

Report of the videoconference on

**3rd EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION FOR MARKETING INFORMATION
AND COOPERATION SERVICES FOR FISHERY PRODUCTS IN AFRICA
(INFOPÊCHE)**

4th February 2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Established in 1991 in Abidjan, INFOPÊCHE is an Intergovernmental Organization for Marketing Information and Cooperation Services for Fishery Products in Africa. It gathers 18 African countries (Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Morocco, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo). The republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the hosting country, chairs the Governing Council.

In recent years, INFOPÊCHE has faced enormous financial difficulties. Regarding the increasingly critical development of the situation, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire as the Chairman of the Governing Council, requested the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to carry out a mission to assess the situation, the nature and the importance of INFOPÊCHE's needs. The study was carried out from, March 9th to 13th, 2020. The mission focused on the results and conclusions, recommended that an extraordinary session of INFOPÊCHE Governing Council to be held urgently for analyzing the conclusions and recommendations of the report in order to take suitable measures for its performance.

The extraordinary Session was followed by (2nd and 3rd February 2021) two-days meeting of the Directors of Fisheries, INFOPÊCHE's Administrators.

The 3rd extraordinary Session of INFOPÊCHE's Governing Council was held on February, 04th 2021 by videoconference due to Coronavirus disease.

II. PARTICIPATION

Had taken part to the meeting the representatives of the following member countries : Angola, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Kingdom of Morocco, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

Had also taken part as observers, the following Organizations:

- Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation Among African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO);
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations(FAO);
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The Chairman of the Governing Council had ensured that the quorum was reached with the participation of 15 States out of 18.

III. OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Moussa DOSSO, Minister of Livestock and Fishery Resources of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Chairman of INFOPÊCHE's Governing Council.

It registered seven speeches.

- Mr. Abdelouahed BENABBOU, Executive Secretary of ATLAFCO, congratulated Côte d'Ivoire for holding the extraordinary session which aims to revitalize INFOPÊCHE, whose relevance is still important, particularly in terms of promoting regional trade of fishery products. He highlighted the difficult financial situation undergone by INFOPÊCHE, due to the failure of payment of the member states contributions and which weakens the institution. He paid a vibrant tribute to the republic of Côte d'Ivoire for its role of regional and continental leadership for all questions relating to fisheries, and thanked the Minister of Livestock and Fishery Resources, for his personal involvement, his advice, his guidance and his availability despite its heavy national responsibilities.

He finally reaffirmed the commitment of ATLAFCO, which is linked to INFOPÊCHE by a Memorandum of Understanding, to support it by carrying out additional or joint programs, for the benefit of the fishery sector.

- Mr. N'diaga Gueye, Senior Officer at FAO, stressed that now more than ever, fish and fishery products are essential in the fight against hunger and poverty. The development of sustainable value chains is essential to improve market access and increase global trade of fish and fishery products. INFOPÊCHE has been an important source of marketing support for fish producers and exporters in Africa, a region that includes some of the world's largest fisheries. Its activities include buyers and seller's match-making, publishing current and long-term business information, and providing technical advice and specialized services.

The FAO, through its Regional Office for Africa, is delighted with the holding of these meetings and expresses the very strong wish that INFOPÊCHE will return completely to the Member States who have formally committed to establishing it. Regular payment of their contribution would encourage other partners to support them. He praised the determination of Member States to carry out the necessary reforms by involving the private sector and drawing lessons from the experiences of other Info networks such as INFOFISH.

- For his part, Dr. Aboubacar SIDIBÉ, conveyed in his speech, warm greetings from Mr. Sékou Sangaré, Commissioner in charge of Agriculture, Water Resources and Environment of ECOWAS. He recalled that the coordination of regional agricultural development policies and strategies became a reality in 2005 with the adoption of **ECOWAP/ECOWAS**. This regional agricultural policy aims to make a sustainable contribution to meeting the food needs of the population, to economic and social development and to poverty reduction in the member states.

