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PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES AND RELATED INSTRUMENTS

Executive Summary

One hundred and twenty-seven FAO Member States and the European Union¹ participated in the 2018² edition of the questionnaire on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related instruments, representing 65 percent of FAO Members. This shows a 11, 20 and 107 percent increase in respondents compared to the 2015, 2013 and 2011 editions, respectively. Thirty-three regional fishery bodies and 11 Non-governmental Organizations also submitted their respective responses to the questionnaire, an increase from the 25 and 10, respectively, in comparison to the 2015 edition. The 2018 edition of the questionnaire was expanded to allow for reporting on Sustainable Development Goals indicators and Aichi targets, while also including a section for reporting on abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear. A detailed analysis of the responses to the questionnaire is presented in this document. Statistical tables summarizing Members' responses referred to in this document are made available on the COFI website³ and in document COFI/2018/SBD.1, which is to be read in conjunction with this document.

¹ The EU responded on behalf of its Member States, except for sections 19.2, 19.3, 20, 21, 41 and 51. In the case of 41 and 51, both the EU and its Member States have provided a response.

² The questionnaire is usually initiated in the year preceding COFI; in this case it initiated in January 2018.

³ www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi/documents-cofi33/en/

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I. ACTIVITIES AND APPLICATIONS OF THE CODE AT NATIONAL LEVEL

A. General

1. In Article 2, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) lays out ten objectives. Members⁴ were invited to rank the relevance of these objectives (Table 3). Top priorities continued to be assigned to objectives (a)⁵ and (b),⁶ as was the case since 2007. As in 2015, Members rated (j),⁷ (d)⁸ and (h)⁹ as the least relevant objectives.
2. The Code is subdivided into themes, touching on eight technical domains of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Members were invited to assign priority ratings to these (Table 4). Fisheries management and aquaculture development continued to be ranked as top priorities, reflecting results obtained since 2001. Similarly to 2015, 2013 and 2011, inland fisheries development and integration of fisheries into coastal and basin area management were given comparatively lower priority.
3. Members reported an average degree¹⁰ of conformity to the Code of 3.62 for policy, 3.74 for legislation, 3.57 for institutional framework, and 3.32 for operations and procedures (Table 5). Out of those who were not fully in conformity, 87, 88, 85 and 88 percent reported they intend to become fully in conformity with regard to policy, legislation, institutional framework, and operations and procedures, respectively.
4. Forty-nine percent of the respondents reported to have enacted their main fisheries legislation as currently in force prior to 1996 (Table 6), 26 percent between 1996 and 2005, and 24 percent since 2006. The regions with the highest percentage of respondents having enacted changes to their main fisheries legislation since 2010 are South West Pacific (33 percent) and Africa (28 percent).
5. Eighty-eight percent of the Members reported having increased awareness about the Code, the same percentage as reported in 2015 (Table 8). To do so, the mechanisms that were most frequently reported as key included, meetings, workshops and seminars (77 percent), training and administration of staff (54 percent), developing guidelines and codes based upon the Code (48 percent), and publishing and distributing guidelines (36 percent).

B. Fisheries management

6. Respectively 76 and 60 percent of the respondents reported to have identified at least one marine and one inland fishery. Of those that did identify fisheries, 94 and 69 percent reported to have developed marine and inland fisheries management plans (FMPs), respectively. Of those that had developed fisheries management plans (FMPs), 92 and 88 percent reported to have implemented marine and inland FMPs, respectively, equating to a reported total of 826 marine FMPs and 501 inland FMPs implemented (Table 8).
7. Out of the Members who reported to have developed FMPs, the most common categories of management measures to promote responsible resource use in marine fisheries include: prohibiting

⁴ Percentages within document are only reflective of the Members to which the question or section was relevant, while also having provided a response to the question or section.

⁵ Objective a): Establish principles for responsible fisheries taking into account all their relevant biological, technological, economic, social, environmental and commercial aspects.

⁶ Objective b): Establish principles and criteria for the elaboration and implementation of national policies for responsible conservation of fisheries resources and fisheries management and development to implement policies for the conservation of fishery resources and fisheries management and development.

⁷ Objective j): Provide standards of conduct for all persons involved in the fisheries sector.

⁸ Objective d): Provide guidance which may be used where appropriate in the formulation and implementation of international agreements and other legal instruments, both binding and voluntary.

⁹ Objective h): Promote the trade of fish and fishery products in conformity with relevant international rules and avoid the use of measures that constitute hidden barriers to such trade.

¹⁰ Members were asked to rate the extent of conformity from “1” being “Not at all” to “5” being “Fully”.

destructive fishing methods and practices, providing for the protection of endangered species (*ex aequo* at 95 percent), addressing selectivity of fishing gear, and involving stakeholder participation in management decisions (*ex aequo* at 94 percent). The least common categories of marine measures were: making use of stock-specific target reference points (TRPs) (63 percent) and targeting or addressing abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) (61 percent) (Table 9).

