedures in proceeding with the discussion of the Agenda of the 52nd Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council. Specifically, the Agenda items that require urgent consideration and approval of the Council would be discussed during the Teleconference Session. For the remaining Agenda (except Agenda 8 on the Future Direction of SEAFDEC), the *ad referendum* consideration and directives of the SEAFDEC Council would be sought by the SEAFDEC Secretariat using the email or other similar platforms.

9. After careful consideration, the Council adopted the Agenda of the 52nd Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council, which would be conducted through Teleconference Session and *Ad Referendum* Session, as shown in **Annex 4**.

II. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

10. The Council Director for Myanmar expressed the appreciation to SEAFDEC for implementing various programs and activities in 2019, particularly in promoting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development for food security, livelihood and economic benefit, as well as in sustaining its impressive role as technical arm for regional fisheries development on various issues. However, he also urged SEAFDEC to consider putting more efforts in exploring the appropriate management measures and technologies that support the fisheries sector in adapting to the changing situation in the region, as well as the promotion of practical works that support fisheries at the community level.

11. The Council Director for Malaysia suggested that for projects that are scheduled to be completed in 2020 but the activities could not be undertaken due to the COVID-19 situation, SEAFDEC should consider describing its plan on how to carry out the remaining activities under the section on “SEAFDEC Programs for 2020” of Annual Report 2019.

12. In response to the suggestion of the Council Director for Malaysia, the SEAFDEC Secretariat informed the Council that there are two regional projects that are scheduled to be completed in 2020.

The first is the “Establishment and Operation of a Regional System of Fisheries *Refugia* in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand,” which may be extended for two more years although this is still being discussed through consultation with concerned countries before the final agreement is reached. For the second project “Strengthening the Effective Management Scheme with GIS & RS Technology for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture,” some of the project activities scheduled for implementation in 2020 may be re-scheduled, and this project would still be completed in 2020 as planned. Nevertheless, considering that the Annual Report 2019 covers the period from 1 January 2019 until the end of 2019, while the need for program adjustment in response to the COVID-19 emerged after 2019, the SEAFDEC Secretariat would appropriately accommodate the adjusted workplans in the forthcoming SEAFDEC Annual Report 2020.

13. After considering the draft Annual Report 2019 prepared by the SEAFDEC Secretariat, the Council approved the Draft SEAFDEC Annual Report 2019 for publication and dissemination to the Member Countries, relevant organizations and the public.

III. NOTE OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SEAFDEC PROGRAM COMMITTEE ON THE RESULTS OF THE FORTY-SECOND MEETING

14. The Council took note of the results of the Forty-second Meeting of the Program Committee of SEAFDEC (**Annex 5**) which was held from 11 to 13 November 2019, in Chiang Mai, Thailand, as presented by the Secretary-General, *Ms. Malinee Smithrithee* in her capacity as the Chairperson of the SEAFDEC Program Committee.

15. The Council Director for Viet Nam congratulated *Ms. Malinee* for being the first woman to serve as the Secretary-General of SEAFDEC. While expressing the appreciation to SEAFDEC for the its continued effort in the implementation of the activities in 2019, she also suggested that the ways and means of implementing the programs of activities planned for 2020 should be explored by SEAFDEC, amidst the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. In responding to the concern raised by the Council Director for Viet Nam, and after expressing the appreciation for the continued support and cooperation of the Member Countries to SEAFDEC in 2019, the SEAFDEC Secretary-General stated that SEAFDEC is presently exploring the possibility of conducting its training sessions and other capacity building activities in 2020 through the on-line platform in order that the implementation of such activities could be still pursued.

17. The Secretariat received and delivered the written suggestion from the Council Director for Myanmar that proposed that SEAFDEC should consider the establishment of *refugia* for neritic tuna in Southeast Asia, and the application of GIS mapping technology to support fisheries co-management in the inshore areas of the region.

18. After the discussion, the Council approved the progress of the programs implemented by SEAFDEC in 2019 and the proposed programs for 2020, as well as recommendations of the SEAFDEC Program Committee. The Council then requested SEAFDEC to consider incorporating the recommendations of the Council at this Meeting in its future programs.

IV. NOTE OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FISHERIES CONSULTATIVE GROUP (FCG) OF THE ASEAN-SEAFDEC STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (ASSP) ON THE RESULTS OF THE TWENTY-SECOND MEETING

19. After taking into consideration the recommendations made during the Twenty-second Meeting of the Fisheries Consultative Group of the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Strategic Partnership (22FCG/ASSP) on 14-15 November 2019 in Chiang Mai, Thailand (**Annex 6**) as presented by the representative from Viet Nam, *Ms. Nguyen Mai Huong* on behalf of the ASEAN Co-chair for the 22FCG/ASSP Meeting, the Council endorsed the Report of the Twenty-second Meeting of the FCG/ASSP.

20. With regards to the updating of the Database of Regional Fishing Vessels Record (RFVR) for vessels 24 meters in length, in a written statement received by the Secretariat, the Council Director for Myanmar confirmed that Myanmar would submit the country's inputs for the Database in July 2020. As for the establishment of the database for vessels less than 24 meters in length, he expressed the apprehension that preparation of the required data set would need more time. He also requested SEAFDEC to continue providing capacity building to the staff of the Department of Fisheries of Myanmar through the planned training courses of SEAFDEC, and expressed the commitment of Myanmar to support and collaborate with the other ASEAN Member States (AMSs) on the establishment of the regional and sub-regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) Network.

V. POLICY CONSIDERATION ON IMPORTANT ISSUES

5.1 Issues on Combating IUU Fishing

5.1.1 ASEAN Guidelines to Prevent the Entry of Fish and Fishery Products from IUU Fishing Activities into the Supply Chain

21. The Council noted and considered the summary of the progress made by MFRDMD in promoting to the ASEAN Member States (AMSs) the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines for Preventing the Entry of Fish and Fishery Products from IUU Fishing Activities into the Supply Chain as well as the updated results of the self-evaluation by the AMSs on the implementation of the Guidelines (**Annex 7**).

22. While expressing the view that the self-evaluation of the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines is useful, the Council Director for Myanmar suggested that the evaluation should be conducted annually as a regular procedure. Along line with such a suggestion, the Council Director for Malaysia agreed that the self-evaluation of the implementation of the Guidelines should be conducted annually.

23. The Council Director for Japan reiterated his suggestion during the 51st Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council, that MFRDMD should consider finding alternative methods of externally evaluating the progress made by each country in the implementation of the Guidelines, *e.g.* to conduct surveys every few years.

24. The Council Director for Indonesia suggested that MFRDMD should consider developing a methodology and reformulating the evaluation form, which should not only assess the effectiveness of the AMSs in the implementation of the Guidelines, but should also serve as means of identifying the challenges and required capacity to address the gaps of each AMSs that hinder the implementation of the Guidelines, the result of which would serve as basis for SEAFDEC to provide further assistance to the respective AMSs in the future.

25. The Council Director for Thailand expressed the view that since the Guidelines serves as an effective tool for the AMSs in combating IUU fishing, regular monitoring of the progress made by the AMSs in the implementation of the Guidelines is necessary. He also suggested that the results of the self-evaluation of the AMSs should be submitted to SEAFDEC to serve as the basis for reviewing and updating the Guidelines as appropriate. Moreover, as the self-evaluation exercise also serves as a platform to facilitate sharing of information among the AMSs on their efforts in combating IUU-fishing, he also suggested that the AMSs should consider incorporating such exercise as part of the ASEAN Network for Combating IUU Fishing (AN-IUU).

