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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

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GLOBAL AND REGIONAL OCEAN PROCESSES

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of the major global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture governance that are implemented with the involvement and support of FAO. It describes the role that FAO plays as a key stakeholder and as the specialized UN entity working on fisheries and aquaculture issues. In particular, given the numerous processes in which FAO is involved in this respect, this paper also highlights the importance of an adequate level of coordination among the relevant organizations in order to achieve the new targets set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- advise on the appropriate roles and functions FAO could be taking to strengthen fisheries and aquaculture governance, through efforts such as enhanced partnerships across the UN system and with relevant organizations;
- encourage FAO's continuous role in facilitating dialogue and information exchange among all relevant stakeholders involved in major global and regional processes with a view to strengthen synergies and avoid duplications;
- provide guidance on the role that regional fishery bodies (RFBs)/regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) play in fisheries governance and, as appropriate, aquaculture development, and advise on the actions and measures that may be taken to promote their further strengthening;
- encourage its Members to make contributions to the Part VII Assistance Fund, including through supporting specific projects within the framework of the Terms of Reference;

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Other documents can be consulted at <http://www.fao.org/cofi/en/>*



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- provide guidance on options for the role and participation of FAO and RFMOs in the framework of the biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) discussions;
- advise on ongoing processes related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- comment on FAO work on disaster relief and resilience with particular reference to the fisheries and aquaculture sector, and any support that FAO can provide in this regard through further development of policy assistance and capacity development.
- Inform FAO of the desired level of Secretariat input into CBD's strategic vision beyond 2020, and offer direction to FAO's Biodiversity Platform initiative.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The international legal framework for ocean governance and fisheries is made up of a multitude of global, regional and bilateral binding and voluntary instruments. The cornerstone of these instruments is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)¹, which provides the international legal basis for the protection and sustainable use of living and non-living resources of the world's oceans. UNCLOS is the point of departure for most, if not all, binding and voluntary international fisheries instruments. International fisheries instruments have progressed to address prominent and emerging fisheries governance challenges, and have been influenced by the ongoing evolution of global environmental milestones, most notably the 1992 Earth Summit², which adopted Agenda 21, and the Rio Declaration, and highlighted sustainable development as a central tenet.
2. Few of the more recent key developments that are important in terms of the work of FAO on fisheries and aquaculture are: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the progress towards a new internationally binding instrument under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of BBNJ³.
3. In addition to the above-mentioned global processes, it is important to note the role of the regional dimension; in particular that the regionalisation of fisheries and aquaculture governance can be an opportunity to address common concerns, create synergies and to mainstream the global objectives of relevant UN bodies, as well as to broaden the outreach of the global fisheries agenda to the general public.
4. Working at the appropriate scale in most cases requires cooperation at the regional level, as processes related to the exploitation of natural living resources usually involve, at least, several countries. In an increasingly connected world, RFBs, and particularly RFMOs, are gaining importance in international fora for discussion of issues related to fisheries management and shared living marine and inland resources.
5. This paper describes the FAO collaborative participation in global and regional processes. The paper also aims to provide an overview of on-going initiatives of particular relevance for fishery and aquaculture governance and related issues, and refers to the role of FAO for consideration by the Committee. Notably not included in this paper are those processes in which FAO is involved, but are covered in other working documents papers: COFI/2018/6; COFI/2018/7; COFI/2018/9; and COFI/2018/10.

II. THE GLOBAL SCALE: PROCESSES RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND RELATED FRAMEWORKS

A. The UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the Part VII Assistance Fund

6. The thirteenth round of informal consultation of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, 22-23 May 2018. Pursuant to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 72/72, adopted on 5 December 2017, the 13th round of informal consultation focused on the topic "Science-policy

¹ The 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention:

www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

² 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

³ UNGA Resolution No. 66/231 'Oceans and the law of the sea' (UN doc. A/RES/66/231, of 5 April 2012) and UN doc. A/66/119, of 9 June 2011.

interface”. FAO had provided inputs on the topic, in particular regarding the experiences by RFMOs in charge of tuna and/or deep-sea fisheries management.

7. FAO has continued to administer the Assistance Fund established under Part VII of UNFSA through resolution 58/14 of the UNGA. Both Organizations have continued to make calls for contributions to the Assistance Fund. The Governments of Canada, Iceland, Lebanon, New Zealand, Norway and the United States of America (USA), all States Parties to UNFSA, have made financial contributions to the Assistance Fund totalling \$1,667,455. However, since October 2016, the Assistance Fund has been suspended until additional contributions become available.

B. Conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction

8. In its resolution 69/292 of 19 June 2015, the UNGA decided to develop an international legally-binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. To that end, it decided to establish, prior to holding an intergovernmental conference, a Preparatory Committee, to make substantive recommendations to the General Assembly on the elements for a draft text of an international legally-binding instrument under UNCLOS.