8. In the case of inland fisheries, the most commonly reported categories of measures relate to: recognizing a process for identifying species of conservation concern (83 percent), protecting species of concern being encountered by fisheries (83 percent), and using the precautionary approach (81 percent). The inland measures that were least reported were those prohibiting destructive fishing methods (42 percent) and addressing biodiversity of aquatic habitats (38 percent) (Table 9).

9. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents reported having started implementation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF). Of those, 97 percent reported having established ecological, socio-economic and governance objectives, 95 percent reported having identified issues to be addressed by management actions, and 67 percent reported having established monitoring mechanisms (Table 10).

10. Of those implementing EAF, 94 percent reported having addressed social and/or economic elements at the community and national levels, and 92 percent reported having management and institutional systems in place. Issues relating to external drivers and discarded species were least reported (*ex aequo* 72 percent) (Table 11).

11. Since 2010, the number of Members reporting to have developed TRPs has gradually increased from 56 percent to 68 percent. The total number of TRPs having been developed has also increased from 845 in 2011 to 1739 in this reporting session. Seventy percent of Members reported that one or more TRPs were being approached, while 39 percent reported that they had been exceeded (Table 12). These were relatively similar to figures from 2015 reporting but shows a marked reduction since 2010 where 76 percent of Members reported to have exceeded one or more TRPs.

12. Types of indicators used for managing stocks other than TRPs include: catch and effort indicators (78 percent), socio-economic indicators (50 percent), validated stakeholder knowledge (41 percent), and ecosystem indicators (25 percent) (Table 13). Where TRPs were exceeded, the most commonly reported remedial actions were: limiting fishing effort (96 percent), carrying out more research (92 percent), and strengthening monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) (85 percent) (Table 14).

C. Fishing operations

13. Members were invited to report on the most important measures taken to control fishing operations undertaken by vessels flying their flag within and beyond their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Ninety-six percent and 93 percent reported having taken these measures within their EEZ and beyond, respectively. As since 2011, the strengthening of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems (71 percent), penalties and sanctions (61 percent) and vessel registers (43 percent) were reported to be the most important actions taken to ensure that fishing operations within the EEZ comply with license provisions (Table 15).

14. With respect to measures taken outside of their EEZ and as since 2011, 65 percent reported that the application of mandatory authorisation schemes was the most importance measure of the measures taken to control fishing operations. The next two categories of measure given the most importance were ratification of relevant international instruments (40 percent) and enhancement of MCS measures (40 percent).

15. Seventy-two percent of Members reported that bycatch and discards occur in major fisheries, and 61 percent reported having formal bycatch and discard monitoring schemes in place. This represents an increase from 63 and 57 percent, respectively, compared to 2015. Of those formally monitoring bycatch and discards, 71 percent consider that bycatch and discards contribute to unsustainability. Of those that consider that bycatch and discards contribute to unsustainability, all

respondents reported to have management measures in place to minimise bycatch and discards, a consistent increase from 51 percent in 2013. Ninety-one and 64 percent of Members who have management measures for bycatch and discards also have measures to address the protection of juveniles and ghost fishing, respectively (Table 17).¹¹

16. Seventy-six percent of Members reported to have either partially or fully implemented vessel monitoring systems (VMS). Of those that have yet to implement VMS, 58 percent plan to do so in the future. Seventeen percent of Members reported that although they had not implemented VMS, they demand foreign vessels to carry VMS and report to other monitoring centres (e.g. Regional Fisheries Management Organizations) (Table 18).

17. Members were invited to rate their concerns from 1–5¹² with regard to abandoned lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). The average response from Members was 3.17 or slightly above medium concern. The issues of highest concern related to: harm to the environment (92 percent), entanglement of wildlife (75 percent) and loss of fish stocks (71 percent). The issues of least concern were negative impacts on tourism (31 percent) and damage to vessels (30 percent) (Table 19).

18. Fifteen percent of the Members that considered ALDFG to be a concern reported having information on gear loss rates, with 50 percent of those reporting to have this information by gear type (Table 20). Of those that reported having information by gear type, the more frequently identified types were: longline (29 percent), gillnets and entangling nets, purse seine and fish aggregating devices (*ex aequo* at 14 percent). No information was reported to be available for loss of other gear types (Tables 21 and 22).

19. Forty-five percent of Members reported to have requirements for gear marking. The most widely used types of gear marking reported were marking pen or spray (67 percent) and printed metal or plastic tags (43 percent) (Table 23).

