

## COFI-35

### General Statement by the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is committed to ensuring a clean, healthy, productive, safe and biodiverse ocean, sustaining thriving and resilient fisheries and marine environments. We want to ensure fisheries are environmentally sustainable in the long term, that they contribute to food security and that they provide healthy, nutritious, low carbon food for generations to come.

We want fish stocks to be managed sustainably, to protect vulnerable species and the wider ecosystem, and to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing - one of the biggest threats to our ocean.

There are three key areas we would like to highlight as crucial to realising this vision for our ocean.

**Firstly, maintaining and strengthening the fight against IUU fishing.** We want to build upon the significant progress made in tackling IUU fishing over recent years, including through instruments such as the Port State Measures Agreement and RFMO measures. However, there is still more to do.

We can take advantage of new tools to combat IUU, namely the FAO's voluntary guidelines on transshipment and the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. We encourage all COFI members to adopt the Voluntary guidelines at COFI35, and to ratify as well as implement the WTO Agreement as soon as possible.

The UK, together with Canada, Iceland and the US, is pleased to have launched the IUU Fishing Action Alliance at the recent UN Ocean Conference. This alliance is a collection of State and non-State actors committed to taking proactive measures – together and individually – to prevent, deter, and eliminate IUU fishing. We encourage others to join us.

**Secondly, ensuring strong ocean governance worldwide,** enabling more fish stocks to be managed sustainably, while protecting vulnerable species and the wider ecosystem.

The UK supports continued cooperation and collaboration at a global and regional level. There are many governance structures in place to manage fishing and the marine environment both globally and regionally. However, there remain opportunities to better co-ordinate, collaborate and share best practice between these bodies. It is only through effective cooperation that we can collectively maximise our potential, manage resources we all rely on, and move from managing not just species but entire ecosystems.

That is the case for areas currently managed by existing regional agreements. However, we also need to consider how best to ensure more sustainable approaches in those areas of the ocean where the absence of any meaningful management and conservation measures means unregulated activity can continue unchecked.

The proposed establishment of an additional COFI Sub-Committee to focus on improving fisheries management globally, regionally and nationally is to be welcomed. This new forum will allow more time for in-depth discussions on improving fisheries management and highlight future challenges and opportunities that FAO could help to address.

**Thirdly mainstreaming consideration of biodiversity and climate change within fisheries.** Biodiversity loss and climate change pose significant and increasing threats to our ocean and fisheries.

We welcome more effective cooperation between fisheries and marine environment bodies, such as the recent collective agreement between OSPAR and NEAFC. We want to see the importance of sustainable fisheries better reflected in other relevant forums, agreements and organisations, including negotiations on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).

In addition to addressing biodiversity loss, achieving long term sustainable fisheries will require ambitious action to protect and restore ocean health and resilience in the face of a changing climate. Climate change, combined with other pressures such as pollution and overexploitation, is having a catastrophic impact on ocean health which has devastating effects globally on marine life, fisheries and coastal communities. During the UK's COP26 Presidency in Glasgow, we called for ambitious action and underscored the critical importance of marine nature-based solutions, underpinned by sufficient finance and robust science. The UK's £500 million Blue Planet Fund supports developing countries to protect the marine environment and reduce poverty, and reinforces the UK's global leadership on these issues, including our call to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030.