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REGULATING FISHERIES SUBSIDIES MUST BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

1. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (September 2015), a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 14) is exclusively dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources. This marks the first time in which achieving sustainable management of fisheries and marine resources has been included in the global governance agenda. This goal encompasses a specific target (SDG 14.6) to prohibit by 2020 those fisheries subsidies that lead to overcapacity and overfishing, to eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and to refrain from adopting such subsidies.

2. Goal 14 and its targets are vital to ensure domestic and international food security. In FAO's State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (2016), FAO estimates that the proportion of assessed marine fish stocks fished within biologically sustainable levels has declined from 90 percent in 1974 to 68.6 percent in 2013, whereas 31.4 percent of fish stocks were at biologically unsustainable levels and, therefore, overfished. The existence of harmful forms of fisheries subsidies remains one of the principal factors that contribute to such overfishing and depletion of fish stocks.

3. Fisheries subsidies have been roughly estimated to be as high as \$35 billion worldwide, of which about \$20 billion have been categorized as capacity-enhancing subsidies that directly contribute to overfishing. However, the issue of addressing and removing fisheries subsidies has been a complicated and thorny one. The lack of information concerning countries' activities and comprehension of the magnitude and impact of such support are persistent problems. Another complication is that there are many types of subsidies. Certain subsidies are associated with development actions focused on developing countries. As such, some subsidies, coupled with development programmes and effective management frameworks, could be instrumental in achieving SDGs. A particular area of concern is the continuation of those subsidies that undermine sustainable development, as noted in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in 2012. Failure to address these subsidies will jeopardize the livelihoods of coastal populations, particularly in countries and communities most dependent upon fish production.

4. Tackling the fisheries subsidies issue through the multilateral and regional trade frameworks has faced difficulties and failed to produce concrete results. However, the opportunity costs of inaction are particularly high. A positive negotiation outcome in the WTO subsidies negotiations, aligned with the SDG's stated objectives and targets will improve international efforts to address many of the negative impacts of fisheries subsidies, leading to improved transparency on specific governmental subsidy programmes. The recent UNCTAD - Commonwealth's Ad Hoc Expert Meeting on Trade in Sustainable Fisheries (2015), as well as the International Seminar on Oceans

Economy and Trade: Sustainable fisheries, transport and tourism (2016), confirmed that the immediate question facing the international trade community is how to operationalize these global commitments.

5. The SDG 14 creates new momentum at the multilateral level to address unsustainable practices in the marine capture fisheries sector. Regulating fisheries subsidies cannot be seen as a stand-alone issue. It is vital to adopt a holistic approach for the sector's development that also addresses market access (tariffs and non-tariff measures) and capacity constraints in implementing sustainable fisheries-related measures.

6. FAO and UNCTAD stand ready to support international efforts to achieve the SDGs and have identified the following minimum outcomes that could contribute to the members' efforts to meet Target 14.6:

- accurate, additional, practical and feasible provisions for the transparent notification of all relevant fisheries subsidies;
- clear prohibition of subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity, including subsidies linked to IUU fishing, and those that undermine sustainable development, food and nutritional security, jeopardizing the livelihoods of coastal populations;
- adequate and appropriate instruments and tools to deter introduction of new harmful subsidies; and
- special attention and treatment to developing countries, in particular, the least developed ones and Small Islands Development States (SIDS), so that they can continue to use their marine resources sustainably.

7. The SDGs and their specific targets represent a comprehensive avenue for advancing sustainability. International Organizations, such as FAO and UNCTAD, are ready to support Members States in achieving policy coherence and provide capacity building and technical assistance.

8. With the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing coming into force on 05 June 2016, an important tool has been launched in the global fight against IUU fishing. We welcome the Agreement's entry into force and encourage more States to deposit their instruments of adherence to the Agreement. We invite the international community to demonstrate similar determination in prohibiting those fisheries subsidies that lead to overcapacity and overfishing and to eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing. The entry into force of the Port State Measures Agreement and concerted efforts to eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies represent key elements in a global strategy to protect our oceans and their valuable natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

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Supporters:

The following fully support this UNCTAD-FAO Statement:

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- Uruguay

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- Commonwealth Secretariat
- Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS)
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

Civil Society Organisations:

- Consumer and Trust Society (CUTS International)
- Fisheries Economics Research & Changing Ocean Research Units, University of British Columbia
- International Institute of Sustainable Development (IISD)
- International Oceans Institute (IOI)
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