9. Four meetings of the preparatory committee were held in 2016 and 2017. As identified in Resolution 69/292, discussions focused on: Marine Genetic Resources, including access and benefit sharing; area based management tools, including marine protected areas; environmental impact assessments and capacity building and transfer of technology. Cross cutting issues were also discussed.

10. Given the potential implications this process might have on the fisheries sector, FAO attended all the four meetings of the preparatory committee to provide fisheries and other pertinent technical information and guidance on issues related to FAO's mandate. Upon request, FAO also informed the discussions on specific thematic issues. As requested by COFI, FAO made available the document COFI/2016/8/Sup1.⁴, to the second session of the Preparatory Committee.

11. FAO organized and contributed to several side events that aimed to provide additional information to the delegations and participants on specific topics of relevance to the discussions of the preparatory committee. This included, amongst others, the organization of side events on capacity building and on the current governance system for fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

12. Under the recommendations of the Preparatory Meeting, in its resolution 72/249⁵ of 24 December 2017, the UNGA decided to convene an Intergovernmental Conference that will meet in four sessions, the first to be convened from 4-17 September 2018, the second and third in 2019, and the fourth in 2020.

C. Ongoing work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

13. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets and indicators, represents a new global framework for sustainable development, and is being implemented by countries across all sectors, including fisheries. Calls for action, numerous voluntary commitments and financial pledges by governments, intergovernmental organizations, private sector, civil society organizations and academia, resulted from high-level conferences addressing the targets of SDG14: *Conserve and sustainably use the*

⁴ FAO's work relating to the elements of a draft text of an international legally binding instruments under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (www.fao.org/3/a-mr024e.pdf)

⁵ <http://undocs.org/en/a/res/72/249>

oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. These included the UN Ocean Conference⁶, held in 2017 in New York, as well as the annual “Our Oceans” Conferences⁷ held in the USA, Chile and Malta.

14. Activities at regional levels also reflect significantly on the importance and guidance of the SDGs. For example, the high-level international conference on the Blue Growth Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean⁸ held in 2017 in Mexico City emphasized in particular SDGs 2 (zero hunger) and 14 as highly relevant for efforts aiming at the eradication of hunger and the sustainability of aquatic resources. In 2017, the General Fishery Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) issued a “Mid-term Strategy (2017-2020) towards the Sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries”⁹ with clear reference to SDGs 14, 5 (gender equality), 8 (economic growth and decent work) and 13 (climate change) providing strategic guidance for regional fisheries governance approaches.

15. The 2018 Fish Trade workshop for the Pacific Islands, jointly organized by FAO, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Government of New Zealand will discuss SDG target 14.7 (economic growth and fisheries) and its importance in the Pacific region. FAO is also contributing to the development of methodologies for measuring indicators related to four SDG 14 targets.

D. United Nations General Assembly related work and UN-Oceans

16. Within the framework of the two annual UNGA resolutions on Oceans and the Law of the Sea and on Sustainable Fisheries, the UNGA continues to address multiple ocean-related matters. This year the UNGA is discussing the topic of “The effects of climate change on oceans” during the 18th UN Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. As in the past, FAO contributed to the preparatory process of this year’s session by reporting on its initiatives aimed to address climate change, climate-related disasters and their impacts on the fisheries and aquaculture sector. FAO continues to participate in the UN-Oceans in collaboration with the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UN-DOALOS). As part of the UNGA resolution on Sustainable Fisheries, the UNGA also proclaimed 5 June the International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing as well as the year beginning on 1 January 2022 the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, and invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to serve as lead agency for them.

17. At its 72nd session the UNGA proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (the Decade) for the 10-year period beginning on 1 January 2021. The UNGA named the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC) as the lead agency and called on them to prepare a roadmap and implementation plan in consultation with Member States, specialized agencies of the UN, including UN Oceans, and other relevant stakeholders. FAO, at the invitation of IOC, will support the co-design of the Decade over a three-year period (2018-2020) to achieve a campaign that is highly inclusive and leads to major breakthroughs in ocean science in support of ocean management and services.

18. The high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, was held from 5 to 9 June 2017 in New York. This Conference was the first-of-a-kind UN global event dedicated to oceans. It was attended by Member states, UN entities, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations and the private sector

⁶ <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/>

⁷ www.ourocean2017.org/our-ocean-commitments

⁸ www.fao.org/mexico/noticias/detail-events/en/c/1070167/

⁹ www.fao.org/3/a-i7340e.pdf

to discuss the implementation of SDG 14. The Conference adopted a Call for Action¹⁰ which focuses on concrete and action-oriented recommendations. The Conference also generated more than 1300 voluntary commitments on forward facing work related to the implementation of SDG 14.

