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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Thirty-fifth Session

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DEVELOPMENTS IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES RELATED TO FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of some of the major global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture governance that are implemented with the involvement and support of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN). It describes the role that FAO plays as the main UN Specialized Agency working on fisheries and aquaculture issues. This paper reports the developments in key global and regional processes including, where appropriate, the FAO collaborative participation to support them, and considers how these activities address the integration of the environmental, economic and social dimensions as key to achieving sustainable development.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- Comment and advise on FAO's role in support of the United Nations system related work on oceans and fisheries, including vulnerable marine ecosystems and deep-sea stock sustainability, UN Ocean Conference, UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, and a new international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ);
- Encourage FAO to continue to develop and strengthen fisheries and aquaculture governance through efforts such as enhanced partnerships across the UN system and with relevant global and regional organizations;
- Provide recommendations on how to promote dialogue and information exchange among all relevant stakeholders involved in major global and regional processes with a view to strengthening synergies and avoiding duplications;

- Comment on the role that regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and regional fishery advisory bodies (RFABs) play in fisheries governance and aquaculture development, and provide guidance on the actions FAO may take to promote their further strengthening, also through the FAO supported regional fishery body secretariats' network (RSN);
- Acknowledge the important role of RFBs and RFMOs in integrating safety and decent work standards in the management of fishing fleets under their mandates; and
- Note and advise on the ongoing regional collaboration with other UN entities at the global and regional scale.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The domain of international fisheries law has made significant progress since the 1990s, in particular through the adoption and establishment of international instruments and bodies at the global and regional levels[1].

2. Ecological features and processes, as well as governance levels, are described at national, regional and global levels. Aquatic ecosystems are complex and dynamic, stretching across political boundaries. Ocean governance actions can be more effective if properly matched to the ecological scale of the process being governed. Consequences of scale mismatch can be avoided through governance at global or regional level and coordination among global and regional actors and instruments.

3. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides for and encourages regional approaches. Global discussions and regional actions are two interconnected processes which feed each other and both need to be strengthened. Consequently, the articulation between global and regional governance mechanisms is becoming increasingly important.

4. Moreover, the importance of regional-level cooperation and coordination is prominent in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Regional fishery bodies (RFBs) are international institutions established by states that identify common gains in cooperating to overcome problems related to regional fisheries. There are some 50 RFBs worldwide. Some only provide advice to their members and are hence referred to as regional fisheries advisory bodies (RFABs). Others are "intergovernmental fisheries organization or arrangement, as appropriate, that has the competence to establish conservation and management measures"[2] and are referred to as regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs)[3].

5. This document describes the developments in key global and regional processes, including FAO's collaborative participation in supporting them. Notably, not included in this document are those processes in which FAO is involved as they are covered in other working documents: COFI/2022/5; COFI/2022/7; and COFI/2022/8; and information document COFI/2022/Inf.13 which constitutes an integral supplement to this document.

II. THE GLOBAL-SCALE: UN-RELATED PROCESSES AND FRAMEWORKS

A. The UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the Part VII Assistance Fund

6. Pursuant to UNGA resolution 76/71 (9 December 2021), the 15th round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the UNCLOS of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) was held at UN headquarters in New York, 17–19 May 2022. In accordance with the resolution, the 15th round of Informal Consultations focused on the topic "Implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management" (EAF). FAO contributed to the Consultation's panels and organized a side event on EAF implementation.

7. FAO has continued to administer the Assistance Fund established under Part VII of UNFSA through resolution 58/14 of the UNGA, in close cooperation with the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS). Both Organizations have continued to make calls for contributions to the Assistance Fund, but the Assistance Fund has not been ready for full operation and further additional contributions are expected. Alternatively, FAO received a contribution from the

[1] Caddel, R., Moleenar, E.J. (eds), *Strengthening international fisheries law in an era of changing oceans*. 2019. Hart Publishing, Oxford, UK.

[2] Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations, Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) (June 5, 2016). Art. 1(j).

[3] RFABs and RFMOs are collectively referred to as RFBs.

European Union for a project aiming to: raise awareness of the benefits of participation in UNFSA, as well as the full and effective implementation of its provisions; improve understanding of the provisions and implementation requirements of the UNFSA; strengthen capacity of developing States Parties to implement UNFSA at the national level; and strengthen implementation of UNFSA at the international level.

B. Conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction

8. Fisheries and marine biodiversity are inextricably linked, not only through conducting of fisheries in oceans ecosystems, but across the continuum of international obligations, policy frameworks and standards, management institutions and tools, and science support needed to choose responsible strategies and tactics for management[4]. Sustainable utilization of fisheries resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction cannot be achieved without biodiversity conservation. Pursuant to UNGA resolution 69/292 of 19 June 2015[5], negotiations are underway for a new international legally binding instrument (ILBI) under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of BBNJ. In its resolution 72/249 of 24 December 2017[6], the UNGA decided to convene an Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) to meet in four sessions. The fourth session was held from 7–18 March 2022 after being postponed for approximately two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. Given the implications this process might have on the fisheries sector, and as instructed by COFI, FAO attended and contributed to all four IGC sessions to provide fisheries and other pertinent technical information on issues related to FAO's mandate. Regardless how the BBNJ process will evolve, the instrument will be of relevance for high seas fisheries. For instance, area-based management tools and environmental impact assessments, two main elements of the discussion package, will undoubtedly influence fishing activities in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). Still, UNGA Resolution 69/292 clearly stipulates that the new agreement should not undermine existing instruments, frameworks and bodies, therefore including RFMOs and their respective mandates.

