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Report of the

**TECHNICAL CONSULTATION ON VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES FOR
CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES**

**Rome, Italy, 18–22 April 2016, 8 July 2016, 15 July 2016 and 4–5 April
2017**

Report of the
TECHNICAL CONSULTATION ON VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES FOR CATCH DOCUMENTATION
SCHEMES

Rome, Italy, 18–22 April 2016, 8 July 2016, 15 July 2016 and 4–5 April 2017

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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is the final report adopted by the Technical Consultation on Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes.

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ABSTRACT

The UN General Assembly Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries of 9 December 2013 expressed concern for the continued threat to marine habitats and ecosystems from illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, and acknowledged the negative impact of these activities on food security and state economies, particularly in developing regions.

As mandated by the fifteenth session of the FAO COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade and the thirty-second session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries in 2016, the Technical Consultation was convened by the Director-General of FAO to elaborate guidelines and other relevant criteria relating to catch documentation schemes.

The Technical Consultation, funded by the Government of Norway, adopted the Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes on 5 April 2017.

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OPENING OF SESSION

1. The Technical Consultation on Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes (CDS), hereinafter referred to as “the Consultation”, was held in Rome, Italy, on 18–22 April 2016, 8 July 2016, 15 July 2016 and 4–5 April 2017.
2. The Consultation was attended by 63 delegates from 32 Members of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The full list of participants is given in Appendix B.
3. Mr Audun Lem, Secretary of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT), called the meeting to order and thanked the Government of Norway for its support in convening the Consultation.
4. The opening statements were delivered by Mr Árni M. Mathiesen, Assistant Director-General, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, FAO, for the 18–22 April 2016 session, and by Mr Manuel Barange, Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division, for the 4–5 April 2017 resumed session. The full text of their statements is given in Appendixes C and D.
5. No opening statements were made at the first resumed session on 8 July 2016 or the second resumed session on 15 July 2016.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSONS AND DESIGNATION OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE

6. Mr Jón Erlingur Jónasson (Iceland) was elected Chairperson and Mr Royhan N. Wahab (Indonesia) was elected as Vice Chairperson.
7. Mr Mafizur Rahman (Bangladesh) was elected as Chairperson of the Drafting Committee, and Bangladesh, Canada, Norway, Republic of Korea, Brazil, Russian Federation, Senegal, Papua New Guinea and Spain as members of the Drafting Committee.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

8. The agenda, given in Appendix A, was adopted.

BACKGROUND

9. The Secretariat elaborated on the relevant developments leading up to the Consultation. It recalled concerns and recommendations of the UN General Assembly in 2013, which called upon Members to initiate work as soon as possible with FAO to develop guidelines concerning fish trade and CDS. The FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), in its thirty-first session in 2014, agreed that FAO should develop guidelines and other relevant criteria relating to CDS, based on six guiding principles.
10. As a result, an Expert Consultation on the Guidelines for CDS was organized in July 2015, where resource persons and experts developed draft Guidelines. Subsequently, COFI:FT during its fifteenth session in Agadir, Morocco, in February 2016, reviewed both the Expert Consultation draft Guidelines and an alternative proposal prepared by one Member in consultation with several others. Following the review of both documents, the fifteenth session of COFI:FT agreed that the alternative proposal would serve as a starting point for the subsequent Consultation, while taking into consideration the relevant elements from the Expert Consultation and key issues raised during COFI:FT.
11. The FAO Secretariat subsequently submitted the draft guidelines as per the outcome of COFI:FT as a starting point for deliberation.
12. Following the resumed session of 8 July 2016, the Consultation was resumed during the thirty-second session of COFI on 15 July 2016. COFI authorized the Consultation to resume its session

again as soon as possible and address and resolve the outstanding paragraphs: ii) finalize the Guidelines; and iii) submit the Guidelines to the FAO Conference at its fortieth session in July 2017 for final adoption.

REVIEW OF THE DRAFT VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES FOR CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES

13. The Chairperson stressed the importance of developing the Guidelines and reminded the Consultation that it would follow the forms and procedures of COFI.

