

U.S. Statement on Agenda Item 6: Decisions and recommendations of the Seventeenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, Vigo, Spain, 25–29 November 2019

- The United States would like to thank the Government of Spain for hosting a very successful 17th Session of the Sub-committee on Fish Trade in Vigo.
- One of FAO's most important functions is the collection, analysis and dissemination of fisheries and aquaculture statistics, including trade and market data. We particularly appreciate FAO's efforts to provide quick assessments and disseminate data related to the impacts of COVID-19 on the fisheries sector.
- We also want to encourage FAO to expand its analysis of the results of the Implementation of Article 11 of the Code of Conduct questionnaire to determine trends and identify new potential work areas for the SCFT.
- While we recognize the unique characteristics of the aquaculture, inland, and marine fisheries sectors, we see tremendous overlap in their respective contributions to development, income generation, and food security.
- In building on the discussions at the Sub-committee in Vigo, we encourage, where appropriate, use of the term “seafood” in communications to link the two sectors of this industry.
- We also want to again express our appreciation for the collaborative work undertaken by FAO with other intergovernmental organizations, including the International Labor Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Customs Organization, and the World Trade Organization.
- In particular we appreciate the work with OECD to streamline data requests and analysis to minimize the burden on Members and the promotion of the Fisheries Sector in the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2020-2029.
- We appreciate the many updates FAO has provided on its work since the Sub-committee on Fish Trade in 2019, including: the updates to Globefish, FAO's continued work on fisheries value chains, food loss and waste, food safety, and traceability and certification.
- We noticed there is not much discussion of some key issues that were a large focus of the SCFT in 2019: namely, the rescoping of work on trade in fisheries-related services and FAO's new suggested work area on regional trade agreements and free trade agreements. We would appreciate an update from the Secretariat on if and how this work is moving forward, consistent with the SCFT guidance.
- Finally, the United States continues to support work by FAO on social responsibility to protect the rights of workers through addressing safety at sea, labor standards, including the elimination of forced labor, in close collaboration with the ILO and IMO, and we

look forward to reviewing the scoping paper at the next SCFT meeting.

- We reiterate our recommendation that the FAO should focus on its unique value to add and use its expertise to help industry better understand social responsibility issues, including implementation of existing labor related guidance tools from IMO and ILO in the fisheries sector and supply chain.
- We also stress that any guidance be non-binding; engage worker associations, key civil society organizations, and seafood industry representatives throughout the development; and include a focus on human trafficking, including forced labor, within the fisheries sector.
- We also want to offer a tangible recommendation in moving this work forward. COFI 33 recommended that FAO build on the experience from the development of the OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains.
- We suggest that guidance could serve as a general model for the type of guidance FAO should be working towards, written in cooperation with the ILO, IMO, and other relevant international organizations. In particular, that guidance is non-binding and provides practical and tangible best practices and a framework for value chain actors to implement these best practices in business operations.
- Beyond the development of the guidance, we see value in FAO working closely with ILO and IMO to learn more about labor issues and existing instruments and frameworks on labor, in particular forced labor, in the fisheries value chain, and incorporating that information into FAO's programmatic work.
- Finally, we endorse the report of the Sub-committee on Fish Trade meeting.