Mr President, distinguished Members and representatives of the FAO Secretariat, the EU and its Member States take this opportunity to express their disappointment concerning the late release – as from January only – of the supporting documents to the Agenda items of this COFI 34. This has seriously impeded the preparation of the EU and its Member States for this meeting. We also want to highlight the need to make all documents available in all of the UN languages.

In principle, many documents should have been available a long time ago since COFI was originally scheduled for July 2020.

The early circulation of the documents was all the more necessary since, for the first time, our meeting takes place virtually, and it was also virtually that we had to prepare for it, coordinate ourselves and approach other delegations.

We understand that under other agenda items, we will discuss the COFI working method and ways to enhance COFI discussion on fisheries management. For the EU and its Member States, the timing for the delivery of the COFI session documents should be part of the elements to consider.