He then noted that the potential of fisheries and aquaculture is not fully perceptible in the strategies for sustainable development of the agricultural sector. Also, he reported that to remedy this situation, a Detailed Strategic Framework for the Development of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture (CSD/DPAD) was recently validated by the Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the ECOWAS's member countries. Finally, he reiterated, on behalf of the Chairman of the ECOWAS Commission, their sincere thanks and gratitude to the Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the region, and to the technical and financial partners of **ECOWAP/ECOWAS**, for their commitment and multi-dimensional support.

After the interventions of the Development Partners, the Chairman invited his peers to take the floor.

- Mr. Alioune N'DOYE, Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Economy of the Republic of Senegal, reaffirmed Senegal's commitment and membership at INFOPÊCHE after recalling the importance of this Organization's mandate for member countries. He then recalled the importance of the fishing sector for Senegal in particular and lamented that the potential of this sector is not fully exploited to ensure greater availability of fish for the populations despite the existence of a regional development policy.

He called for adapting the Organization's mandate to take into account emerging areas such as the blue economy, the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), the value chain and labels certifying the products placed in the markets, etc.

He finally invited his colleagues Ministers to validate the experts report and recommended that the administrator of the transitional phase take office as soon as possible.

- Mrs. Esperança Da Costa, Secretary of State for Fisheries of Angola, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Republic of Angola, reaffirmed her country's commitment to the collective vision of revitalizing INFOPÊCHE. She thanked the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for its support to this important organization which contributes to food and nutritional security as well as to the creation of jobs in our countries.
- Mrs. Levina OWUSU, Chief Director of the Minister, had, on behalf of Mrs. Elizabeth Afole QUAYE, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, reaffirmed her country's commitment to the collective vision of revitalizing INFOPÊCHE. She underlined that INFOPÊCHE is a very important tool which had formerly provided technical support related to hygiene, food safety and development of the fisheries sector in the Member States.

She thanked the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the host country, for its support to this organization since its creation and supports the decision to revitalize INFOPÊCHE.

- In his opening speech, Mr. Moussa DOSSO, Minister of Livestock and Fishery Resources of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and Chairman of INFOPÊCHE's Governing Council, thanked his colleagues for their availability to hold discussion upon the organization which was born from the common will of each of the States in 1991. He then thanked the development partners, in particular the Economic Community of West African States, whose contribution permitted to carry out the INFOPÊCHE diagnostic study and the holding of this extraordinary session of the Governing Council, as well as FAO and ATLAFCO for their constant support.

He recalled the importance of INFOPÊCHE and noted that the positive development of the international political environment and the dynamism of fishing and aquaculture constitute opportunities for the development of the activities of this common institution.

He finally presented the main objective of the session, which is to draw the paths of a new departure in carrying out the necessary reforms to revitalize INFOPÊCHE with a view to making it a real instrument of development and creation of added value for fishery and aquaculture sector.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND WORK HOLDING

4.1. Adoption of the agenda

The following agenda was adopted by the session:

1. Opening of the session;
2. Presentation of the administrators report;
3. Examination and adoption of the Administrators ' draft recommendations;
4. Adoption of the summary report;
5. Other matters;
6. Closure of the meeting.

4.2. Work progress

4.2.1. Opening of the session

The 3rd Extraordinary Session of INFOPÊCHE's Governing Council was chaired by Mr Moussa DOSSO, Chairman of the Governing Council and Minister of Livestock and Fishery Resources of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

4.2.2. Presentation of the administrators report

The recommendations of the experts' report were presented and submitted to the Governing Council (the directors' report is appended)

4.2.3. Examination and adoption of the resolutions

The Governing Council after deliberation adopted the following resolutions:

4.2.3.1. Political Reforms

The member states, having affirmed their interest in pursuing the mission of INFOPÊCHE, which has a clear comparative advantage in terms of marketing compared to those of other sub-regional, regional and continental fisheries management organizations;

The member states considering the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area as an opportunity to develop the activities of INFOPÊCHE throughout the continent;

The member states reaffirming their political will to continue supporting INFOPÊCHE, undertake to:

- a) revise INFOPÊCHE's mandate in taking into account changes operated in the environment regarding fisheries and aquaculture development, technical and technological innovations;
- b) revise the regulatory texts for adapting them to the current evolution of the political environment of fisheries and aquaculture sector;
- c) develop a five-year strategic development plan for putting INFOPÊCHE into perspective.

