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**Statement by Mr Gudno Bragason, Minister Counsellor of the
Republic of Iceland**

40th Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate you upon your election as the Chair of this Conference, and thank the organization for the comprehensive State of Food and Agriculture report which gives us a good basis to build our work in the future particularly through its main theme of Climate Change.

Climate change poses a major threat to food security and to the Sustainable Development Goals. We laud our organization for integrating the SDGs into its structure and programmes.

I like to use my time here mainly to draw attention to the fundamental function that the oceans have for food security. Without clean, healthy and productive oceans, Agenda 2030 will be almost impossible to attain.

Sustainable management of natural resources is key to eradicating poverty and hunger. If we want the oceans to be a part of our commitment, it is imperative that science-based sustainable harvesting of marine resources become a universal practice.

The SDG 14 on the oceans gives a clear guidance, and was given a great boost at the Conference on the Oceans last month with a 14- point Call to Action and more than 1300 voluntary commitments.

Iceland puts a great emphasis on actions to reduce the pollution of the oceans. We have made voluntary commitments to reduce marine litter in our waters and to address acidification by producing an updated climate mitigation strategy by the end of this year, in line with the Paris Agreement.

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is the basis for a successful implementation of the SDG

14 and I also like to note that the management of high fisheries through RFMO's, in line with the Fish Stocks Agreement, has proven a firm basis for sustainable management of the living marine resources. The FAO provides essential support to these bodies.

FAO has provided a good leadership through the Department for Fisheries and Aquaculture. We welcome the FAO Blue Growth Initiative, which aims at supporting the economy through efficient and sustainable industrial and small-scale fisheries.

The FAO Port State Measures Agreement is a milestone in our fight against IUU fisheries and needs wide ratification to meet its objectives. We further believe that global elimination of harmful subsidies in the fisheries sector is fundamental.

We welcome recent progress made in developing tools in combatting IUU fishing, such as the recent release of the first working version of the Global Record, and then today the endorsement of the Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes, aimed at keeping illegally caught fish off the market.

Let me add that Iceland fully stands behind the statement made yesterday by the Minister of Agriculture of Norway, on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, on the commitment of our countries in the fight against the great global health threat of anti-microbial resistance.

FAO must take a lead role in this fight.

Mr Chairman,

It is certainly alarming to hear that the number of hungry people in the world is on the rise again. It means that we need to intensify our work toward the SDGs and bring into these efforts the knowledge and instruments of FAO in fisheries, forestry, family farming, soil, restoration, renewable energy, gender equality and the human rights of vulnerable people, as well as its partnership programmes and long-standing cooperation with civil society and the private sector.

Thank you.