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“Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

ANNEX 3

Inputs by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI)

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.

The 34th Session of COFI was held from 1 to 5 February 2021. Agenda 7, Contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, was particularly focused on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Suggested outline¹

- a. **Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF**
 1. The Committee commended FAO for the 2020 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) publication, including the addendum on the impacts of COVID-19, and reiterated that SOFIA serves as the benchmark publication for global status and trends in fisheries and aquaculture.
 2. The Committee noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified data scarcity problems, jeopardizing timely policy response.
 3. The Committee emphasized that according to WHO, the international trade of animals and animal products is not contributing to the spread of COVID-19. There is currently no scientifically based evidence that humans can be infected with COVID-19 through food,

¹ The headings and bullets are included as per the suggested outline annexed to the letter of the President of ECOSOC. Notes on expected contents are included in each section in *italic*.

including fish and fish products, or the packaging in which they are stored. In this regard, Members were encouraged to refrain from imposing restrictive measures, and the need to avoid unnecessary barriers to trade was emphasized.

4. The Committee recognized that COVID-19 has had a particularly negative impact on small-scale and artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, and stressed the need to provide the appropriate support and foster resilience for the sustainable development of this sector.
5. The Committee noted with concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture, including RFMOs and RFABs.

b. Actions, policy guidance, progress, challenges and areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the SDGs

1. The Committee underlined the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to food security and nutrition, and towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including synergies and interlinkages with other SDGs beyond and within SDG 14.
2. The Committee stressed the importance of increasing availability, affordability and access to consumers of safe and healthy aquatic food products throughout the value chain, and the role of small-scale and artisanal producers in this regard. At the same time, it recalled that all trade measures must be consistent with WTO rules.
3. The Committee noted the importance of sustainable and inclusive ocean economies, and the further implementation of the FAO Blue Growth Initiative, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It took note and requested additional information on the proposal for a voluntary Blue Ports Network for the development of coastal areas in collaboration with Members and relevant organizations.

c. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind”

1. The Committee noted that selected information submitted through the FAO Questionnaire for Monitoring the Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) was used for reporting on SDG indicators 14.6.1 and 14.b.1, subject to validation by Members.
2. The Committee highlighted that Members would require additional human and financial resources to strengthen independent data collection, monitoring and reporting, and welcomed the establishment of the FAO Multi-Donor Umbrella Programme to fill capacity gaps in national statistical systems.
3. The Committee noted the importance of science and evidence-based measures in the sustainable management of all fish stocks.
4. The Committee welcomed the Draft Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition and appreciated its comprehensive consultative development process. The Committee emphasized the need to strengthen the critical role of aquatic foods in national plans and action for sustainable food systems, food security and nutrition.
5. The Committee noted the relevance of protected areas and other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs) to achieving a number of the SDGs and global biodiversity

targets, and requested that FAO produce and disseminate practical guidelines to support Members in their identification and implementation.

d. Cooperation, measures and commitments at all levels in promoting sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Encouraged FAO to continue to strengthen its collaboration with relevant international organizations, RFABs and RFMOs, to advocate the positive contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to sustainable development, and avoid the duplication of efforts.

e. Various measures and policy recommendations on building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

1. The Committee urged FAO, in collaboration with its partners to promote the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in relevant events and initiatives such as: the United Nations Ocean Conference, United Nations Food Systems Summit, United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, United Nations Decade of Family Farming, United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition, Our Ocean Conference and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit, and encouraged FAO and its Members to highlight the 2021 Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, in that regard, and in particular in the framework of the activities and celebrations of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) in 2022.

Selected recommendations for accelerating progress towards achievement of specific SDGs under review in 2021, which are, 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships.

1. The Committee called on FAO to continue supporting Members to overcome challenges in implementing the Code, especially in view of the added complexities posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The Committee called on FAO to continue to preserve the core purpose of the questionnaire in monitoring the implementation of the Code, while noting that it can also be used to support Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator reporting.
3. The Committee requested FAO to continue to assist Members in strengthening statistical capacity and delivery of data, especially in data-poor situations, as well as in integrating innovative technologies.
4. The Committee emphasized the need to improve data and scientific evidence on the role of aquatic products in healthy diets to support policy and action, including advocacy. The

- Committee requested FAO's support in capacity development, and stressed the need to strengthen gender equality, and gender and youth empowerment issues within the strategy.
5. The Committee also emphasized the need for IYAFSA to increase awareness and understanding of this sector for the social and economic development of coastal communities and the provision of food of high nutritional value, sustainable use of natural resources, and COVID-19 response and recovery.
 6. The Committee encouraged FAO to also reflect on the importance of SDG 14 in the new Strategic Framework and the significant role of FAO in achieving this goal, as part of the indivisible 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 7. The Committee recommended the relevant FAO Governing Bodies duly consider integrating actions identified in the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, as well as additional actions concerning post COVID-19 response and recovery, as priority areas, while examining the draft strategic framework and the Medium Term Plan, and to improve the visibility of the sector within FAO.