14. The floor was then opened for general comments. The Consultation welcomed the draft Voluntary Guidelines for CDS and noted the importance of ensuring that CDS do not result in the creation of unnecessary barriers to trade. The Consultation stressed that states should give full recognition to the special requirements of developing states when designing and implementing CDS. The Consultation also noted that CDS should account for the needs and special requirements of small-scale fisheries.

15. The Consultation agreed that it would strictly follow the mandate designated by COFI and COFI:FT in its examination of the elements contained in the draft Guidelines submitted by the Secretariat.

16. The consultation reached an agreement during the resumed session on 5 April 2017. The adopted Voluntary Guidelines for CDS are in Appendix E.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

17. The Consultation adopted the report on 5 April 2017.

FOLLOW UP

18. Following the directions of the thirty-second session of COFI, the adopted Voluntary Guidelines for CDS will be presented at the fortieth session of the FAO Conference in July 2017 for endorsement.

APPENDIX A

Agenda

1. Opening of the Session
2. Election of the Chairperson and the Vice-chairpersons and Designation of the Drafting Committee
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Review of the draft Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes
5. Adoption of the report

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APPENDIX C**Opening Statement by Mr Árni M. Mathiesen, Assistant Director General, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, FAO
18 April 2016****Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to Rome and to FAO to participate in the Technical Consultation on the Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes. I would like to express my gratitude that you accepted FAO's invitation despite your busy schedule.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains one of the greatest threats to aquatic ecosystems, undermining national, regional and international efforts to manage fisheries sustainably and conserve aquatic biodiversity. Trade-based measures are one of a number of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) tools, for combating IUU fishing activities. One important type of trade-based measure is catch and trade documentation schemes initiated by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). As these schemes continue to evolve, they are being supplemented by other nationally- or regionally-based documentation systems such as the European Union regulation to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

The sixty-eighth Session of the General Assembly called upon States to initiate, as soon as possible, work within the FAO on the elaboration of guidelines and other relevant criteria relating to catch documentation schemes, including possible formats.

The FAO Committee on Fisheries, on its thirty-first session in Rome, Italy from 9–13 June 2014, stipulated future work relating to the harmonization of catch documentation schemes. The Committee agreed that FAO undertakes to elaborate guidelines and other relevant criteria relating to catch documentation schemes, including possible formats, based on six principles.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Expert Consultation on the Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes was organized successfully in July last year, with generous support from Norway. Experts with support from knowledgeable resource persons elaborated on the draft Guidelines, which were consequently reviewed by the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade at its fifteenth session in Agadir, Morocco in February this year.

The Sub-Committee on Fish Trade reviewed both the Expert Consultation draft Guidelines and an alternative draft Guidelines prepared by a Member in consultation with several others. The Sub-Committee decided that the alternative draft Guidelines should constitute the starting point for the deliberations at this Technical Consultation aimed at finalizing the Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes together with the several considerations identified. Therefore, the alternative draft Guidelines have been presented to you as the basic working document of the Technical Consultation.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to remind you that it has undoubtedly become a global consensus that catch documentation schemes should not in any case become an unnecessary trade barrier. The purpose of developing the Guidelines is to provide guidance to all stakeholders in developing, implementation, review, and enhancement of catch documentation schemes to make it an effective mechanism in combating IUU fishing. In this regard, international cooperation has never become so critical to ensure effective implementation of catch documentation schemes as today.

Special consideration should also be paid to the demand for technical assistance from developing countries and small-scale fisheries including the development of electronic systems. FAO encourages

governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and financial institutions to support capacity building. FAO has been prepared to contribute joint efforts in providing technical assistance in this regard.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the Government of Norway for providing the funds necessary to hold this Consultation. I wish you fruitful deliberations over the coming days and look forward with interest to the results of your work.

I hope you will have an enjoyable stay in Rome in spite of all the work to be done.

Thank you very much, Ladies and Gentlemen, for your attention.

