



STATEMENT BY WWF at COFI34 - Agenda Item 11: Addressing climate change and other environment-related matters in fisheries and aquaculture

WWF calls on FAO to acknowledge the findings of the review paper by Lam et al 2020 on the predicted climate change effects on tropical fisheries and the implications for sustainable development. The paper finds that the maximum catch potential of tropical fish stocks in some tropical exclusive economic zones is projected to decline by up to 40% by the 2050s under the RCP8.5 emissions scenario, relative to the 2000s. The authors propose that climate-driven reductions in fisheries production and alterations in fish-species composition will subsequently increase the vulnerability of tropical countries with limited adaptive capacity. **WWF urges the FAO and its members to recognise that given the billions of people dependent on tropical marine fisheries in some capacity, there is a clear need to account for the effects of climate change on these resources and urgently identify practical adaptations when building climate-resilient sustainable-development pathways.**

WWF urges all states to recognise the Nature-based Solutions function of natural coastal infrastructure, such as mangroves, seagrass, coral reefs, shellfish reefs, and the wetlands associated with deltas and estuaries, play a key role in increasing the resilience of economic, social and natural systems to the impacts of climate change and extreme events. **WWF urges member states to recognise that an integrated “Ocean – Food – Climate” approach that prioritises the restoration and regeneration of coastal habitats, is a powerful means of addressing biodiversity loss, delivering sustainable development opportunities to coastal communities and tackling climate change.** In addition, if it is delivered as part of a comprehensive approach to building climate and disaster resilience; ensuring environmental sustainability and delivering sustainable blue economy development it will deliver triple bottom line benefits in terms of Nutrition, Mitigation and Resilience.

WWF urges FAO to acknowledge the carbon buffering potential of ocean biomass more broadly, as well as the particular benefits of undisturbed sediment, and these values be incorporated in discussions about the trade-offs associated with various ocean uses and development choices.

WWF urges States and RFMOS to include climate change and ocean acidification effects into their fisheries management, including in integrating such effects into deep sea fisheries environmental impact assessments and in preventing significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems. WWF also recommends that States and RFMOs identify and protect climate change and ocean acidification refugia sites and areas capable of acting as refugia sites. Other measures that should be encouraged based on relevant CBD decisions regarding coral reefs and cold water areas include:

- Enhance the resilience of coral reefs and closely associated ecosystems through ecosystem-based adaptation to enable the continued provisioning of goods and services;
- Maintain sustainable livelihoods and food security in reef-dependent coastal communities including for indigenous peoples and local communities;
- Enhance international and regional cooperation (across fisheries authorities/bodies and other sectors) for the conservation and sustainable use of blue carbon ecosystems and areas important for biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Sustainably manage fisheries for coral reefs and closely associated ecosystems;

- Promote community-based measures, including community rights-based management;
- Adopt new or strengthen existing national legislation/regulation and management measures including on the application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries to address unsustainable fishing, ensuring enforcement and using relevant FAO guidelines;
- Identify and implement multispecies reef fisheries management;
- Sustainably manage key reef fish and invertebrate species populations targeted by export-driven fisheries;
- Prioritize recovery and sustainable management of reef species with key ecological functions.

WWF recognises the efforts of states and regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) to address bycatch but believes far greater ambition and urgency are required. Data paucity remains a significant barrier in comprehending and tackling megafauna bycatch, and **WWF urges all states and RFMOs for tuna to significantly increase human and/or electronic observer coverage. In parallel, more action is needed to avoid interactions between fishing gear and marine megafauna (e.g. through spatial and temporal closures), to invest in the research and development of new or modified fishing gear and other approaches to reduce fishing mortality, and to mainstream these where most needed.**

WWF is greatly concerned that 68 species of shark are now critically endangered globally according to the IUCN Red List, up from 25 in 2014. In light of this, WWF urges all states and tuna RFMOs to manage catches of sharks using the same precautionary approaches as for high-value stocks of other fishes. WWF welcomes last year’s convention text update by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) [AC(HK1)], which expands the Convention’s scope for enhanced shark conservation as a positive example of increased prioritisation, and the first joint RFMO meeting on shark bycatch, held in Porto, Portugal Dec 2019.

WWF urges all states to recognise the continued problem of plastic pollution, which despite growing awareness, is only getting worse, and support a new UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution. Fishing gear accounts for roughly 10% of the total plastic debris in the ocean. WWF published a recent report “What’s In The Net”, laying out the principles of using camera technology (i.e. remote electronic monitoring) to monitor, and support mitigation of wildlife bycatch in fisheries. **WWF urges FAO and states to support and incentivise fishing gear designers and manufactures to innovate new, traceable fishing gear and for fishers to retrieve, if possible, and report any lost gear.**

STATEMENT BY WWF at COFI34 - Agenda Item 11.1: Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across fisheries and aquaculture

Science has never been clearer: IPBES (2019) has described the accelerating nature crisis and its dire consequences. WWF's Living Planet Report 2020 revealed that global populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish have suffered an average two-thirds decline in less than half a century due in large part to the very same environmental destruction which is contributing to the emergence of zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19. The Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 (2020) has shown that countries have collectively failed to fully meet any of the Aichi targets. The report concludes that insufficient commitment is at the root of this failure.

Biodiversity, and the benefits it provides, are fundamental to achieving and sustaining human health, well-being and a healthy planet. It provides needed nature-based solutions to many societal challenges that we are facing. Despite ongoing efforts, biodiversity is deteriorating worldwide and this decline is projected to continue or worsen under business-as-usual scenarios.

Transformative change is urgently needed in our production and consumption patterns, in particular in how we produce and consume our food, but also in other productive sectors, including forestry, fisheries, infrastructure and energy, extractives and manufacturing and the finance sector. These transformations need to be just - costs and benefits need to be shared fairly and equitably - and they need to take place urgently, to limit risks of more and irreversible damage (e.g. species extinction, new pandemics) and higher restoration costs. WWF has developed a discussion paper, the Kunming Plan for Nature and People, which presents WWF's proposals for a transformative, comprehensive and measurable post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) that would be ready for implementation immediately after its adoption.

WWF urges governments to increase the level of ambition in the draft GBF, while ensuring that the drivers of nature loss are addressed. To achieve this, WWF urges States that at a minimum, the elements contained in the Aichi Biodiversity Target 6, as well as SDG 14.4 on sustainable fisheries should be integrated into the GBF, including by committing to: the sustainable management and harvesting of all fish and invertebrate populations and aquatic plants by applying the ecosystem approach to fisheries, with species and ecosystems within healthy biological and ecological limits based on precautionary reference points. Furthermore, overfishing must be halted, and recovery plans and measures shall be in place and fully implemented for all declining stocks so they can rebuild to healthy levels. Fisheries shall not have significant adverse impacts on the marine environment (species, habitats, ecosystem processes).

As noted in the GBO-5, there is a need for better stock assessments (including through reliable and verified catch data) for effective fisheries management. Multi-species assessments/ecosystem models should also be fully integrated in fisheries management and supported by capacity building and mobilisation of resources to data poor regions.

WWF supports the continued work of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global dialogue with regional seas organizations and regional fisheries bodies and other sectoral competent bodies on accelerating progress towards achieving global targets.