19. FAO was a very active member in the preparatory process to the lead up of the Conference through the informal preparatory working groups. During the Conference, FAO announced some major voluntary commitments ranging from general support to small island developing States (SIDS) and technical assistance on issues related to market access and trade-related aspects, to the strengthening of fisheries governance as well as States' capacities to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, all to be implemented through the FAO's Blue Growth Initiative, which is based on FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the Ecosystem approach.

20. This Conference agreed on the following challenges in relation to fisheries, all of which are at the core of FAO's work in fisheries and aquaculture. These are:

- IUU fishing;
- Challenges in the management of shared, straddling and migratory stocks on the high-seas as well as in coastal sovereign waters; and
- Improving the status of fisheries in coastal communities in developing countries, including SIDS. These are mostly small-scale fisheries, and those concerned make up over 90 percent the people involved in the fishing industry globally.

21. FAO is currently working together with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean (His Excellency, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji) and the broader UN system, on the needed follow-up actions to the commitments made at the Conference, by performing the function of Focal Point for the Community of Ocean Action on Sustainable Fisheries.

E. Other major global oceans events

22. The "Our Oceans" Conference was held from 5 to 6 October 2017 in Malta and focused on issues related to the oceans and climate change, marine pollution, sustainable fishing, sustainable Blue Growth, ocean governance, and empowering a new generation to lead the way. It increased visibility for the countries, industry and civil society in their work to overcome the problems currently being faced. The Conference also engaged participants towards making significant commitments aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans' resources.

23. The Conference generated 437 commitments, of which 200 from governments and 100 from the private sector, in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, as well as recommendations on the implementation of SDG14. Furthermore, financial pledges for a total amount of EUR 7.2 billion were made and the establishment of 2.5 million square kilometres of additional Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) was announced.

24. During the Conference, FAO reaffirmed some of its major commitments made at the Oceans Conference in New York and announced some additional commitments aimed at upscaling its work with Member countries, small-scale fisheries actors and other partners to raise awareness, strengthen institutional capacities, empower small-scale fisheries organizations, generate and share knowledge, support policy reform and provide technical assistance to support the implementation of the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

25. On this occasion FAO announced its Blue Hope Project which will focus on building coastal community resilience through improved technical capacity among government agencies and

¹⁰ <https://oceanconference.un.org/callforaction>

communities to sustainably manage their coastal resources, especially inshore fisheries, thus improving their food security and their livelihood opportunities as well as their capacity to respond to drivers of change such as climate and migration. FAO also announced it will join efforts promoted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to address the highly important issue of decent work in fisheries and aquaculture.

26. FAO is currently reviewing some of the other commitments announced at the “Our Oceans” Conference, to see whether synergies could be created and cooperation established with other entities (in particular with the Private Sector) with the aim of supporting the full implementation of such commitments.

27. It is expected that the next sessions of the “Our Oceans” Conference will take place in Indonesia (2018), Norway (2019) and Palau (2020).

F. United Nations Environment

28. FAO works closely with the United Nations Environment Programme (nowadays UN Environment) as a UN partner on many issues of common interest, in particular on issues related to the interphase between sustainable use, conservation and environmental protection, including as partners for the implementation of projects funded by the Global Environmental Facility.

29. FAO has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UN Environment (formerly UNEP) that also includes activities on fisheries and aquaculture, such as the maintaining of FAOLEX and ECOLEX, and a study on how legislations address biodiversity, including in the context of fisheries and aquaculture.

30. UN Environment is a partner to the Common Oceans Programme and, within this framework, the project “Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction” is implemented by FAO, in partnership with UN Environment and the World Conservation and Monitoring Centre.

31. FAO and UN Environment implement the "Protection of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem" project that aims to enable the countries of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) to address priority transboundary concerns on declining fisheries, associated biodiversity and water quality through governance reforms, investments and management programs. In the Caribbean LME (CLME+) and the Guinea Current LME, FAO collaborates with UNEP and other UN agencies to support partner countries implementation of their agreed Strategic Action Programmes. Through these collaborations FAO and UN Environment provides technical assistance in relation to their respective areas of expertise.

32. FAO provided technical input on microplastics in fisheries and aquaculture as a contribution to an overall study carried out by UN Environment on marine litter. This led to the publication of a technical paper¹¹ that reviews the impacts of microplastics on fisheries and aquaculture resources, suggests food safety risk profiling for fish products and outlines policy recommendations.

G. Conventions and International Processes focussing on Threatened Species (CITES, CMS, IUCN Red List)

33. Although species extinction in the oceans is low in comparison to the analogous situation on land, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) ‘Red List’ is increasingly responding to recognised depletions across

¹¹ Lusher, A.L.; Hollman, P.C.H.; Mendoza-Hill, J.J. 2017. Microplastics in fisheries and aquaculture: status of knowledge on their occurrence and implications for aquatic organisms and food safety. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper. No. 615. Rome, Italy. www.fao.org/3/a-i7677e.pdf

marine and freshwater realms. Originally, there were relatively few commercially exploited aquatic species listed under such Conventions, partly in recognition of the range of management processes in place for these species. However since 2013, CITES Parties have listed 20 such species while CMS has listed 28, showing a greater willingness by Parties of these Conventions to list commercially-exploited aquatic species. Some of these determinations come with binding provisions that regulate trade, requiring a shift in practices across commercial and artisanal fisheries.