10. The fourth IGC session could not conclude the work and a fifth session will be convened in August 2022 pending the UNGA decision. FAO will continue providing technical information to support the BBNJ process.

C. United Nations General Assembly UNGA and other related global ocean frameworks

11. FAO works collaboratively with governments, inter-governmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, the fishing industry and the scientific community to improve fisheries management practices, increase knowledge of fish and fisheries and protect vulnerable areas in the deep-sea high seas.

12. FAO is leading the second phase of the global Common Oceans Program which is co-implemented with UNDP and UNEP and supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The Program contributes to strengthening the sustainable management of 12 million hectares of marine protected areas in the ABNJ, and supports the moving of 943 000 tonnes of several globally over-exploited fish species to sustainable levels. With USD 27 million in financing, the new phase of the Common Oceans Program is the largest FAO program endorsed by the GEF governing body at its 58th Council meeting.

13. The project "Sustainable fisheries management and biodiversity conservation of deep-sea living marine resources and ecosystems in the ABNJ" is one of three FAO-led projects included in the Common Oceans Program. The project´s objective is to enhance the sustainability in the use of deep-sea living resources and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach.

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[4] Grafton, R.Q, et al. (eds). 2010. *Handbook of marine fisheries conservation and management*. New York, Oxford University Press.

[5] https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/187/55/PDF/N1518755.pdf?OpenElement

[6] http://undocs.org/en/a/res/72/249

14. FAO, working closely with RFMO/As, reviewed the application of the FAO ecosystem approach to fisheries within the ABNJ[7] and undertook a study on Monitoring Control and Surveillance[8] (MCS) and of the legal support[9] necessary.

15. The Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME) portal and database requested by UNGA in Resolution 61/105 was launched in December 2014[10] in collaboration with RFMO/As. In addition, FAO has organized workshops to raise awareness, exchange of best practices and knowledge-sharing, and promote best practices in deep-sea fisheries in different regions related to VMEs. It has also contributed to specific projects on VME indicator' species, including the Horizon2020 SponGES project[11]. FAO was responsible for the work package on the science-policy interface and several information brochures and policy briefs have been developed to inform the public at large on issues related to deep-sea sponges.

D. United Nations Ocean Conference

16. The second United Nations Ocean Conference – Scaling up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions – was held from 27 June to 1 July 2022 in Lisbon, Portugal. It was co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Portugal and attended by more than 6,000 participants, including 24 heads of state and government and over 2,000 representatives of civil society, advocating for urgent and concrete actions to tackle the ocean crisis and to advance implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water).

17. The Conference built on momentum generated by the first UN Ocean Conference held in 2017 which adopted a new Call for Action[12] focused on concrete and action-oriented recommendations, it also generated over seven hundred of new voluntary commitments on forward-looking work related to the implementation of SDG 14.

18. FAO actively contributed to the preparatory process as member of the Advisory Committee, ensuring that aquatic foods were appropriately represented and discussed. FAO co-led the development of two thematic background papers for the Interactive Dialogues on "Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems" and "Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets", as well as provided technical review of the other six thematic background papers.

19. During the Conference, FAO delivered statements in Plenary and interactive dialogues, took part in 20 formal bilateral meetings, spoke at 45 side events, of which co-organized 17 of them. FAO also gave 18 media interviews (including press conferences and SDG media zone events). The launch of the *2022 edition of the State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture report: Towards Blue Transformation*[13] (SOFIA 2022) was a key highlight. The launch was preceded by a media conference and followed by a talk in the SDG media zone.

20. FAO remarked that achieving SDG14 is essential not only for the ocean, but also to reduce poverty and eradicate hunger. Our ocean, rivers and lakes can help feed the world, but only if we use their valuable resources responsibly, sustainably and equitably. This clearly underpin the need for a Blue Transformation,[14] one that could promote growth driven by key principles: sustainability, equity, resilience. Production advances go hand in hand with improving the working conditions and rights of those who depend on the sector for their livelihoods as well as improvements in the state of our aquatic ecosystems.

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[7] https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb1509en

[8] Monitoring, control, and surveillance of deep-sea fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction (fao.org)

[9] http://www.fao.org/3/ca5628en/CA5628EN.pdf

[10] https://www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/

[11] http://www.deepseasponges.org

[12] https://oceanconference.un.org/callforaction

[13] https://www.fao.org/publications/sofia/2022/en/

[14] https://www.fao.org/3/cc0458en/cc0458en.pdf

21. In particular, the active participation of the Director General in the Conference allowed FAO to reach significantly greater impact, also at strategic level. The Director General was a lead panelist in the interactive dialogue on '*Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets',* underlining that without urgent actions the ocean will not be able to maintain its significant role in providing food security and economic prosperity, and highlighted the need for a Blue Transformation. The Director General also participated in two high level events, and notably his presence in the launch of SOFIA underscored the strategic nature of this publication and its instrumental role underpinning fisheries and aquaculture management around the world. Through a number of bilateral meetings, the Director General was also able to further discuss the priorities of a number of countries and offered FAO assistance and commitment in addressing food security and poverty eradication, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

22. In addition, FAO announced 12 voluntary commitments with a collective budget of more than USD 140 Million in direct funds, plus in-kind contributions, designed to support Members in achieving SDG 14 and the 2030 Agenda by establishing more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

23. The UN Ocean Conference ended on the 1 of July with the collectively endorsement of the Lisbon Declaration- "Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility"[15], which emphasizes the urgency of the challenge: transformation is essential to halt and reverse the decline in the health of the ocean's ecosystems and to advance sustainable, resilient and equitable food systems.

