



**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**
helping to build a world without hunger

**STATEMENT MADE AVAILABLE AT SBSTA MEETING
BONN CLIMATE TALKS, JUNE 2009**

With our increasing understanding of the role that aquatic environments play as a vector of climate change, such as sea level rise, more frequent and severe floods and droughts, and increasing intensity and frequency of severe weather events; with our increasing understanding of the impacts of these changes on the aquatic systems and those communities that depend on these systems for their food and livelihood security; and with our increasing understanding of the particular vulnerability of coastal communities; the FAO, along with 15 other international institutions, calls for the international climate change community to pay special attention to the need to create resilient aquatic, fisheries and aquaculture systems around the globe to help ensure a stable and high quality supply of fish for food and for livelihoods.

As you may know, fish provides essential nutrition for 3 billion people; over 520 million people depend on fisheries and aquaculture for their livelihoods; and fish products are among the most widely traded foods.

In addition, the oceans are the earth's main buffer to climate change and, among other things, removed about 25% of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activities from 2000 to 2007. Investing in protecting and building resilient marine, coastal and freshwater systems, alongside restoring fisheries and finding better ways to fish and fish-farm, could reduce global greenhouse gas levels.

The capacity of the fisheries and aquaculture sector to provide for food and livelihood security depends not only on healthy aquatic systems but also on its own ability to adapt to the opportunities and risks related to climate change. Strengthening the adaptive capacity of the sector and, hence, reducing its vulnerability to climate change will need to be a priority not only for low-lying coastal states and small island developing nations but for any country with highly vulnerable communities who depend on freshwater or marine fisheries and aquaculture. Urgently, fisheries and aquaculture need to be blended into national and international climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

The FAO notes with considerable concern that the fisheries and aquaculture sector appears to be getting little attention in the global programmes of actions on climate change and supports the invitation by the recent Manado Declaration for the Parties to the UNFCCC to consider how the coastal and ocean dimensions could be appropriately reflected in their decisions.

In line with the Nairobi Work Programme, the FAO calls for investments in increasing our knowledge of the complex aquatic systems, in identifying the highly vulnerable communities, both land and water based, and in understanding, promoting and strengthening the ways that people and institutions cope with and adapt to living in a changing environment.

These actions are imperative for the hundreds of millions of people dependent on the fisheries and aquaculture sector.