Global Fishing Watch

FAO Committee on Fisheries Thirty-fifth Session, 5-9 September 2022

General Statement

Global Fishing Watch would like to express our thanks to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its Member States for organising, hosting and participating in the thirty-fifth session of the Committee on Fisheries. Global Fishing Watch is delighted to join this session as an observer for the first time, and grateful for the opportunity to contribute to key discussions on issues and challenges related to fisheries and aquaculture.

Global Fishing Watch believes transparency, shared and accessible data, and innovative free technology can significantly contribute to better fisheries and ocean management. We support a number of Member States to demonstrate this in the commercial fishing sector and are dedicated to doing so across an increasing number of ocean governance areas.

Agenda Item 6: Supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries, including in the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture

Global Fishing Watch welcomes the achievements of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division as outlined in document COFI/2022/4, Supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries. We commend the efforts of FAO and all stakeholders on all the achievements and activities under the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture as well as the Illuminating Hidden Harvests report.

We encourage Member States and the Committee to consider the role transparency and technology can play in supporting the uptake of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries and in enhancing the sustainability of small-scale and artisanal fisheries and their contribution to food and nutrition security and livelihoods, specifically by:

- Furthering the articulation of transparency principles for the small-scale fisheries sector to help ensure better, fair, and equitable management; and
- Exploring innovative technologies that will help build further knowledge and understanding of the sector to support better governance.

Where applicable, Global Fishing Watch is pleased to support the efforts of the Committee on data collection, use, and sharing using our established and existing platforms.



Global Fishing Watch

Agenda Item 7: Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

Global Fishing Watch welcomes the extensive work of the Committee to address IUU fishing. Despite international efforts, the problem continues to affect international fisheries, with impacts often disproportionately felt by developing States.

The thirty-fifth Session of COFI offers an opportunity to further address this issue. We suggest that transparency of key vessel information offers a cost-effective and scalable way to ensure that those that need vessel information to make key decisions have access to it. It also facilitates a level of accountability needed to ensure flag, port and coastal States responsibilities are fulfilled.

We urge Member States to take action to improve transparency of international fisheries, specifically by:

- Endorsing the Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment and encourage members and associated bodies to adopt, implement and improve transshipment oversight and management practices;
- Initiating a consultation process to consider a binding agreement on vessel tracking that examines the role of emerging technologies and a need for interoperability between systems and recognises the requirements of developing States, including the establishment of appropriate funding mechanisms;
- Undertaking a comprehensive update of the FAO Standard Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels;
- Calling for increased participation in the FAO Global Record, including submission of information related to beneficial ownership of vessels;
- Support the development of the Global Information Exchange System; and
- Join the IUU Fishing Action Alliance.

Agenda Item 10: Mainstreaming biodiversity in fisheries and aquaculture

Global Fishing Watch welcomes the mainstreaming of biodiversity issues across fisheries and aquaculture. Protections and other area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are one of the management tools used to help maintain ecosystem functions.

When such measures are informed by data and consider the needs of all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, they can help sustain biodiversity in the face of rising water temperatures and ocean acidification, and help create safe havens for fish populations to replenish. But management is often hampered by inadequate information to support decision-making.

Transparent data and innovative technologies can support the visualisation of management plans and the scrutinisation of data to ensure that decisions are taken based on the best available science. Technology platforms can provide dynamic and interactive data on ocean conditions, biology and human-use activity in near real-time to support marine spatial planning, marine protected area design and management, and scientific research.

We urge Member States to support a data driven approach to the designation and implementation of marine protected areas and OECMs, specifically by:

- Positively engaging in relevant processes in other fora, including, in particular, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction;

- Recognising the importance of consultation with all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, in the consideration of protections and other area-based conservation measures; and
- Supporting the use of transparency and technology as key tools in efforts to secure biodiversity and its benefits.