E. United Nations Decade of Ocean Science

24. At its 72nd session, the UNGA proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (the Ocean Decade) for the 10-year period beginning 1 January 2021. Science is essential to transforming aquatic food systems to be more productive, sustainable and equitable and so FAO has taken an active role in the Ocean Decade from the outset, participating in the global planning process and supporting development of the Implementation Plan.

25. Today the ocean makes a significant contribution to food security and nutrition, and has the potential to play an even bigger role in the global agrifood system. In this way, the Ocean Decade can help countries meet SDG 14 as well as many other SDGs. The 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture recognized that the Ocean Decade presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the scientific basis in support of fisheries and aquaculture management decisions.

26. In April 2021 FAO co-hosted the Ocean Decade virtual series event, "Blue Foods: Science for a Sustainable Future", bringing together stakeholders from the fisheries and aquaculture sector to begin a conversation on how to generate knowledge that provides the basis for innovation and solutions to optimize the role of the ocean in sustainably feeding the world's population under changing environmental, social and climate conditions.

27. The First International Conference of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development[16] took place as two interconnected segments. The first segment was the High-Level Launch of the Ocean Decade[17], held on 1 June 2021. The second segment consisted of seven virtual Ocean Decade Laboratories that brought together different stakeholders on priority issues to promote joint action for the Ocean Decade. FAO contributed to the seventh Ocean Decade Laboratory held from 31 May to 2 June 2022 on the Ocean Decade Outcome: "A Productive Ocean".

28. Ocean Decade Actions are the tangible initiatives that will be carried out across the globe over the next ten years. FAO is working with partners to deliver targeted actions, and help ensure that

[15] https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/389/07/PDF/N2238907.pdf?OpenElement

[16] Organized by German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in partnership with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO).

[17] https://www.oceandecade-conference.com/en/

science and innovation contribute to sustainably feeding the world's population and ending poverty by promoting the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture and informing policy responses to changing environmental, social and climate conditions.

F. UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration

29. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 was adopted by the UNGA in 2019. This global call for the revival and restoration of ecosystems and their ecosystem services, foresees the restoration of habitats and species components of ecosystems to ensure that social-environmental systems are both productive and resilient to tackle current challenges (e.g. changing global climate, increasing pollution, habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, growing population, and fragmentation and market-related stress).

30. FAO and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) co-lead this initiative in an inclusive, efficient and cost-effective way through a pragmatic vision for ecosystem restoration[18], including aquatic ecosystems, that is inclusive of people with scaled-up actions to safeguard the planet's resources[19]. The vision for restoration has evolved in policy and practice beyond traditional concepts that foresees ecosystem improvements in a range of settings from protected areas to urban environments. Healthier ecosystems, with richer biodiversity, yield greater benefits - more productive waters supply bigger and more sustainable catches of fish, while playing an important role in greenhouse gas sequestration.

G. UN Food Systems Summit

31. Convened by the UN Secretary-General, over 160 Member States, representatives of partners and stakeholder groups, came together at the UN Food Systems Summit on 23–24 September 2021 where they articulated hundreds of individual and collective solutions and commitments to transform agrifood systems to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It was an opportunity for Members to share national experiences and pathways as part of a call for bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs. Fisheries and aquaculture form a vital component of agrifood systems, supporting the livelihoods and food security of millions worldwide. As the world's population continues to grow the sector will play an ever greater role in global nutrition, underscoring the importance of developing fisheries and aquaculture in a manner that is inclusive and socially, environmentally and economically sustainable.

32. The Summit was the culmination of a consultative and inclusive preparatory process, which included a three-day Pre-Summit hybrid event held in Rome, where more than 500 delegates from 108 countries, together with 17 000 online participants, worked to consolidate inputs received around the Summit's 5 action tracks to ensure the broadest possible range of perspectives and ideas on agrifood systems transformation, laying the groundwork for the Summit by providing a set of priorities and proposed resolutions.

33. In his Chair's Summary and Statement of Action, the Secretary-General committed the UN System to jointly lead a Coordination Hub that collaborates with, and draws upon, wider UNsystem capacities to support follow-up to the Food Systems Summit. The Hub is hosted by FAO on behalf of the UN System to carry forward transformative actions that will ensure that agrifood systems are able to fulfil their essential role in driving the global post-COVID-19 recovery. Progress will be monitored through regular stock-taking meetings to be held every two years.

[18] A process of reversing the degradation of ecosystems, such as landscapes, lakes and oceans to regain their ecological functionality; in other words, to improve the productivity and capacity of ecosystems to meet the needs of society.