34. FAO and CITES both recognise ‘sustainable use’ of aquatic resources as part of their respective strategic visions, and are increasingly working together under an MoU signed in 2006 to facilitate legal and sustainable trade. FAO provides advice to assist member countries when proposals to amend Convention Appendices are presented for consideration by Parties, and supporting countries, regional fisheries bodies and other relevant partners in implementing the resultant provisions that are mandated by such listings. FAO’s work in this regard includes the collation and presentation of measures being implemented by the fisheries sector (see Shark database-of-measures¹²), and support for capacity development. This recognises the need countries have, to upgrade governance; adapt approaches with fishers and stocks, markets and socio-cultural elements, so as to return the human and environmental value that sustainable fisheries and productive oceans offer.

35. FAO will continue to work collaboratively with the CITES Secretariat and its Parties to understand the practical application of CITES listings across the full ‘seascape’ of fisheries activity. Understanding the successes and challenges in the application and impacts of implementing CITES provisions, helps FAO in informing countries on best practices and steer investment in management and conservation where it is most needed, with the overall intent of improving the implementation of the Convention.

H. Convention on Biological Diversity

36. Biodiversity mainstreaming, the consideration of biodiversity across fisheries (and aquaculture) has gained substantial profile since the 1992 adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The broader impact of fisheries on natural renewable resources and the environment is enshrined in the UNCLOS while the CCRF and Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Aquaculture further define approaches that promote biodiversity conservation for sustainable development and management of fisheries and aquaculture. A 2018 publication FAO helped to author outlines the fisheries sectors approach to biodiversity conservation.¹³

37. At the 13th CBD Conference of Parties in 2016 entitled “Mainstreaming of Biodiversity for Well-Being”, FAO and its partners were able to show how fisheries had generally strengthened consideration of biodiversity in relation to management and conservation of fisheries, with particular focus on conservation of threatened species and vulnerable habitats. FAO also showed how RFBs/RFMOs and national fishery management authorities have been updating their constitutive management instruments or replacing them with new ones, and incorporating more active management rules for species and habitats of particular conservation concern. The outcome document, the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being, as well as the launch of the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform, further reinforced FAO’s role in integrating actions for the conservation, sustainable use and management of biological diversity in the fisheries sectors.

38. CBD Parties adoption of Aichi Targets in 2010 reflects the global societal expectation of biodiversity conservation in sectoral management, with Aichi Target 6 outlining a comprehensive series of deliverables for fisheries by 2020. This international process, and related SDG 14, outlines fisheries’ accountability for the full footprint of its activities and facilitates the measurement of action

¹² www.fao.org/ipoa-sharks/database-of-measures/en/

¹³ Friedman, K.J. Garcia, S., and Rice, J. (2018) Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Fisheries. Marine Policy. In press.

by states in biodiversity mainstreaming. Most recently, CBD Parties invited FAO to continue working with the CBD Secretariat to refine advice on both the list of available indicators and methods to support the reporting processes of countries for Target 6, in one case collaborating over the adaptation of the CCRF questionnaire, to reflect the requirements of Aichi Target 6 more effectively.

I. State of World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

39. The sustainable use, management and conservation of aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture (AqGR) is crucial to the continued growth and sustainability of aquaculture. There is an urgent need to preserve and better manage existing aquatic genetic diversity to enhance its contribution to food security, nutrition and livelihoods. FAO and Members are currently engaged in a number of activities that will help promote AqGR in achieving the recommendations of COFI, recommendations of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission), and FAO's strategic objectives. Among these, the revised State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is presented to this session of COFI, following a comprehensive preparation and review process with inputs from Members and observers of COFI's Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, experts of the COFI Advisory Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources and Technologies (COFI WG AqGRT), and the Commission's Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, with the main goal to improve the state of information on AqGR. Also, FAO in close consultation with the COFI WG AqGRT, developed a comprehensive "Framework of minimum requirements for sustainable use, management and conservation of aquatic genetic resources of relevance for aquaculture" with the generous support of the Government of Germany. Finally, FAO supports multiple countries *inter alia* through TCP projects that include elements related to the sustainable development of AqGR.

J. Fisheries subsidies negotiations at the World Trade Organization

40. In the area of fisheries subsidies, new attempts have been made to revitalize the negotiations process at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to achieve a positive outcome at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11). In addition, the SDGs, adopted by Heads of State and Government in 2015, contains a specific target (14.6) reinforcing the need for countries to address the issue of fisheries subsidies. In order to support WTO with technical issues associated with the debate on fisheries subsidies negotiations, an FAO Senior Liaison Fishery Officer was assigned to the Secretariat of Negotiating Group on Rules from July to December 2017.