20. Seventy-eight percent and 33 percent of Members reported that they have included inspection of on-board gear within observer programs to ensure relevant compliance with regulations and safety, and reporting mechanisms for ALDFG, respectively. Seventeen percent of Members reported to have requirements for reporting ALDFG in logbooks for vessels above a certain size; 16 percent reported to have this requirement for all vessels. (Table 24).

21. Members were asked to report on port facilities with regard to waste disposal and recycling. Thirty-eight percent reported having requirements for ports to provide facilities for receiving fishing vessel waste, while 26 percent reported being required to have facilities for receiving old fishing gear. Thirteen percent reported to have public and/or private programs for recycling and/or upcycling of old fishing gear (Table 25).

D. Aquaculture development

22. Ninety-five percent of Members reported that aquaculture development occurs in their countries (Table 26). Less than half of Members had largely complete and enabling policies (49 percent), legislation (40 percent) and institutional frameworks (46 percent). The majority of the remainder have partially developed policy, legal and institutional frameworks, and a few (12 percent or less) have no or largely insufficient frameworks.

23. The Code encourages Members to promote responsible aquaculture practices. Seventy-four percent of Members reported that government agencies have adopted codes or instruments in this regard, compared to 85 percent in 2015. Private sector actors were reported by Members to also have adopted such codes or instruments at the producer level (55 percent), supplier level (43 percent) and manufacturer level (42 percent) (Table 27).

¹¹ For more information regarding bycatch and discard refer to document COFI/2018/inf.24.

¹² “1” being “no concern”, “3” being “medium concern”, and “5” being “major concern”.

24. Members were invited to report on the presence of procedures to undertake core activities for responsible development of aquaculture in accordance with the Code. Ninety-one percent reported having measures to minimize the harmful effects of alien species introductions, 89 percent reported that they monitor aquaculture operations, and 85 percent reported conducting environmental assessments of aquaculture operations (Table 28). This shows a consistent improvement since 2013 when 56, 67, and 56 percent of Members reported the presence of these procedures, respectively. More than 70 percent of Members that implement these procedures reported that improvements were needed (Table 29). For all procedures, over 90 percent of Members identified the strengthening of institutional technical capacity as the major area where improvements are needed (Table 30).

25. Members are encouraged to promote responsible aquaculture practices to support rural communities, producer organizations and fish farmers. Ninety-one percent of Members stated that they had taken measures in this regard, and the most frequently reported measure was the design and implementation of extension programs/awareness campaigns/trainings (48 percent) (Table 24).

E. Integration of fisheries into coastal area management¹³

26. Of the Members who reported having a coastline (90 percent), only 23, 17 and 19 percent have a largely complete and enabling policy, legal and institutional framework for integrated coastal zone management in place, respectively. This shows lower figures than in any other reporting years through to 2011. Close to half have partially developed policy (46 percent), legal (50 percent) and institutional frameworks (47 percent). The remainder have not developed any or have largely insufficient governance frameworks for integrated coastal zone management (Table 32).

27. Members were asked to report on the issue of conflict not only within fisheries but also between the fisheries sector and other sectors operating within the coastal area. Of the reporting Members, the highest ranked activities have remained the same since 2010: conflicts between fishing gear types (17 percent) and conflicts between coastal and industrial fisheries (17 percent). Close to 70 percent of the concerned countries reported having resolution mechanisms in place for these two conflicts (Table 33).

F. Post-harvest practices and trade

28. The percentage of Members that reported having in place a largely complete and enabling effective food safety and quality assurance system for fish and fisheries products dropped from 71 percent in 2013 to 49 percent in this year's reporting, whilst the number of Members having no or largely insufficient systems increased from zero to eight percent (Table 34).

29. The issue of post-harvest losses and waste was relevant to almost all respondents (99 percent), of which 98 percent have taken measures to address it, including, enacting food-safety regulations (70 percent) and enhancing monitoring, control and inspections (53 percent) (Table 35).

30. Improving the use of bycatch is relevant to 90 percent of Members of which 91 percent reported having implemented measures to improve bycatch utilization, a 10 percent increase since 2015. As was the case in 2015, awareness raising (41 percent) and mandatory landing of bycatch (40 percent) were identified by members as the most important measures to achieve improved use of bycatch (Table 36).

31. Similar to the reporting in 2011, 2013 and 2015, the large majority of processors were in a position to trace the origin of the fisheries products they purchase (87 percent), while only about one third of consumers could do so (36 percent) (Table 37).

32. The elimination of processing and trading in illegally harvested fisheries resources was deemed relevant by 96 percent of Members, and 96 percent of those have taken measures to address

¹³ The questions under this header were responded by individual EU Member States with the exception of those relating to policy framework in table 32.

these matters. As in 2015, the most common reported measures include enhanced fisheries control and inspections (66 percent), enhanced custom and border controls (37 percent), and implementation of national plans of action to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (NPOA-IUU) (36 percent) (Table 38).

