

# **THE BAY OF BENGAL LARGE MARINE ECOSYSTEM PROGRAMME**

(GCP/RAS/175/SWE)

(GCP/RAS/179/WBG)

**The Second Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Programme**, 19 February 2003, Garden Resort Hotel, Pattaya, Thailand

## **Report of the Meeting**

### **Welcome**

The Regional Coordinator, Dr. Philomène A. Verlaan, welcomed the participants on behalf of FAO and noted that representatives from the eight BOBLME countries were present. The list of participants is attached as Annex 1. She then called for election of a chairperson.

### **Election of Chairperson**

The representative from Thailand, Mr. Somsak Chullasorn, announced that he would be retiring in the autumn, and proposed that the representative from Bangladesh, Mr. Bhuiyan Rafiuddin Ahmed, be elected as Chairperson. The representative from Maldives, Mr. Ahmed Hafiz, seconded this proposal. Mr. Ahmed formally declared the meeting to be open and proposed that introductions were unnecessary as all present already knew each other. Mr. Ahmed asked whether there were any matters arising from the First Programme Steering Committee Meeting (January 28-29, 2002, Chennai, India). There were no matters arising.

### **Adoption of the Agenda**

The Programme Steering Committee (PSC) adopted the Agenda for this Second PSC Meeting (DOC 2PSC/2003/GEN/1).

### **Agenda Item 1: Update on the BOBLME Programme**

Dr. Verlaan presented the update beginning with her formal assumption of duty in Chennai on December 25, 2002. The principal substantive activities were the preparations for the First Regional Workshop and the Second PSC Meeting. The principal administrative activities included: improvement of the BOBLME Programme computing facilities, formal acquisition by the Programme of a full-time assistant, upgrading of the Programme's telecommunications facilities, and establishment of an Imprest Account and Programme-related financial and accounting procedures in accordance with FAO rules.

Mr. Peter Funegard, from the National Board of Fisheries of the Government of Sweden, representing the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), one of the two

principal funders of the BOBLME Programme (GCP/RAS/175/SWE), inquired about the status of the BOBLME Programme's office location.

In her reply, Dr. Verlaan first briefly summarized the background to his question. The BOBLME Programme is currently located on the same premises in Chennai where FAO's Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) had been located, whose rent and electricity are kindly paid by the Government of India. It had been originally planned for BOBP to be replaced by an independent Bay of Bengal Inter-Governmental Organization (BOB-IGO) well before the BOBLME Programme began. BOB-IGO would have remained on the (former) BOBP premises, its rent and electricity would continue to be paid by the Government of India, and the BOBLME Programme would occupy a small part of the former BOBP premises. The unforeseen prolonged delay in the establishment of BOB-IGO exhausted the remaining funds available to FAO for this purpose from the BOBP donors, necessitating the closure of BOBP by FAO on December 24, 2002. The continued location of the BOBLME Programme on the former BOBP premises thereby became uncertain. The BOBLME Programme was not budgeted to include rent and electricity, hence it would be virtually impossible to occupy even a much reduced space on the former BOBP premises at a much reduced rent paid for by the Programme – an alternative to moving the office that was extensively explored by Dr. Verlaan and other FAO staff.

If a move were required, the attendant disruption would severely jeopardize the chances of completion of the Programme on schedule. The much-needed improvement of the BOBLME Programme telecommunications facilities also could not be implemented until the Programme's office location was confirmed.

The formal establishment of BOB-IGO would obviate the need for the BOBLME Programme to relocate. It had been very recently announced that the agreement of the fourth of the (required minimum of) four countries to join the BOB-IGO had been secured and that a signing ceremony to formally establish the BOB-IGO was being scheduled; however, a firm date for this ceremony was not yet fixed. Meanwhile, FAO and the Government of India were exploring an interim arrangement that would enable BOBLME Programme to remain at its present location without incurring rent and electricity expenses until the establishment of the BOB-IGO.

Therefore, Dr. Verlaan concluded, while the retention of the Programme's office at its present location remains not finally confirmed for the duration of this phase of the Programme, the prospect of a relocation at present seems less imminent.

The representative from India, Mr. Pattanaik, confirmed the commitment of the Government of India to provide the BOBLME Programme with office space.

## **Agenda Item 2: The Draft National Workplan**

Dr. Verlaan introduced the Draft National Workplan (DOC 2PSC/2003/WP/1) and explained that it was drawn up to comply with the Workplan (DOC 2PSC/2003/INF/1)

submitted by FAO in October 2002 to meet the funding schedule of the donors, which were, respectively, December 31, 2003 for SIDA (GCP/RAS/175/SWE) and October 31, 2003 for GEF (GCP/RAS/179/WBG). This schedule would entail the national work being completed by October 31, 2003, leaving the remaining period for which funding was available for completion by FAO of the Project Brief to be submitted to the GEF Council for its meeting in May 2004.

Mr. Robin Broadfield, the representative for GEF from the World Bank, the Implementing Agency for and one of the two principal funders of the BOBLME Programme (GCP/RAS/179/WBG), stated that the funding period set by his Agency for completion of the PDF Block B phase was now viewed as too ambitious. Furthermore, submission of the Project Brief for the next phase of the BOBLME Programme to the October 2004 GEF Council would be preferable for operational reasons. He intended to recommend to his Agency that the funding deadline be extended accordingly. He thought an additional six to nine months would be feasible.

