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Council Item 17: Developments in Fora of Importance for the Mandate of FAO
Item 3: Outcomes of the 20th Anniversary Celebrations of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Vigo, Spain, 8-9 October 2015)

Twenty years after its approval, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries remains more relevant than ever. Back in the 1990s, high production levels in the fisheries sector coupled with increasing concerns about the risks of overfishing, shifted the debate from greater production to more sustainable production.

In 1991, FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) first called on FAO for the development of new concepts for responsible, sustained fisheries. The International Conference on Responsible Fishing held in Cancún, Mexico in 1992 followed up on this work. The process was further boosted by the Earth Summit later that year in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, positioning sustainable development high on the international agenda, and paving the way for negotiations and adoption of the Code.

The outcome, in 1995, was the emergence of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Through its twenty year history, its principles have given rise to various instruments that seek to improve the conservation, management and development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector. These include technical guidelines and plans of action, the Voluntary Guidelines for Small-scale Fisheries, and the Blue Growth Initiative.

Throughout the year, we marked the Code's anniversary at various events, including in Bergen, Norway for the North Atlantic Seafood Forum, Grimsby, UK for the World Seafood Congress, the COFI Subcommittee on Aquaculture in Brazil, at various fisheries events at Expo Milano and at the Foro Económico de la Pesca y Acuicultura, Mexico City.

We were very pleased to officially celebrate this important anniversary at the First International Fisheries Stakeholder Forum 8-9 October 2015 in Vigo, Spain.

The successful Vigo event, co-organized with the Government of Spain, the Regional Government of Galicia and Conxemar (the Spanish seafood industry) attracted more than 600 participants to the Galician port city. 70 delegations from 5 continents attended the two-day

event. This included 10 Ministers, 12 Vice-Ministers, 10 Directors-General of Fisheries organizations and the EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

Policy-makers, seafood industry representatives, fisheries experts, trade experts, retailers, civil society organizations, seafood journalists and representatives of small-scale fisheries associations were among the participants of the two-day event.

A full two-day schedule included sessions focused on the continued relevance and importance of the Code of Conduct, the Blue Growth Initiative, trends in industry and trade, aquaculture development, fisheries management and fishing rights, IUU fishing, livelihoods, sustainability and certification.

Participants called on called on FAO to continue and strengthen its work to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, urging countries to ratify the Port State Measures Agreement.

While the Code was praised for its efforts to strengthen environmental issues, many believed a greater socioeconomic emphasis was needed, particularly in light of growing concerns over slave labor, child labor and poor work conditions in the sector. The Voluntary Guidelines for Small-scale Fisheries and the Blue Growth Initiative were indicated as positive first steps.

Seafood certification was another area of interest and lively debate at the Vigo event, where the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) - benchmarking certification schemes against the Code - was also launched.

The Vigo events and other events throughout the year also called for additional outcomes:

- Exploring the development of a Blue Growth Industry Forum along the model of the present Banana Forum that operates in cooperation with FAO.
- Strengthening dialogue and collaboration between FAO and the private sector, through the Blue Growth Initiative and GLOBEFISH.
- Increasing awareness of the role of social issues and better mainstreaming sustainable livelihoods for fish workers in developing countries into all of FAO's work programmes.

This past year has provided welcome reflection about achievements in the Code's first two decades, and guidance about next steps for achieving sustainable fisheries and food security during the Code's next twenty years.