G. Fisheries research

33. Members reported that they obtained reliable estimates on stock status for a cumulative total of 2188 stocks. On average Members responded that stocks for which an estimate had been obtained represented 41 to 50 percent of their total stocks (Table 39).

34. Similarly to 2013 and 2015 reporting, 73 percent of Members indicated that statistics on catch and fishing effort were collected in a timely, complete and reliable manner, and 57 percent of Members reported that sufficient qualified personnel were available to generate data in support of sustainable fisheries management (Table 40). The subject areas for which the need for additional qualified personnel are greatest are fish biology and stock assessment (71 percent) and fisheries statistics and sampling (60 percent) (Table 41).

35. The most prominent data sources used by Members for the development of fishery management plans are: historical data, routine data collection (*ex aequo* at 82 percent), in-port/landing site sampling surveys (81 percent), processing, market and trade statistics (64 percent), and FAO and/or RFMO statistics (63 percent) (Table 42).

36. Ninety-five percent of Members reported that they have data gaps in the management of their fishery resources, with the most prominent data gaps being: stock status (43 percent), catch (33 percent), ecosystem (31 percent), and IUU fishing and/or MCS (30 percent) (Table 43). Stock status was also the type of data for which there were the most gaps in 2011, 2013 and 2015.

37. Fifty-seven percent of Members reported that they routinely monitored the state of the marine environment. This was similar to 2013 and 2015 but still afar from the 78 and 66 percent reported in 2009 and 2011, respectively. Of the Members reporting to perform such monitoring, the most common routine monitoring programmes focused on coastal parameters and coastal and offshore habitats (*ex aequo* at 78 percent), and on oceanographic parameters and monitoring of threatened and endangered species (*ex aequo* at 73 percent) (Table 44).

38. Members were asked to report on research and programmes addressing the impacts of climate change on fisheries. Sixty-four percent of Members indicated that formal research was in place to assess/predict the impact of climate change on fisheries, and 79 percent of these implemented formal programmes to mitigate its potential ecological, economic and social impacts and to build resilience, up from 51 and 70 percent in 2015 reporting, respectively (Table 45).

H. International instruments

39. Members were invited to report on the activities of flag vessels conducting fishing and fishing related activities. Eighty-six percent reported to be doing so in waters within their national jurisdiction, 59 percent on the High Seas, and 42 percent in waters under the jurisdiction of another State (Table 46). With respect to the occurrence of fishing vessels flagged by the responding Member that were authorised by another state to conduct fishing and fishing related activities, 39 percent responded that this was occurring in waters under the jurisdiction of another State, and 29 percent reported that it was occurring on the High Seas (Table 47). Sixty-four percent of Members reported that authorised foreign-flagged vessels were authorised to enter and use their ports, while 46 percent authorise foreign vessels to operate in waters within their national jurisdiction (Table 48).

40. Fifty-three percent of Members reported to have launched a preliminary fishing capacity assessment, with 38 percent planning to do so in the future. Of those who had launched a preliminary assessment, 89 percent reported to be implementing methods used to measure capacity (Table 49). The

most prevalent methods were key fleet and vessel characteristics (85 percent) and potential catch to be harvested by fleet (80 percent) (Table 50).

41. Of the Members that have launched a preliminary fishing capacity assessment, 47 percent reported to having developed a national plan of action for the management of fishing capacity (NPOA-Capacity). Of those having developed an NPOA-Capacity, using a 1–5¹⁴ scale, Members reported an average degree of implementation with regard to policy (3.73), legislation (3.69), institutional framework (3.50), and operations and procedures (3.31) (Table 51).

42. Fifty-five percent of Members identified fishing overcapacity as a problem. Of these, 91 percent have taken steps to prevent further build-up of overcapacity. The most prominently steps reported were: limited entry regimes (70 percent) and a freeze on number of vessels/licenses (49 percent) (Table 52). Furthermore, 89 percent reported to be taking steps to reduce overcapacity, with the most prominent being promotion of alternative income (28 percent), public buy-back and decommissioning schemes (26 percent), and NPOA-Capacity development and implementation (25 percent) (Table 53). Ninety-five percent of those who identified overcapacity as a problem also took steps to prevent it from causing further negative impacts on stocks, with the most prominent measures being seasonal closures of particular fisheries (75 percent) and spatial closures (58 percent) (Table 54).

43. Fifty-eight percent of Members reported that sharks were caught either through targeted fisheries or bycatch (Table 55). In the States where this was occurring, of those that conducted an impact assessment (73 percent), 95 percent concluded the need of a national plan of action for the conservation and management of sharks (NPOA-Sharks), and of these 58 percent reported having developed a NPOA-Sharks. Of those having developed an NPOA-Sharks, using a 1-5 scale¹⁴, Members reported an average degree of implementation with regard to policy (4.34), legislation (4.29), institutional framework (4.29), and operations and procedures (4.06) (Table 56).