Mr. Funegard stated that SIDA would be inclined to take a similar view with regard to its funding period, and that he intended to recommend a concomitant extension to SIDA.

The Chairperson, Mr. Ahmed, expressed his appreciation to the two principal funders on behalf of the BOBLME countries. The Regional Coordinator was requested to prepare and circulate a revised National Workplan based on the proposed funding extension.

### **Agenda Item 3: Budget for National Activities: Items Covered**

Dr. Verlaan introduced the Budget for National Activities: Items Covered (DOC 2PSC/2003/INF/2). She explained that this budget's focus on travel costs for out-station members of the National Task Force to NTF meetings, participation by stakeholders in the National Workshop and travel by the National Consultant reflects the importance of the comprehensive inclusion of even the most remote stakeholders in the national activities. A principal objective of the present PDF Block B Phase of the Programme is the establishment of coordination and communication mechanisms both regionally and nationally. In the case of the countries surrounding the Bay of Bengal, where those parts of the countries actually bordering the Bay are often quite far from the country's capital (e.g., India, Indonesia, Malaysia), it is particularly important that the stakeholders from these parts be represented. The FAO Country Representatives, and UNDP in Malaysia, would be in charge of making the appropriate disbursements in accordance with this Document and FAO's Procedures for such disbursements.

### **Agenda Item 4: National Task Force**

Dr. Verlaan stated that all the countries had been sent the Draft First National Task Force Meeting Guidelines on 15 January 2003, together with a prospectus of the Programme. These Draft NTF Guidelines were now submitted to the PSC for comments (DOC 2PSC/2003/WP/2). India and Myanmar had held their first NTF meeting and the other countries had indicated their intention to hold their first NTF meeting after the First

Regional Workshop. The PSC approved the NTF Meeting Guidelines and agreed that it was feasible to complete the remaining first NTF Meetings by 31 March 2003.

### **Agenda Item 5: National Workshop**

Dr. Verlaan proposed that if sufficient funds were available, a 1-day meeting be held with the National Coordinators prior to the National Workshops to review the national process, develop a common agenda and list of participants so that the National Workshops could be run consistently with comparable outputs. The Regional Coordinator would issue a guideline for the National Workshop on the basis of that meeting. This proposal was approved for further exploration.

### **Agenda Item 6: Terms of Reference**

Dr. Verlaan asked the PSC for its comments on the Draft Terms of Reference for:  
National Consultant (DOC 2PSC/2003/WP/3)  
National Report (DOC 2PSC/2003/WP/4)  
National Review Group (DOC 2PSC/2003/WP/5)  
International Scientific Review Group (DOC 2PSC/2003/WP/6)  
Theme Reports (DOC 2PSC/2003/WP/7).

The PSC agreed to amend the Draft Terms of Reference as follows:

**National Consultant:** Footnote 1 will include: “Biodiversity National Strategies, WCS National Reports and country responses to initiatives under the Biodiversity & Climate Change Conventions.”

**National Report:** After Bullet 5 insert: “summarize and assess the actions already underway or planned to address the threats and their causes.”

**National Review Group:** Insert “preferably” between “experts” and “at” in Bullet 1; state that the review will be desk-based in Bullet 3; replace “three” with “five” and state that NRG members will assess the Reports independently of each other, both in Bullet 4.

**International Scientific Review Group:** In Bullet 1 between “experts,” and “at” insert ....“either from the region or with extensive regional experience,”...; replace the first part of the second sentence of Bullet 2 with: “Final selection will be made by FAO,....”; replace “five” with “ten” in Bullet 4.

**Theme Reports:** no changes.

The following actions were also agreed under this Agenda Item 6:

With regard to the National Reports: the best example of a “good practice” National Report from another LME Programme would be provided to the National Consultants by the Regional Coordinator. National Reports from the GEF/UNEP South China Sea

Project would be examined for this purpose, in consultation with its Project Director, Dr. John Pernetta.

With regard to the Theme Reports: examples of “good practice” Theme Reports on themes comparable to those agreed on for the BOBLME Programme would be provided to the Theme Report Consultants by the Regional Coordinator.

The number of Theme Reports, originally set at four because of funding constraints, would be kept flexible, and the final number would be determined based on the recommendations of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Workshop and available funding.

### **Agenda item 7: Second Regional Workshop**

The Workshop should preferably be held in the first week of April 2004, or, less preferably, the last week of April 2004 (the intervening two weeks are religious holidays in some of the BOBLME countries).

The venue of the 2d Regional Workshop will be decided later.

If funding were available, a 1-2 day meeting of the PSC, the National Coordinators and the Regional Coordinator would be held to discuss the draft outline Project Brief, participants and the proposed agenda for the 2d Regional Workshop, preferably in the week of 10 February 2004.

### **Agenda Item 8: Communications with PSC Members**

It was agreed that for efficiency and cost-effectiveness, transmission of documents from the Regional Coordinator to the PSC Members would be via email. The National Coordinators were also receiving their documentation from the Regional Coordinator via email. In general communication via email was to be encouraged.

### **Agenda Item 9: Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **Closure of the Meeting**

Mr. Ahmed thanked those present and formally declared the Second Meeting of the BOBLME Programme Steering Committee to be closed.