



**WWF Introductory Statement - 34th Session FAO-COFI**  
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WWF acknowledges the efforts underway globally to address the state of the world's fisheries and the commitment shown by the FAO members and member organizations to implement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, now celebrating its 25th anniversary.

However, the ocean is experiencing unprecedented and cumulative pressures - driven in large part by unsustainable production and consumption. The interdependent crises of biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and climate change require urgent and immediate global, regional and local action. This is further compounded by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted negatively on the world's economy, food security and livelihoods, with severe repercussions on the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

WWF remains deeply concerned about the current fisheries management model, where a large number of stocks are being unsustainably exploited. Moreover, the overfishing fronts are multiplying; we are fishing more, and expanding fishing areas deeper and wider than ever before. This is severely hindering advancements on the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goal 14 to protect and sustainably use the oceans to advance sustainable development, and hampering the critical role sustainably managed fisheries could play in building the resilience of the ocean and its dependent societies, particularly in the face of a changing and erratic climate.

There is an urgent need to change the current production and consumption model that is damaging the health and resilience of the oceans, overexploiting fish populations and eroding the habitats and ecosystems that sustain healthy fish populations and biodiversity. This is already increasing the vulnerability of communities, eroding societies and threatening food security in many parts of the world. The coming decade is crucial to step up global ambition for nature, climate and people; investing in the recovery, protection and resilience of our ocean and dependent societies is essential to secure national economies, advance ocean-related mitigation and adaptation solutions and support the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For WWF, a few overarching themes are key to achieve sustainability in fisheries and we are pleased to see that these are in line with the 2021 COFI Declaration:

1. **Advancing integrated approaches and solutions to address the interdependent crises of biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and climate change, including by implementing an ecosystem-approach to fisheries, where fish are seen as a part of the ecosystem rather than a resource for extraction** . This should include prioritising the restoration and regeneration of coastal habitats, as a powerful means of addressing biodiversity loss, delivering sustainable development opportunities to coastal communities and tackling climate change. The IPCC and others have suggested that policy coordination and integrated management are considered important climate change adaptation and ocean governance responses.
2. **Changing the rules of the fisheries sector at all levels**. In this context, States and other actors must define new and sustainable business models that will transform the way fishing is done, as well as repair the weak governance that characterizes fishing and its trade, making full cooperation among states to increase transparency along the value chain a

standard operating practice and reduce or eliminate the incentives that encourage overcapacity, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and facilitates human rights abuses by,.

3. **Recognising the need to scale up investments to support and de-marginalise coastal communities.** Coastal fisheries play a critical role in delivering nutritional and income security to small scale fisheries communities across the world. For many countries food is a national security issue and policy makers need to be aware of the trade-offs and potential consequences of particular policy pathways and the importance of protecting and restoring the habitats and target species that sustain coastal fisheries. Investments are urgently needed to support community enterprises, foster gender inclusion and provide financial incentives to coastal communities recognizing the vital role that small-scale fisheries play for food security, employment and political stability.
4. **Stressing the need for partnerships between governments, communities and/or other non-state actors to deliver nearshore conservation with greater urgency.** This can include area-based management tools such as no-take reserves for spawning grounds, locally managed marine areas, collaborative fisheries management areas, and managed coastal and marine areas.