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# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## Thirty-third Session

Rome, 9-13 July 2018

### STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

It is an honour to welcome all of you to the 33rd Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, COFI.

I would like to start by highlighting two points that I think will be relevant to your discussions during the week.

First, let me refer to the High-Level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal number 14.

As you know very well, the SDG 14 calls for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources.

The Conference was held one year ago, in June 2017, in New York, and adopted a Call for Action that focuses on concrete and action-oriented recommendations on some specific areas.

Let me mention four of them:

One: Ensure that fisheries continue to contribute to food and livelihood security for all;

Two: Improve the management of shared and migratory stocks on the high seas, as well as in coastal sovereign waters;

Three: Increase the resilience of coastal communities especially in SIDS and Least Development Countries.

And Four: Put an end to illegal, unreported and unregulated Fishing, what we call the IUU fishing.

All these challenges are at the core of FAO's work in fisheries and aquaculture.

FAO is working closely with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, to follow-up on the commitments made at the Conference.

Your discussions this week on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the state of fisheries and ocean governance, will provide further inputs and guidance to FAO's work.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

The second point that I want to highlight is that almost two months ago, on the 5th of June, FAO organized a special event to celebrate the first UN International Day for the Fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated Fishing.

As you will recall, the last session of COFI in 2016 endorsed the creation of this International Day.

It was established in order to mark the entry into force, on the 5th of June of 2016, of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement, the PSMA.

As of today, 56 signatories representing 81 countries are already part of the PSMA. And some other countries are in the process of ratification of the Agreement by their parliaments.

Let me renew my appeals to every country to become part of this global effort against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

We need everyone on-board for the PSMA to be very effective.

FAO has also put forward different activities and initiatives to support the effective implementation of the PSMA.

Last year, we launched the first operational version of the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels.

Also in 2017, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes was approved.

The objective of the Voluntary Guidelines is to provide assistance to countries, regional organizations and other international organisations to harmonise or review existing Catch Documentation Schemes, as well as to develop new ones following the same standards.

FAO is also developing studies about trans-shipment practices that have increased as more and more countries become part of the PSMA.

So we are creating a strong and comprehensive framework to combat IUU fishing.

And it will be important to hear from you on what should be done to reinforce even more our actions against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The FAO Assistant Director-General of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, Mr Árne M. Mathiesen, will soon present to you the main findings of the 2018 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report (SOFIA 2018).

The report will set the scene for COFI to review the status, issues and needs of global fisheries and aquaculture, and also provide guidance on FAO's work towards sustainable development.

SOFIA 2018 highlights the critical importance of fisheries and aquaculture for global food and nutrition security, as well as for the livelihoods of millions of people.

In 2016, total fish production reached an all-time high of 171 (one hundred and seventy-one) million tonnes, thanks to relatively stable capture fisheries production, reduced wastage and aquaculture growth.

It is important to highlight that aquaculture responds now for about 53% of the supply of fish for human consumption.

So the overall increase of fish production has resulted in a record-high per capita consumption of 20kg of fish in 2016.

Preliminary estimates for 2017 indicate a further increase in the global consumption of fish.

These are good news. Fish is an important element in the promotion of health and nutritious diets, particularly in small island developing states that face high levels of overweight and obesity in their populations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During the 2018 session of COFI, you will also review progress on a number of standing items, such as the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, based on the outcome of member's questionnaires.

Another important agenda item is the impacts of climate change.

Let me highlight that FAO will launch this week an extensive report on the impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture.

The report aims to provide the most up-to-date information on this issue, and also provide some guidance to countries to put in place adaptation and mitigation measures to climate change.

So I invite all of you to participate in the side event that will take place tomorrow at lunch time.

You will have the opportunity to review the work carried out by FAO also in relation to biodiversity conservation, bycatch reduction and aquatic pollution.

So you have a very busy and an active programme over the next five days.

Your deliberations are crucial to the work of FAO, and we look forward to your decisions.

I wish you every success in your discussions, and encourage you to actively participate not just in the main sessions but also in the rich programme of side events.

Thank you for attention.