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Speech by Fabrizio De Pascale, National Secretary of Uila Pesca at the International Congress on Social Sustainability

Despite the short time available, I would like to thank FAO for this invitation that honours my organization and that we consider to be a recognition of the action carried out by Uila Pesca.

Sixteen years ago, we translated the handbook about the FAO code of conduct for responsible fishing into Italian and we promoted it among Italian fishermen.

In 2012, working with Dr Marashi, an FAO consultant and author of many studies, we produced a first research on IUU Fishing and Decent Work, pointed out the need to connect respect for labour rights to IUU fishing problem, by the extension of this concept also to the violation of fish workers' rights, as defined in the ILO C 188 Convention.

As regards safety at work, in 2015 we started a project, using sophisticated equipment to measure and demonstrate scientifically how fishing is a disabling activity for the health of fishermen.

The two principles of IUU Fishing and Decent work both emerged in the same year but within two different UN Agencies, meaning that they were never put together, until 2016 when the Holy See and FAO promoted an important international event on "the violation of human rights in IUU Fishing"; in the same year the ILO Convention on working in fisheries and the FAO Port states agreement entered into force. So, we can say that a new era began for sustainable development and decent work in fisheries. Uila Pesca has actively participated in this process, in particular within the activities of FAO, ILO and GFCM and has produced other reports on this subject.

To summarise our view, we can say:

Management of fisheries resources is like a triangle, with each point representing part of the process (resources, legal framework, fishermen), each of them dependent on the others.

Since 1958 the attention of the international community has been given exclusively to resources and to the legal framework, while fishermen and the social dimension of fisheries have been completely ignored.

Sustainable development of fishery depends on the success of conservation and management measures. But the success of these measures also depends on the participation, approval and consent of fishermen when deciding such measures. Otherwise, they can provoke negative reactions from fishermen, who then simply do not respect the measures.

In 1992, the Rio Agenda pointed out that sustainable development should be at the same time environmental, economic and social. The FAO code of conduct considered the social aspect of fisheries and the need to involve fishermen in sustainable development, but the following Plan of action against IUU fishing ignored this need.

If we don't address the problem of the respect of labour rights, we will never successfully fight IUU fishing. Moreover, for a real sustainable development of fisheries, it is necessary to involve fishermen and fishworkers' representatives in the process of defining conservation and management measures, both at national, regional and international level.

Regional fisheries organizations can play an important role as legislative innovators, both in promoting the concept of decent work and in involving fishermen and fishworkers' representatives in their activities. For example, the public "blacklist" of IUU fishing vessels represents an important and innovative "best practice" introduced by these organisations.

As there is no link between ILO Convention on working in fishing and FAO Port states agreement, regional fisheries organizations could introduce some practical ways to impose adherence to these different international instruments.

Also, at national level, member states can introduce good practice aimed at ensuring the application and respect of international norms, for example by giving national authorities the power to inspect and control fishing vessels under the two conventions.

Finally, we think that the social dimension of fisheries is generally ignored in international and regional organizations because member states send to the meetings of these organization people who have little or no competence on social matters.

As regards fishermen, Uila Pesca knows that lot of them are really concerned with sustainable development of fisheries and lot of them are convinced that it possible "fish less to gain more".

A final consideration about the concept of social sustainability. We believe that respecting national and international law is an obligation for everyone and that acting in the sense of social sustainability, concretely means doing something that goes beyond the limits imposed by the law.

I hope we will be able to continue the collaboration with FAO and other international organizations, and I'd like to thank you again for inviting me.