[19] http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb6591en

III. THE REGIONAL SCALE: MATTERS RELATED TO REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)

34. This section provides an overview of some relevant regional processes and actions by RFMOs. The information has been gathered through the FAO-supported Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN) with the active cooperation of RFMO secretariats.[20, 21]

Atlantic Ocean

Joint Technical Commission of the Maritime Front (CTMFM)

35. Close to celebrating half a century of existence, CTMFM has strengthened its commitment to comply with the mandates established by the Treaty of the Rio de la Plata and its Maritime Front in 1973, while keeping track of the mainstream global agenda related to conservation and management of fish stocks and marine ecosystems.

36. A regional approach, accountable, transparent and based on the best available science is crucial to sustainable management of shared stocks. The provision of fishery advice for the adoption of stock management measures has recently increased covering at present over 90% of landings. The CTMFM indicator of the compliance of SDG 14.4.1 indicates that 60% percent of the stocks are managed within biologically sustainable levels. Recovery plans for two stocks overfished in the past, were implemented in order to rebuild their biomass to sustainable levels.

37. Area-based management measures for the conservation of fish stocks have been adopted by the CTMFM since 1994. FAO guidance could be decisive in order to assimilate those measures into the recently developed Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECM) concept.

38. In spite of limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission expanded the range of scientific issues addressed, to incorporate research on marine pollution including microplastics, climate change and megafauna conservation. Important achievements were the preparation of Regional Plans of Action for Sharks and Marine Birds.

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

39. In pursuing its management and conservation objectives, and while continuing to strengthen its scientific advice, ICCAT has been able to make significant progress, despite the constraints imposed by COVID-19.

40. At its annual meeting in November 2021, ICCAT agreed on a new conservation measure for North Atlantic shortfin mako shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries. An agreement was reached to roll over the multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas, implying a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for bigeye tuna of 62,000 tonnes for 2022. In addition, to reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, a new shorter fish aggregating device (FAD) fishing closure was agreed upon. Improvements to the management plan for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna were also adopted, and measures for other stocks were updated.

41. ICCAT established several new technical working groups: to advance work on catch documentation systems, on electronic monitoring, and an ad hoc working group to examine labour standards in ICCAT fisheries. The Commission also adopted new measures on transshipment, vessel monitoring system (VMS) measures and vessel listing requirements. ICCAT continues to strengthen

[20] An overview of relevant regional developments by Regional Fishery Advisory Bodies is provided in COFI/2022/Inf.13 "Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture (including regional fishery advisory bodies)" which is integral part of the section on *Regional processes (RFBs related matters)* included in COFI/2022/9.

[21] The FAO Secretariat wishes to acknowledge the kind collaboration of RFB secretariats for their contribution to COFI document COFI/2022/9 and COFI/2022/Inf.13.

its cooperation with other organizations through frequent exchanges and a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC) was recently signed.

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)

42. NAFO held its 43rd Annual Meeting virtually for the second year in a row from 20–25 September 2021. Considerable progress was achieved with key decisions on the sustainable management of NAFO-managed fish stocks, the protection of VMEs and its review of NAFO's Precautionary Approach Framework.

43. Notably, measures were adopted to enhance NAFO's protection of VMEs, in particular to further safeguard black coral and sea pens. NAFO has now closed to bottom fishing fifteen areas to protect sponge, sea pen and corals and twelve seamount areas, making 372 201km^2 (or 14 percent) of the NAFO Regulatory Area closed to bottom fishing. Following this decision, all seamount areas in the NAFO Regulatory Area at fishable depth (i.e. shallower than four thousand metres) are now closed to bottom fishing. NAFO also agreed on processes to review its Precautionary Approach Framework and its Ecosystem Approach Framework to fisheries management in 2022, as well as additional conservation measures to protect a key cod stock on the Flemish Cap.

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)

44. NASCO, established under the 1982 Convention, is the sole RFMO tasked with the conservation and management of wild Atlantic salmon. Recent progress has been made on fisheries management, aquaculture and a third performance review. First, in 2021, NASCO's West Greenland Commission negotiated an Interim Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Atlantic Salmon at West Greenland, which restricts the total allowable catch for the Atlantic salmon fishery at West Greenland to 27 metric tonnes. Additionally, NASCO's North-East Atlantic Commission agreed not to set a quota for the salmon fishery in the Faroese Fisheries Zone, noting that the Faroe Islands will manage any fishery on the basis of the advice of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) advice (i.e. zero catch). Second, following a 2021 Theme-based Special Session on Minimising Impacts of Salmon Farming on Wild Atlantic Salmon, NASCO's Council has agreed to support the production of a high-impact scientific paper on the impact of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon. Finally, the third performance review of NASCO will take place in 2022.

North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)

45. NEAFC has carried out its work over the last years by virtual means, returning to a hybrid Commission meeting in late 2021. Thus, renewal and development of legally binding recommendations have continued throughout the pandemic, as well as monitoring and control of fisheries activity. NEAFC is continuing its development of electronic systems with a newly functional online user interface to allow NEAFC fisheries inspectors to access vessel logbook information live.

46. NEAFC operates an efficient and effective monitoring and control system for its fisheries, including Port State Control (PSC) procedures aligned with those of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), which as of April 2021 forms a minimum standard for NEAFC. The operational NEAFC electronic information sharing system for PSC, serves as a model for the FAO Global Information Exchange System for PSMA. As well as management and control measures for fish stocks, NEAFC also adopts measures to protect other components of marine ecosystems. This includes preventing significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems through area-based conservation measures. This means that the vast majority of the NEAFC Regulatory Area is in practice closed to bottom fishing. In this context, NEAFC is continuing to assess how such measures could be understood as OECMs.