APPENDIX D**Opening Statement by Mr Manuel Barange, Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, FAO
4 April 2017****Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to Rome and to FAO to participate in the Third Resumed Session of the Technical Consultation on the Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes. I would like to express my gratitude for accepting FAO's invitation despite your busy schedules.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains one of the greatest threats to aquatic ecosystems, undermining national, regional and international efforts to manage fisheries sustainably and conserve aquatic biodiversity. For some decades now the FAO has been leading the international community in combating IUU fishing. A broad range of measures have been implemented including the Port State Measures Agreement, which entered into force in June 2017.

Trade-based measures are one of the effective monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) tools for combating IUU fishing activities. Catch and trade documentation schemes are important trade-based measures, initially developed by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). As these schemes continue to evolve, they are being supplemented by other nationally- or regionally-based documentation systems such as the European Union (EU) regulation to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, and Seafood Import Monitoring Program of the United States, introduced last December.

The Sixty-Eighth Session of the General Assembly called upon States to initiate, as soon as possible, work with the FAO on the elaboration of guidelines and other relevant criteria relating to catch documentation schemes, including possible formats.

I would like to recall that in July 2015, the Expert Consultation on the Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes was organized successfully with generous support from Norway. Experts with support from knowledgeable resource persons elaborated on draft Guidelines, which were consequently reviewed by the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade at its Fifteenth Session in Agadir, Morocco in February 2016.

The Sub-Committee on Fish Trade reviewed both the Expert Consultation draft Guidelines and alternative draft Guidelines prepared in consultation by a Member Country. The Sub-Committee decided that the alternative draft Guidelines should constitute the starting point for deliberations. Therefore, the alternative draft Guidelines were presented as the basic working document of the Technical Consultation.

The Technical Consultation on the Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Scheme was organized in April 2016 in this conference room. I am sure you will not disagree with me in recognizing the significant efforts and spirit of cooperation that was demonstrated by all member states during that meeting. The majority of the draft Guidelines were agreed upon and finalized. Only two paragraphs remain outstanding. Although since then, several informal meetings and two resumed sessions have been organized to address the outstanding issues, the draft Voluntary Guidelines were not ready for submission by the time the Thirty-second Session of COFI started in July 2016.

COFI, at its Thirty-second Session, authorized the Technical Consultation to resume as soon as possible in order to resolve the two outstanding paragraphs and to submit the Guidelines to the FAO Conference at its fortieth session in July 2017 for final adoption.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The purpose of the Guidelines is to provide clear guidance to all stakeholders in the development, implementation, review, and enhancement of catch documentation schemes to make it an effective mechanism in combating IUU fishing. I am pleased to inform you that the Republic of Korea has become the first member state to refer to the Voluntary Guidelines when developing its own Catch Certification Requirement.

I wish to reiterate that FAO believe that catch documentation schemes should not in any case become an unnecessary trade barrier. In this regard, international cooperation has never become so critical to ensure the effective development and implementation of the Guidelines, particularly when we are addressing the two outstanding paragraphs today.

FAO encourages governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and financial institutions to support capacity building of developing countries and small-scale fisheries, including the development of electronic systems to facilitate implementation. FAO is fully prepared to contribute with technical assistance in this regard.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the Government of Norway for providing the funds necessary to continue this Consultation. I wish you fruitful deliberations over the coming two days, reiterating the importance of completing the task in hand, and looking forward to the results of your work.

I hope you will have an enjoyable stay in Rome in spite of all the work that has to be done.

Thank you very much for your attention.

APPENDIX E

Adopted Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes

1. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE

1.1. These Guidelines are voluntary and cover Catch Documentation Schemes (CDS) for wild capture fish caught for commercial purposes in marine or inland areas, whether processed or not.

1.2. These guidelines are elaborated recognizing that all available means in accordance with relevant international law and other international instruments, such as, the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU) should be used to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. CDS build on the primary responsibility of the flag state to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing. They also constitute a valuable supplement to port state and other measures.