26. In connection with the directives of the Council, the Chief of MFRDMD agreed that the self-evaluation should be conducted regularly by the respective AMSs. However, as the project that supported this activity has already been completed in 2019, some forms of assistance would be necessary to enable MFRDMD to sustain its support for the AMSs to continue the self-evaluation or

to conduct an external evaluation, which could be considered only upon official request from the concerned country and when additional funding support is allocated to MFRDMD. In such a case, the result of the self-evaluation shall be presented during relevant SEAFDEC meetings. The Chief of MFRDMD added that the AMSs had been informed during the project terminal meeting in Kuala Lumpur in September 2019 on the IUU Fishing Index developed by external organizations, which could be applied to the region. Nonetheless, MFRDMD is also willing to develop a methodology and reformulate the evaluation form subject to allocation of additional funding support. MFRDMD also agreed with the suggestion of the Council Director for Thailand to support and cooperate with the AN-IUU as necessary, in the future.

5.1.2 Regional Fishing Vessels Record

27. The Council considered the document that summarizes the progress of works undertaken by TD on the Regional Fishing Vessels Record (RFVR) (**Annex 8**). Specifically, the Council was also informed of the results of the discussions during the “Meeting on Regional Fishing Vessels Record in Southeast Asia” organized on 13-14 May 2019 in Seoul, the Republic of Korea as side event during the FAO’s “Fifth Meeting of the Global Record Informal Open-Ended Technical and Advisory Workshop Group (GRWG5),” as well as the agreed schedule for the AMSs to provide the updated information for the RFVR Database for vessels 24 meters in length and over.

28. With regards to the existing Database of the RFVR for vessels 24 meters in length and over, and the efforts of Indonesia to regularly provide its updated data twice a year through its focal point, the Council Director for Indonesia encouraged the other Member Countries to also actively provide updated data for the Database, as this serves as a tool to combat IUU fishing activities in the region.

29. The Council Director for Myanmar informed the Meeting on the period of effectivity of fishing licenses in Myanmar, which is from 1 September to 31 August of the following year. In this regard, he reiterated that his country’s fishing vessels data for the 2018-2019 fishing season (1 September 2018 - 31 August 2019) is being checked and relevant data will be submitted to SEAFDEC in due course. He added that while the data for 2019-2020 fishing season (1 September 2019 - 31 August 2020) will be prepared soon, the necessary data would be provided to SEAFDEC as soon as this is available.

30. The Council Director for Japan also reiterated the importance for all the AMSs to submit their respective updated data based on the agreed schedule, to enable SEAFDEC to update the RFVR Database, as this would promote improved utilization of the RFVR Database.

31. Regarding the schedule for the AMSs to provide data for the RFVR Database, the Council Director for Thailand expressed the view that the AMSs should not only update their data twice a year but should also consider more frequent updating of their inputs in order that the Database could provide more trustworthy and accurate data anytime.

32. The Council Director for Malaysia also suggested that in the future, the RFVR Database should be updated by the respective AMSs in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Database as a tool to support fishing vessel inspectors’ efforts to combat IUU fishing and its consequences.

33. The Council Director for Indonesia also suggested that SEAFDEC should consider developing a system that could enhance the utilization of the RFVR Database and strengthen the collaboration and data sharing with other related regional fisheries bodies in the future. He also suggested that access to the RFVR Database could also be provided to additional officers of a country, in addition to the focal point who provides the data, considering that there are also personalities other than the data provider, who might need to access the Database for their assigned tasks.

34. The Chief of TD expressed the gratitude to the AMSs for providing their data for the RFVR Database. While acknowledging that the AMSs would be able to provide updated data this year, TD could provide the usernames and passwords to the AMSs upon request, to enable their concerned staff to access the Database. Moreover, TD is also planning to promote the utilization of the RFVR Database in close cooperation with potential direct users, such as Port State inspectors, local fisheries officers, local custom officers, local immigration officers, *etc.*, to enhance the utilization of the RFVR Database for combating IUU fishing. TD also informed the Council that a “Teleworkshop on Development and Improvement of Regional Tools for Combating IUU Fishing in Southeast Asia” would be organized by TD on 28 August 2020 to discuss with the focal points and experts from the AMSs on the ways and means of submitting the required data in the future, and promoting and improving the utilization of the RFVR Database for 24 meters in length and over.

35. With regards to the proposed development of the RFVR for vessels less than 24 meters in length, the Council Director for Malaysia expressed the view that the minimum length of these vessels should be determined, *i.e.* from 18 meters in length, considering that vessels of this size range have the higher possibility of encroaching into the waters of the other AMSs.

36. Considering that most of the vessels that are engaged in IUU fishing activities are less than 24 meters in length, the Council Director for Thailand also suggested that SEAFDEC should conduct a series of workshops to discuss the development of RFVR Database for vessels less than 24 meters in length.

37. The Council Director for Japan also expressed the view that the inclusion of vessels less than 24 meters in length (*i.e.* 18-23.99 meters) in the RFVR Database would enhance the effectiveness of the RFVR in combating IUU fishing considering that the number of vessels in this size range is significantly larger than those of 24 meters and over. Nevertheless, he also suggested that SEAFDEC should consider enhancing the understanding and support of the AMSs by advocating the registration of fishing vessels less than 24 meters in length.

38. The Council Director for Indonesia however suggested that the Council should carefully consider again the benefits of expanding the RFVR Database to cover vessels less than 24 meters in length, considering that small-scale fishers usually do not operate very far from the coastal areas. In addition, the expansion of the RFVR to cover smaller vessels would create much burden and in view of its complexity, such effort would require a considerable amount of resources from the respective countries to be able to provide the required data compared with the benefits that could be derived from such efforts.

39. With regards to the proposed development of the RFVR Database for vessels less than 24 meters, the Chief of TD informed the Council that there are not many vessels in the size range of 18.0 to 23.9 meters in the region, so the burden of providing the necessary data would therefore be not much. Nevertheless, considering that a large number of such vessels could possibly be engaged in IUU fishing activities, the development of such RFVR would considerably help in enhancing the capability of the AMSs to cope with IUU fishing. In this connection, TD is also planning to incorporate the possible development of RFVR Database for vessels less than 24 meters in the discussion during the Teleworkshop scheduled on 28 August 2020.

40. With regards to the development of the IUU Watchlist, the Council Director for Indonesia suggested that SEAFDEC could consider collaborating with agencies that have already established mechanisms on listing and delisting of IUU fishing vessels, *e.g.* RPOA-IUU. He also suggested that SEAFDEC should collaborate with FAO on the Global Fishing Vessel Record, to reduce the burden of the countries in providing fishing vessels data to both regional and international organizations.

41. The Chief of TD informed the Council that SEAFDEC would collaborate with the RPOA-IUU as it has already established the mechanisms for listing and delisting of IUU fishing vessels that cover almost the same areas as that of SEAFDEC. In addition, SEAFDEC would also collaborate with

FAO on the Global Fishing Vessel Record, although the Global Record focuses on vessels with IMO Numbers which could be very limited in the Southeast Asian region. Nonetheless, SEAFDEC had already adjusted the features in the RFVR Database to align with the Global Record by adopting the categories of fishing vessels and fishing gears based on the FAO International Standard Statistical Classification of Fishery Vessels (ISSCFV) and the International Standard Classification of Fishing Gears (ISSCFG).

5.1.3 ASEAN Catch Documentation Scheme

42. The Council took note of the document that summarizes the progress made by TD in the implementation of the ASEAN Catch Documentation Scheme (ACDS) for marine capture fisheries (**Annex 9**), particularly the efforts to pilot test the electronic system of the ACDS (eACDS) in Brunei Darussalam, Viet Nam, Myanmar, and Malaysia, as well as the introduction of eACDS in Cambodia.

43. While providing the updated information on the progress of implementation of the eACDS in Myanmar, the Council Director for Myanmar also mentioned that the required key data elements (KDEs) from the two pilot sites of the country had already been submitted to SEAFDEC in May 2020. Nevertheless, in order to ensure that the application of the electronic format of the ACDS is beneficial to the country, he requested SEAFDEC to provide more capacity building activities on the use of the application for the staff of DOF Myanmar and relevant stakeholders.

