EUROPEAN UNION

Item 12. Enhancing COFI discussion on fisheries management: Proposal for a new COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management

UNION POSITION
(On behalf of the EU and its Member States)

- I have the honor to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

- Two years ago, the COFI already expressed a strong interest in discussing the establishment of a new sub-committee on fisheries management to assist the international community, especially developing States, to consider small-scale fisheries, and requested to develop a proposal for the possible establishment of such a new sub-committee.

- Therefore, the EU and its Member States regret that there is today no proposal on the table for the COFI to decide on. There is an urgent need to ensure that COFI’s work on fisheries management, small-scale fisheries, cross-cutting themes and ocean governance be better prepared at technical level.

- What is at stake here is nothing less than the ambition set out in the FAO Declaration on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture: we want to ensure that COFI remains the main global forum for discussions and decisions on fisheries issues.

- We however understand the legitimate concerns raised in relation to the possible financial and human resources costs that a new sub-committee on fisheries management might entail and their possible impact on participation. We are therefore ready to explore an alternative solution for finding ways to improve COFI’s efficiency.

- In this respect, we support the approach suggested by Japan and the continuation of the work by the Joint Task Force – or a group differently named – to look at the current terms of reference and functioning of the COFI and its sub-committees. But, considering the importance of this for all of us, the Joint Task Force should be enlarged to all the willing COFI members.

- Finally, as we said at the beginning of this meeting, a first step towards improving the functioning of this Committee would consist in providing the session documents sufficiently in advance to allow adequate preparation and coordination.