1.3. The objective of these Guidelines is to provide assistance to states, regional fisheries management organisations, regional economic integration organizations and other intergovernmental organisations when developing and implementing new CDS, or harmonising or reviewing existing CDS.

1.4. States should give full recognition to the special requirements of developing states when implementing CDS taking into account paragraph 7.

1.5. States, relevant international organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, and financial institutions are encouraged, individually or through coordination, to provide assistance and capacity building, including financial and technical assistance, technology transfer and training for developing states in order to achieve the objectives of these Guidelines and to support its effective implementation, especially regarding issuance of electronic catch certificates.

1.6. CDS should account for the needs and special requirements of small-scale fisheries (SSF).

2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of these Guidelines:

2.1 “Catch Documentation Scheme”, means a system with the primary purpose of helping determine throughout the supply chain whether fish originate from catches taken consistent with applicable national, regional and international conservation and management measures, established in accordance with relevant international obligations, hereinafter referred to as “CDS.”

2.2 “Catch certificate” means an official document accompanying a consignment and validated by the competent authority, allowing accurate and verifiable information concerning fish passing through the supply chain.

2.3 “Fish” means all species of wild capture living aquatic resources, whether processed or not.

2.4 “Consignment” means fish, which are either sent simultaneously from one exporter to one consignee or covered by a single transport document covering their shipment from the exporter to the consignee.

2.5 “Fishing vessel” means any vessel of any size used for, equipped for use for, or intended for use for the purposes of fishing or fishing-related activities, including support vessels, fish-processing vessels, vessels engaged in transshipment and carrier vessels equipped for the transportation of fishery products, except container vessels.

2.6 “Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing” means the activities set out in paragraph 3 of the 2001 FAO International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, hereinafter referred to as “IUU fishing.”

2.7 "Landing" means the initial movement of fish from a vessel to dockside in a port or free-trade zone, even if subsequently transferred to another vessel. The offload or transfer in port of fish from a vessel to a container is a landing.

2.8 "Regional fisheries management organization" means an intergovernmental fisheries organization or arrangement, as appropriate, that has the competence to establish fishery conservation and management measures, hereinafter referred to as “RFMO/A.”

2.9 “Supply chain” means a sequence of processes involved in the production and distribution of fish from catch to the point of import in the end market, including events such as landing, transshipments, re-export, processing, and transport.

2.10 "Transshipment" means the transfer of fish that have not previously been landed, from one vessel directly to another, at sea or in port.

3. BASIC PRINCIPLES

The Guidelines are based on the principles that CDS should:

- 3.1 Be in conformity with the provisions of relevant international law;
- 3.2 Not create unnecessary barriers to trade;
- 3.3 Recognize equivalence;
- 3.4 Be risk-based;
- 3.5 Be reliable, simple, clear and transparent; and
- 3.6 Be electronic, if possible.

4. APPLICATION OF BASIC PRINCIPLES

The application of the principles set out in paragraph 3 should be guided by the following:

4.1 Any measure taken should be in conformity with the relevant provisions under international law, *inter alia* the World Trade Organization agreements, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and should take into account the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;

4.2 To avoid unnecessary barriers to trade, a CDS should clearly define its objective, be the least trade-restrictive measure to achieve its objective, and be designed to minimize the burden on those affected by its requirements. A CDS should be applied on a non-discriminatory basis and notified in accordance with subparagraph 4.5;

4.3 Different CDS could be recognised as equivalent for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the guidelines if they result in equivalent outcomes. In addition, existing schemes should be taken into account; and

4.4 Every effort should be made to ensure that CDS are only implemented where they can be an effective means to prevent products derived from IUU fishing from entering the supply chain. To that end CDS should be implemented from within the context of an effective fisheries management

regime. CDS should be designed and implemented based on risk analysis and be proportionate to the risk that IUU fishing poses on the relevant stocks and markets. A risk assessment should include:

- (a) the systematic and transparent identification of risk and the implementation of all measures necessary for limiting exposure to risk. This includes activities such as collecting data and information, analysing and assessing risk, prescribing and taking action, including regular monitoring and review;
- (b) consideration of any IUU fishing activities within, *inter alia*, fish stocks, fleet, geographical area, or fishery that impact negatively on management and control measures, fisher's income and livelihood, markets and other relevant factors;
- (c) consideration of whether the vessels or fleets in question are flying the flag of a state that has not implemented relevant international obligations and guidelines; and
- (d) in the case of CDS to be developed within a RFMO, the RFMO should additionally consider the ability of CDS to address the IUU risk due to potential gaps in its existing conservation and management regimes, including the effectiveness of current monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures.