44. The Council Director for Indonesia also concurred that the eACDS should serve as a tool not only for preventing the IUU fishing products from entering the supply chain but also for enhancing intra- and international trade of fish and fishery products. Furthermore, the eACDS should also be beneficial for the country that obtained assistance from SEAFDEC, as well as the other countries that have not yet implemented the scheme. He also suggested that the eACDS should also fulfill the requirements of market States so that the AMSs do not need to apply several different schemes in the future.

45. Moreover, the Council Director for Indonesia also informed the Council that Indonesia has adopted the Certificate of Catching Fishes (SHTI) for the country's tuna products to be exported to the European Union (EU), to ensure that all tuna products from Indonesia are free from IUU fishing, while the electronic logbook has been initiated since 2018. In this connection, he sought the possible assistance of SEAFDEC to ensure that this current scheme being promoted in the country would meet the requirements of the market States such as the EU.

46. The Council Director for Indonesia also shared the information on the recent traceability measures that is being developed by the EU, which is the electronic catch certificate system or the e-Catch, which is paperless and will be applied to countries outside of the EU. The US is also adopting traceability measures through the NOAA Seafood Import Monitoring Programme (SIMP). He therefore requested SEAFDEC to consider harmonizing the eACDS with the e-Catch system of the EU. Furthermore, he also requested SEAFDEC to provide technical assistance to some AMSs for the improvement of their own traceability systems that are already being applied, such as Indonesia which already applied the key elements of the ACDS at the national level.

47. In response to the query of the Council Director for Indonesia, the Council was assured that all necessary KDEs required by market States, such as the EU and the USA, have been incorporated in the ACDS. In addition, TD has improved the eACDS application to ensure that the relevant authorities of the EU and other market States could verify the information throughout the seafood supply chain and the products could be traced back to their sources of origin. Being aware of the electronic catch certificate system or the e-Catch that was recently developed by the EU for some commercial fishery products exported to the EU and which would be introduced to other countries, SEAFDEC would make sure that the eACDS would be harmonized with the requirements of the e-Catch and other traceability systems, as appropriate.

48. Although the eACDS has not yet been implemented in Thailand, the Council Director for Thailand expressed the willingness of the country to be part of this project in order to catch up with the recent status on the eACDS implementation in the region, and at the same time for the country to be kept updated with the recent developments and implementation of the eACDS. Specifically, Thailand is willing to nominate its representatives to participate in relevant fora of SEAFDEC and share the country's experiences, *e.g.* on catch documentation, traceability, and fishery management system.

49. While recognizing that the eACDS serves as an effective tool for combating IUU fishing, the Council Director for Japan indicated that the Fisheries Agency of Japan will endeavor to maintain the country's financial support to the eACDS related activities of SEAFDEC. He also suggested that SEAFDEC should also consider seeking other sources of funds to support the wider adoption of the eACDS related activities in the other SEAFDEC Member Countries.

50. TD informed the Council that despite the COVID-19 situation, TD would exert efforts to provide as much as possible, capacity building on the eACDS through meetings and workshops, as well as practical training using the televisual applications. TD also plans to organize a training workshop on ACDS in 2021 to share the information on eACDS and other electronic traceability tools, as well as the recent developments on this aspect, to enhance the capacity of the concerned officers from the AMSs.

5.1.4 Regional Cooperation to Support the Implementation of the Port State Measures in ASEAN Region

51. The Council took note of the progress made by TD in the implementation of the Regional Cooperation to Support the Implementation of the Port State Measures (PSM) in the ASEAN region (**Annex 10**).

52. The Council Director for Japan suggested that SEAFDEC should consider mobilizing the relevant expertise of other organizations, *e.g.* the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), during the conduct of its planned "Regional Technical Consultation on Development and Improvement of Regional Tools for Combating IUU Fishing in Southeast Asia" and training courses on PSM. He also suggested that SEAFDEC should maintain and strengthen its cooperative relationship with FAO in order to support the AMSs in the implementation of the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA).

53. The Council Director for Thailand also indicated the willingness of Thailand to nominate their representatives as technical persons to participate in meetings, workshops and training programs of SEAFDEC in order to share with the other AMSs the experiences of Thailand in the implementation of PSM in the country.

54. The Council Director for Indonesia expressed the appreciation to SEAFDEC for extending the capacity building activities to the AMSs through the "Regional Training on Port State Measures Implementation for Inspectors in Southeast Asia" in 2019, and suggested that SEAFDEC should consider providing continued assistance and capacity building to the AMSs in the future. He mentioned that Indonesia has already ratified the PSMA and has designated specific ports to implement the PSMA. In this connection, he encouraged the other AMSs to also ratify the PSMA and enhance collaboration among the AMSs to work together in the implementation of the PSMA in the region. Specifically, he requested SEAFDEC to develop a platform to support the exchange of information among the AMSs regarding the implementation of PSMA, which could include allowing each national focal point of the PSMA to access the RFVR Database.

55. The Council Director for Myanmar also mentioned some relevant activities in his country, *e.g.* training course on port inspection of fishing vessels organized by FAO in collaboration with the Ocean Mind and the Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission (APFIC) on 2-6 December 2019 in

Myanmar, as well as the established cooperation between Myanmar and Thailand to promote the PSM under bilateral agreement between the two countries. He then requested SEAFDEC to provide the opportunity for Myanmar to participate in the future training courses of SEAFDEC on PSM implementation.

56. While noting the comments of the Council Directors for Japan and Indonesia, the Chief of TD expressed the gratitude to Thailand for the willingness to share the country's experiences with the other AMSs on the implementation of PSM. Moreover, TD would continue to provide assistance to enhance information exchange and capacity building on the implementation of PSM in the AMSs, and maintain cooperative relationship with FAO and other organizations on this aspect. Specifically, the "Teleworkshop on Development and Improvement of Regional Tools for Combating IUU Fishing in Southeast Asia" scheduled in August 2020, would also facilitate exchanging of information and discussion about PSM implementation among the focal points and experts from the AMSs. In addition, TD would organize the "Regional Training on Port State Measures Implementation for Inspectors in Southeast Asia" in 2021 with the cooperation of partners, *e.g.* FAO, NOAA, DOF Thailand.

5.1.5 Regional Plan of Action for Management of Fishing Capacity

57. The Council took note of the progress made by SEAFDEC in developing and supporting the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action for Management of Fishing Capacity (RPOA-Capacity) (**Annex 11**), including the effort of MFRDMD in developing a concept proposal for the project "Implementation and Assessment of Fishing Capacity and Zoning System for Southeast Asia" which was presented to the SEAFDEC Program Committee Meetings (PCM) in 2018 and 2019, however the funding support for this project could not be secured until the present.

58. While noting the progress made by SEAFDEC on the development of the RPOA-Capacity, the Council Director for Thailand suggested that although funding support for the aforementioned project proposal is not yet available at the present, SEAFDEC should include this project in its Pipeline Projects, and explore the prospective donors that could provide the necessary funding support for this project in the future.

59. The Council Director for Indonesia reported on the implementation of the RPOA-Capacity in Indonesia, *i.e.* application of national regulation regarding catch estimation and harvest strategy in Indonesian waters. As for SEAFDEC, he proposed that the activities to be undertaken could emphasize on the assessment of fishing capacity focusing on migratory species, considering that management of fishing capacity for coastal and demersal species should be under the purview of the respective AMSs. Nevertheless, while noting that the implementation of the RPOA-Capacity in the region is limited, he suggested that SEAFDEC should also consider providing assistance for the AMSs to improve and manage fishing capacity in their respective waters.

60. In response to the recommendations of the Council, the Chief of MFRDMD agreed to include the proposal on "Implementation and Assessment of Fishing Capacity and Zoning System for Southeast Asia" as a Pipeline Project and to explore the prospective funding sources and report any progress on this proposal to the PCM at its next meeting. He also agreed to consider incorporating the suggestions of Indonesia on the management of fishing capacity in the future activities of MFRDMD, subject to financial support from potential donors.