44. Eighty-two percent of Members reported that longline, trawl and/or gillnet fishing was conducted in waters under their jurisdiction, and of these 46 percent conducted an assessment of said fisheries. Fifty-nine percent of these assessments concluded that a National Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds (NPOA-Seabirds) was needed (Table 57), and of those 52 percent reported having developed a NPOA-Seabirds. Of those that had implemented an NPOA-Seabirds, using a 1-5 scale¹⁴, Members reported an average degree of implementation with regard to policy (4.67), legislation (4.58), institutional framework (4.58), and operations and procedures (4.42) (Table 58).

45. Members were asked about mitigation measures with regard to seabirds and fisheries. Of the Members who reported to be conducting longline fisheries (73 percent), and trawl and/or gillnet fisheries (68 percent), 68 and 53 percent applied mitigation measures, respectively. The most prominent mitigation measures in both cases were legal framework improvements and observer programs (Tables 59 and 60).

46. Members were invited to respond to questions relating to illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU fishing). Eighty-nine percent of members reported that IUU fishing was perceived as a problem. Sixty-seven percent of Members reported to have developed an NPOA-IUU. Of those that had implemented an NPOA-IUU, using a 1-5 scale¹⁴, Members reported an average degree of implementation with regard to policy (4.14), legislation (4.32), institutional framework (3.97), and operations and procedures (3.85) (Table 61). The most prominent measures taken to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU were, legal framework improvements (74 percent), and improved coastal State controls and MCS (72 percent) (Table 62).

47. Eighty-five percent of Members¹⁵ reported to have ratified, accepted or acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,¹⁶ with a further 23 percent of the remaining Members

¹⁴ Members were asked to rate the extent of implementation from “1” being “Not at all” to “5” being “Fully”.

¹⁵ EU and its Member States reported a response to this section.

¹⁶ UN Convention of the Law of the Sea of December 1982.

reporting to have initiated the process to doing so. Using a 1–5 scale¹⁴, Members reported an average degree of implementation of the provisions of the agreement with regard to policy (3.88), legislation (3.92), institutional framework (3.70), and operations and procedures (3.60) (Table 63).

48. Fifty-seven percent of Members reported to have ratified, accepted or acceded to the Agreement on Port State Measures,¹⁷ with a further 57 percent of the remaining Members reporting to have initiated the process to doing so. Using a 1–5 scale,¹⁸ Members reported an average degree of implementation of the provisions of the agreement with regard to policy (3.88), legislation (3.92), institutional framework (3.70), and operations and procedures (3.60). As per the requirements of the Agreement, 61 and 65 percent reported having designated ports and contact points, respectively (Tables 64 and 65).

49. Members were invited to report on the implementation of their flag State responsibilities. Fifty percent of Members reported to have ratified, accepted or acceded to the Compliance Agreement,¹⁹ with a further 30 percent of the remaining Members reporting having initiated the process to doing so. Using a 1-5 scale¹⁸, Members reported an average degree of implementation of the provisions of the agreement and/or other flag state responsibilities with regard to policy (3.47), legislation (3.49), institutional framework (3.30), and operations and procedures (3.28) (Table 66). Twenty-eight percent of Members reported to have undertaken an assessment of its performance as flag State in accordance with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance, with 80 percent of the remaining intending to do so in the future (Table 67).

50. Sixty-six percent of Members reported to be supplying a record of fishing vessels operating on the High Seas. Eighty-one and 88 percent of Members, respectively, reported to be ensuring that their vessels were not engaged in activities undermining conservation and management measures and that their vessels were providing all necessary information to fulfil its obligations as flag State. Seventy-six percent of Members reported that they had a fisheries access agreement prior to fishing in another coastal State (Table 67).

51. Twenty-seven percent of Members reported to be conducting deep sea fisheries in the High Seas. Of those that were conducting these fisheries, using a 1-5 scale¹⁸, Members reported an average degree of implementation of the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas with regard to policy (4.19), legislation (4.22), institutional framework (4.15), and operations and procedures (4.11) (Table 68).

52. Sixty-seven percent of Members reported that they were aware of the Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries (Strategy-STF), and 71 percent of Members are implementing Strategy-STF plans and programmes, including components to improve data collection (100 percent), data analysis (98 percent), and data dissemination (96 percent) (Table 69).

53. Sixty-two percent of Members reported being aware of the Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Aquaculture (Strategy-STA), and 72 percent declared that related plans and programmes are being implemented. Of these, 100, 98 and 98 percent reported to include components to improve data collection, data analysis and data dissemination, respectively (Table 70).

