

COFI 35 – WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

RECEIVED COMMENTS FROM OBSERVERS

A – BASIC INFORMATION

Document Number	COFI/2022/11
Document Title	Decisions and recommendations of the Eighteenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade
Commenting Observer	The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
Referred paragraph numbers (if applicable)	-

B – COMMENT RECEIVED

UNCTAD would like to thank the FAO for the efficient organisation of the 35th session of the Committee on Fisheries. UNCTAD and the FAO have had a robust and valuable partnership on the Fisheries Trade and the Ocean Economy trade for more than a decade. Of note, UNCTAD Member States are pleased with the two agencies' enduring cooperation and support on the implementation of trade-related targets of SDG 14. UNCTAD mandate to work on oceans and fisheries was agreed at the UNCTAD 14 Ministerial Conference and expanded at the UNCTAD 15 one and calling for cooperation with FAO and other United Nations Agencies to ensure conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources in line with trade related targets of SDG14.

UNCTAD, FAO, UNEP, the Commonwealth, the OACPS, CAF and the IOI, with the support of the Governments of Portugal and Kenya organised and hosted the [4th Oceans Forum on Trade related aspects of SDG 14](#) on 6-8 April 2022. The objective of the forum was to identify opportunities for the ocean economy and trade to contribute to post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience in the road to the [2022 United Nations Oceans Conference \(2022 UNOC\)](#).

The forum gathered nearly 500 experts and representatives from United Nations agencies, regional bodies, governments, NGOs, civil society organizations including the youth, as well as research and scientific institutions. The forum made a strong political call for a [global blue deal for economic recovery and sustainable growth](#) and discussed the following topics:

- Challenges and opportunities for the ocean economy to contribute to a sustainable and resilient post-COVID-19 recovery
- Emerging sustainable ocean economy sectors, such as seaweed production
- Transparency and fish subsidies support mechanisms
- Ocean economy markets and non-tariff measures reform
- Social sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture value chains
- Sustainable and resilient maritime supply chains
- Trade-related aspects of marine litter and plastic pollution

As the Chair of the [4th ocean forum](#), H.E. Ms. Usha Dwarka-Canabady, Ambassador of Mauritius to the United Nations in Geneva produced a [Summary with the main findings and recommendations of the Forum](#), which was then transmitted to the governments of Portugal and Kenya, the co-conveners of the 2022 UNOC, as well as to all United Nations Missions in Geneva and New York. UNCTAD has also cooperated with the FAO in organising at the 2022 UNOC in organizing a side event titled [“Trade facilitation for a sustainable blue economy”](#) on the 29 June 2022.

Currently, UNCTAD and FAO are preparing a United Nations publication to be titled “Building a sustainable and resilient ocean economy beyond 2030” that would cover main substantive economic, and trade issues discussed at the 4th Oceans Forum and at the 2022 Ocean conference. This publication will also list of relevant ocean economy and trade in fisheries recommendations made at the Forum and at the 2022 Ocean conference for easy follow up by the Trade and Fisheries community.

Beside this, UNCTAD would like to provide comments, inputs, and additional information to the COFI on the following documentation provided:

I. TRADE AGREEMENTS AND MARKET ACCESS FOR FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE PRODUCTS

UNCTAD would like to express its full support for the recommendation of the FAO Sub-Committee on Fisheries Trade (COFI -FT) to develop guidance for a comprehensive database compiling the elements for preferential trade agreements from the perspective of fisheries and aquaculture. UNCTAD stands ready to support FAO Members in developing such guidance as UNCTAD is the depository of the [Global System of Trade Preferences Among Developing Countries \(GSTP\)](#) (South-South Trade) and the [Generalized System of Preferences](#) (GSP – unilateral preferences).