41. In December, the MC11 decided to continue negotiations towards adopting the final agreed disciplines by the next Conference, in 2019. The achievement of a substantive outcome in 2019 remains the main challenge. It is highly relevant to FAO that a legally binding international instrument to prohibit some fishery subsidies be adopted, taking into consideration its effects on the management of marine capture fisheries of the world.

42. The current cooperation example between WTO and FAO proved that duplication of efforts and reduction of reporting burden to national administrations can be avoided, associated with the optimization of the use of human and financial resources. In addition, FAO can provide the necessary technical resources and knowledge in the area of fisheries, including the required capacity development at the country level.

43. In order to continue the development of this cooperation scheme, to build a continuous knowledge platform, and to provide basic and neutral information in support to WTO members during the negotiation process, FAO, in partnership with the WTO Secretariat, could organize a series of specific technical information sessions in the current biennium.

K. The UNFCCC Paris Agreement: A historic moment of change

44. Momentum on oceans has increased over the last two years in the climate change arena. During the 22nd Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22), for the first time since its creation, the Oceans Action Day was organized as part of the official programme of the UNFCCC at the request of the Government of Morocco. This emphasis was confirmed during COP23 under the leadership of the Government of Fiji who has also launched the Oceans Pathway Partnership to support the inclusion of oceans in the official negotiations on climate. The efforts undertaken by the Government of Fiji complements those of the “Because the Ocean” declaration that is being signed by an increasing number of countries. This increase of emphasis on oceans has significantly changed the level of players involved, as well as topics discussed in oceans-related events within the climate arena. Partners involved have progressively moved from awareness raising and advocacy to the showcasing of concrete actions and initiatives undertaken throughout the Globe to address climate change, in an attempt to demonstrate how oceans and aquatic systems can be part of the solution, both in terms of adaptation and mitigation.

45. FAO actively participated in this endeavour and was a prominent partner in the discussions, reporting on initiatives and projects detailed in document COFI/2018/10.

L. Area-based management

46. Recently, environmental conservation organizations have strongly advocated for MPAs as the preferred mechanism for biodiversity conservation and as an instrument for supporting the recovery and conservation of fishery resources. FAO notes the long history of use of spatial management of fisheries, but highlights the need for managers to consider the full range of management and conservation tools in addition to the use of MPAs. In presenting these arguments, FAO promotes solutions that can deliver benefits beyond the boundaries of MPA approaches while taking account of issues related to fishing re-allocation and overcapacity.

47. FAO champions a rights-based approach that reflects comprehensive marine resource management, and the need to ensure food security and sustainable livelihoods for local communities. FAO has represented fishers and fisheries in MPA related events and initiatives, including the 4th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC4), and UN Oceans Conference. FAO continues to explore the impacts of MPAs on fishing communities and published a paper in 2017 entitled *Marine protected areas: Interactions with fishery livelihoods and food security*.¹⁴ More recently, FAO collaborated with the Parties of the CBD advising on the available indicators and methods for Aichi Target reporting and reflecting the requirements of Aichi Targets in the CCRF questionnaire.

48. In February 2018, FAO participated in an expert workshop on MPAs to assist in defining criteria for the term ‘other effective area-based conservation measures’ (OECMs), which is needed for achieving Aichi Target 11 in marine and coastal areas. Once the criteria for OECMs are finalized, FAO will continue collaborating with the CBD Secretariat and its Parties to support FAO Members in identifying and classifying OECMs for Aichi Target 11 accounting.

¹⁴ Westlund, Lena, A. Charles, S. M. Garcia, and J. Sanders (2017). Marine protected areas: Interactions with fishery livelihoods and food security. FAO Technical Paper 603

III. THE REGIONAL SCALE: MATTERS RELATED TO REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES AND FISHERY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

A. Fishery and aquaculture governance from a regional perspective

49. The 2013 Agenda for Sustainable development emphasizes the importance of the regional and subregional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development. The regional level is the most appropriate level for establishing a collaborative framework that encompasses whole ecosystems to efficiently preserve and protect ecosystems while, at the same time, providing opportunities for participating states to sustainably benefit from the services they render.

50. RFMOs and regional fisheries management arrangements (RFMAs) have a long history, as the nature of living marine and inland water resources drives sound management to transboundary agreements. The first RFMO for a marine fish resource was the International Pacific Halibut Commission established in 1923. FAO lists fifty RFBs¹⁵ of which about half are considered RFMOs. Furthermore, less than half of the RFBs have a regulatory authority, and therefore many do not reach the status of RFMOs.

