



**Thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks**

**(New York, 22-23 May 2018)**

**Report**

**SUMMARY**

The present document contains the report of the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (the Agreement), which was held in New York from 22 to 23 May 2018.

The thirteenth round of Informal Consultations was convened to focus on the topic “Science-policy interface”. The resumed Review Conference on the Agreement in 2016 had recommended that the Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement be dedicated, on an annual basis, to the consideration of specific issues arising from the implementation of the Agreement, with a view to improving understanding, sharing experiences and identifying best practices for the consideration of States Parties, as well as the General Assembly and the Review Conference.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. Pursuant to paragraph 55 of General Assembly resolution 72/72 of 5 December 2017, the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (the “Agreement”) was held at United Nations Headquarters, in New York, from 22 to 23 May 2018.

2. The resumed Review Conference on the Agreement in 2016 recommended that the Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement be dedicated, on an annual basis, to the consideration of specific issues arising from the implementation of the Agreement, with a view to improving understanding, sharing experiences and identifying best practices for the consideration of States parties, as well as the General Assembly and the Review Conference (A/CONF.210/2016/5, annex, para. 15).

3. In its resolution 71/123 of 7 December 2016, the General Assembly recalled the recommendation of the Review Conference and requested the Secretary-General to invite States parties and entities referred to in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the “Convention”) and in article 1, paragraph 2(b), of the Agreement to propose specific issues to be considered at the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement and bring those proposals to the attention of the informal consultations concerning the annual resolution of the Assembly on sustainable fisheries through its Coordinator.

4. Subsequently, in its resolution 72/72, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, to convene the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for two days in May 2018 to focus on the topic “Science-policy interface”.

## **II. Organization of work**

### **A. Opening of the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement**

5. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, opened the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement.

6. In his opening remarks, Mr. Serpa Soares noted that since the last round of Informal Consultations in 2016, Benin, Ecuador, Ghana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Thailand and Vanuatu had become party to the Agreement, bringing the total number of Parties to 89, including the European Union.

7. Mr. Serpa Soares stressed the importance of the science-policy interface in ensuring the full and effective implementation of the regime for the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks set forth in the Convention and the Agreement. He further emphasized that the effectiveness of the conservation and management measures adopted pursuant to the Convention and the Agreement was dependent on the availability of sound science and accurate data, as well as the strength and effectiveness of the interaction between scientists and policy-makers aimed at integrating

such science and data into policy-making. He noted, in this regard, that various approaches on how to address this issue had been developed at the global, regional and national levels.

8. He recalled that the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations would provide a valuable opportunity to share information and experiences on how to strengthen the interaction between fisheries managers and scientists. It would also benefit from the discussions taking place in other fora on the science-policy interface, for example, in the General Assembly and its Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (the “Regular Process”).

9. He noted that despite all of the progress achieved thus far in implementing the Agreement, the report of the Secretary-General to the 2016 resumed Review Conference indicated that the overall status of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks had continued to deteriorate since the entry into force of the Agreement. The report also noted that data limitations regarding the status of certain stocks continued to exist and that, as a result, the state of exploitation of some stocks might be unknown. In that regard, he stressed the need for the international community to redouble its efforts to improve the management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, including by strengthening the science-policy interface at all levels.

10. In concluding, Mr. Serpa Soares noted that the 2016 resumed Review Conference decided to keep the Agreement under review through the resumption of the Review Conference at a date not earlier than 2020, to be agreed at a future round of Informal Consultations. He further noted that the outcome of these Informal Consultations, as well as next year’s discussions on the topic on “Performance reviews of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements” would serve to inform discussions at the resumed Review Conference, as well as within the General Assembly, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements (RFMO/As) and other relevant global and regional fora.

## **B. Election of the Chairperson**

11. The meeting elected Mr. Fábio Hazin, Professor of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department of the Universidade Federal Rural of Pernambuco, Brazil, as Chairperson.

## **C. Attendance**

12. Representatives of the following Parties attended the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations: Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Estonia, European Union, Fiji, Greece, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Slovakia, Spain, Thailand, Tonga, and United States of America.