4.2.3.2. Institutional Reforms

The member states, noting that the institutional framework of INFOPÊCHE has become ineffective, undertake to:

- a) propose a new decision-making body at ministerial level and define its operating procedures;
- b) carry out a feasibility study on the opportunity to linking INFOPÊCHE to the African Union as a specialized Technical Institution.

4.2.3.3. Governance Reforms

The member states, having noted significant dysfunctions in the governance mechanism within INFOPÊCHE, undertake to:

- develop a communication plan that strengthens links with the fisheries administrations of member states, professionals of the sector and with other similar organizations; which promotes dynamic consultation and lobbying and the effective operationalization of the Memorandums of Understandings (MoU) concluded.

4.2.3.4. Transitional Phase

The member states having noted the weakness of the adaptation of INFOPÊCHE to the regional and global contexts of deep changes;

The member states having also noted the weakness of the strategic management of INFOPÊCHE which hampered the possibility of developing partners networks, of perceiving the development of the market, of adapting and of bringing the work team with profiles varied to adhere to a common and innovative vision to learn the lessons of the changes and seize the opportunities;

The member states, convinced of the need for a transitional phase to negotiate the full operating capacity so that INFOPÊCHE can recover its performance, undertake to:

- a) open an operational transition for a two-year period and select Côte d'Ivoire as Chairman of the Governing Council and hosting country of INFOPÊCHE to ensure the implementation of this transitional period;
- b) set up a task-force composed of the following countries: Angola, Morocco, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone to support the transitional authority actions;
- c) to support the transition
- d) set up the roadmap below:
 1. propose an optimal structure to modernize the management method in order to achieve the objectives of INFOPÊCHE;
 2. regularize the staff administrative situation;
 3. develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy at the level of member states and development partners;
 4. clear of salaries, salary accessories and social fees;
 5. provide INFOPÊCHE with appropriate equipment and logistics;
 6. examine and implement the resolutions set out in points 4.2.3.1, 4.2.3.2 and 4.2.3.3.

4.2.3.5. Funding INFOPÊCHE

The member states having claimed that INFOPÊCHE was born of their own agreement;

The member states having expressed their serious concern about the financial health of INFOPÊCHE and having noted that the accumulation of arrears weakens the functioning of the institution, have undertaken to:

- a) regularly pay their contributions to the INFOPÊCHE's budget;
- b) clear of their arrears;
- c) pay their contribution to the regular budget of INFOPÊCHE for the year 2021 and for the following years;
- d) pay their arrears on instalment option.

V. OTHER MATTERS

No other matter was registered on the agenda

VI. ADOPTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

The Ministers in charge of Fisheries of INFOPÊCHE's member states unanimously adopted the report of the 3rd Extraordinary Session of the Governing Council.

VII. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

Mr. El MALAGUI Mohamed, Director of INFOPÊCHE expressed his thanks to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for all the attention he receives when being in this Country. He also addressed a very special mention to Mr. Moussa DOSSO, Minister of Livestock and Fishery Resources, Chairman of INFOPÊCHE's Governing Council and his collaborators for the enormous sacrifices carried out in benefit of the organization.

The Session expressed three motions to ATLAFCO, FAO and ECOWAS to thank them for their commitment to INFOPÊCHE.

Mr. Moussa DOSSO, Minister of Livestock and Fishery Resources of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Chairman of the session was delighted with the effective participation of his peers and for their mobilization to make INFOPÊCHE one of the instruments of cooperation the most efficient and competitive one in the field of processing and marketing fishery and aquaculture products in Africa. He thanked the Ministers for their commitments for supporting the transitional phase and the required reforms to revitalize INFOPÊCHE. He called on the member states of the task- force to give the transitional phase all the support to ensure its success.

Then, he declared close the work of the 3rd Extraordinary Session of the INFOPÊCHE's Governing Council.

The Chairman of the Governing Council

Moussa DOSSO