5.2 Regional Cooperation to Promote Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture in the ASEAN Region

5.2.1 Regional Plan of Action on Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tunas in the ASEAN Region

61. The Council took note of the progress made by SEAFDEC in supporting the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tunas in the ASEAN Region (RPOA-Neritic Tunas), and the proposed revision of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Scientific Working Group (SWG) for Stock Assessment on Neritic Tunas in the Southeast Asian Region which appears as **Annex 12**.

62. While expressing the support to the revision of the TOR of the SWG to also cover other important pelagic species, the Council Director for Japan expressed the concern that if the revised TOR covers important pelagic fishes as proposed, this could also include the highly migratory fish species and would possibly result in an overlap of the mandate between the SWG and relevant RFMOs, *i.e.* the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Such duplication of works would not only be inappropriate in terms of the effective use of limited financial resources, but also leads to the possibility of creating confusion in the Member Countries if the SWG and the RFMOs come up with different scientific recommendations on the same fish species. He therefore suggested that MFRDMD should strengthen its cooperative relationship and coordination with the IOTC and WCPFC so that the future projects of MFRDMD under the revised TOR would complement the works of IOTC and WCPFC, and thus avoid any duplication of works.

63. While taking note of the progress of the RPOA-Neritic Tunas and supporting the revised TOR of the SWG, the Council Director for Thailand requested SEAFDEC to explore the possibility of organizing training course(s) on stock assessment of neritic tunas that would also cover the economically important small pelagic species, making use of the stock assessment handbook and software previously developed by SEAFDEC. Moreover, he also expressed the need for enhancing the knowledge on environmental factors that affect the abundance of small pelagic species in the Southeast Asian waters. He also suggested that SEAFDEC should consider accommodating in its relevant projects as appropriate, the improvement and development of fishing gears targeting small pelagic species and post-harvest technologies to reduce the fishing crew onboard fishing vessels.

64. While noting the progress of the promotion of the RPOA-Neritic Tunas, the Council Director for Indonesia reiterated that during the past years MFRDMD in collaboration with the AMSs undertook genetic study of two neritic tuna species, namely longtail tuna (*Thunnus tonggol*) and kawakawa (*Euthynnus affinis*). He then suggested that the future works under the RPOA-Neritic Tunas should continue to focus on these two species. On the proposed revision of the TOR of the SWG, he suggested some modifications of the proposed revised TOR, *i.e.*: in Part I on Introduction and Rationale – to change the term “*shared stock*” to “*species*”; and in Part II on Scope of Work – to change the term “*Southeast Asian waters*” to “*Southeast Asian region*.”

65. The Council Director for the Philippines, while supporting the revision of the TOR of the SWG-Neritic Tunas, informed the Meeting that *Mr. Noel Barut*, who was appointed as one of the Standing Members of the SWG, has already retired from the service of the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI). He therefore requested SEAFDEC to remove the name of *Mr. Noel Barut* from the List of Standing Members, and Philippines will further nominate the new person in due course.

66. In response to the recommendations of the Council, the Chief of MFRDMD assured the Council that the preliminary findings on neritic tuna (KAW and LOT) stock assessments based on ASPIC and Kobe Plot Models would be shared with the IOTC and WCPFC. Moreover, MFRDMD in collaboration with the SEAFDEC Secretariat organized a special training on neritic tuna stock and risk assessments in February 2020 at the premises of TD, and would incorporate in its future work, the activities toward enhancing knowledge on environmental factors that affect the abundance of small pelagic species in the Southeast Asian waters. Furthermore, he agreed to continue the activities under the RPOA-Neritic Tunas that focus on longtail tuna and kawakawa, including the genetic study on kawakawa species from AMSs, which is now being undertaken by MFRDMD with support from the JTF.

67. Based on the suggestion of the Council Director for Indonesia, the SEAFDEC Secretariat revised the corrected texts on the TOR of the SWG, and the revised TOR which is shown as **Annex 13** was approved by the Council.

5.2.2 ASEAN Guidelines on Aquatic Emergency Preparedness and Response Systems for Effective Management of Transboundary Disease Outbreak in Southeast Asia

68. The Council was informed of the progress undertaken by AQD on the development of the ASEAN Regional Technical Guidelines on Early Warning System for Aquatic Animal Health Emergencies (**Annex 14**). The Council noted that this Guidelines was endorsed by the by 41st Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) held in August 2019.

69. On the follow-up actions after the endorsement of the Guidelines as proposed by AQD, the Council Director for Thailand requested for more detailed information on Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the project since little information had been provided in the document. He also suggested that assessment and follow-up activities should be conducted to monitor the implementation of the Guidelines by the respective AMSs.

70. The Council Director for Indonesia supported the proposed follow-up actions that include the conduct of workshops where the AMSs could share information and lessons learned on aquatic animal health issues, especially those related to transboundary disease outbreaks in the region.

71. The Council Director for Myanmar expressed the appreciation to AQD for the development of the Guidelines, which could be applied nation-wide by the fish farmers in Myanmar. He added that as Myanmar is importing fish and marine shrimp seeds from neighboring countries, the implementation of the Guidelines would be very helpful in assuring that the imported seeds are of good quality and are disease free. He also expressed the willingness of Myanmar to learn from the other AMSs their experiences in the implementation of the Guidelines in the future.

72. The Council was informed that AQD is currently discussing internally the activities to be undertaken in Phase 2 of the project. The proposal which would include all the necessary details is currently being drafted by AQD, taking into consideration all the comments and suggestions of the Council of Directors.

5.2.3 Proposed Assessment of Aquaculture Research and Development Updates in Southeast Asia

73. The Council took note of the Proposed Assessment of Aquaculture Research and Development Updates in Southeast Asia (**Annex 15**) by AQD. The Council also noted the proposed conduct of the Seminar-Workshop on Aquaculture Development in Southeast Asia (ADSEA) including the objectives and suggested topics as part of AQD's activity from 2020 to 2021.

74. While agreeing to the proposed conduct of the ADSEA Seminar-Workshop, the Council Director for Myanmar also mentioned that the ADSEA would address the requirements for timely assessment and updating of information on aquaculture research and development in Southeast Asia, and for sharing of the information and technologies among the Member Countries.

75. The Council Director for Indonesia also suggested that the ADSEA Seminar-Workshop should come up with the information on the status of aquaculture in each Member Country, and identify the gaps that need to be addressed with respect to the sustainable development of aquaculture in the region.

76. The Council Director for Singapore suggested that as part of the review exercise, AQD should also include a review of the adoption of technologies developed by AQD in the past.

Furthermore, in the planning of its future research, AQD should also include the proposed steps and the strategies to facilitate the adoption of such technologies by the aquaculture industry in the region.

77. The Council Director for Japan emphasized the importance of the aquaculture sub-sector that accounted for approximately 55 percent of the world's fishery production, and its importance has been increasing recently. Under such circumstances, he supported that it is timely for AQD to organize the ADSEA Seminar-Workshop for further development of responsible and sustainable aquaculture in Southeast Asia. In this connection, he expressed the willingness of Japan to contribute to the development of sustainable aquaculture in the region through the dispatch of expert(s) to serve as resource persons during the ADSEA Seminar-Workshop.

78. The Council Director for Thailand expressed the view that the proposed conduct of the ADSEA Seminar-Workshop should have been scrutinized by the SEAFDEC Program Committee Meeting prior proposing it to the Council Meeting.

79. AQD expressed the appreciation to the Council for their comments and suggestions which AQD had duly noted, specifically the comments of the Council Director for Thailand. In this regard, AQD will present the details of the seminar-workshop during the next Program Committee Meeting for endorsement.

5.2.4 Progress on Regional Guidelines on Cold Chain Management for Seafood

80. The Council was informed of the progress undertaken by MFRD in the development of the Regional Guidelines on Cold Chain Management for Fisheries and Fishery Products in the ASEAN Region (**Annex 16**), and that the Guidelines was endorsed by the by 41st Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) held in August 2019. The Council also noted that in order to follow-up the adoption of the Guidelines, the activity to support information sharing on the implementation of the Guidelines was proposed as part of the new "ASEAN-JICA Food Value Chain Project."

