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INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONSERVATION  
OF THE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE SEA

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Item 12 b of the agenda

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONSERVATION  
OF THE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE SEA

International conservation problems requiring solution...

The Secretary-General has the honour  
to communicate the following paper, sub-  
mitted by the Italian Delegation to the  
International Technical Conference on the  
Conservation of the Living Resources of  
the Sea.

FISHERY PROBLEMS AND FISHERY CONSERVATION IN ITALY

UN/SEA-197

1. Italy, with a coastline of 7,500 kilometres, - a considerable length when compared to its land area - is deeply concerned with fishery problems:

- a) because of the large number of inhabitants engaged in that occupation and earning its living by it
- b) because of the large consumption of fish, especially in some parts of the country with limited supplies of protein foods
- c) because of the considerable economic interests connected with fisheries.

The importance of these aspects of the question is shown in the appended table.

2. Italian fishermen carry on their trade in territorial and international waters, viz:

- a) the Ligurian sea,
- b) the Tyrrhenian sea along the coast of Sardinia
- c) along the southern coast of Sicily and in the Ionian sea
- d) the Adriatic
- e) outside the Mediterranean (along the western coast of North Africa and the great Newfoundland banks).

The richest areas, where the largest number of fishermen and fishing vessels are found, are:

- a) the Adriatic
- b) the seas to the south of Sicily
- c) the northern and central areas of the Tyrrhenian sea.

3. The most important types of fishery for Italy are:

- a) trawler fishing with an annual catch of 1,101,697 quintals
- b) clupeoid and mackerel fishing, with an annual catch of 667,010 quintals
- c) tuna fishing with an annual catch of 24,877 quintals.

Long line, coastal and other types of fishing are of less importance.

4. Migrating clupeoid and scombridae are fished with various types of nets: "menaid", "lampara", "saccolava" nets or purse seiners. These fisheries, while producing very large catches, are liable to fluctuate widely. They are closely linked to the canning industry.

They are not only of considerable importance economically, but have also a marked influence on the food situation by placing on the market an abundant and popular foodstuff.

5. Tuna fishing, which is traditionally a coastal occupation carried on around Sicily and Sardinia with madragues (or tunny-nets), is also subject to wide fluctuations and frequent periods of depression.

An attempt is being made to introduce purse seiners. This would make it possible to catch tuna without using madragues and, given the necessary control to avoid over-fishing, might bring about a substantial increase in production.

6. Fishing by trawler which gives the biggest catches occupies large numbers of fishermen throughout the year. It is carried out at specific fishing banks by fishermen from certain localities which have a long tradition of this type of fishing. Among the most important of these are Chioggia, Fano, Ancona, San Benedetto del Tronto, Molfetta, Mazara del Vallo, Porto S. Stefano and Viareggio.

For some years the fishermen of the west coast of the Italian peninsula, more particularly those belonging to the harbours of Tuscany and Liguria, have been extending their activities from the shallower waters of the continental shelf to the subjacent slope to a depth of 600 metres. It has thus become possible to catch species hitherto unknown on the market, e.g. the "malu" (Micromesistius Gadus Poutassou), the "occhione" (Chloropthalmus agassiyii), the red shrimp (spec Aristeus, Aristeomorpha) and others, e.g. the Norway lobster (Nephrops norvegicus), hitherto known only in certain small areas (Quarnaro).

7. Thirty-five years ago, trawler fishing was carried out almost exclusively by sailing boats working in pairs. From 1921 onwards motor trawlers began to replace sailing boats and are the only ones used to-day, with a few exceptions in coastal fishing.

The mechanization of fishing boats resulted in considerably increased catches. This increase needs to be watched closely in order to avoid over-fishing. So far there has been no definite proof of over-fishing in Italian waters. As soon as such proof is forthcoming, fishery conservation measures will become necessary.

Italy began to regulate the use of fishing gear as long ago as 1882 (Royal Decree of 13 November 1882, No. 1090, regulating the enforcement of the sea fishery chapter of the law on fishery). Trawler fishing is regulated by a ministerial decree of 1 September 1934, while the fishing of fingerling is regulated by a ministerial decree of 19 October 1939.