South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO)

47. The fishing effort since 2005 in the Convention Area of SEAFO never exceeded five vessels and four contracting parties in any one year. Due to the low level of exploitation, SEAFO finds itself in a data poor situation when it comes to stock assessment and ecosystem management. Two of the five stock which are managed by TACs are managed by using Harvesting Control Rules on the available CPUE data. SEAFO is planning a stock assessment survey on the Walvis Ridge to get a better idea of the biomass of Orange roughy and Alfonsino. Another Dr Fridtjof Nansen research

survey in the SEAFO convention area is planned during 2022. Survey data were shared with United Kingdom's Overseas Territory (UKOT) which resulted in prediction modelling work done for VME's during 2020. During 2019 SEAFO trained port inspectors in Namibia and South Africa with the focus on the implementation of Port State Measures according to the PSMA. SEAFO manages bottom fisheries for impacts on VMEs through a combination of mechanisms; "existing bottom fishing areas"; a 'move-on' rule; areas closed to all bottom fishing and exploratory fishing evaluation and approval.

Indian Ocean

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

48. IOTC is a RFMO formed under the FAO Constitution as an Article XIV Body. It has 30 Members and is responsible for the management of 16 tuna and tuna-like species. The Indian Ocean supports the second largest tuna fishery in the world. The catch of the major commercial species: bigeye, skipjack, yellowfin and albacore tunas, was over 1.1 million tonnes in 2020. IOTC is different from other tuna RFMOs in that the (coastal) small-scale commercial and artisanal fisheries, account for over 60 percent of the total catch of IOTC species. This feature poses challenges for the effectiveness of the Commission and considerable effort is put into working with coastal States to strengthen their ability to collect data and implement Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs).

49. The major issues currently being addressed by the Commission include the development of a catch allocation regime; rebuilding the yellowfin tuna stock; and strengthening the management of fish aggregating devices. The Commission continues to be active on compliance and ecosystem and bycatch issues. A priority for the Commission is the introduction of modern fisheries management techniques through Management Procedure development and annual Science-Management dialogue sessions facilitated by the Technical Committee on Management Procedures.

Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Aquaculture and Fishery Organization (RAAFO)

50. The regional consultation to establish RAAFO will be resumed and convened in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in late 2022. The consultation will review the zero-draft of the agreement to establish this regional organization. FAO will provide technical support as requested.

Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI)

51. The Eleventh Session of RECOFI was held virtually from 25–27 October 2021 and attended by 40 participants. The Commission recognized the importance of a number of matters when discussing its vision for RECOFI including the need to sustain and upgrade the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) and support it to cover capture fisheries data. The Commission appreciated that the "Recommendation RECOFI/X/2019/1, Assessment and Management of Kingfish *(Scomberomorus commerson)* stocks in the RECOFI Area" is being broadly implemented but noting that the gaps that remain are currently with data submission. The Commission also noted the importance of continuing the cooperation with Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) and specifically conducting joint activities under the current MoU.

52. RECOFI Members noted with satisfaction the reinvigorated positive and promising context of the Commission and agreed to a fivefold increase of Member's contribution on an ad interim basis and until further decision on the RECOFI contributory system and scale.

Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

53. SIOFA covers all fishery resources in its maritime area, excluding any highly migratory species managed by IOTC and sedentary species subject to the fishery jurisdiction of coastal states.

54. The SIOFA Scientific Committee, despite a complex health context in 2020, has endeavoured to develop its knowledge of the fisheries resources in the area, with a particular focus on conducting stock assessments for the main target species. It further assessed the impact of bottom fisheries on target and non-target species (including the environment at large), and in parallel advanced in mapping VMEs in the area.

55. SIOFA has also progressed global cooperation with the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (on toothfish tagging), Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (on seabird mitigation), IOTC (on a joint letter of intent) and globally committed to an in-kind contribution to the ABNJ process. Further studies are in progress, such as further work on bio-regionalization and management of VMEs, and two workshops on harvest strategies pre-assessment and on deepwater shark management are planned in March 2023. SIOFA will likely also strengthen the scientific basis for decision-making through further work on toothfish, protected areas and its observer programme.

Mediterranean and Black Sea

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

56. GFCM, an FAO Article XIV Body, has been instrumental in its efforts to ensure the conservation and the sustainable use of living marine resources and the sustainable development of aquaculture in its 23 contracting Parties and six cooperating non-contracting Parties in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. The COVID-19 pandemic did not deter GFCM from convening a large number of virtual meetings, webinars and workshops during the last two years. In line with its subregional approach, 21 binding decisions were formulated and passed in 2021 whose implementation was overseen by GFCM's Compliance Committee. Fisheries management and conservation advice was carried out by the extensive scientific work done by experts through the Scientific Advisory Committee and its working groups on validated stock assessment and advice that covered 55percent of its priority species. Aquaculture development also received due attention through the several technical meetings, workshops and missions organized by the Scientific Advisory Committee. The GFCM-adopted subregional approach saw the establishment of Subregional Technical Units for the Black Sea, and the Eastern and Western Mediterranean.