81. The Council Director for Myanmar expressed the country's willingness to adopt the Guidelines through the conduct of training on cold chain management to build up the capacity of the country's relevant public and private sectors. He therefore requested MFRD to continue supporting Myanmar toward the implementation of the cold chain management for seafood in the future.

82. The Council Director for Japan expressed the support to the proposed activity under the ASEAN-JICA Food Value Chain Project considering that this would help in facilitating information sharing among the AMSs on the implementation of the Guidelines.

83. While expressing the support to the ASEAN-JICA Food Value Chain Project considering that this would facilitate the implementation of the Guidelines by the AMSs, the Council Director for Indonesia offered Indonesia as a study case to implement the Guidelines, especially for products that are produced from small-scale fisheries.

84. The Council Director for Thailand requested SEAFDEC to provide more detailed information once it is available, on the document on the ASEAN-JICA Food Value Chain for further consideration by the Member Countries. He also expressed the willingness of Thailand to share its experiences on the implementation of the Guidelines during the relevant activities to be conducted by SEAFDEC in the future.

5.2.5 Regional Action Plan for Management of Transboundary Species: Indo-pacific Mackerel in the Gulf of Thailand Sub-region

85. After noting the progress on the development of the Regional Action Plan (RAP) for Management of Transboundary Species: Indo-Pacific Mackerel in the Gulf of Thailand Sub-region

(**Annex 17**), the Council approved and endorsed the RAP for submission to the ASEAN mechanism for consideration and support.

86. The Council Director for Thailand expressed the view that the RAP would be beneficial to AMSs, especially for Thailand, as this comprises the most appropriate tool that takes into account the legal frameworks, social, and environmental aspects in management of transboundary species in the Gulf of Thailand.

5.3 Other Matters

5.3.1 Project Concept Note: Enhance Healthy Ocean Ecosystems through the Best Practice in Trawl Fisheries and Innovation

87. The Council was informed of the proposed Concept Note on Enhanced Healthy Ocean Ecosystems through the Best Practice in Trawl Fisheries and Innovation (**Annex 18**), which was prepared by SEAFDEC for possible funding from the Green Climate Funds (GCF) and/or Global Environment Facilities (GEF) through the support of the UNEP.

88. The Council Director for Indonesia recalled that the previous project under the collaboration between FAO/GEF and SEAFDEC on the “Strategies for Trawl Fisheries By-catch Management” or REBYC-II CTI also focused on trawl fisheries. He cited that Indonesia is banning the utilization of trawls in all fisheries activities due to its drastic impact to the aquatic habitat and the environment. He therefore expressed some concerns about this new project and requested for more time to carefully consider this Concept Note, to be able to provide the country’s feedback on this matter.

89. The Council Director for Japan cited the Agreement Establishing the Southeast Fisheries Development Center (Article 13) stating that “*The Center may, by a two-thirds majority vote of the total number of the Directors of the Council, receive assistance from governments and organizations external to the Center as well as other international organizations...*” He therefore suggested that after the full project document is prepared, approval by the SEAFDEC Council in accordance with Article 13 is required. Nevertheless, as the full project document will probably contain technical aspects that need further explanation from the SEAFDEC Secretariat, he also suggested that this matter should be discussed and decided at an annual Council Meeting rather than through *ad referendum* vote of the Council.

90. After reviewing the Concept Note, the Council Director for Myanmar suggested that both single and multi-species management should be considered under the Concept Note, through the development and promotion of appropriate technical measures.

91. SEAFDEC assured the Council that once the full proposal of this project is available, SEAFDEC would seek the comments of the SEAFDEC Program Committee and approval of the Council in accordance with Article 13 of the Agreement Establishing the Southeast Fisheries Development Center. Furthermore, the suggestions of the Council would be considered in finalizing the project proposal, as appropriate.

5.3.2 Project Concept Note: Ocean Relief through Seaweed Aquaculture

92. The Council was informed that in the Project Concept Note on Ocean Relief through Seaweed Aquaculture (**Annex 19**) developed by the World Wildlife Fund-US (WWF-US) for possible funding support from GEF Trust Fund, SEAFDEC was asked to be involved in the project implementation as two target participating countries, namely: the Philippines and Viet Nam are its Member Countries. The Council also noted that this proposal is still subject to further discussion between SEAFDEC and the WWF-US.

93. The Council Director for Myanmar expressed the strong support to this Project Concept Note considering that Myanmar is located in the tropical region and possesses a very good environment to farm seaweeds. Specifically, he requested for the possibility of including Myanmar in the regional capacity building on seaweed aquaculture. Furthermore, he also indicated that through this Project, Myanmar could acquire reliable technologies and experience in seaweeds culture, and support the local farmers of Myanmar by sharing the project outcomes.

94. While expressing full support to the Project Concept Note, the Council Director for Indonesia suggested that all AMSs should be involved in the project activities.

95. The Council was informed that SEAFDEC would consult with WWF-US on the possibility of disseminating the results of the project implementation in two pilot countries, to the other AMSs.

5.3.3 Project Concept Note: Regional Collaborative Research and Capacity Building for Monitoring and Reducing Marine Debris from Fisheries in Southeast Asia

96. The Council reviewed the Project Concept Note on Regional Collaborative Research and Capacity Building for Monitoring and Reducing Marine Debris from Fisheries in Southeast Asia (**Annex 20**) which was developed by SEAFDEC for possible funding support from the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF).

97. The Council Director for Japan expressed the view that addressing the issues on marine debris is important considering that the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) during its Third Senior Officials' Meeting in August 2019 already adopted the APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris, and that SEAFDEC should continue working with the potential donors on this aspect. Specifically on the proposed project activity 4-1 "Development of methods on marking of fishing gears and promotion on marking of fishing gears," he mentioned that as FAO already produced in 2018 the Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear, the implementation of this activity by SEAFDEC should be with a view to combating, minimizing and eliminating the occurrence of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and in a manner that is consistent with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines.

98. SEAFDEC assured the Council that this project would be developed in harmony with the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris and that any duplication with the FAO initiatives would be avoided. TD also informed the Council that with the collaboration of MFRDMD, research studies that stem from the pilot study of FAO on testing the means and methods of marking various fishing gear in accordance with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines, would be carried out by TD. Moreover, TD would also collaborate with the Fishing Operations and Technology Branch (FIAO) of FAO to ensure that the activities under this project would be consistent with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines, and that TD plans to simplify the Voluntary Guidelines into a user-friendly manual to facilitate its implementation in the AMSs.

99. With regard to marine debris, the Council Director for Indonesia shared the view that there are three components that need to be addressed in this activity, namely: marine plastics; abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear; and land waste in fishing ports.

100. The Council Director for Myanmar also shared the view with respect to the Project's Component 2 "Research, Innovation and Capacity Building" that the activities should aim not only to evaluate the microplastics but also map the occurrence of microplastics at sea in different parts of the region, as well as describe the associated neustonic communities in order to understand the presence of microplastic particles with plankton in filter feeders. Specifically, he also suggested that an investigation of the ratio of microplastics to zooplankton in the neustonic micro-layer of the waters in the region is necessary and thus should also be included as part of the activities. Furthermore, the standard techniques should also be improved to ensure that the data to be collected from the Southeast Asian countries in the future are comparable.

101. In response to the query of the Council Director for Myanmar, TD assured the Council that the scientific study on microplastics would include among others, mapping of the occurrence of microplastics at sea in different parts of the region, analysis of the microplastic particles with plankton in filter feeders, and determining of the ratio of microplastics to zooplankton in the neustonic micro-layer of the waters. In addition, the development of standard techniques for microplastic surveys would be considered by the regional network of microplastic experts through appropriate platform.

