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INTERVENTION OF ARGENTINA ON ITEM 4: *“Status, trends, emerging issues and innovative responses to ensure responsible and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture: Building back better”*

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Being the first intervention of our Delegation, we take the opportunity to greet you and all participants of this meeting, and to thank and congratulate the Secretariat and the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department for the efforts and work carried out. In order to take advantage of the allotted time, I will now directly express Argentina's comments on the agenda item.

In the document COFI/2020/02, it is highlighted the importance of SOFIA Report at a global level as a reference and consultative document, in particular the Global Analysis. It states, among other issues, that 41 Area is ranked 3rd among the areas with the highest number of exploited populations at unsustainable levels. In our opinion, the methodology used for the preparation of the ranking is inadequate or, at least, incomplete as it was indicated in the Virtual Dialogue on SOFIA 2020, since the volumes of catches are not considered to weight the quantity of stocks with levels of sustainable exploited or unsustainable, or at least the volume they present on the total area is not reported in the same section.

The 14 stocks considered for the 41 area correspond mainly to 5 subareas, while the remaining 6 are practically under-represented. It is evident that it is necessary to expand the stock numbers included in this group. This will allow and account of the efforts made by Argentina individually, as well as in conjunction with Uruguay within the CTMFM framework, in order to reduce the proportion of populations not evaluated in the region.

On the other hand, among the species considered there are two marine invertebrate species with annual life cycle, such as Squid and Prawn, that constitute practically 30% of landings of the area and 50% of the catches of species considered for the sustainability calculation. The exploitable biomass of these species may present marked oscillations due to the respective annual recruitments, not being directly dependent on the efficiency of the management to which those species are subjected. Under these conditions, it does not be reasonable to apply the sustainability indicator of the sustainable development goals, given the specific difficulties of stimulating the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). It should also be mentioned that in 2020, the calamar MSY has been 60% above the average for the last 11 years.

As already mentioned on my previous opportunities, it would be of great importance that, before of its publication, the relevant text to be included in the SOFIA Report concerning the corresponding FAO area were sent it to countries; or the complete database of the stocks considered and their status, in order to avoid making these type of clarification a posteriori. In this sense, we remain at the complete disposal of the Secretaria to collaborate in whatever they deem necessary in order to present the information in the best possible way.

Regarding the recommendations included in various working documents that all flag, port, coastal and market States must ratify and apply the Agreement on Port State Measures to Combat IUU Fishing, it should be clarified that the decision to ratify or not an international instrument is a sovereign decision of each State and for this reason the inclusion of prescriptive expressions in this regard should be avoided.

On the other hand, it is noted that various documents refers to “Blue Economy”. In this regard, it should be recalled that there is no agreement in relation to this concept at an international level. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda does not include this term either in general or in the Sustainable Development Goal 14 referring to “Conserve and sustainably use oceans seas and marine resources for sustainability development”. In any case, our Delegation is committed to continue addressing aspects related to sustainable and inclusive marine economies.

Finally, the aforementioned COFI/2020/2.2 includes a recommendation related to “integrate market-based mechanism through measures to protect non-commercial social and economic values that achieve progress in the sustainability of fisheries management”, in this regard, it is important to clarify that any trade-type measure should be consistent with WTO rules.

Thank you.