Pacific Ocean

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)

57. In spite of the persisting limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the IATTC continued to work normally, holding its meetings and those of its subsidiary bodies virtually. In 2021 it adopted the conservation and management measures for tropical tunas in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) for the triennial cycle 2022-2024, as well as conservation and management measures on Pacific bluefin tuna and shark species, with special emphasis on the silky shark. It also moved forward decisively in two areas. On Port State measures, it established an IATTC scheme for minimum standards for inspection in port, entering into force on 1 January 2022. It initiated a programme of work aimed at the establishment in the EPO of an Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) which, as currently proposed, would cover all vessels greater than a minimum size to be agreed. As an initial step in the process, in 2021 the IATTC held the first two of a series of workshops on EMS and adopted two binding resolutions, one of the EMS definitions and the second on the terms of reference of the workshops. IATTC also continued to cooperate and collaborate with other entities and regional organizations, through the signing of memoranda of understanding, participation in joint activities and working groups.

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC)

58. IPHC established in 1923, is now in its 99th year of operation. The Convention was the first international agreement providing for the joint management of a marine resource. The IPHC mission is "...to develop the stocks of [Pacific] halibut in the Convention waters to those levels which will permit the optimum yield from the fishery and to maintain the stocks at those levels..."[22]

59. Throughout 2021, the IPHC Secretariat has continued to make progress in enhancing scientific processes and the communication of scientific advice emanating from its core functions as a

[22] IPHC Convention, Article I, sub-article I, para. 2).

Secretariat serving the Commission. This has continued to occur in tandem with an evaluation of the supporting governance procedures of the organization, including how stakeholder inputs are incorporated into the decision-making framework to ensure that all points of view are being adequately considered in a transparent manner. A full accounting of documents and presentations provided to the Commission at its most recent meeting is available from the IPHC webpage[23].

The North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC)

60. NPAFC is completing the 2022 International Year of the Salmon (IYS) Pan Pacific Winter High Seas Expedition, the main signature project of the IYS, 2018-2022[24]. Five research vessels from Canada, Russia, and the United States covered more than 1.5 million km^2 by a regular integrated survey to study Pacific salmon distribution, winter ecology, in February–April 2022. This is the first international research expedition on Pacific salmon that combines such wide geographical scope in high seas during the least studied winter season with such a variety of methods and approaches including sampling by trawl, gillnet, and three types of plankton nets, oceanographic and hydrochemical research, hydroacoustic monitoring, macro- and microplastic pollution observations, etc. Novel technologies such as gliders, environmental DNA and genetic stock identification are used to enhance research efforts. First results of 2022 Winter Expedition will be presented along with other IYS findings at the IYS Synthesis Symposium 'Salmon in a Rapidly Changing World: Synthesis of the International Year of the Salmon and a Roadmap to 2030' in Vancouver, Canada, from October 4-6, 2022.

North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)

61. NPFC has continued enhancements in both the science and compliance areas to ensure the long term conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries resources and protection of marine ecosystems. The NPFC expanded scientific activities toward stock assessment of all priority species to provide solid advice on the status and trend of its target stocks. A management strategy evaluation process has been started to develop a management procedure for Pacific saury. The Commission strengthened its MCS/Compliance tools including implementation of a regional VMS, a more robust CMM for transshipment and further refined online tools. Significant efforts have been put into developing cooperation with intergovernmental organizations in the Pacific Ocean Basin. The NPFC has begun its first Performance Review to access the effectiveness of its measures and activities and identify the gaps in the implementation of the NPFC Convention.

Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC)

62. The PSC has released a report on the socio-cultural value of Pacific salmon to indigenous people of Canada and the United States of America, where the species are culturally irreplaceable. The report provides insights from direct engagement with the Tribes and First Nations represented in the Commission.

63. The PSC has also released a report on environmental indicators in salmon assessment. Salmon ecology is changing as the North Pacific warms, and the report provides recommendations on next steps to address this. Similarly, the PSC sponsors high seas research in the North Pacific under the IYS and its efforts to understand salmon in a changing world. 2021 saw the launch of PSC grants to improve implementation of Mark-Selective Fisheries (MSFs). MSF's harvest hatchery salmon "marked" through adipose fin removal while releasing unmarked wild fish. These fisheries are underway, but their impacts on wild populations and sentinel stocks is not fully understood. Different jurisdictions also have varying capacity to mark hatchery fish. The programme grants aim to help resolve these issues.

South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO)

64. The 10th Meeting of the Commission of the SPRFMO was held remotely from 24–28 January 2022. Over 225 participants (from 15 Members, three CNCPs, two Observer States, six IGOs, eight NGOs along with invited experts) attended the meeting. The Commission approved the accreditation

[23] https://www.iphc.int/venues/details/98th-session-of-the-iphc-annual-meeting-am098.

[24] https://yearofthesalmon.org/

of two Observer Programmes from the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China bringing the total number of Members who have accredited observer programmes to five. The Commission amended eight CMMs and adopted one new CMM bringing the total number of CMMs to 23. Almost all of the 2022 decisions were able to be taken by consensus with one CMM decision going to a vote. The SPRFMO Commission continues to cooperate and collaborate widely and renewed its cooperation arrangements with CCAMLR and the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific, and approved SPRFMO's participation in the GEF funded FAO Deep-Sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach project. SPRFMO also joined international efforts to fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated IUU) fishing by becoming a member of the International Monitoring Control and Surveillance Network.

