

OPENING STATEMENT FOR 35 COFI
HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND BLUE ECONOMY, DR PAUBERT
MADAGASCAR

Thank you Chair, I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of Madagascar and the Southern African Development Community – the SADC – as part of the African Regional group.

May I start by congratulating you on your appointment as Chair, by thanking the FAO Secretariat for hosting us, and by offering a warm greeting to all present.

In the coming days we will deliberate on many important issues, in particular, I note:

- Fisheries and aquaculture must contribute to global food security, job creation and poverty alleviation – achieving the SDGs, and particularly target 14 must be at the top of our agenda this week.
- Small scale and also semi-industrial fisheries are vital – we need inclusive global approaches that re-focus policies and guidelines to prioritise the management of 'less economically important' fisheries. Our SADC region has been actively commemorating IYAFIA with the focus on sharing lessons learned in building resilience in the small scale fisheries sub-sector and highlighting important role that small-pelagic fisheries play in the regional food systems.
- Collaboration is vital – locally, nationally, regionally and internationally this will ensure that we do not leave anyone behind. We must work together and across sectors to find global approaches, for example to: data collection and transparency; fisher safety; and to vessel marking and identification.
- Blue growth and blue thinking is no longer a choice – it is a pathway that we must follow. In my homeland the small island developing state of Madagascar we have aligned our fishery and aquaculture development strategy to the African Union's blue economy development strategy in the hope to achieve truly meaningful and sustainable growth.
- Protecting our fisheries from illegal operators is an ongoing battle – in the SADC we are developing a Regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre to drive this fight and to coordinate our implementation of port state measures and other anti-IUU procedures.
- Improving safety is key – we are losing too many fishers to accidents and through miss-treatment, this is unacceptable and we need to monitor this and find solutions for change.

There is an African proverb that says if you want to go fast, go alone but if you want to go far, go together. Ladies and gentlemen, Madagascar and the SADC region want to go far and fast.

I welcome discussion and cooperation in the coming days, and hope that together we can achieve sustainable, legal, fair and safe fisheries – for everyone.

Thank you.