I. Small-Scale Fisheries²⁰

54. Overall, SSF was reported taking place in close to 90 percent of Members' fisheries. As in 2015, on average Members responded that SSF represented between 51 to 60 percent of both the volume and value of the total catch. Respondents within the regions reporting the highest average ratio

¹⁷ 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

¹⁸ Members were asked to rate the extent of implementation from "1" being "Not at all" to "5" being "Fully".

¹⁹ 1993 FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas.

²⁰ The EU responded on behalf of its Member States to questions under this header.

of SSF to total catch by volume are found in Africa, Asia and the Near East (61 to 70 percent), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (51 to 60 percent). In terms of value, Near East reported the highest average ratio of SSF to total catch by value (91 to 100 percent), followed by Africa (71 to 80 percent), Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (61 to 70 percent). The overall average response given by Members on the proportion of people involved in SSF to that of the total in fisheries remained between 61 and 70 percent, as in 2015. The regions showing the highest average proportion being Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean at 71 to 80 percent, followed by Africa and Near East at 61 to 70 percent (Table 73).

55. The availability of information about employment in SSF activities by gender and employment status remains limited. For full-time employment more information, including gender disaggregation, is provided than for part-time, occasional and unspecified employment. In full-time employment all regions reported to have a higher percentage of men than women involved in fishing activities. As for 2015, the only cases where women were reported to make up a higher percentage of men under full time employment were in post-harvest activities in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (Table 74).

56. SSF are reported as being legally defined by 44 percent of the Members and informally defined, and therefore not legally supported, by 35 percent. Compared to 2015, the percentage of countries that have a legal definition for SSF was lower in all regions except Asia, while the percentage of countries that have an informal definition of SSF was higher in all regions, except North America. Sixty-three percent of the respondents that do have a legal or informal definition of SSF and 45 percent of those that do not have one reported intending to either review it or introduce it through a multi-stakeholder process as foreseen in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) (Table 75).

57. Ninety-three percent of those having defined SSF reported collecting sector-specific data. Data collected by Members concerned the volume of production (85 percent), value of production (63 percent), employment (65 percent), trade (54 percent) and consumption (33 percent) (Table 76).

58. Seventy-five, 73, 72 and 63 percent of Members reported having introduced or developed policies, regulations, laws, plans or strategies specifically targeting or addressing SSF, respectively (Table 77).

59. Members were asked if they had specific initiatives to implement the SSF Guidelines. Forty-eight percent of the Members responded positively, whilst 59 percent reported that they intended doing so in the future. Initiatives already in place were most prominently related to activities supporting SSF actors actively participating in sustainable resources management (92 percent), enhancing SSF value chains, post-harvest operations and trade (88 percent) and promoting social development, employment and decent work (78 percent) (Table 78). The most prominent constraints encountered by Members in implementing such initiatives were the lack of financial resources (86 percent) and organizational structures among small-scale fishers and fish workers (57 percent). This was followed by insufficient coordination with other related administrations and limited public awareness of the importance of SSF (*ex aequo* at 55 percent) (Table 80). Opportunities to implement the SSF Guidelines were mainly identified in the context of on-going/planned projects, programmes, initiatives (69 percent), the possibility of involving small-scale fishers in fisheries management (67 percent), and through the engagement with existing SSF organizational structures (63 percent) (Table 80).

60. Mechanisms through which small-scale fishers and fish workers can contribute to decision making processes have been reported to exist for 82 percent of the respondents. The most common mechanisms include mechanisms for involving small-scale fishers in fisheries management (90 percent) and getting fisher/fish workers' representatives into advisory/consultative bodies to the Ministries/Departments of Fisheries (81 percent). Out of the Members who responded to have mechanisms in place, 76 percent reported encouraging the active participation of women (Table 81).

J. Constraints and suggested solutions

61. Eighty-seven percent of Members reported that they faced some constraints in implementing the Code. The top constraints were related to insufficient budgetary (64 percent) and human (44 percent) resources and inadequate scientific research, statistics and access to information (37 percent) (Table 71).
62. The top ranking solutions proposed by Members to counter constraints faced in implementing the Code were: access to more budgetary means (62 percent), training and awareness raising (42 percent), improvement of research, statistics and access to information (37 percent), and access to more human resources (34 percent) (Table 54).
63. Members²¹ were invited to report on which FAO technical guidelines they have received. The most widely available include the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (73 percent), Fisheries Management (72 percent), and Implementation of the IPOA-IUU (70 percent) (Table 82).