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

65. WCPFC effectively manages the tuna stocks in the western and central Pacific Ocean – the only region where all four main tuna stocks are neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing. A priority for the Commission is the adoption and implementation of Harvest Strategies. A Science-Management Dialogue will be convened in 2022 to facilitate this work. Progress has been made on banning the use of mesh netting on FADs and promoting the use of biodegradable FAD materials. Intersessional work is progressing on the use of E-Reporting and E-Monitoring technologies to enhance independent data collection and verification and on improved regulation and monitoring of transhipments. The Commission continues to be active on by-catch issues. Enhancements to the WCPFC Compliance Monitoring Scheme are being progressed, including through the development of a risk-based assessment framework and audit points. WCPFC was the first RFMO to adopt a non-binding resolution on labour standards for crew on fishing vessels in 2018 and in 2019 on climate change as it relates to WCPFC. WCPFC was an active partner agency in phase 1 of the GEF/FAO ABNJ Project and expects to contribute to the second phase of the project.

Global and trans-ocean

Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLAR)[25]

66. CCAMLAR is an integral part of the Antarctic Treaty system. It has 36 Contracting Parties and applies to all marine living resources within the Convention Area. Its objective is conservation, where conservation includes rational use.

67. Since its establishment 40 years ago (7 April 1982) CCAMLR has set global benchmarks for long-term conservation including rational use of marine living resources. Some key achievements have been: implementing ecosystem-based precautionary management for krill, icefish and toothfish fisheries; reducing, and effectively eliminating, IUU fishing from the Convention Area and implementing a highly effective catch documentation scheme for toothfish; dramatically reducing seabird mortality through mitigation measures and changes to fishing practices; identifying and protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems; establishing the largest high seas marine protected area in the world, the Ross Sea region marine protected area; monitoring the ecosystem including for the impacts of climate change. The Commission is actively developing all these areas and in October 2021, at its 40th Meeting, the Commission adopted a Declaration[26] to reaffirm its commitment to achieving the objective of the Convention.

The Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)

68. CCSBT manages the global southern bluefin tuna stock. The CCSBT adopted a science-based Management Procedure (harvest strategy) in 2011 to guide the setting of the global southern bluefin tuna TAC, in three-year blocks, for the fishing years from 2012 to 2020 inclusive. This Management Procedure (MP) presided over the rebuilding of the stock from approximately 5 percent of the original spawning biomass in 2010 to approximately 20 percent in 2020, which was the CCSBT's interim rebuilding target. The CCSBT adopted a new MP, with new data inputs in 2020 to guide the setting of

[25] CCAMLR is a conservation organization with some attributes of an RFMO (CCAMLR-XXI, Paragraph 15.2.

[26] https://www.ccamlr.org/en/system/files/declaration.pdf

the TAC from 2021 onwards. The MP is being run again during 2022 to recommend the TAC for the 2024-2026 quota block. The CCSBT completed its third Performance Review in early 2022 and will be considering the recommendations from that review during 2022 and 2023. Intersessional work is progressing on the development of an electronic Catch Documentation Scheme to replace the current paper-based system and on other electronic reporting mechanisms for CCSBT Members. Work is also underway on a variety of monitoring and research projects.

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

69. IWC was established in 1946 with a focus on recovering overharvested whale stocks, and has since evolved given an ever-changing global context. Today IWC addresses threats from many different human activities, reflecting the extensive environmental impacts of population growth and industrialization. Stricter catch regulations, including the moratorium on commercial whaling, led to conservation success stories for some, but not all, cetacean populations. The IWC continues to play a role in Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling by ensuring sustainable harvests of four aboriginal communities.

70. IWC faces new sources of population decline as evidenced in a recent extinction (baiji) and another on the brink (vaquita). These challenges are addressed through globally recognized science and stewardship programmes of IWC, including: bycatch and entanglement in active and ghost fishing gear; underwater noise, marine debris and other habitat pollutants; a boom in whale watching; and the impacts of climate change. The IWC's work is global, inclusive and collaborative, with an expanding array of partnerships. The eighty-eight member countries and a large body of observers and contributors reflect a broad array of stakeholder interest in cetaceans, their conservation and management.

Continents

Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish)

71. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work programme of CACFish was not undertaken between 2019 and 2021, with the exception of publishing several technical manuals and reports. At its Seventh Session, held on 11–13 October 2021, the Commission endorsed a work programme for 2021-2023 which includes the following themes: Ecosystem-based planning, management and development of inland aquatic resources; Culture-based fisheries development; Inland stock assessment in selected large water bodies; Genetic cataloguing of aquatic genetic resources from Central Asia and the Caucasus; Sturgeon aquaculture; and A regional synthesis on the role of women in fisheries/aquaculture in CACFish Member States.

Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO)

72. The Third Regular Session of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectoral Council of Ministers (FASCoM), the governing body of LVFO, was held, and approved the regionally coordinated Operation Save Nile Perch for Lake Victoria.

73. LVFO received funding from the European Union under the E€OFISH Program for harmonization of fisheries policies and legal frameworks. The project has supported updating of the LVFO Fisheries Management Plan, undertaking of a regional frame survey, and facilitating a consultancy to undertake a legal, institutional and organizational framework analysis of the organization. The project is also supporting capacity building in MCS operations in Lake Victoria by developing regionally harmonized approaches and identifying resources and human capacity needs.

