

# Closing of Workshop

Honourable Minister of Fisheries

Mr. Einar K. Guðfinnsson

Improved economic growth is a goal of all authorities, of all countries. I have at least never heard any government say that it doesn't want higher growth. With economic growth, poverty can be reduced, education improved, HIV/AIDS fought against, children can be fed and so on and so forth.

But how can countries increase their economic growth? This is certainly a complex question and there are many possibilities. I for one do not pretend to have the answer to such a million dollar question. But I am surely not the only one to wonder why fisheries is not more often mentioned in this context. That, in my view, is a mistake. Fisheries can be, and in many countries really should be, an engine of growth. I say this judging from our own experience, because in my country this has been the case for decades. Iceland was one of the most backward country in Europe in the beginning of the 19th. century but is now one of the most prosperous one. This of course is due to a number of factors. An emphasis on fisheries as a modern industry certainly however plays a major role. We have never been able to afford anything less than an efficient fishing industry. Fisheries is the major industry in our economy and has been for decades. The high growth rate has therefore been driven mainly by the outstanding performance of our fisheries and fishing industry, although I would not like to underestimate other very important contributors to our economic performance. Particularly in recent years.

In too many countries, fisheries is not looked upon as a modern industry, obeying accordingly to the strict rules of the market economy. Fisheries is unfortunately in industrialised countries all too often seen as an integral part of social measures, which thus has contributed to its poor economic performance. That is a model to avoid. Fisheries and the fishing industry should be seen as means of generating better living standards.

In your countries I believe fisheries and aquaculture can play a role in improved economic growth. Of course, countries differ and the potential of fisheries and aquaculture differs across countries. However, fisheries and aquaculture should not be an employer of last resort. People working in these industries should not be the poorest of poor. On the contrary. Fisheries and aquaculture should be an engine of growth. This could and hopefully should be the case in your countries.

Turning fisheries and aquaculture into an engine of growth is not an easy task. It will require sacrifices. Sometimes job losses may occur or old jobs being replaced by new and different ones. However, the remaining jobs will be much more productive and better paid than the old jobs. Old ways and traditions often have to be changed. People may need to relocate. However, if done well, the sacrifices will result in great rewards for your countries in the future.

During the last couple of days I have seen some remarkable things in the development of the fishing industry in this country. I know that domestic fisheries, let alone developed domestic fisheries are relatively new to Namibia. Not least with reference to that, I was

encouraged to see many of the developments which are certainly encouraging to your industry. I was particularly pleased to see how the emphasis on further education and knowledge has resulted in a progress. That applies to the marine research and biology, also to the fisheries school which undoubtedly has contributed enormously to the progress in certain fields of fisheries. May I once more remind you that serious fisheries must be knowledge based in the future. That both applies to fishing, fisheries management, processing, and marketing. An emphasis on fisheries as an important part of development, thus eventually leads to an evergrowing emphasis on education of all sorts.

One sees new potentials, not least in the field of aquaculture, in improved fisheries management, increased knowledge, better yields and marketing. This is an objective of every progressive industry and will be the key to a further achievements. I have been convinced that the fisheries in this area has a great potential. It is up to yourself to exploit these possibilities in an efficient way.

This is where I believe Iceland can play a role. In helping with the development of fisheries and aquaculture in your countries. I would be the first one to admit that we have had our shares of mistakes in the past. We have, however, tried to learn our lessons and move forward although we still have a lot to learn. Today, we are however at the forefront of fisheries in the world. We define our fisheries as a knowledge based, efficient industry, run by able management and employed by an efficient workforce. Fisheries as such are relatively well paid occupation though one must admit that the processing is unfortunately lagging behind. Due to increased efficiency, the number of people employed in fisheries, is declining. The technological advancement has led to that development.

The presence a thriving and dynamic fishing industry in Iceland has initiated new industries which are based on the idea of serving the fishing industry, first in Iceland and later the whole world. This has been an important part of our economic development through the years.

We have participated quite extensively in development fishery projects in developing countries. The policy behind these projects has been to listen to our partners and never attempt to impose our culture – on others. We see our work as a mutual objective in order to achieve a common goal. This may have its disadvantages, but the positive consequences certainly outweigh them. Our government has furthermore committed it self to a gradual increase in its ODA, which has resulted in new and exciting projects among other in this region. We want to believe that we can have a role to play, not least in the fields where we have special knowledge and have excelled. Fisheries being among those.

If I try to specify I would like to mention that some of the areas where Iceland could make a contribution are:

Training of fishermen, in particular training of trainers. In Namibia for example, Iceland has assisted in the development of a training institute for fishermen, NAMFI in Walvis Bay.

Quality control of fishery products. To give examples, in a number of African countries Icelandic experts have in the past assisted with the development of legislation in this area, for instance incorporating EU requirements into such legislation. They have also assisted with the organisation of competent authorities, development of inspection methods and procedures.

We will not claim to have solutions to all of your problems. Far from it, let me assure you. But it is the hope of the Icelandic people however, that we may in some small way assist other countries on their development path in fisheries, basing on our own experience. . You will have to do the work, you will have to plan, you will have to implement the plans, you will have to adjust them along the way, fix problems that arise and so on. But hopefully, Iceland can in some way help you on the way, so that your path to improved economic growth will be a little bit shorter than otherwise.

I do hope that the discussions and deliberations during the past three days have helped you. Maybe you see some issues in a clearer way than before. Presumably you were able to learn something from the way in which other countries in the region have addressed problems similar to your problems. Maybe you have made new contacts that will come in useful in the future. At least I hope that you and we all have been able to widen our horizon a little bit. That at least would be an important outcome of our gathering.

We all have a common goal, namely, to make fisheries and aquaculture contribute more to the well being of the people in our countries. To become an engine of growth.

With these few words, I now declare this workshop on fisheries and aquaculture in southern Africa closed.

Thank you.