II. ACTIVITIES OF REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

K. Regional fishery bodies

64. Thirty-three Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs)²² responded to the questionnaire on the implementation of the Code and related instruments, reflecting a substantial increase of 32 percent in the participation in comparison to 2015 reporting.
65. The number of contracting parties of responding RFBs varied between two and 52, with an average of 14 contracting parties. Over a third of the RFBs have between one and five cooperating non-contracting parties, while half of them have observers.
66. RFBs include diverse subjects in their mandates. Seventy-six percent of respondents reported having a primary mandate of fisheries management, 45 percent providing advice, 39 percent in environmental and biodiversity conservation, 36 percent in scientific/research, and 30 percent in aquaculture development. The main differences found in comparison to 2015 reporting regarded the increase of those reporting to be providing advice (24 percent) and aquaculture development (16 percent) as primary mandates; those with a scientific/research (52 percent) as a primary mandate decreased.

²¹ The EU and its Member States responded to this section.

²² Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC), Bay of Bengal Programme – Inter-Governmental Organization (BOBP-IGO), Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish), Committee for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA), Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), Joint Technical Commission of the Maritime Front (CTMFM), European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC), Fishery Committee of the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA), Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO), Mekong River Commission (MRC), Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African Countries Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT), Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO), North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC), North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), Central America Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA), Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC), Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI), Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO), Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO), Sub-regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), and Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC).

67. The convention area of responding RFBs included 22 covering the EEZs, 18 covering Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) and 12 covering inland waters. Most RFBs cover more than one of these areas; three include EEZ, ABNJ and inland waters, while ten more cover both the EEZ and ABNJ.

68. Sixty-one percent of responding RFBs report having adopted binding measures. Since 2010, eight of them have adopted more than 30 binding measures; one has adopted between 21 and 30 measures; three between 11 and 20; and eight between one and 10. Since 2010, 85 percent of responding RFBs report having adopted non-binding measures: thirteen of them have adopted between 1–10 non-binding measures; four between 11 and 20; three between 21 and 30; and four have adopted more than 30 non-binding measures.

69. As regards fisheries management plans specifically concerning marine capture fisheries, most RFB management plans are addressing: the protection of endangered species (61 percent), prohibiting destructive fishing methods and practices (58 percent), contain measures to allow depleted stocks to recover (55 percent), and ensuring that the level of fishing is commensurate with the state of fisheries resources (52 percent). Less than half of respondents mentioned the adoption of management plans for addressing/containing matters of selectivity of fishing gear (48 percent), biodiversity of aquatic habitats and ecosystems (48 percent), interests and rights of small-scale fishers (39 percent), fishing capacity (36 percent), and stock specific target reference points (33 percent).

70. Based on the 28 RFB respondents to the section concerning inland capture fisheries, prohibiting destructive fishing methods, addressing the biodiversity of aquatic habitats and ecosystems, providing for stakeholders participation in determining management decisions, and addressing the protection of endangered species constitute the most included topics in management plans.

71. Sixty-three percent of RFB respondents reported having taken steps to ensure that only fishing operations in accordance with their adopted fisheries management plans are conducted within their area of competence. Ninety-four percent of RFBs reported that the precautionary approach had been applied to the management of fisheries resources within their area of competence. In the last two years, almost 70 percent have either taken or strengthened measures to limit bycatch and discards.

72. Data sources most used by RFBs in fisheries management include historical data (88 percent) followed by: routine data collection (76 percent), in-port/landing site sampling surveys (73 percent), FAO and/or other organizations' statistics (67 percent), discard and/or bycatch monitoring (58 percent), and MSC data (56 percent). This was similar to 2015 reporting.

73. Twenty-three out of 33 RFBs (70 percent) reported that reliable estimates of the status of fishery stocks have been obtained for a total of 268 stocks²³ within the last three years. Five RFBs reported having estimates for over 80 percent of the stocks considered important, seven have estimates between 41 to 80 percent and seven have reported having estimates for fewer than 40 percent. Five RFBs either did not know or did not respond.

74. Fourteen RFBs (42 percent of respondents) reported that TRPs were developed for a cumulative total of 208 stocks.²⁴ Of these, 64 percent of RFBs reported that one or more TRPs had been approached, while 57 percent reported that one or more TRPs had been exceeded. Catch and effort indicators were by far the most popular alternative to the use of TRPs and applied by 56 percent of RFBs which did not develop TRPs, while ecosystem and socio-economic indicators doubled in comparison to 2015 reporting. As was the case in 2015 reporting, limiting fishing effort is the highest reported mitigation measure when TRPs are exceeded followed by carrying out research.

75. Thirty and 21 percent of responding RFBs reported having established requirements for the implementation of VMS for the entire and for a portion of the fishing fleet, respectively, and none of reported having VMS implementation problems. Ten RFBs reported that between 91 and 100 percent

²³ Estimates may have been developed for the same stocks by different RFBs.

²⁴ TRPs may have been developed for the same stocks by different RFBs.

of their members are in line with its requirements on VMS implementation. Of the remaining RFBs, two reported compliance ranging between 71 and 90 percent, and two more reported between one to 40 percent compliance.

