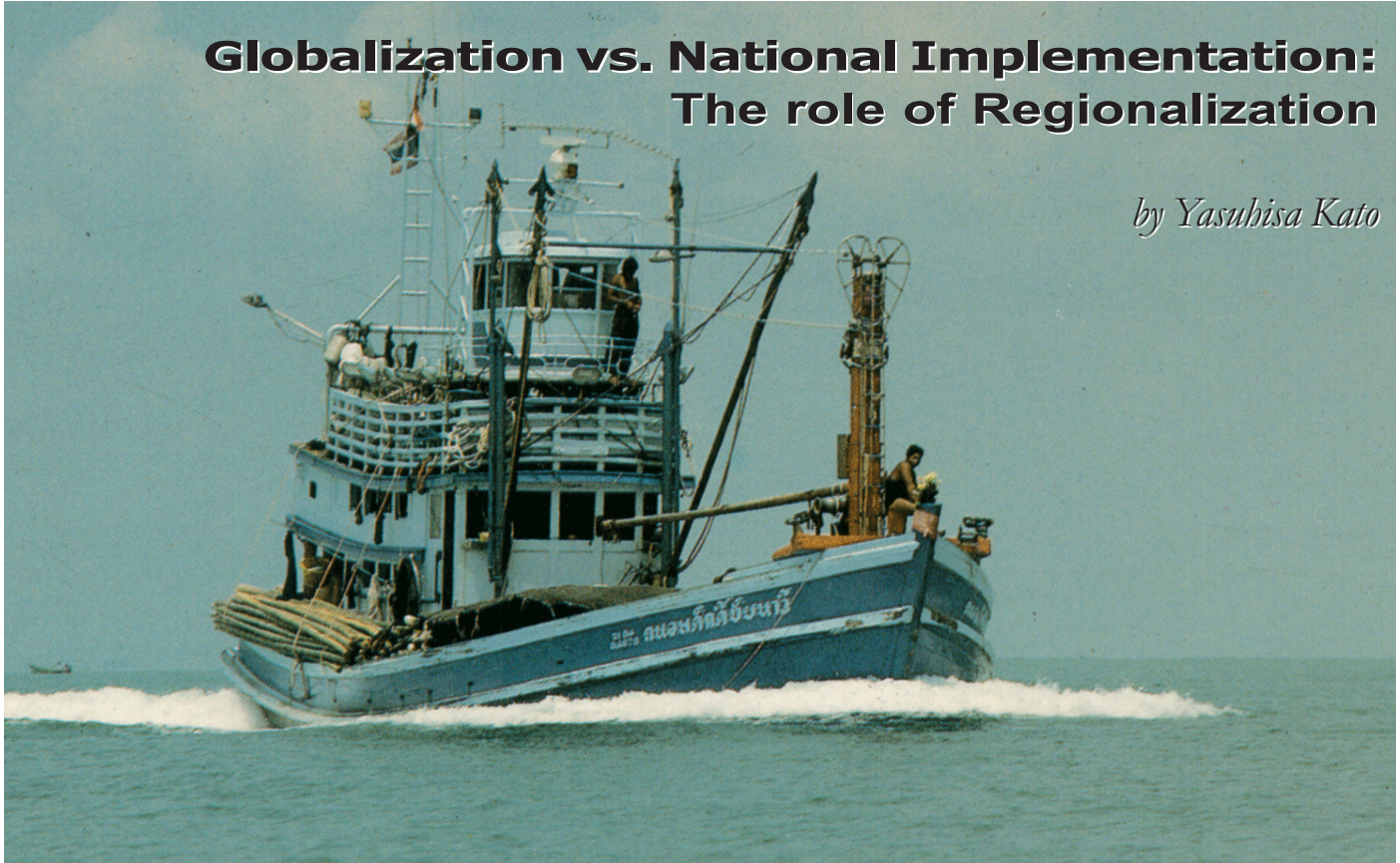


Globalization vs. National Implementation: The role of Regionalization

by Yasuhisa Kato



Regulating fisheries

International fisheries societies have elaborated various global instruments to regulate fisheries. These have often consisted of codes of conduct and international plan of actions, in addition to international fisheries related laws, in order to promote a concerted and coherent approach to the sustainable use of aquatic resources. These initiatives are based on global concerns about the impacts of unregulated fisheries industries on aquatic environments. The pace of such initiatives has accelerated since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, when international societies discussed various elements affecting global environment, including aquatic ecosystem.