13. Observers from the following States, United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and bodies, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations attended the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations:

- a. States non-parties: Angola, China, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Holy See, Jamaica, Lebanon, Myanmar, Turkey and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of);

- b. Specialized agencies and other relevant organizations, bodies, funds and programmes within the United Nations system and secretariats of relevant organizations and conventions: secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations University (UNU);
- c. Intergovernmental organizations, subregional and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements: Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO).<sup>1</sup>
- d. Non-governmental organizations: International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA), International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF),<sup>2</sup> and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

#### **D. Opening statement of the Chairperson**

14. In his opening statement, the Chairperson recalled how the informal nature of the Consultations in past meetings, had fostered an environment where States Parties and States non-parties to the Agreement alike could exchange information and views and engage in an open and constructive dialogue on issues of mutual concern.

15. He recalled this would be the first round of Informal Consultations to be held after the resumption of the Review Conference on the Agreement held in May 2016. It was also the first round to utilize the new meeting format recommended by the resumed Review Conference, featuring a discussion panel focusing on a specific topic relevant to the implementation of the Agreement. Having served as both a scientist and a policy-maker in the fisheries context, the Chairperson underscored the importance of a strong and effective science-policy interface to inform decision-making, and thus the relevance of this topic of focus to the implementation of the Agreement.

16. The Chairperson expressed optimism that presentations by experts during the different panel segments would spark substantive and interactive discussions and lead to concrete recommendations for the consideration of the resumed Review Conference.

#### **E. Adoption of the meeting documents**

17. The Informal Consultations considered and adopted the provisional agenda of the meeting (see annex II) and draft organization of work for the meeting as proposed.

18. The Informal Consultations also had before it the contributions received pursuant to paragraph 57 of General Assembly resolution 72/72, whereby the Secretary-General was

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<sup>1</sup> The representative of CITES participated electronically in discussion panel segment 1. The representative of SPRFMO contributed an electronic presentation to discussion panel segment 2.

<sup>2</sup> The representative of ISSF contributed an electronic presentation to discussion panel segment 4.

requested to invite States parties to the Agreement, as well as States, and entities referred to in the Convention and in article 1, paragraph 2 (b), of the Agreement, not parties to the Agreement and others invited to participate in the Consultations as observers pursuant to paragraph 56 of the resolution, to submit their views on the science-policy interface. The full text of the contributions received has been posted on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (the Division) of the Office of Legal Affairs.<sup>3</sup>

19. A proposal for amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Assistance Fund established under Part VII of the Agreement was also circulated by the Division to all States Parties to the Agreement in advance of the meeting, at the request of the delegation of Norway.

### **III. General statements**

20. Many delegations expressed their strong support for the Agreement, including as a mechanism for giving effect to the requirements to cooperate under the Convention. They welcomed the latest parties to the Agreement, and encouraged States that were not yet party to consider becoming party to this important legal instrument. It was recalled that a number of States were parties of RFMO/As, but had not yet become parties to the Agreement. Several delegations expressed support for enhancing the effective implementation of the Agreement, including to meet the commitments in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Several other delegations noted the importance of fisheries to their economies, as well as for sustainable development.

21. Several delegations welcomed the new format of the Informal Consultations and expressed the hope that this new format would encourage broader participation, particularly from States non-Parties, and support for the implementation of the Agreement. The new format was considered well-suited to discussing some of the practical issues related to the effective conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks, particularly those issues identified in the recommendations from the last Review Conference.

22. The importance of this year's topic, namely the "Science-policy interface", and the role of science in sustainable fisheries management more broadly, was underlined by many delegations. They noted the importance of using sound scientific research to inform policy in order to achieve the sustainable management of fisheries. The importance for the sustainable management of fisheries of the ecosystem approach, the precautionary approach, integrated approaches, evidence-based management, monitoring and compliance, transparency, and the involvement of different stakeholders, including fishers, indigenous people and the industry was underlined by several delegations.

23. Examples were provided of national and regional-level frameworks, measures and mechanisms to avoid the overexploitation of fishery resources and to ensure fisheries management decisions were based on the best scientific advice available. Delegations also recognized the challenges inherent in such a task, including insufficient capacity, cost, ineffective communication between stakeholders, the lack of data specifically tailored to the needs of policy-makers, as well as the individual challenges faced by RFMO/As. Several delegations highlighted the importance of the role of RFMO/As in sustainable fisheries

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/ICSP13/ICSP13\\_table\\_contributions\\_rcvd.pdf](http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/ICSP13/ICSP13_table_contributions_rcvd.pdf).

management, including in relation to the science-policy interface. A view was expressed that each organization would need to adopt the structures and procedures that worked best for it.