5.3.4 Project Concept Note: SEAFDEC Capacity Development through USAID Sustainable Fish Asia Activity

102. The Council was informed of the Concept Note on SEAFDEC Capacity Development through USAID Sustainable Fish Asia Activity (**Annex 21**) with the USAID as prospective funding source. This Concept Note is part of the USAID Sustainable Fish Asia (USAID SuFIA) Support Program, and has the objective of providing SEAFDEC with organizational development, institutional capacity building, and further strengthening of the organization's role as regional fisheries platform to carry on international fisheries development projects, policies, and activities.

103. The Council Director for Indonesia expressed the view that SEAFDEC could take this project as an opportunity to improve human resources in the SEAFDEC Departments.

5.3.5 Others

104. The Council Director for Indonesia suggested that SEAFDEC should consider formulating new projects related to the adaptations carried out by the region's small-scale fisheries in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

VI. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-MEMBER GOVERNMENTS

105. The Council noted the Statement of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO/RAP) (**Annex 22**), in which the issue on COVID-19 pandemic was raised as this has severely affected the food security and livelihoods of millions of people in the fisheries and aquaculture supply chain in Asia, creating much impact on the fisheries sector. As several measures had been established to manage the pandemic, FAO encouraged SEAFDEC to advocate among its Member Countries so that the fisheries and aquaculture sector would not be left behind in availing of the relevant relief and assistance schemes. The Council also took note of the two important areas of cooperation between SEAFDEC and FAO in the near future, *i.e.* SEAFDEC serving as executing partner for the BOBLME II and GoTFish Projects of FAO, and SEAFDEC supporting the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) in the region. The Council also acknowledged the wish of FAO for SEAFDEC to affirm its commitment as a longstanding partner in supporting the welfare of its Member Countries in the Southeast Asian region.

106. The Council also noted the Statement of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) (**Annex 23**) which reiterated the past cooperation between SEAFDEC and MRC through the MOU signed in 2017, particularly on the development of a Project-Based Action Plan (PBAP) for implementing the Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (BFMS). Subsequently a series of the PBAP were developed and finalized for endorsement by the MRC Joint Committee in 2020. The MRC has also started to develop technical guidelines for transboundary fisheries management, and for restoring and enhancing fish stocks in key important habitats to secure ecological health system along transboundary areas in the Mekong River Basin, and is also updating its 20-year old fisheries monitoring programmes. The Council also recognized that BFMS and its PBAP are regional cooperation frameworks that aim to facilitate, support, and strengthen coordination and collaboration

among the MRC, SEAFDEC and other relevant regional and international organizations for sustainable inland fisheries and aquatic resources development and management in the Mekong River Basin.

107. While expressing the gratitude to SEAFDEC for its efforts in promoting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development in the region through the collaborative arrangements with various international/regional organizations and non-member governments, the Council Director for Myanmar reiterated that such collaboration is necessary as it has significantly contributed to the region's fisheries sector development, through the delivery of the suitable practices and modes developed by those organizations and non-member Governments as well as works and experiences, and financial support.

VII. OTHER MATTERS (CLOSED SESSION)

7.1 Resolution and Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region Towards 2030

108. The representative from the SEAFDEC Secretariat informed the Council on the progress made by the SEAFDEC Secretariat with support from the Member Countries, in revising the Resolution and Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region Towards 2020 (RES&POA-2020) and in coming up with the 5th draft of the Resolution and Plan of Action Towards 2030 (RES&POA-2030), including the timeline for submission of the document to the ASEAN mechanism (**Annex 24**).

109. The Council Director for Thailand expressed his support to the draft RES&POA-2030 as this would serve as a framework for the development of programs, projects and activities for sustainable fisheries for food security towards 2030. He also emphasized that since the RES&POA-2030 touches upon a number of regional and international frameworks related to sustainable fisheries, climate change, as well as on human well-being, livelihood and welfare, implementation of the activities in line with the RES&POA-2030 would be beneficial for the AMSs to achieve its goal while moving together towards 2030.

110. While also expressing support to the adoption of the RES&POA-2030 as it would serve as important guidance for long-term fisheries development in the region, the Council Director for Indonesia commended the SEAFDEC Secretariat for exerting significant efforts to come up with the final version of the RES&POA-2030 after a series of consultations with the Member Countries. He added that the adopted RES&POA-2030 would ensure that relevant activities would be implemented by the respective Member Countries for the sustainability of fisheries in the region.

111. After the discussion, the Council endorsed the 5th draft of the RES&POA-2030 for subsequent submission to the ASEAN mechanism.

7.2 Preparation of Southeast Asian State of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SEASOFIA) 2022

112. While noting the proposal of the SEAFDEC Secretariat related to the preparation of the Southeast Asian State of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SEASOFIA 2022) which appears as **Annex 25**, the Council also supported the proposed frequency of production of future SEASOFIA which is every 5 years.

113. After expressing the support to the preparation of SEASOFIA 2022, the Council Director for Japan requested SEAFDEC to consider minimizing the cost of production and enhancing the dissemination through electronic format. In addition, he suggested that two (2) topics could be included in this current publication, namely: 1) Damages caused by COVID-19 on fisheries industries (including fish processing industries) in the Southeast Asian region; and 2) Policies of the ASEAN Member States in coping up and recovering from the damages. Moreover, if it is preferred that the

future SEASOFIA would be published more frequently than every 5 years, he suggested that SEAFDEC should consider conducting a survey on the utilization the SEASOFIA and submit the results of the said survey to the 53rd Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council.

114. On the frequency of production of future SEASOFIA, the Council Director for Thailand supported the suggestion that the future SEASOFIA should be produced every 5 years and should be published both as hard copy and in electronic format, and should be accessible through the SEAFDEC website.

115. The Council Director for Indonesia expressed the view that since SEASOFIA will be produced every 5 years, SEAFDEC should ensure that the data and information in the publication are harmonized with the State of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) which is produced by FAO every two years. He also asked SEAFDEC to circulate the draft of SEASOFIA 2022 to the Member Countries for consideration prior to its final printing.

116. The Council Director for Myanmar commended SEAFDEC for coming up with the SEASOFIA as it has provided good reference, especially in terms of the historical status of fisheries in the region. Such information could be used to support the formulation of the next 5-year Strategic Action Plan (SAP), and specific Annual Work Plan (AWP) under the respective priority areas.

7.3 Revision of Regional Framework for Fishery Statistics of Southeast Asia

117. The Council took note and approved the proposed plan for revising the Regional Framework for Fishery Statistics of Southeast Asia (**Annex 26**), as submitted by the SEAFDEC Secretariat.

118. While expressing appreciation to SEAFDEC for its efforts in compiling the fishery data and statistics of the Southeast Asian region, the Council Director for Japan shared the view that the accuracy and timeliness of data could be challenging. He therefore expressed the hope that the revision of the Framework would lead to improved utilization of the fishery statistics in the AMSs.

VIII. FUTURE DIRECTIN OF SEAFDEC (CLOSED SESSION)

119. With regards to Agenda 8 on the Future Direction of SEAFDEC, the Council agreed that items of discussion among the Council Directors and the Secretary-General under this Agenda are very important and should be confirmed in advance before having another teleconference session. In addition, considering the limited time for preparing such session and the issues that need to be discussed prior to the timeline for the adoption of the Report of the 52nd Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council, the Council suggested that such discussion could be conducted separately as a Special Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council tentatively in August or September 2020. In this connection, the Chairperson requested the SEAFDEC Secretariat to communicate with the Council Directors to provide their respective proposal on important issues including brief description on the issues, and prepare the Agenda of the Special Meeting to facilitate advance preparation of the Council.

IX. MANAGEMENT OF THE CENTER (CLOSED SESSION)

9.1 Operation of SEAFDEC Training and Research Vessels

120. The Council was informed of the Operation of the SEAFDEC Training and Research Vessels in 2019 and the proposed plans for the year 2020 (**Annex 27**), as well as the results of the review of the countries' interests in conducting their respective fishery resources surveys during 2020-2023 using the SEAFDEC vessels, which was reported by the representative from the SEAFDEC Training Department (TD).