76. Besides unspecified regional management measures, the most common efforts of RFBs to assist in the implementation of the IPOA-Capacity were related to the organization and hosting of meetings and seminars (48 percent), capacity building (45 percent), publishing information material (40 percent), assessing fishing capacity, and technical assessment to member countries (*ex aequo* at 30 percent). Assessing the conservation and management of sharks was the most common activity to assist in the implementation of IPOA-Sharks (45 percent), followed by publishing documents (42 percent). RFBs engaged in supporting the implementation of the IPOA-Seabirds through the assessment of the impact on incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries, the organization or hosting of meetings and seminars, the publication of documents and capacity building (*ex aequo* at 24 percent).

77. Several RFBs contributed to the implementation of the IPOA-IUU, mainly through initiatives aimed at: strengthening and developing innovative ways to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing (67 percent); enhancing cooperation in the exchange of information on vessels involved in IUU fishing (61 percent); and assisting in the implementation of other activities prescribed by the IPOA-IUU (64 percent).

78. With regard to the Strategy-STF, RFBs assisted in the application of research to enhance the availability of scientific evidence to support conservation, management and sustainable use of fishery resources along with the adoption of processes which improve the availability of information on STF (*ex aequo* at 79 percent).

79. RFBs to which aquaculture was relevant reported on the steps taken to ensure that their members have in place procedures of good aquaculture practices. The procedures reported mainly related to: monitoring of aquaculture operations (addressed by seven RFBs), environmental assessments of aquaculture operations (addressed by five RFBs) and minimizing the harmful effects of the introduction of non-native species or genetically altered stocks used for aquaculture (addressed by nine RFBs). Almost all RFBs indicated that these procedures required improvement in order to become effective. Areas that were most commonly reported to require improvements were institutional technical capacity, legal frameworks, periodicity, widening the scope of assessment, lowering costs of assessment and the introduction of certification schemes for operators.

L. Non-governmental Organizations

80. Eleven Non-governmental Organisation (NGOs)²⁵ responded to the questionnaire on the implementation of the Code and related instruments.

²⁵ Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), Conservation International (CI), European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD), Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP), International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), International Seafood Sustainability Association (ISSA), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT), Pew Charitable Trusts (PCT) and World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

81. NGOs were invited to rank their perception of the relevance of the ten objectives of the Code for the achievement of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. The most highly ranked were objectives (1)²⁶, (2)²⁷, and (5)²⁸; the lowest ranked objective was (8).²⁹

82. Of the eight substantive themes developed in the Code and in the relevant FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries, the themes most identified as top priority by NGOs were fisheries management, fishing operations and fisheries research; the theme most identified as a low priority was inland fisheries development.

83. The main constraints identified by NGOs for the implementation of the Code related to institutional weakness, incomplete policy and/or legal frameworks, and difficult socio-economic climate, the first two also being considered important in 2015 and 2013. The main suggested solution was improving institutional and organisational structures and collaboration, which was also a highly suggested solution in 2015.

84. The activities NGOs considered to be most effective in making the Code more widely known and understood were very similar to those identified in 2015 and 2013, including the organization and/or hosting of national and international workshops and the promotion of standards based on the Code. The publication of books and other information material, the development of voluntary guidelines and the organisation and/or hosting of international workshops were also considered effective.

85. NGOs were invited to provide their opinion on measures within existing country and/or RFB marine and inland fisheries management plans. Measures that were most reported to be already existent within marine and inland fisheries management plans were those aiming to prohibit destructive fishing methods and practices and those addressing the protection of endangered species.

86. The large majority of the NGOs reported that most countries did not have procedures in place to undertake environmental assessments of aquaculture operations, monitor aquaculture operations, or minimize the harmful effects of the introduction of non-native species or genetically altered stocks used for aquaculture. Those NGOs that considered that Members did have such procedures in place, reported that the procedures required improvements to ensure their effectiveness.

87. NGOs were invited to report on their efforts to assist implementation of the IPOAs. The IPOA-IUU showed the highest number of NGOs providing assistance for its implementation, with all reporting to have assisted in its implementation. This was followed by IPOA-Capacity, with the majority reporting to have assisted in its implementation, mainly through the organisation of meeting and seminars and the publication of documents and other information material. The IPOA-Seabirds had the least number of NGOs reporting to have assisted in its implementation, with close to half reporting to have done so.

²⁶ Objective a) Establish principles for responsible fishing and fisheries activities considering all their relevant biological, technical, economic, social, environmental and commercial aspects.

²⁷ Objective b) Establish principles and criteria to implement policies for the conservation of fishery resources and fisheries management and development.

²⁸ Objective e) Facilitate and promote co-operation in the conservation of fisheries resources, fisheries management and development.

²⁹ Objective h) Promote the trade in fish and fishery products in conformity with relevant international rules.