51. The regional dimension is a central milestone of international fisheries management policy as also proved by the rapid expansion of the family of RFBs and RFMOs. In this regard, FAO is actively engaged in the strengthening of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN¹⁶) which is increasingly playing a key instrumental role in this process.

52. Different levels of development and maturity have been attained by individual RFBs and Regional Seas Programmes. Increasingly, RFBs are undergoing performance reviews, in line with the recommendations formulated in international fora.

53. Further performance and effectiveness reviews of both RFBs and Regional Seas Programmes should be undertaken, also to monitor and evaluate the implementation of SDGs at the regional level and the impact of policies. Enabling conditions that render this collaboration successful require strong political will of the parties to these regional instruments, as well as financial support.

B. FAO support to the establishment or strengthening of new RFBs/RFMOs and related activities

54. FAO promotes regional cooperation in many geographical areas, by assisting with the establishment of new RFBs and providing technical assistance to those already existent. In this context, the following highlights have been reported:

Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Aquaculture and Fishery Organization (RAAFO)

55. The Regional Consultation for the establishment of the RAAFO was held in Cairo (Egypt) from 29 November to 1 December 2016.

56. The designated Coordination Group (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan) with the technical assistance of FAO was called on to formulate a zero-draft of the agreement to establish this regional organization. The zero-draft agreement was made available to the concerned coastal countries in Arabic and English. The Coordination Group is due to meet to revise and finalize the agreement.

¹⁵ www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/en

¹⁶ www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/en

Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)

57. WECAFC has been very active, especially through its seven Working Groups. A project portfolio of over 17 million USD, help in addressing members' needs on fisheries statistics, science, management, and IUU fishing.

58. The WECAFC members decided at the 16th session (June 2016), to launch a process for establishing an RFMO in the WECAFC area. The WECAFC Secretariat, supported by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department and the FAO legal office, has since continued to supply information on this process and to clarify questions from members and partners; also it has mobilized resources to organize the related supporting Preparatory Meetings.

South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC)

59. The Working Party on Collaboration and Cooperation in tuna fisheries requested a consultancy for assessing legal, policy, institutional and budgetary implications of formulating, adopting and implementing a regional fishery cooperation and coordination agreement by the South West Indian Ocean States. The two options being assessed are related to the establishment of (a) an independent organization defined in line with the proposed draft Agreement on South West Indian Ocean Coastal State Coordination and Cooperation on Fisheries of Common Interest, and (b) the establishment of an FAO Article XIV body.

Committee on Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA)

60. At the 17th session of the CIFAA (Banjul, Gambia, May 2017), members reflected on the necessary actions to address issues that limit the committee's effectiveness, and discussed means for the development of aquaculture in Sub-Sahara Africa. The session decided that certain Rules and Procedures in the Statute should be revised and amended to become a more modern and streamlined RFB; this included possibilities of written declarations on CIFAA items, review the legal status and feasibility of a CIFAA Multi-Donor Trust Fund as well as the membership/attendance to address the quorum challenge.

61. In view to enhance cooperation among countries and to better disseminate aquaculture information in the region, the Aquaculture Network for Africa will be integrated within the African Union-Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources, counting on the FAO continued support.

Commission for the Conservation and rational use of Aquatic Biological Resources and Management of Shared Stocks of Such Resources (Caspian Sea)

62. In response to the call for support made by the 32nd session of COFI to, *inter alia*, the Caspian region¹⁷, FAO presented the draft project proposal entitled "Scientific and technical cooperation for responsible fisheries management in the Caspian Sea (CASCOOP) - Project Formulation and Preparatory Phase", during the First Inaugural Session of the Commission for the Conservation and rational use of Aquatic Biological Resources and Management of Shared Stocks of Such Resources (Baku, Azerbaijan, from 21 to 23 November 2017). This proposal is aimed at establishing and promoting a technical cooperation framework among the riparian States of the Caspian Sea to ensure the sustainability of the regional fisheries and aquaculture resources, for the common interest of the region. The Commission took note of the draft proposal and decided that it will provide FAO with an official response in 2018.

¹⁷ Paragraph 141 of the report of the 32nd session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI 32) states that "The Committee reiterated the calls for support to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, the Caspian Sea and the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) regions."

Commission on Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture for Latin America and the Caribbean (COPESCAALC)

63. FAO is providing support to the Commission's plan of work, both through assisting regional and subregional fisheries and aquaculture development processes, and at a national level by assisting member countries in their efforts to comply with internationally-agreed commitments, such as the SDG targets.

64. Through the implementation of an FAO Technical Cooperation Programme project, institutional capacities of member countries have been strengthened to combat, deter and eliminate IUU fishing. Also, resource-limited aquaculture farmers of member countries have increased their capacities in formulation of locally available, low-cost aquaculture feeds, thus increasing their economic sustainability. A number of national fisheries and aquaculture development strategies and policies have been supported over the past biennium in Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru. These include the inclusion of fish in school feeding programmes, linked to public purchases; as well as the incorporation of the SSF Guidelines in national legal and policy frameworks.

