

General Statement

The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) would like to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for inviting us to participate in this session of the Committee on Fisheries. EJF appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this meeting, which includes a number of our priority issues on the agenda.

The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) is a non-governmental organisation working to secure a world where natural habitats and environments can sustain, and be sustained by, the communities that depend upon them. For over a decade, EJF has worked to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and associated human rights issues.

The FAO Secretariat and its Members play a vital role in protecting the health of the world's oceans. This year is the 25th Anniversary of the [Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries](#), a key instrument that has been setting standards towards sustainable fisheries. EJF believes that increased transparency in the fishing sector is key to deter and eliminate IUU fishing and progress the objectives of the Code of Conduct.

EJF therefore calls on Members to prioritise measures designed to increase transparency in the sector. These measures belong to EJF's wider strategy to increase transparency via the adoption of its ten [Transparency Principles](#) across fisheries governance and seafood supply chains. Examples where this can be progressed include:

- Recognising the role that at-sea trans-shipments can play in undermining transparency, we commend the development of international guidelines on regulating, monitoring, and controlling trans-shipments particularly when they take place at sea, and we welcome the FAO's inclusion of this work as a priority area within the programme of work for the upcoming biennium.
- This year's meeting provides an opportunity to urge Members to continue to mandate International Maritime Organization's (IMO) numbers for their eligible fishing vessels and populate the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels, including information that is crucial to the implementation of the Port State Measure Agreement.
- EJF thanks the FAO for its work on Catch Documentation Schemes (CDS) and further urges Members to establish robust CDS to protect their markets and align these with existing schemes through the adoption of common Key Data Elements.
- EJF calls on FAO Members to work directly and indirectly through COFI and other relevant fora to address the problems presented by the use of flags of convenience by fishing vessels. The use of flags of convenience can obscure the true owners of fishing vessels and thereby prevent accountability when IUU fishing takes place. It also provides an escape route for vessels to leave flags that put in place good governance measures such as those proposed in the FAO's International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU fishing. EJF therefore believes Members should work towards the end of the use of flags of convenience by fishing vessels.

This year, it is critical that we come together as a global community to deliver shared targets to protect our oceans. As such, we are urging COFI Members to prioritise SDG target 14.6. The WTO must come to an agreement to prohibit fisheries subsidies that contribute to overfishing, overcapacity and IUU fishing. Capacity-enhancing fisheries subsidies are an important factor in the consistent decline in the health of fish stocks and, as they enable overfishing and IUU fishing, ending these subsidies is crucial to pave the way towards sustainable fisheries. In addition, we are calling upon Members and the FAO to work constructively towards the finalisation of a robust High Seas Treaty in 2021 and, once agreed, to actively collaborate and cooperate to ensure a sustainable ocean ecosystem that will provide benefits for current and future generations.

Thank you.