121. While expressing the appreciation to TD for its efforts in maximizing the utilization of the two vessels, the Council Director for Japan raised the concern regarding the low operational days at

sea of these vessels during the recent years. Nevertheless, considering that the facilities and equipment of the M.V. SEAFDEC 2 had been improved in 2019 with the support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), he encouraged the other Member Countries to consider maximizing the operational utilization of the M.V. SEAFDEC 2 in the future, in order that the Government of Japan would also consider continuing its support to the activities that involve the utilization of the vessels.

122. The Council Director for the Philippines commended SEAFDEC for considering the request of the Philippines during the 42PCM, to use the M.V. SEAFDEC 2 for hydroacoustic survey of small pelagic fishing grounds in Philippine waters in 2020. Nevertheless, as the implementation of such survey is being confronted with difficulties due to the COVID-19 situation necessitating its postponement, it was therefore proposed that the Philippines would pursue the utilization of the M.V. SEAFDEC 2 in 2021 once the situation has improved.

123. While also noting the utilization of the M.V. SEAFDEC 2 in 2019 and the proposed plan for 2020, the Council Director for Viet Nam explained that although Viet Nam has already sent an official request to SEAFDEC for supporting the conduct of a national survey of large pelagic and demersal species in the country's waters, and that the technical cooperation discussion had already been convened between the technical staff of the Research Institute for Marine Fisheries (RIMF) of Viet Nam and TD for such a plan, the possibility of adjusting the plan might be necessary depending on the policy of the Government of Viet Nam towards bracing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

124. The Chief of MFRDMD recognized the need to conduct pelagic fishery resources surveys in the respective waters of the Member Countries as indicated in the results of the review of the countries' interest in the conduct of fishery resources surveys during 2020-2023. However, he suggested that the SEAFDEC vessels should be equipped with proper equipment, particularly the scientific echo sounder, which is necessary for the conduct of such surveys. Although the representative from TD explained that in 2019, TD tested the set of scientific equipment onboard M.V. SEAFDEC 2 (Simrad echo-sounder model EK60 of the Department of Fisheries (DOF) of Thailand connected with the transducer of RIMF of Viet Nam), the result of which showed that the CPU system of the echo sounder of DOF Thailand is compatible and could be linked with transducer of RIMF Viet Nam; the Chief of MFRDMD continued to propose that TD should consider acquiring its own scientific equipment for installation in the SEAFDEC vessels in the future.

125. After the deliberation, the Council approved the proposed operational plan of the M.V. SEAFDEC 2 for the year 2020 with a note that the proposed plan might be adjusted in accordance with the respective policies of the AMSs in addressing the COVID-19 situation.

9.2 Collaborative Arrangements between SEAFDEC and Other Organizations

126. The Council noted the collaborative arrangements which were signed between SEAFDEC and other international/organizations, donors, and agencies of non-member countries during the period after the Fifty-first Meeting until this Fifty-second Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council (**Annex 28**).

127. The Council Director for Indonesia expressed the hope that the existing arrangements between SEAFDEC and other organizations would provide benefits to the Member Countries, including the aspects of capacity improvement, and in raising the awareness toward sustainable fisheries.

9.3 Procedures for Establishment of Cooperation between SEAFDEC and Other Organizations

128. The Council took note of the proposed Procedures for Establishment of Cooperation between SEAFDEC and Other Organizations (**Annex 29**) as prepared by the Secretariat.

129. The Council Director for Singapore suggested that approval of the Council should be required for the extension and renewal of arrangements between SEAFDEC and other organizations even if there are no changes in the circumstances and in the nature of the cooperation. This is to allow the Council to determine whether such projects are still relevant or changes in the scope would be required to better serve the purpose of SEAFDEC.

130. In this regard, the Council Director for Indonesia suggested that all cooperation between SEAFDEC and other organizations should be communicated with the Council Directors for appropriate direction and approval.

131. With regards to the suggestion of the Council Director for Singapore that SEAFDEC should seek prior approval of the Council for extension and renewal of arrangements, the SEAFDEC Secretariat informed the Council that, in the future, the list of arrangements that will be extended and renewed in the coming years without any change in the activities or nature of the arrangements, would be compiled by the SEAFDEC Secretariat for approval of the Council which would be sought at its forthcoming annual meetings. Nevertheless, as the new text for some of the arrangements might not yet be available during the annual meetings of the Council, the SEAFDEC Secretariat would provide a copy of the current arrangements for information of the Council. Nonetheless, once these arrangements are signed, the SEAFDEC Secretariat will send a copy of the signed arrangements to the Council Directors for their information.

132. Taking into consideration the aforementioned recommendations, the SEAFDEC Secretariat revised the Procedures for Establishment of Cooperation between SEAFDEC and Other Organizations, and the revised Procedures shown in **Annex 30** was approved by the Council.

9.4 Monitoring the Implementation of Gender Strategy

133. The Council noted the progress made by the SEAFDEC Secretariat and Departments in the implementation of the Gender Strategy in 2019 (**Annex 31**).

134. The Council Director for Japan suggested that the SEAFDEC Secretariat should consider providing the report of the progress in the implementation of the Gender Strategy at each annual meeting of the SEAFDEC Council in the future. This would facilitate better understanding of the Member Countries on the importance of this matter.

135. In response to the suggestion of the Council Director for Japan, the Secretariat assured the Council that the progress in the implementation of the Gender Strategy would be accommodated in the SEAFDEC Annual Report and in the future reports under the Agenda on Report of the Secretary-General at each annual meeting of the Council.

136. While acknowledging the progress of the implementation of SEAFDEC Gender Strategy, the Council Director for Indonesia mentioned that Indonesia has also been implementing the gender strategy in the fisheries sector through the increased involvement of women in the upstream and downstream sectors.

137. The Council Director for Myanmar shared the view that the country's Gender Strategy will be developed in the future, especially mainstreaming it in the research programs for developing fisheries technologies, farming systems, and policies, to support the role of rural women in improving fisheries productivity and their livelihoods. Moreover, incorporating in these efforts are the steps to assess and analyze gender inequalities and needs, collection of information and disaggregated data on the target groups, identification of the existing gender inequalities and their underlying causes, direct consultations with the target groups, and drawing of conclusions and additional resources, will also be considered to form part of the strategies.

9.5 Outlines of 5-Year Achievement of IFRDMD

138. The Council took note of the 5-Year Achievement of IFRDMD (**Annex 32**) which was reflected through its two regional projects and concluded during the Workshop on 5-year of IFRDMD's Achievement organized in 2019. The Workshop also identified the challenges or key recommendations for consideration during the planning of the future projects and activities of IFRDMD.

139. The Council Director for Indonesia encouraged IFRDMD to continue improving the region's capacity in research and data collection on inland fisheries, especially for the tropical anguillid eel which has high economic potentials.

140. While conforming to the validity of the key challenges and recommendations described in the document, the Council Director for Japan encouraged IFRDMD to address such challenges in an appropriate manner. He also emphasized that the role of IFRDMD in the sustainable development of inland fisheries has been increasingly important considering that the amount of the world's catch from freshwater has been increasing since 2014.

141. The Council Director for Myanmar expressed the gratitude to the Government of Indonesia for hosting IFRDMD, and to the personalities involved in the establishment and operation of IFRDMD to support inland fisheries development and its sustainability. He also mentioned that Myanmar is one of the countries endowed with the vast inland fisheries areas that support the livelihood and food security of fisheries dependent communities. He therefore looked forward to enhancing its close collaboration with IFRDMD for the sustainable development of inland fisheries in Myanmar, specifically in terms of reflecting in the planning process of IFRDMD, the need to improve the capacity of Myanmar in inland fisheries species identification and composition as well as in enhancing the data collection systems in inland fisheries of Myanmar in the future.