65. COPESCAALC began a reform requested by their Members to include marine small-scale fisheries in the scope and mandate of the Commission (currently dealing with continental fishing and aquaculture). The proposed new name and statutes have been submitted to the FAO Council for approval, after been unanimously approved by the XV Ordinary Session of COPESCAALC.

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

66. FAO participates and contributes (in partnership with UN Environment) to the Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries Conventions and Related Instruments in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (the GEF UNDP OFMP 2 project).

Pacific Community (SPC)

67. The Pacific Community recently signed an MOU with FAO at the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) in Nadi, Fiji. The FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific has been working closely with SPC to align country support and create a collaborative and complementary fisheries program for coastal fisheries. In addition, FAO is currently engaging in a cross-regional exchange between the Pacific and Caribbean regions in collaboration with the Caribbean Regional Fishery Mechanism.

South East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (SEAFO) and Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

68. FAO is working with SEAFO and SIOFA to implement the "Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-Seas Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)" GEF-funded project. The project aims to achieve efficiency and sustainability in the use of deep-sea living resources and improve biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ, through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach for: (i) improving sustainable management practices for deep-seas fisheries, taking into account the impacts on related ecosystems, (ii) improving the protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems and enhanced conservation and management of components of Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas, and (iii) testing area-based planning tools for deep-sea ecosystems.

Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF)

69. FAO, through its Regional Office in Africa and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, is providing technical and administrative support to the Commission, to implement agreed activities as outlined in the workplan adopted at the 21st session of CECAF, in April 2016, including the development of a study looking at options for the future functioning of the Committee, which is

expected to be launched in 2018. Extra-budgetary support has been secured to contribute to organizations of statutory meetings in 2018 and 2019 as well as to the implementation of other relevant activities. CECAF has continued to provide regular scientific advice for the shared demersal and pelagic resources within its area of competence.

C. Ongoing regional collaboration with other UN entities

70. FAO continues to collaborate with other UN organizations and agencies on issues of common interest, with the aim of improving regional interagency coordination and to develop effective synergies at the regional and global level.

71. Partnerships at the sea basin-level provide an opportunity for regionally-coordinated efforts to harmonize the delivery by key stakeholders, of the 2030 Agenda related to fisheries and aquaculture production and governance, including health of ecosystems and oceans and their links to food security and poverty reduction. The importance of this regional cross-sectoral collaboration has been increasingly recognized by the international community.

72. MoUs, formal Collective Arrangements, mutual Governing Body decisions, and common policy instruments and strategies are used to regulate cooperation and cross-sectoral policy coherence. It is advisable and important that regional organizations are clear about their respective mandates and mutually respect the mandates of partner organizations.

73. FAO and UN Environment are cooperating to establish cooperation frameworks between RFBs and regional seas partnerships (RSPs) in different regions. SWIOFC and the Nairobi Convention in the South-western Indian Ocean, and the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) and Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Arabian Sea have are finalizing MoUs with the purpose to provide a framework for co-operation between the regional organizations, with the overall objective of increasing and integrating the services provided by those organizations to their members and avoid duplications of activities in order to effectively fulfil their respective mandates, acknowledging the common vision to conserve and sustainably manage the marine and coastal ecosystems and their resources in the concerned regions.

74. CECAF continues to seek collaboration with regional organizations operating within and close to its geographical area. The scientific advice from CECAF is being made available to cross sectoral networks such as the CCLME project, where the CECAF's working groups are a vehicle to provide information on states of resources and fisheries. This project is jointly implemented by FAO and UNEP, being the Abidjan Convention implementing activities on behalf of UNEP, in relation to environmental issues and biodiversity. The Abidjan Convention is also invited to CECAF statutory meetings as an observer as well as to ad-hoc workshops and meetings, e.g. on deep-sea fisheries and vulnerable marine ecosystems.

75. In the case of WECAFC, the 2016 formalized collaboration continues under the "Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries" with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Central American Organization for Fisheries and Aquaculture (OSPESCA). The scientific advice from joint species and fisheries based working groups is reviewed, adopted and implemented in an effective manner throughout the region. Collaboration with the CITES Secretariat, on sharks and rays and queen conch management and conservation, is ongoing.

76. In addition, FAO became formal party to the Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM) for the "Sustainable Management, Use and Protection of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems" (the CLME+ region), established in July 2017. This mechanism includes the collaboration of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOCARIBE of IOC-UNESCO), the UN Environment represented by its Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit and Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention (UN Environment Programme CAR/RCU), OSPESCA, the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), the Caribbean

Community Secretariat, CRFM, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Commission and FAO/WECAFC.