UNCTAD also offers resources and analysis on **fish and processed products markets** owing to a new and unprecedented [UNCTAD database on ocean trade](#), which is the first ever dataset undertaking to draw on official data reported by all UN member states, covering all ocean based goods from fisheries and aquaculture (including precise estimates on fish, molluscs, and crustaceans, amongst others) to seafood processing, port equipment, vessels, and high-technology manufactures. The database will be continuously updated with trade data on ocean services including tourism, transport, port services, environmental services, and research and development being added to the database. Ocean services data is expected go made public by November 2022.

UNCTAD also offers to support to identify and analyse **non-tariff measures** (NTMs) hindering access to important fisheries and seafood exports export through its Trade Analysis Information System ([TRAINS database](#)). This database is a one-stop shop for importers/exporters, policymakers, and researchers to access data on trade regulations, NTMs, as well as some practical information on target markets.

II. BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION INITIATIVES ON TRADE OF COMMERCIALY EXPLOITED AQUATIC SPECIES

UNCTAD has undertaken various actions to support sustainable use and trade of aquatic species. These include the following:

In 2022, UNCTAD, DOALOS and FAO published after more than two years of consultation and research, the [Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy: Barbados large pelagic longline fishery](#). This strategy focuses on sustainable marine fisheries and seafood processing, specifically the Barbados large pelagic longline fishery and the process of moving from exporting fresh headed and gutted tuna to exporting fresh tuna loins.

UNCTAD and DOALOS have also proposed [a climate resilient multispecies finfish management plan in Belize](#) to support the development of the finfish fishery in cooperation with the Belize Fisheries Department and the Environmental Defence Fund. It has also supported Belize on the establishment of a robust data collection program for finfish based on a data collection methodology developed by the UNCTAD-DOALOS [Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy Project](#).

UNCTAD and the Organisation of the East Caribbean States (OECS) have also developed the first ever Blue [“BioTrade regional plan of action for the Eastern Caribbean queen conch value chain”](#) as well as [a stakeholder maps](#) and country assessments of the queen conch value chain (a CITES Appendix II-listed species). UNCTAD has also analysed the [Blue BioTrade potential](#) through country case studies in [Grenada](#), [Saint Lucia](#) and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. These country case studies will present a detailed value chain analysis of the queen conch production in each country based on the [2020 BioTrade Principles and Criteria](#), CITES, regulations and the [FAO Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan](#). Furthermore, these studies are envisaged to provide recommendations to, inter alia, (i) create a more sustainable queen conch value chain through the implementation of Blue BioTrade; (ii) enable access to international and regional markets; and (iii) address country-level CITES interventions (e.g., trade suspension) to facilitate legal and sustainable trade of the queen conch.

III. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: SCOPING PAPER AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

UNCTAD welcomes the recent progress regarding the development of the FAO Guidance on Social Responsibility in Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains as reported by the COFI -FT. The topic of social sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture value chain as well as the FAO guidance was presented, discussed, and consulted at the [4th Ocean Forum in Geneva](#) with more . The Geneva Trade community had the opportunity engage directly with FAO, ILO and UNCTAD experts as well as with private sector and small-scale fisheries association on the matter. Specific recommendations were compiled by the Chair of the Forum including:

- 1) The need to promote **decent work in the fisheries and aquaculture sector** through active collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders and the enforcement of better social practices in the fish value chain at a national, regional, and international level. This can be done through the implementation of relevant international instruments and tools such as the ILO conventions and recommendations (i.e., Work in Fishing Convention – C.188) and the IMO standards.

- 2) **The continuation of the development of the FAO Guidance on Social Responsibility in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chain**, targeting business actors to facilitate the implementation of better social practices, and supporting governments to improve national frameworks in order to enhance decent working conditions throughout the fisheries and aquaculture value chain
- 3) **The visibility and recognition of women's role in the fisheries and aquaculture sector**, particularly in the small-scale fisheries sector. It is important to respect the rights of women and they must be supported to create their own cooperatives for better organization amongst themselves and their participation in decision-making processes should be facilitated.

UNCTAD will continue cooperating with FAO and other UN agencies to develop guidance that is voluntary, non-binding, practical, complementary, written in simple language, supportive, and based on the wide range of existing international conventions, agreements, and standards.