4.5 To improve the transparency of the supply chain and markets CDS should ensure accurate and verifiable information along the supply chain. To ensure CDS are reliable, simple, clear and transparent:

- (a) catch certificates should be user friendly and contain verifiable information that is relevant, necessary and readily available; and
- (b) a proposed measure should be publicized and a reasonable time for comments should be given before the measure is adopted. Adopted measures should be made available on relevant websites¹. Such notice should include an explanation of how domestic and imported products are treated to ensure even-handedness.

4.6 Secure electronic systems should be used to reduce the risk of falsification. The systems should:

- (a) serve as the mechanism of issuance and, validation of catch certificates by the competent authority and should function as the repository of catch certificate and supply chain data to allow verification of information;
- (b) ensure that accurate and verifiable information is available along the supply chain through cooperation of states involved in it;
- (c) be based on agreed international standards and formats for information exchange and data management, ensuring that its components provide for interoperability;
- (d) be flexible, user friendly and minimise the burden on users. Functions such as routines for uploading of scanned documents, printing of documents, cancelling documents, and data queries should be considered;
- (e) include secure access by use of logins and passwords or by other appropriate means;
- (f) define roles and responsibilities for data inputs and validation and specify which parts, functions and levels of the system the individual user or user group may have access to;
- (g) facilitate the documentation flow;
- (h) provide for greater flexibility in the information requirements; and
- (i) assure support for developing States in the development and implementation of secure electronic systems.

¹ For the purpose of these Guidelines, such notifications should, as a minimum, be made available on the website of the State proposing or implementing a measure and on the WTO and FAO websites.

5. COOPERATION AND NOTIFICATION

5.1 CDS are most effective when all states involved cooperate in the schemes. States should seek wide multilateral engagements in the development and implementation of CDS, based on the risk assessment approach and cost-effectiveness considerations. Multilateral or regional CDS are preferred.

5.2 States should make every effort to cooperate in the design, implementation and administration of CDS. Such cooperation should aim to:

- (a) ensure that the risk assessment is based on clear objective criteria;
- (b) ensure that imports of fish originate from catches made in compliance with applicable legislation;
- (c) facilitate the importation of fish and the verification requirements of catch certificates; and
- (d) provide for the establishment of a framework for the exchange of information.

5.3 The acceptance of catch certificate should be subject to the notification by the validating state that:

- (a) it has in place national arrangements for the implementation, control and enforcement of laws, regulations and conservation and management measures that must be complied with by fishing vessels; and
- (b) the competent authority is empowered to attest to the veracity of the relevant information contained in catch certificates and to carry out verifications of such certificates on request from the importing state. The notification should also include the necessary information to identify and contact the authority. If the information provided in the notification is incomplete, the importing state or RFMO should indicate to the state validating the catch certificate, without delay, which elements are missing and request that it provide a new notification as soon as possible.

All states involved in events in the supply chain in the CDS should designate a competent authority to ensure availability of accurate and verifiable information along the supply chain.

6. RECOMMENDED FUNCTIONS AND STANDARDS

6.1 The CDS should be based on a clearly defined objective, enabling determination of the level of traceability and functions required. It should be designed to meet its objective and minimize the burden on users.

6.2 The CDS should clearly specify the species and stocks concerned, wherever applicable, product types, and exemptions associated with the scheme, and list all applicable Harmonized System (HS) classifications.