77. Globally, FAO is actively engaged in cooperating with CBD within the framework of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, that has led in 2016 to the so-called “Seoul Outcome”¹⁸. The second meeting of SOI was held in April 2018. FAO and CBD have coordinated efforts to facilitate the properly balanced and representative attendance from both RFBs and RSPs. The meeting elaborated the so-called “Seoul Outcome plus 2” and possible ways and means were identified to put the “Seoul Outcomes” into concrete practice and to further enhance cross-sectoral collaboration at the regional scale, including regional dialogues/partnership initiatives.

IV. OTHER GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND PROCESSES

A. Building resilience of fisheries and aquaculture livelihoods

78. Disasters and climate change have a significant impact on the fisheries and aquaculture subsectors. A review of 74 post-disaster needs assessments conducted in 53 developing countries between 2006 and 2016 has shown that agriculture (including fisheries and aquaculture) absorbs 23 percent of all damage and loss caused by medium to large-scale natural disasters (FAO 2018).

79. In addition to this, the demand for humanitarian and resilience assistance is escalating at a moment in which four countries (South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and northeast Nigeria) have been identified at risk of famine. Conflict and insecurity are the primary drivers of food insecurity in 18 countries, where almost 74 million food-insecure people remain in need of urgent assistance (AFO/WFP, 2018). Conflict also causes widespread displacement (internal and cross-border), and places a burden on host communities, for example through competition over natural resources and access to basic services.

80. The humanitarian work of FAO focuses on building resilience and saving livelihoods. Interventions forge linkages between disaster risk reduction, disaster response, climate change and resilient and sustainable development, in order to accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for delivering on the SDGs.

81. FAO’s resilience work promotes four key pillars to understand and manage climate risks and hazards at scale. These are: Institutional strengthening and governance of risk and crisis, information and early warning systems, prevention and vulnerability reduction measures, preparedness for and response to disasters and crisis.

82. In addition, there is a need to link (post-disaster) those damage and loss assessments to the loss and damage evaluations of the Warsaw Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, as per article 8 of the Paris Agreement,¹⁹ to reinforce convergences and synergies between the disaster and the climate actors.

B. Increasing evidence and knowledge about tenure and rights-based approaches

83. Both the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and COFI have recognized the importance of appropriate forms of tenure and rights-based approaches that are in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) and the SSF Guidelines.

¹⁸ www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/soiom-2016-01/official/soiom-2016-01-outcome-en.pdf

¹⁹ https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

84. The work of FAO on tenure and rights-based approaches is centred around serving as a neutral platform for advancing knowledge on the complex issue of rights-based approaches and providing knowledge, institutional support and assistance for developing appropriate rights-based fisheries management systems. In doing so, and following-up on “Tenure and Fishing Rights 2015: A global forum on rights-based approaches for fisheries, FAO is co-organizing the global conference “Tenure and User Rights in Fisheries 2018: Achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030” (UserRights 2018).²⁰ FAO is also working improve access to information on the topic of rights-based approaches by developing a searchable repository of existing right-based management systems as part of the Global Work Programme.

85. This combination of global to local engagement, learning, and experience sharing amongst national and local governments, international organizations including other relevant UN entities, RFMOs and RFBs, fishers, fisherfolk, fishing communities, CSOs, NGOs, academics, and others should help support the implementation and mainstreaming of both the CFS VGGT and the COFI-endorsed SSF Guidelines in support of achieving the SDGs.

V. CONCLUSIONS

86. FAO has a key role to play in the aforementioned global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture as the UN’s specialized entity on these topics.

87. Cooperation between organizations dealing with fisheries management and sustainability, such as FAO, and those that focus more specifically on overall issues of environmental health, such as UN Environment and CBD, needs to be reinforced by greater cooperation with those concerned with regulating trade, such as the WTO. Such three-level cooperation has the potential to be a game-changer for the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture, as it can bring together the elements necessary for a real departure from “business as usual”.

88. Environmental protection organizations, such as regional seas programmes or national environment ministries, can focus some of their aquatic environment interventions on those areas that can have the highest impact on keeping the balance and productivity of aquatic ecosystems, getting specialized sectoral information from the fisheries and trade organizations. Cooperation is thus not only an option, but an absolute necessity, and necessary human and financial means to achieve need to be mobilized – aligned to CBD post 2020 and 2030 Agenda Processes.

89. These processes require an adequate level of coordination among all relevant international and regional organizations and stakeholders for them to successfully implement and achieve the targets set by the 2030 Agenda.

90. The reported processes are all relevant if not essential components of the Blue Growth vision promoted by FAO, including the actions that FAO is undertaking with specific regional bodies and entities dealing with fisheries in SIDS region.

²⁰ UserRights 2018 is being co-organized with the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, Republic of Korea, and will be held in Yeosu, Republic of Korea, 10–14 September 2018. See www.fao.org/about/meetings/user-rights.