

EUROPEAN UNION

Item 9. Combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing

UNION POSITION

(On behalf of the EU)

- I have the honor to speak on behalf of the EU. The EU notes with pleasure that the Port State Measures Agreement has the **fastest rate of adherence** to a binding international fisheries instrument related to the Code of Conduct. We hope that this trend will continue, **while implementation is strengthened**.
- This demonstrates the commitment that most of us attach to the fight against IUU fishing, towards which we can only have a **zero tolerance approach**.
- The EU supports the **FAO's appeal to COFI members who are not yet Parties to join the PSMA** and to participate in its implementation.
- We look forward to **hosting the virtual 3rd meeting of the Parties to the PSMA from 31 May to 4 June**, which will also be the **1st review meeting of the agreement**.
- We really hope that this meeting will be the opportunity for all participants – parties, non-parties, observers – to **assess and deepen their cooperation**.
- As regards **SDG target 14.6**, we emphasise the importance of applying the disciplines in its entirety to all WTO Members, without exception.
- While the EU is **favorable to special and differential treatment for developing countries** regarding other types of subsidies, we think that everybody should be very firm in **rejecting any exemption for subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing**.
- We understand that the **WTO discipline will not create new rights and obligations for members to identify IUU activities, beyond those already existing under the International Law of the Sea**. The objective is to ensure that not one cent of public money goes to vessels and operators, which engage in such activities.
- The EU remains committed to strengthening the conservation and management regime of RFMOs to contribute more effectively to the fight against IUU fishing. A large number of them have adopted efficient mechanisms of monitoring, control and surveillance, that have proven rather effective against IUU activities.
- There are still some areas where **additional efforts** could improve results:
 - The first one is **better coordination amongst RFMOs**.

- The second one is the **Catch Documentation Scheme**. The FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes, adopted in 2017, serve as a useful blueprint for RFMOs to develop and implement a new Catch Documentation Scheme, or harmonising or reviewing existing ones.
- The third one is **transshipments at sea**. A global strategy for the control of transshipments under the different RMFOs, using Remote Electronic Monitoring, would have a great impact on the fight against IUU fishing.
- We welcome the **FAO in-depth study on transshipment**, to which the EU provided a **substantial financial contribution**, and we **thank FAO for the work done** over the last years.
- We are very concerned that transshipments operations remain **largely unregulated and insufficiently monitored and controlled**.
- In some cases, this lack of control can be **exploited by certain operators who engage in IUU fishing activities**.
- The in-depth study provides a **valuable overview of the risks and issues** associated to transshipment and constitutes an **excellent basis for further action**.
- We therefore ask the Secretariat to undertake the **elaboration of draft international guidelines on transshipments**, for discussion and review by an Expert Consultation, which would subsequently be negotiated and adopted by a Technical Consultation. We hope that they can be finalised and **endorsed at the 35th Session of COFI**.
- We **welcome the increased submission of information** by FAO Members to the **Global Record of Fishing Vessels**. We have noticed, however, that **most Members do not update the data sent**, which is essential for this tool to be useful. We also call for **broader participation and submission of a wider range of information**.
- We **encourage FAO to keep progressing on the development of technical guidelines on methodologies and indicators for the estimation of the magnitude and impact of IUU fishing**.
- Finally, we like to stress that **transparency** throughout seafood supply chains is essential. Enhanced transparency allows government agencies, corporate actors and other stakeholders to leverage limited assets to combat effectively IUU fishing.