6.3 In the CDS validation process, different roles of relevant states to authorise, monitor, and control fishing operations and verify catch, landing, and trade should be fully recognized, consistent with relevant national and international law, multilateral measures, instruments and obligations. Validation of the catch documentation information should be done by a competent authority. According to the specific circumstances of the fisheries, all relevant states could take part in the verification of information in the catch documentation. Importing states may request verification by the competent authorities validating the catch documentation.

6.4 The CDS should include requirements for unique, secure document numbers. In the case of split consignments, or processed products, clear links to the underlying catch certificate should be available to facilitate verification by importing states.

6.5 When establishing a CDS, due consideration should be given to:

- (a) applicable monitoring, control and surveillance requirements;
- (b) relevant standards for information exchange and data confidentiality;
- (c) use the operative languages necessary to the efficient and effective function of the CDS; and
- (d) user manuals for various user groups and provide appropriate training, taking into account, the special requirements of developing states.

6.6 Core information elements for CDS are set out in the Annex. To ensure the link between the catch and the products, information along the supply chain should be included as appropriate. In specific instances, CDS may incorporate additional elements as necessary to achieve their objectives.

7. COOPERATION WITH AND RECOGNITION OF THE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OF DEVELOPING STATES

7.1 States should give full recognition to the special requirements of developing States, in particular the least-developed among them and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to ensure that they have the ability to implement these Guidelines.

7.2 In this regard, States may, either directly or through international organizations, including RFMO/As, provide assistance to developing States in order for them to enhance their ability to, *inter alia*:

- (a) develop, implement and improve practical and effective CDS;
- (b) develop an adequate legal and regulatory framework for CDS;
- (c) strengthen institutional organization and infrastructure needed to ensure effective implementation of CDS;
- (d) build institutional and human resource capacity including for monitoring and control purposes and for training, at the national and regional levels, for CDS; and
- (e) participate in international organizations.

7.3 States may, either directly or through FAO, assess the special requirements of developing States to implement these guidelines including the needs for assistance identified in subparagraph 7.2.

7.4 States may cooperate to establish appropriate funding mechanisms to assist developing States to implement these guidelines. These mechanisms may be directed specifically towards the needs for assistance identified in subparagraph 7.2.

7.5 States may establish an ad hoc working group to periodically report and make recommendations on the establishment of funding mechanisms.

7.6 Cooperation with and among developing States for the purposes set out in these guidelines may include the provision of technical and financial assistance, including South-South Cooperation (SSC).

**INFORMATION ELEMENTS FOR CATCH CERTIFICATES AND
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ALONG THE SUPPLY CHAIN**

1. When considering the data elements to be included in the catch certificates, due consideration should be given to the fisheries concerned, the outcome of the risk assessment, the objective of the CDS and the complexity of the supply chain. Core elements include:
 - (a) Unique and secure identification of document
 - (b) Information on catch and landing (fishing vessel or vessel group (SSF), species, catch area, landing information etc.)
 - (c) Transshipment at sea or in port, as appropriate (donor and receiving vessel, area, date)
 - (d) Description of exported product(s) (product type, weight)
 - (e) Issuing Authority validating the catch certificate, including contact details
 - (f) Exporter identity and contact details
 - (g) Importer identity and contact details
 - (h) Export and transport details

2. In addition to the core elements, elements unique to re-export and processing:
 - (a) Link to originating catch certificate
 - (b) Description of imported products(s)
 - (c) Description of re-exported or processed product(s)
 - (d) Issuing Authority validating the re-export or processing statement, as appropriate, including contact details

The UN General Assembly Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries of 9 December 2013 expressed concern for the continued threat to marine habitats and ecosystems from illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, and acknowledged the negative impact of these activities on food security and state economies, particularly in developing regions. As mandated by the fifteenth session of the FAO COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade and the thirty-second session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries in 2016, the Technical Consultation was convened by the Director-General of FAO to elaborate guidelines and other relevant criteria relating to catch documentation schemes. The Technical Consultation adopted the Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes on 5 April 2017.

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