74. The EU-EAC True Fish Project with an overall budget of EUR10.15 million from the 11th European Development Fund, was launched at the EAC Secretariat in Arusha (Tanzania) to contribute to the development of aquaculture in the region. The project is being jointly implemented by the LVFO Secretariat, Worldfish Centre, FAO and Landell Mills on three different Results Areas. The Responsible Fisheries Business Chains on Lake Victoria Project with funding from the German Agency for International Cooperation has supported reviews of Standard Operating Procedures and development of the Nile Perch Fisheries Management Plan.

Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN)

The Network

75. FAO is committed to bolstering regional cooperation through the RSN [27], which provides a forum for promoting consultation and regional dialogue, addressing priority issues of common concern and facilitating the coordination, exchange of experiences and lessons learned by RFBs. RSN maintains regular liaising with its members and partners, including through the production of a magazine[28] and further development of a publication series, and making available relevant data and information related to RFBs, including the publication of a global assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture from the perspective of RFBs[29]. The RSN Secretariat also carried out a thorough review of the RFBs database by updating 44 fact sheets[30].

Cooperation and coordination between RFBs

76. RFBs show the greatest potential to increase international cooperation for the management and conservation of fisheries. However, despite years of calling for better cooperation and information exchange between RFMOs, there are still challenges.

77. The 34th Session of COFI reiterated the key role that RFMOs and RFABs play in combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and encouraged RFMOs to increase cooperation, called upon FAO to further increase its support to RFBs, and reiterated its appreciation of the role of RSN in supporting RFMOs and RFABs. Consequently, regional consultations on the development of regional coordination framework between RFBs are being organized for the Indian Ocean and central-eastern Atlantic.

Cross-sector cooperation

78. Current progress at the regional level has shown that in order to realize the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, regional cross-institutional cooperation through coordinated efforts is necessary. The need for cooperation between RFMOs and organizations that deal with the management of human activities in other sectors, such as regional seas organizations, is a rapidly rising new trend. FAO and RSN are actively engaged in the implementation of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Sea Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies in partnership with the Convention on Biological Diversity and UNEP. The third meeting of SOI Global dialogues will take place in October 2022 hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Common Oceans: a partnership for sustainability in ABNJ

79. Since 2014, FAO has been leading a large programme of four projects with funding from the GEF to address fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ, known as the Common Oceans Program. A unique feature of the Program was the large array of partners involved, including all relevant RFMOs with a mandate on ABNJ, other UN agencies, inter-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, private sector initiatives and academia. Hailed as a success at the Program's final evaluation, GEF invited the partnership to submit a proposal for a second phase. This proposal has been approved, and the new five-year phase began in July 2022.

80. The Program will consolidate the work carried out so far, including transformational change in fisheries management, especially tunas, through a more explicit implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF), control and compliance and management procedures in all tuna RFMOs; a strong support to implement the EAF in the deep-sea RFMOs, with better spatial protection for vulnerable ecosystems. The new phase recognizes the forthcoming BBNJ agreement, including a

[27] https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/rsn

[28] https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/rsn/newsletter

[29] https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/publications/281600

[30] https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/organization/search

project to promote cross-sectoral collaboration in the ABNJ, as well as building capacity on future provisions of the Agreement. Also included is a project demonstrating a cross-sectoral approach to management in the Sargasso Sea.

81. The Common Oceans Program is a prime example of the benefits of a varied partnership that brings together initiatives with different perspectives, roles and comparative advantages, all joining forces to achieve a common management and conservation objective.

IV. SAFETY AT SEA AND DECENT WORK

82. In 2021-2022 FAO, through a European Commission funded project, studied the role of RFBs and RFMOs in promoting safety and decent work in fisheries under their mandates. Secretariats of thirty-seven RFBs representing inland and marine small-scale and industrial fisheries across the globe participated in a survey.

83. The research showed that safety at sea is a priority for 52 percent of the RFBs. Thirty-five percent regard safety as important, but not a priority. Moreover, 38 percent of the RFBs surveyed consider decent working conditions a priority. Decent working conditions are important, but not a priority for almost 30 percent of the RFBs.

84. The RFBs' basic texts provide the main legal basis for their mandate to work on safety and decent work in fisheries. Commission meetings and requests by members contribute substantially to RFB's measures in this respect. Management measures, especially for safety of observers, are often the entry point for RFMO work on safety and decent work standards. The obligations of members under international fishing safety instruments also play a role.

85. RFB secretariats support safety in fisheries through trainings and manuals (35 percent), awareness raising materials (31 percent), and recommendations and measures (24 percent). Most RFBs/RFMOs secretariats noted that decent working conditions in fisheries have not been addressed or are not within the mandate of the body. Some RFBs however prioritize decent working conditions in fisheries. Since 2018, several RFBs have supported decent work and safety in fisheries through regional technical seminars organized by FAO in collaboration with IMO and ILO. These seminars aimed to address IUU fishing, decent work and safety in fisheries.

86. Knowledge of international fishing safety instruments is limited among RFB secretariats. The technical, financial and human capacity limitations within the secretariats impede their attention to safety and decent work. Many RFB secretariats recognize that development of an action plan would be beneficial to integrate safety and decent work better in the management of fishing fleets under their mandates. FAO is supporting some RFBs with their action planning processes.

87. An FAO circular with the research findings is available as session background document. More information on FAO's work on safety at sea, social protection and decent work in fisheries and aquaculture can be found in information paper COFI/2022/INF/8.