

Statement by SADC Delegations to the 35th Committee on Fisheries read by Honourable Molebatsi, Assistant Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Republic of Botswana
Agenda item 6: Supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries

Thank you Chair

I am making this Statement on behalf of the Southern African Development Community Member States.

The 2022 International Year for Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) has been and still is an opportunity for partners to work together for the improvement of small-scale fishers and their communities.

At the regional level, in November 2021 we started our IYAFA celebrations by focusing on the importance of small-pelagic fish in regional food systems. This was followed by sharing of lessons on building resilient small-scale fisheries and small scale aquaculture in the face of climate change. Later this year we will consolidate a regional Declaration to ensure that small scale fisheries (SSF) are prioritized in regional and national instruments and support countries in developing their SSF National Plans of Actions, in line with the FAO SSF Guidelines.

We recognise the benefits that the Global Guidelines on small scale fisheries have contributed in raising awareness of the importance of inland and marine small-scale fisheries and welcome the report on Hidden Harvests. The SADC region recognises the importance of the subsector for its contributions to sustainable development and food security and notes the need to improve recognition of this.

Fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations in the world and economic disempowerment, conflict, climate change, food scarcity, overfishing, IUU fishing and inadequate regulation can all lead to significant risk taking and the need for greater protection, especially in small scale fisheries. We note that addressing fisher mortality and improving fisher safety is important for African countries and this will require serious global attention and action. We therefore support practical efforts and solutions to improve the safety of fishers and the need to establish a data collection system and repository on global fisher accident and mortality. We would welcome the opportunity to work with global partners to pilot and test ways to improve fisher safety in our region – both in inland and marine fisheries. This type of information is essential for gaining political support and for enabling targeted and effective safety initiatives based on sound information and understanding. We therefore support developing a mechanism for establishing a data collection scheme and repository on global fisher accident and mortality data.

We also note that the need for improved multi-disciplinary data collection and analysis of SSF is important and we will be striving to improve this through our SADC Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre in Mozambique, in particular to bring the inland sector more to the forefront. On this note, we acknowledge the importance of identifying and marking fishing craft and vessels across the small scale sector as an important baseline element to enable the collection of multi-disciplinary data and information from a range of sources and players and welcome FAO's efforts to improve the global guidelines in this respect.

Thank you