

EUROPEAN UNION

Item 13. FAO's Programme of Work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework

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.
- Before looking specifically at the programme of work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework, the EU and its Member States believe that **the FAO Strategic Framework itself should reflect the importance of SDG 14 and the role of FAO in this regard.**
- With regard to the **global developments and trends** and their implications for fisheries and aquaculture sectors, we appreciate the references to biodiversity, BBNJ, artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, IUU fishing, climate and ocean nexus and the UN Decade on Ocean Science.
- We would however ask the Secretariat to also **refer to the situation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.** It has heavily affected the sector at all levels, including at the level of RFMOs. Its effects will probably continue to be felt well beyond this year. The pandemic has also made clear the **interlinkages between the fisheries and aquaculture sector, health, food security, biodiversity, climate, environment** and the other challenges of our time, highlighting the importance of a **holistic approach** balancing conservation and sustainable use.
- We **welcome the comprehensive overview of the areas of priority in 2021** and beyond and can generally agree on the orientations suggested. We have however the following specific comments:
 - The introductory paragraphs (41-50) for this section should also **mention as a priority the post-COVID recovery.**
 - We would appreciate further clarification on the **additional funding required to support the statistics and data collections systems** mentioned in para 49.
 - We note in para 53 the intention to develop a “**Blue Transformation programme**” that would represent “**an evolution of the Blue Growth Initiative**” and would appreciate clarification with regard to their **articulation and the possible implications in terms of funding.**
 - We note in para 55 that FAO will work in coordination with the COFI-sub-committee on Aquaculture towards the **development of Integrated Sustainable Aquaculture Programmes** and a **Global Sustainable Advancement Partnership.** We take the opportunity to reiterate our wish

to see, in parallel, **more involvement and progress in the elaboration of the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture.**

- In relation to **fostering cooperation through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats** (para 62), we appreciate that the work on BBNJ and fishery subsidies is mentioned but we consider that **cooperation efforts should also focus on post-COVID recovery**, for example establishing recovery plans, further developing crisis response strategies, facilitating the sharing of good practices.
- We fully support the intention that fisheries and aquaculture be well represented in the **UN Food System Summit Action Tracks and dialogues** (para 68) and encourage FAO and COFI members to use the Declaration on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture in that context to **stress the specificities of the sector and value its potential contribution to the transformation of food systems.**
- We also look forward to getting more information with regard to the way FAO envisages the **global capacity development programme in relation to responsible fisheries practices** (para 70).
- Finally, we stress the **importance of the work on the social dimension of fisheries and aquaculture** (para 74-84). We note that **linkages could be present between IUU fishing, working conditions and safety at sea** (para 79), but we would like to stress that we must **also look independently** at each of these issues. If not, many seafarers working conditions and safety at sea might not be improved on the vast majority of vessels fishing legally.