9.6 SEAFDEC Regional Fisheries Policy Network (RFPN)

142. The Council was informed of the proposed adjustment of the number and the timeframes of the Regional Fisheries Policy Network (RFPN) in 2021, and the proposed adjustment of the scopes of work for the RFPN Members in the year 2022 and onwards (**Annex 33**) as raised by the SEAFDEC Secretariat.

143. With regard to the proposed adjustment of the number of RFPN members in 2021, which should cover 8 countries and to be seconded to the SEAFDEC Secretariat for 6 months, although the Council approved such proposed adjustment, the Council Director for Thailand shared the view that this practice should only be for certain periods of time when funding is insufficient. He suggested that SEAFDEC should consider enhancing its efforts in securing funds to support the full RFPN members for one-year period assignment, as originally practiced in order that close networking among the Southeast Asian countries could be fostered.

144. The Council Director for Indonesia supported the continuation of the RFPN program as this is beneficial in facilitating the effective and smooth implementation of the SEAFDEC programs, while also supporting the human resources development for the SEAFDEC Member Countries. He also proposed that the secondment of RFPN members should be for a period of 1 year, as a 6-month period secondment is inadequate.

145. The Council Director for Myanmar while agreeing with the proposed revision of the framework of the RFPN (2022 and onward), shared the view that the 6-month secondment of RFPN would not be sufficient for the RFPN Members to gain knowledge and experience. He added that SEAFDEC should consider looking for potential donors to support the RFPN program in order that this could be continued with 8-country representation on a 1-year basis as originally practiced.

146. On the proposed adjustment of the RFPN frameworks for 2022 and onwards, the Council Director for Thailand expressed the view that the role of the RFPN members should be focused on regional policy matters and that they should be stationed at SEAFDEC Secretariat. As for their capacity building on technical fisheries matters at any technical department of SEAFDEC, this could be undertaken through other appropriate mechanisms, *e.g.* tailor-made training, etc.

147. While requesting the SEAFDEC Secretariat to provide a more concrete picture of the adjustment of scope of works for the RFPN members in the year 2022 and onward, the Council Director for Japan also suggested that the SEAFDEC Secretariat should consider preparing a draft revision of the Terms of Reference of the RFPN for consideration by the Council at its 53rd Meeting, and on such revision the Council could make the necessary decision.

148. In response to the suggestion of the Council on the proposed revision of the framework for RFPN for 2022 and onwards, the SEAFDEC Secretariat agreed to develop the draft revision of the Terms of Reference of the RFPN for consideration by the Council at its 53rd Meeting, and would consult with the prospective donors, *e.g.* Japanese Trust Fund and others, to seek their consideration on the possibility of accommodating the full members of RFPN under their respective programs, as appropriate.

X. FINANCIAL MATTERS (CLOSED SESSION)

10.1 Adoption of Audited Financial Report for the Year 2018

149. In accordance with Article 6, Paragraph 2 (ii) of the Agreement Establishing the Center, the Council approved the Audited Consolidated Financial Statements of the Center for the year ended 31 December 2018 including that of the Secretariat and the four Departments for the Year 2018 (**Annex 34**) as audited by the official auditors of the Center, *Mr. Pongsakorn Suwansaksin* from P. Polymaths Auditing Co., Ltd., Thailand.

10.2 Un-audited Financial Report for the Year 2019, and Status of the Financial Situation for the Year 2020

150. The Council took note of the Un-audited Consolidated Financial Report for the Year 2019 (**Annex 35**), which comprised the Un-audited Balance Sheet as of 31 December 2019, the Un-audited Statements of Income and Expenditures for the Year 2019, and the Un-audited Fund Balances as of 31 December 2019.

151. The Council Director for Japan confirmed the commitment of the Government of Japan to contribute the budget of 1,830,357 USD in 2021 as Japanese Trust Fund (JTF) allocation to SEAFDEC, the amount of which is the same as that allocated for 2020. He also gave the assurance that Japan would continue its financial support to SEAFDEC activities through the JTF in 2022 and thereafter.

152. The Council Director for Indonesia suggested that due to the COVID-19 situation which resulted in limitations of in-person activities in 2020, SEAFDEC should consider reformulating its budgetary requirements in 2020.

153. SEAFDEC informed the Council that the budgetary requirements in 2020 was prepared by SEAFDEC Secretariat and Departments based on the programs of activities approved by the 42nd Meeting of PCM in 2019. Nevertheless, the actual budget utilization corresponding to the activities in 2020 would be recorded in the Financial Report for consideration during the forthcoming Council Meeting.

10.3 Proposed Budgetary Requirements of the Center for the Year 2021

154. The Council approved the proposed budgetary requirements of the Center for the Year 2021 as shown in **Annex 36**. Subsequently, the SEAFDEC Secretary-General expressed the gratitude of SEAFDEC to the Council for endorsing the proposed budgetary requirements of the Center for the Year 2021.

XI. OTHERS

155. Considering that the current COVID-19 pandemic poses the need for SEAFDEC to conduct its activities, such as consultations, workshops, trainings, etc. through teleconference or televisual facilities, the Council Director for Indonesia suggested that the SEAFDEC Secretariat should consider formulating appropriate protocols that could serve as reference for the conduct of such activities in the future, as necessary.

156. The Council Director for Indonesia also expressed the concern over the situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic which could possibly impact on the workplan of SEAFDEC in 2020. In this regard, he requested the SEAFDEC Secretariat and Departments to identify the activities that could be conducted virtually and those that need to be conducted in-person, as well as to explore new mechanisms and systems of conducting the activities during the pandemic situation, as appropriate.

157. In response to the concern of the Council Director for Indonesia, SEAFDEC assured the Council that the workplan of the SEAFDEC Secretariat and Departments in 2020 would be adjusted, including the mode of conducting the activities, *i.e.* virtually or in-person, where applicable.

158. The Council Director for Myanmar expressed the support of Myanmar to SEAFDEC for conducting the Fifty-second Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council through teleconference as this has become necessary when the region is being confronted with the COVID-19 in 2020, and which for that matter could also be adopted in case similar disease outbreaks occur in the future. However, when the situation would have already improved, SEAFDEC should consider continuing with the usual practice of organizing the Council Meeting with the actual participation of the Council Directors considering that the SEAFDEC Council Meeting is one of the most important events for sharing and discussing the important and emerging issues of fisheries in the region.

XII. CONCLUDING MATTERS

12.1 Adoption of the Meeting Report

159. The SEAFDEC Secretariat consolidated the views and directives of the SEAFDEC Council given through the Teleconference and *Ad Referendum* Sessions into the Report of the 52nd Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council, which was adopted by the Council *ad referendum*.

12.2 Date and Venue of the 53rd Meeting of the Council

160. In considering the date and venue of the Fifty-third Meeting of the Council, the SEAFDEC Alternate Council Director for Lao PDR, *Mr. Chanthaboun Sirimanotham* on behalf of the Council Director for Lao PDR informed the Council that the Government of Lao PDR would accept the responsibility of hosting the next Council Meeting in Lao PDR in 2021.

161. The Council expressed the appreciation for the offer of Lao PDR to host the next Council Meeting in Lao PDR, and requested the Secretary-General to discuss with the Council Director for Lao PDR the exact date and venue of the next meeting of the SEAFDEC Council.

CLOSING OF THE MEETING

162. The Chairperson expressed the appreciation to the SEAFDEC Council of Directors for their active participation during the Teleconference and *Ad referendum* sessions of the Fifty-second Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council. He also thanked the SEAFDEC Secretariat and Departments for the cooperation and arrangements for the Meeting despite various limitations. While recognizing that this year's Council Meeting was very challenging due to the coronavirus pandemic, he commended the SEAFDEC Secretariat for successfully reconciling the different views expressed by the Council of Directors during the live-streaming session as well as those sent via e-mail. After commending SEAFDEC for the success of the Fifty-second Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council, he declared the Meeting closed.