

EUROPEAN UNION

Item 10. Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture
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UNION POSITION

(on behalf of the EU and its Member States)

- I have the honor to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.
- **The COVID pandemic** has resulted in the **postponement of many oceans and fisheries related UN and other meetings and processes.**
- We are **happy that FAO has continued its efforts** to develop and strengthen fisheries and aquaculture governance through a collaborative approach with relevant global and regional organisations.
- The spectrum of this collaborative approach is too large to be commented in details. **We will therefore focus on a limited number of elements.**
- Firstly, for the EU and its Member States, the fundamental pillar of ocean governance is the **United Nations' Convention on the Law of the Sea.**
- The Convention remains relevant and able to meet today's and future challenges. For this reason, the EU and its Member States believe that it is important to **continue the work in the context of the Intergovernmental Conference established to negotiate the international legally binding BBNJ instrument.**
- **Concluding an ambitious BBNJ agreement as soon as possible, ideally this year,** remains a political priority for the EU and its Member States.
- The EU and its Member States also hold that the future instrument should **not undermine existing frameworks** or the competence and mandates of competent international organisations, including RFMOs. **Maintaining clearly defined competences and responsibilities amongst international bodies is essential.**
- We look forward to the **FAO's and RFMOs' participation** in the fourth **meeting of the IGC**, so that they can inform the debate on issues pertaining to their mandate.
- We attach great importance to **safety at sea and labour conditions.** We support the FAO activities, in close cooperation with the ILO and IMO, to promote the worldwide implementation of international instruments improving the safety of fishing vessels as well as the health and safety and decent working conditions on board of fishing vessels. But we call on these organisations to **better coordinate themselves** and to **produce terms of reference for their joint work**, as requested by the participants in the last

meeting of the joint FAO/IMO/ILO group on IUU fishing and other related matters.

- The pandemic has heavily affected **Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and Arrangements**.
- Difficulties have arisen in the **organisation of and participation in virtual meetings**, particularly by developing contracting parties.
- In such circumstances, it is **challenging to make decisions** on a number of complex issues, and we are worried that whatever decisions are made, **some contracting parties may feel not bound by them**, or that **decisions are taken without enough opportunities to discuss the issues**.
- It is important that **decisions result from a transparent process** and are not taken behind closed doors.
- In this line, we encourage RFMOs to **pursue their performance reviews** and to ensure the **implementation of resulting review recommendations** as a matter of priority.
- We welcome that **SPRFMO and SIOFA have become operational**. Moreover, in March 2019, the EU also approved the **Agreement to prevent unregulated commercial fishing in the high seas portion of the Central Arctic Ocean** and is looking forward to the last pending ratification to allow for its entry into force as soon as possible.
- It is also crucial to continue supporting the **reorientation from advisory bodies** to management bodies of the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), **including by FAO allocating adequate human and financial resources for the coming years**. Donors' **voluntary contributions are important but do not offer a sufficient basis** for appropriate planning and implementation of the work. Moreover, it is important to establish clear and concrete action plans.
- It is also necessary that RFMOs and Arrangements cooperate to ensure common approaches on a number of cross cutting issues. The **Kobe process** gives us a good model that needs to be gradually strengthened and expanded by focusing on well-defined and topical issues. Stable FAO financial support for such processes could ensure its continuity.