

Agenda Item 10 Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture

This statement is on behalf of the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) and The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew).

EJF and Pew recognize FAO's unique role in the development and application of fisheries and aquaculture governance, and appreciates its efforts to engage across the UN system and with relevant global and regional organizations.

EJF and Pew call on COFI Members and delegations to play their part in responding to the nature and climate crisis by collaborating across multiple sectors and silos in a constructive fashion. All Governments are signed up to the Sustainable Development Goals and many have already made bold commitments at the highest levels in Government to properly protect nature, on which productive fisheries rely.

EJF and Pew call on States to recognize the lack of cross-sectoral conservation management to ensure the protection of all biodiversity and the habitats on which all marine life depends in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including but not limited to commercially targeted fish stocks. As areas beyond national jurisdiction and the high seas become an increasingly busy space, it is becoming clearer the current ocean governance is insufficient to ensure comprehensive measures that will also address the negative impacts on fisheries from other sectors such as mining, shipping, and emerging industrial activities such as geoengineering and open-ocean aquaculture looking to operate further into the ocean.

We urge Members and the FAO to work constructively towards the finalization of a robust high seas treaty in 2021 and, once agreed, to actively collaborate and cooperate to ensure a sustainable ocean ecosystem that will continue to provide benefits for current and future generations.

Additionally, EJF and Pew note that commercial fishers and fisheries observers are engaged in one of the most dangerous occupations in the world and that the 2012 IMO Cape Town Agreement (CTA), the first international binding instrument setting minimum safety standards for fishing vessels, has not yet met its criteria for entry into force.

EJF and Pew are pleased to see the outcomes of the 2019 Ministerial Conference on Fishing Vessel Safety and Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, to which the FAO contributed, and which included a Declaration, now signed by 51 States, that indicates the determination of the signatories to ensure the Agreement meets the criteria for its entry into force by October 2022. We commend the States that have become Party to the Agreement since the last session of COFI and urge other States, particularly those which were signatories to the Declaration, to ratify the CTA and help bring it into force. Once implemented it will be a powerful tool to raise safety standards, save lives and complement the PSMA in the fight against IUU fishing.

EJF and Pew support the recommendation made by the Joint FAO/ILO/IMO Working Group on IUU Fishing (JWG) that the IMO develop guidance to assist competent authorities in the implementation of the CTA and encourages the FAO, along with the ILO, to keep informing the process of developing such guidance on the implementation of the CTA, as suggested by the JWG. We welcome the inclusion of this work within the FAO's Programme of Work as a priority area promoting Better Life for the upcoming biennium, as we believe that this process will accelerate ratification and facilitate implementation.

To conclude, EJF and Pew encourage COFI Members, as participants in many other global and regional processes, to maintain dialogue between all relevant authorities at national level, and strive for synergy and consistency across their efforts within the various fora tied to ocean governance.