The Italian Fishing fleet requires further modernization and several boats must be replaced if maximum yield and security are to be obtained. However, increases in the fishing fleet are subject to very strict control.

8. The Italian Government, whose policy it is to ensure a sustained level of production for its fishermen, is keenly interested in the protection of fishing in those national and extra-territorial waters where the national industry does not compete with that of other countries.

The areas which Italian fishermen share with those of other countries are:

- a) the Adriatic
- b) the Sicilian channel
- c) the northern part of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

To enable our fishermen to carry on their trade without detriment to the interests of the fishermen of neighbouring countries, and also to ensure the maximum sustained production, bilateral agreements in respect of those seas are required.

9. The terms of any agreements covering the Adriatic would require special care. Albanian fishing in that area being almost nil, the two countries involved are Italy and Yugoslavia.

Although biophysically the Adriatic constitutes a single unit, it is not easy, owing to its limited breadth, to delimit the respective territorial waters. Further, the different conformation of the east and west coasts of that sea results in a prevalence of fish in certain areas, which naturally are the most sought after by the fishermen.

By tradition, the fishermen from the Italian coast have trawled the entire Adriatic Sea, and this has led to agreements first between Italy and Austria, and later between Italy and Yugoslavia. Recently, in consequence of political changes, the areas available to Italian fishermen have become more and more restricted, with the result that a crisis of some severity has developed in the Italian Adriatic fishing industry.

10. The Italian Government is especially concerned with protecting the Adriatic fishery in order to guarantee the livelihood of its fishermen. Consequently, in addition to an agreement on conservation measures which it has concluded with Yugoslavia, negotiations are now proceeding with a view to regulating the economic and social interests of both countries.

It must be emphasized that the situation is particularly difficult for Italian sea fishery, which, despite the availability of equipment and highly skilled men, is confined to a few very limited and normally under-productive fishing grounds. For that reason, the position of the Italian fisheries is extremely important socially as well as economically.

While the Italian Government is concerned with fishery conservation, it is also constrained to provide employment and the means of subsistence for a large section of the coastal population. It must therefore obtain new

areas of activity for its fishermen; this might be done by means of international agreements aiming at an allocation of fishing activities more in accordance with the productive capacity of the different areas.

The Italian delegation believes that, so far as the Mediterranean is concerned, one of the most effective means of conserving the living resources of the sea would be a better distribution of fishing activity with a view to obviating any undue disparity between overfished and underfished areas.

STATISTICS FOR ITALIAN SEA FISHERY IN 1953

FISHERY AREA	Number of Fishermen	No. using sailing craft	CRAFT		CATCH	
			M/s	M/b	Quintals	Lire
<u>Tyrr/Sea:</u>						
Ligurian Sea	8.457	2.777	119	575	88.037	1.432.793.699
Northern	5.695	1.238	203	567	108.363	2.017.932.316
Central	5.240	1.319	138	339	78.100	1.321.140.048
Southern	21.207	7.758	173	1.451	157.060	2.672.176.272
<u>TYRRHENIAN SEA</u> (Total)	40.599	13.092	633	2.832	431.560	7.444.042.342
<u>SARDINIA</u>	6.409	1.638	36	521	77.219	1.947.895.150
<u>SICILY</u>	42.496	10.290	604	705	524.493	9.237.902.373
<u>IONIAN SEA</u>	4.353	1.346	18	37	92.820	1.408.602.605
<u>ADRIATIC SEA</u>						
Southern	17.769	4.989	308	227	191.371	3.561.867.650
Central	14.155	2.837	737	322	289.932	4.940.834.499
Northern	14.351	4.627	288	443	186.190	3.237.142.553
<u>ADRIATIC SEA</u> (Total)	46.275	12.453	1.333	992	667.493	11.778.287.172
<u>ITALY (Total)</u>	140.132	38.819	2.624	5.187	1.793.585	31.778.287.172

M/s motor ships

M/b motorboats