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"Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development"

ANNEX 3

Inputs by the FAO Committee on Fisheries

The two main functions of the **Committee on Fisheries (COFI)** are to review and guide the programmes of work of FAO in the field of fisheries and aquaculture and their implementation, and to conduct periodic reviews of global issues in the field of fisheries and aquaculture with a view to developing concerted action by nations, inter-governmental bodies and civil society. COFI is also a forum in which global agreements and non-binding instruments are negotiated to address identified fisheries and aquaculture issues. COFI also reviews and decides on the recommendations of its two COFI Sub-Committees on fish trade and aquaculture, respectively.

Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

a. Critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda within the area of responsibility of the intergovernmental body (bearing in mind interrelations with other goals and targets)

2020 is called as a “super year” for the ocean because four out of ten targets of the Goal 14. Conservation and sustainable use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, namely:

14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans;

14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics;

14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information; and

14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation.

According to the progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals¹ published in May 2019, the progress of the Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, is as follows:

- The expansion of protected areas for marine biodiversity and existing policies and treaties that encourage responsible use of ocean resources are still insufficient to combat the adverse effects of overfishing, growing ocean acidification due to climate change and worsening coastal eutrophication. As billions of people depend on oceans for their livelihood and food source and on the transboundary nature of oceans, increased efforts and interventions are needed to conserve and sustainably use ocean resources at all levels.
- Ocean acidification is caused by the uptake of atmospheric CO₂ by the ocean, which changes the chemical composition of the seawater. Long-term observations of ocean acidification over the past 30 years have shown an average increase of acidity of 26 per cent since pre-industrial times, and at this rate, an increase of 100 to 150 per cent is predicted by the end of the century, with serious consequences for marine life.
- To achieve sustainable development of fisheries, fish stocks must be maintained at a biologically sustainable level. Analyses reveal that the fraction of world marine fish stocks that are within biologically sustainable levels declined from 90 per cent in 1974 to 66.9 per cent in 2015.
- As of December 2018, over 24 million km² (17.2 per cent) of waters under national jurisdiction (0–200 nautical miles from a national border) were covered by protected areas, a significant increase from 12 per cent in 2015 and more than double the extent covered in 2010. The global mean percentage of each marine key biodiversity area covered by protected areas increased from 31.2 per cent in 2000 to 44.7 per cent in 2015 and to 45.7 per cent in 2018.

¹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2019/secretary-general-sdg-report-2019--EN.pdf>

- Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing remains one of the greatest threats to sustainable fisheries, the livelihoods of those who depend upon them and marine ecosystems. A framework of international instruments has been developed that addresses different aspects of fisheries management. Most countries have taken measures to combat such fishing and have adopted an increasing number of fisheries management instruments in the past decade. For example, the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, the first international binding agreement to combat such fishing, entered into force in June 2016. The number of parties to the Agreement has rapidly increased and stood at 58 as of February 2019.
- Small-scale fisheries are present in almost all countries, accounting for more than half of total production on average, in terms of both quantity and value. To promote small-scale fishers' access to productive resources, services and markets, most countries have developed targeted regulatory and institutional frameworks. However, more than 20 per cent of countries have a low to medium level of implementation of such frameworks, particularly in Oceania and Central and South Asia.

b. Priority measures to: accelerate action, and ensure transformative pathways to realize the decade of action for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

In order to accelerate action, and ensure transformative pathways to realize the decade of action for achieving the 2030 Agenda, in its 33rd Session held in Rome, from 9-13 July 2018, the Committee on Fisheries²:

- Emphasized the importance of Members achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 14. It highlighted the coherence of these goals with the policy goals of binding and non-binding international instruments, regional bodies (including RFMOs) and national authorities;
- Noting that SDG reporting was the responsibility of Members, the Committee acknowledged that FAO was the primary UN agency with responsibility for fisheries (marine and freshwater) and aquaculture and has the important role of assisting competent authorities in tracking their progress in achieving SDG 14 and the other goals of the 2030 Agenda;
- Reiterated its support for strengthened cooperation between FAO and international, regional and national bodies, as well as the private sector, in strengthening the development and delivery of suitable indicators for monitoring progress towards achieving SDG and Aichi Biodiversity Targets relevant to fisheries;
- Noted the lack of an internationally recognized methodology for lower tier indicators under the custodianship of FAO. It appreciated the technical work of FAO in progressing the development of appropriate methodologies to facilitate indicator reporting by Members;

² <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5184en/CA5184EN.pdf>

- Emphasized the need to ensure comparability and consistency of reporting indicators at global, regional and national levels, whilst minimizing the burden on Members;
- Agreed that data and information submitted through the Code questionnaire could be used for reporting on SDG indicators and Aichi Biodiversity Targets in aggregate and, where permission is explicitly granted by Members, for reporting on their national progress, subject to adequate consultation and validation of inputs by Members, as stated in paragraph 19 of this report. (cf. 19. The Committee called upon FAO to consult with Members on matters of potential confidentiality in the use of the country data and information submitted through the Code questionnaire. It further emphasized the need for Members to validate the use of any information obtained from the questionnaire for SDG reporting.);
- Highlighted that reporting on these indicators by Members using new methodologies required institutional and human capacity development and resource mobilization, in order for them to achieve independent data collection, monitor and report on SDGs and related international instruments;
- Requested FAO to continue to assist Members in strengthening statistical capacity and delivery of their data and information, especially in data-poor situations. It further requested support to provide tools and publishing guidelines to assist in this activity;
- Recognized the synergies between the SDGs and the Blue Economy, with the need for broad cooperation on developing new economic platforms and processes (e.g. Blue Forum, Blue Ports, Blue Fashion) in a sustainable way;
- Welcomed the upcoming High Level Conference on sustainable blue economy, co-hosted by Canada and Kenya in Nairobi, Kenya, 26-28 November 2018;
- Expressed the need for FAO to increase communication for clarifying and enhancing awareness of multi-sectoral approaches for Blue Growth and delivery of the 2030 Agenda and better elaborate its plans for the BGI; and
- Further requested FAO to review potential opportunities of Blue Growth and Blue Economy initiatives and present this to the 17th session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade in 2019.

In its 10th Session held in Trondheim, Norway, from 23 to 27 August 2019, the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture³:

- Recognized the usefulness the usefulness of the self-assessment tool, which helps Members in developing relevant policy guidance to provide further support for aquaculture development and reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Members commended FAO on the work done and the way the questionnaire has evolved; and

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7137en/ca7137en.pdf>

- Suggested additional areas to be considered during the next intersessional period, including capacity development for data collection. Regarding SDG indicators, the Sub-Committee commented that no aquaculture-specific indicator exists and that the responsibility of reporting rests with members.

In its 17th Session held in Vigo, Spain, from 25 to 29 November 2019, the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade⁴:

- Highlighted the importance of accurate and timely data and information in support of policy setting, monitoring and management of fisheries and aquaculture, and reiterated the important role of FAO in fisheries and aquaculture statistics. The Sub-Committee requested FAO to continue to provide capacity building to improve national data collection, particularly in support of Members' efforts on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and strengthening the science-policy interface in fisheries management.

Contribution of the intergovernmental body to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda within its area of responsibility (including its cooperation with ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies).

Specific updated recommendations will be provided after the next Session of COFI, scheduled to be held in July 2020

Selected recommendations for accelerating progress and moving on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action, for possible use in drafting the HLPF declaration.

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