One outstanding achievement has been the formulation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The CCRF set out principles and an international standard of behaviour to ensure the sustainable exploitation of aquatic resources. The formulation of

the CCRF was an important step toward the global sustainability of fisheries, as it provides a comprehensive framework and principles to guide countries in taking appropriate actions.

The development of the CCRF was mostly the work of the developed fishing nations, and the Code therefore reflects primarily the concerns and situations of fisheries of these countries. Less consideration is given to fisheries issues in developing countries. Reasons for developing countries' failure to become actively involved in such global exercises has been analysed in other articles, and will not be further addressed here. However, it can be argued that most developing countries wish to fully mobilize their fisheries sectors in line with short-term economic development objectives. To some extent, this might explain the reluctance to quick adoption by developing countries of the CCRF.

Limitations of CCRF to developing countries

Developing countries generally have less technical and financial capabilities than developed nations. The

prevalence of poverty, especially in rural areas, may hinder developing countries from taking appropriate actions on issues demanded by global instruments like the CCRF, even though they might wish to do so. Three issues are common and specific to developing countries, and may have to be considered in the implementation of the CCRF:

1. The structure of fisheries. The main fishing industries in developing countries are categorized as small scale or coastal fisheries. In the case of ASEAN Member Countries, 95% of fishers are involved in this sub-sector. Management of these sub-sectors is fundamentally different from large scale, industrial fisheries.

2. The ecological situation. Fisheries resources throughout the tropics are typically multi-species. Most fishers rely on the harvest of different species for their livelihood and only rarely on one particular target species. As a consequence, there are no clear definitions and understandings of the by-catch issue. In addition, ecological factors in the tropics, such as fecundity, replenishment, migration or productivity, are very different from those in temperate waters. The monsoon and topographical conditions such as coral reefs and mangrove areas are unique to the tropics and provide the basis of the ecological specificity. These factors underline a need for different approaches and methodologies for assessing aquatic resources and ways to manage fisheries in developing countries.

3. Socio-economic and cultural factors. Most developing countries, especially in the ASEAN region, have traditionally developed their own culture on fish as food, as can be seen in the tremendous diversity of local fisheries products. Another specificity that needs to be considered is the socio-economic integration of fisheries into local communities, especially for small scale and coastal fisheries. Taking these factors into account is necessary in order to provide an appropriate management basis for fisheries in developing countries.

In this connection, it is imperative for regional specificity to be accommodated into the CCRF, especially since the Code was prepared based upon the situation in the developed fishing nations. Regionalization will supplement the global instruments with either national or even regional needs. If this is done, global instruments can be used practically as a valid framework and guidelines for countries with these specificities.

When the international community seriously considers achieving sustainable fisheries through the implementation of the CCRF, the effective implementation of such global initiatives in developing countries will be one of the most important and critical issues. Although there is no appropriate aggregation of



Small scale or coastal fisheries still involve 95% of the fishermen in the ASEAN Countries

statistical data on fisheries production by developed and developing countries, it can be roughly estimated that about 70% of the global fisheries production is currently harvested in developing countries; the ASEAN region itself produces some 11% of global fisheries products. It is clear therefore that global sustainable fisheries will not be achieved unless developing countries take effective actions in line with the CCRF requirements.

“It is imperative for regional specificity to be accommodated into the RCCRf”

Normally, governmental promotional work comprises the provision of appropriate policy framework and technical clarifications. The ASEAN-SEAFDEC Conference on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security in the New Millennium: “Fish for the People” was held in November 2001 with the participation of more than 800 people from inside and outside of the region. The conference adopted a ‘Resolution and Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the Region,’ that has been accepted by ministers responsible for fisheries in ASEAN Member Countries. The Resolution and Plan of Action is considered as a common regional fisheries policy for ASEAN alongside the CCRF. Such governmental commitments to promoting sustainable fisheries both in the region and at the country level make promotional activities on the CCRF much easier to enact.

