

**Thirty-fourth session of the Committee on Fisheries of the
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

1-5 February 2021

Interventions by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

General statement

*Chair,
Distinguished delegates,*

In view of the importance of sustainable fisheries to economic growth, social well-being and a healthy environment, it is essential to maintain and strengthen synergies across various global and regional processes that address issues related to fisheries. This is especially true for the areas of fisheries and biodiversity, which are mutually dependent and share common goals.

As such, there has been a history of synergy and complementarity between processes under FAO and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as fruitful collaboration between FAO and the CBD Secretariat, which is central to achieving our respective mandates and the mutually supportive goals of productive fisheries and healthy ecosystems.

This synergy and collaboration were expanded when the Conference of the Parties to the CBD adopted the twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets in 2010, including Aichi Biodiversity Target 6 on sustainable fisheries. On the occasion of the 2020 deadline of the Aichi Targets, the CBD Secretariat published the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, which showed that none of the Aichi Targets were fully achieved, despite progress in various areas.

Parties to the CBD are now negotiating the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which will contain a new set of global goals and targets for biodiversity. The post-2020 framework aims to speak directly to the social, cultural and economic development benefits that have a foundation in biodiversity. It points directly to where action is needed—not only in the biodiversity world, but in a broad range of sectors—and the benefits to be gained by better conserving and sustainably using biodiversity. This is why the post-2020 framework is not only discussing targets focused on actions that need to be taken, but also on the outcomes that are needed and where marine ecosystems need to be in 10 years in order to achieve the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

And despite the lack of achievement of the Aichi Targets, the Global Biodiversity Outlook clearly showed bright spots that need to be scaled up. It shows that, when good fisheries management is applied, fish stocks are being maintained or rebuilt. It shows that conservation efforts have reduced the number of extinctions and that, without such actions, extinctions of birds and mammals would likely have been two to four times higher.

We are pleased to note that FAO has been active in providing robust input on fisheries issues to the process to develop the post-2020 framework, as well as valuable input to the 5th edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (also known as GBO-5), and in mobilizing the fisheries community to engage in the post-2020 process as well. FAO also generously hosted the second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in February 2020.

The draft of the post-2020 framework, which will be submitted for adoption at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, contains a number of goals, targets and indicators directly relevant to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. We encourage and welcome further engagement of FAO and its Members in the rest of the process to develop the post-2020 framework.

Agenda Item 4. Status, trends, emerging issues and innovative responses to ensure responsible and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture: Building back better
and

Agenda Item 5. Decisions and Recommendations of the Tenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Trondheim, Norway, 23–27 August 2019

We welcome the reports on the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture and the State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which were published at a critical time during the deliberations under the CBD on the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The reports provide a useful source of information for governments and other stakeholders in the development of new global goals and targets for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. The reports also served as useful sources of information for GBO-5, which provided an assessment of the level of achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets against their 2020 deadline.

We also are pleased to see the steps taken to develop the FAO Global Integrated Sustainable Aquaculture Programme (GISAP), as well as the Global Plan of Action for Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which can play a major role in supporting the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. We note especially strategic priority area 3 on promoting sustainable use and conservation of aquatic genetic resources and strategic priority area 4 on policies, institutions and capacity building as areas around which FAO and the CBD can further enhance our collaboration and to which experiences under the CBD, including the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, could provide valuable lessons.

We also take note of the work by FAO on the Progressive Management Pathway for Improving Aquaculture Biosecurity, outlining the importance of improved aquaculture biosecurity in improving health at farm and national levels, and minimizing the global spread of diseases. The global COVID-19 pandemic has clearly placed the spotlight on the issue of zoonotic diseases and emphasized how the degradation of ecosystems, the loss of biodiversity and its unsustainable use have increased the risk of disease spillover from animals to people.

Under the CBD, we have sought to better understand our role in not only supporting a sustainable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19, but also in preventing future pandemics. Last year, the CBD Secretariat facilitated a number of discussions to advance thinking on this issue and scope out priorities for the future. These include a webinar jointly organized by the Government of Egypt and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in September focused on protecting biodiversity, combating land degradation and mitigating climate change to reduce the risks of future pandemics, and a special virtual session of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body in December focused on biodiversity, One Health and the response to COVID-19. The issue of biodiversity and health will also be addressed at the forthcoming 24th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD.

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

Among the various areas of collaboration between the CBD Secretariat and FAO, one of the most notable is our collaboration, together with the United Nations Environment Programme, in coordinating the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies.

This process, the first of its kind at the global level, provides a platform for regional organizations to outline opportunities to improve regional-scale coordination for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. It provides an informal platform for regional organizations to share experiences in cross-sectoral collaboration, enhance understanding of their respective mandates and areas of work, and identify opportunities to enhance regional-scale collaboration with a view to further strengthening their complementary roles in supporting national implementation.

The third meeting of the Global Dialogue was scheduled to take place in 2020 but has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are, nonetheless, advancing work under the Global Dialogue in the interim, including through convening virtual thematic discussions. The third meeting of the Global Dialogue will be a major opportunity to outline the roles and opportunities for regional organizations and cross-sectoral regional collaboration in supporting the implementation and monitoring of the post-2020 framework.

We appreciate the collaboration of FAO and its Members in this important work and, importantly, in translating the opportunities that emerge during the Global Dialogue discussions into real action on the ground.

Agenda Item 11. Addressing climate change and other environment-related matters in fisheries and aquaculture

In further recognition of the central importance of biodiversity to sustainable fisheries and vice versa, the paradigm of mainstreaming biodiversity into economic sectors has become a central area of focus under the CBD, together with various streams of work to support its realization. We are encouraged that FAO has taken a leadership role on the issue of biodiversity mainstreaming, and we are pleased that the FAO Council, at its 163rd Session in December 2019, adopted the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors. We look forward to working with FAO and its Members in implementing this strategy.

A notable area of importance for achieving mainstreaming goals is the issue of “other effective area-based conservation measures” (OECMs). Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 called for area-based conservation through the use of effective, equitable, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of marine protected areas and OECMs. At its 14th meeting in 2018, the CBD COP adopted a definition and identification criteria for OECMs, and also invited FAO to assist countries in identifying OECMs and in applying the scientific and technical advice for their reporting and management. The expert meeting on OECMs in the marine fishery sector, hosted by FAO in 2019, helped to advance our understanding of the opportunities and challenges in identifying OECMs in the fisheries world. We are pleased to work with FAO in supporting countries and communities to identify, manage and report OECMs, as this provides a valuable opportunity to better acknowledge and understand the biodiversity benefits of measures implemented by the fisheries management sector.

In closing, this is an important moment in time to set ourselves on a pathway to sustainability and to build linkages across our processes help us all walk down this path. The post-2020 global biodiversity framework provides a critical opportunity to utilize the strengths of different stakeholders and sectors, to reinforce commitments for sustainability, to enhance our collective ambition, and to capitalize on the political will and attention on these new global targets to strengthen collaboration and implementation. As such, the engagement of FAO and Member States is essential to establishing a post-2020 framework that reflects the range of interests, experiences and priorities for marine biodiversity.

A key factor of success will be a more inclusive approach to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. We must look beyond our traditional ways of working and our traditional alliances. We are indeed seeing a new spirit of collaboration across different sectors and stakeholders, which will be critical to protecting the ocean and ensuring that it can deliver what human beings need to survive and thrive. As such, we urge FAO, its Members and all in the fisheries community to continue to engage in the process to develop the post-2020 framework, to support its implementation and to see the framework as an important means to not only improve the state of biodiversity, but also to achieve healthy, sustainable and productive fisheries into the future.

Thank you.