SEAFDEC has also been implementing the Regionalization of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (RCCRF) as an ASEAN-SEAFDEC collaborative program in order to accommodate regional priorities, needs and specificity, and to clarify technical issues. The existence of the regional policy framework together with these technical clarifications has greatly enhanced the regional and national awareness of the CCRF.

Regionalization of the Code of Conduct

Developing regional guidelines for the CCRF took two years of preparatory work, including the Millennium Conference. By way of follow-up, SEAFDEC organized a Technical Consultation Meeting on the

Regionalization of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (RCCRF) in Kuala Lumpur in October 2002. More than 50 participants were invited to participate, the majority being policy makers and technical and legal experts from ASEAN-SEAFDEC Member Countries. The preparation of the regional guidelines of Article 7 of the CCRF on Fisheries Management was finalized during the meeting; other already completed regional guidelines are on Article 8 (Fishing Operations) and Article 9 (Aquaculture Development).

Many complex social, economical, financial, cultural and political reasons exist for promoting the actions contained in the CCRF. Before potential users start investigation, the relevant government sector is usually responsible for the application of the CCRF to the national context, evaluating the text in terms of relevance to that country. If found to be even slightly inappropriate, the government will consider its implementation as an issue of low priority, since it has various development priorities to accommodate, within limited financial provisions. Given such conditions, the CCRF, despite the various excellent ideas it contains, may not be considered as an important document and eventually will be shelved, never to be used as an action-oriented document for daily reference and actions, as intended.

Formulating regional guidelines

In this regard, the regionalization of the CCRF program aimed to first formulate regional guidelines. This was then to be followed by various promotional works, including human resource development activities in collaboration with ASEAN Member Countries, not



Participants of the Technical Consultation Meeting on the RCCRF at Kuala Lumpur in October 2002

to attempt creating a separate regional CCRF. During the Kuala Lumpur meeting, participants were invited to provide their national priorities and needs for the draft guidelines, paragraph by paragraph, prepared by the regional experts, in line with Article 7 of CCRF. The participants were also requested to provide their comments on three specific issues:

1. Whether the articles of the CCRF were applicable for national implementation as originally proposed;
2. Whether the articles of the CCRF could be applicable if additional technical explanations and clarifications were provided; and
3. Whether new paragraphs would be required if national priorities and needs were to be included.

The Regional Guidelines (RCCRF) must be considered as a supplementary document to support the implementation of the CCRF at the regional and national levels.

In addition to the original important issues and areas, other more regional issues and priorities were highlighted in the Regional Guidelines. These were:

1. Coastal and inland fisheries
2. Decentralization of selected fisheries management authorities and responsibilities to the local level
3. Introduction of rights-based fisheries
4. The management of fishing capacity
5. Improvement of national fisheries statistics
6. Responsible fishing gears and practices



Regional Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries in Southeast Asia: responsible fishing operations and responsible aquaculture, now available as SEAFDEC publications

7. Resource enhancement, and
8. Fisheries management of multi-species fisheries resources using indicators.

Through the regionalization process, ASEAN Member Countries were able to seriously discuss issues contained in the CCRF and accommodate national and regional needs and priorities. ASEAN Member Countries were able to internalize required issues and identify issues for implementation in their national plans. It is also important that ASEAN Member Countries were able to substantiate their policies on sustainable fisheries through these processes.

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SEAFDEC will continue to work with ASEAN Member Countries to regionalize any future global fisheries initiatives, and to support their implementation through harmonizing national and regional needs and priorities with the various global requirements.

Although initiatives on regionalization were defined originally by ASEAN Member Countries, this process will also be important in other similar tropical regions and countries. A similar process could be undertaken in these regions. Ideally, the coherent globalization of sustainable fisheries would be promoted through the analysis and compilation of regional needs and priorities. However, current technological and economic disparities among regions may make this difficult to accomplish. More than ever, regionalization has to be considered a necessary step towards the harmonization of global, regional and national needs and priorities.

About the author

Yasuhisa Kato, Ph.D. in population dynamics and marine ecology, was President of Overseas Agrofiseries Consultants Co., Ltd (1976-1985). Moving to the Fisheries Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), he was Director of the Operation Services from 1985 to 1994 and of the Policy and Planning Division from 1994 to 1997. Since 1997, he is Special Advisor for the Southeast Asian Fisheries Center (SEAFDEC), based at the Secretariat, Bangkok.