24. The difficulties encountered by new States Parties in developing national legal frameworks to allow for the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement were highlighted, including with respect to data collection. Attention was also drawn to the importance of political will in the establishment of such legal frameworks. Several delegations highlighted how challenges relating to lack of capacity for an effective science-policy interface were being overcome by the Pacific small island developing States through regional cooperation, including utilizing regional institutions.

25. A number of delegations expressed concern over the depletion of funds in the Assistance Fund under Part VII of the Agreement, noting that the Fund was an essential mechanism for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the Agreement relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

#### **IV. Discussion panel on “Science-policy interface”**

##### **A. Segment 1: Legal and policy framework**

26. The first presentation was given by Ms. Minna-Liina Lind, Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations and Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (Regular Process). In her remarks, Ms. Lind gave an overview of the Regular Process, the scientific findings of the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment (the first World Ocean Assessment), in particular with regard to fisheries, and the importance of the Regular Process for the science-policy interface. She recalled the findings of the Assessment that global capture fisheries were approaching the limits of the ocean’s productive capacity and that the outputs of the Regular Process served as an important tool for developing policy in this regard. She explained that while the first cycle of the Regular Process established a baseline for measuring the state of the marine environment, the second cycle would extend to evaluating trends and identifying gaps, culminating in a second world ocean assessment. The Regular Process would thereby support other intergovernmental processes. She also noted that States could contribute to the success of the Regular Process by, inter alia, appointing experts to the Pool of Experts and by designating National Focal Points.

27. In his presentation, Mr. Matthew Camilleri, Senior Fishery Officer, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), recalled the international legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of fisheries, highlighting in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the “Convention”), the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (the “Compliance Agreement”) and the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (the “Port State Measures Agreement”). He noted that central to this framework was also the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the “Code”), which was complemented by several International Plans of Action, Voluntary Guidelines and Strategies and more than 30

technical guidelines related to fisheries. He provided an overview of the national framework for science-based fisheries management to implement these instruments, and noted the importance of such implementation to combat overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. A selection of responses from the FAO biannual questionnaire on the implementation of the Code, illustrating some key statistics in relation to the implementation of a science-based approach to fisheries, was shared with delegations.

28. Via teleconference, Mr. Juan Carlos Vasquez, Chief, Legal Affairs and Compliance team, Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), described the science-policy interface mechanisms within CITES. He provided examples of marine species listed in the Appendices to CITES and explained relevant terms and criteria as they applied to fisheries. He underscored that the listing criteria, which examined the extent and rate of decline of a species, were key for the science-policy interface in CITES. Mr. Vasquez noted that the determination of whether a species should be protected was based on the best available scientific information, and that the determination was made in consultation with the FAO and the relevant RFMOs. He also presented the system of permits and certificates under CITES, and noted that prior to the issuance of export permits, a non-detriment finding should be made at the national level by a scientific institution independent from the management authority. He further drew attention to CITES resolution Conf. 16.7, presenting possible methodologies on the issuance of taking permits which are non-detrimental to the status of stocks.

29. A delegation sought clarification on the link between CITES and IUU fishing, noting that it considered that IUU fishing issues were covered under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and not under CITES. Mr. Vasquez noted that, as a regulator of international trade, CITES covered both legal and illegal trade, and that IUU fishing formed part of illegal trade. Mr. Camilleri noted that the concept of IUU fishing was initially developed in the International Plan of Action on IUU (IPOA-IUU). He further noted that the Port State Measures Agreement, which addressed IUU fishing, made reference to CITES and included an obligation to ensure that no CITES-listed species were being traded.

30. Another delegation sought clarification with regard to the specific case where shark fishing took place on the high seas in an area covered by an RFMO under whose rules such an activity was permissible. Mr. Vasquez noted that any fishing of CITES-listed species on the high seas that would bring the catch onto a vessel (which is regulated by a State) would qualify as “introduction from the sea”, and thus be covered by CITES. He noted that CITES worked with RFMO/As and other entities in complimentary ways to support regulations. He further noted that in CITES low-cost practical measures were sought to facilitate implementation. Mr. Camilleri highlighted the fact that IUU fishing included three distinct components, which should be given equal weight, and not just illegal fishing. Unreported and unregulated fishing were also considered detrimental to science-based fisheries management.

31. An observer delegation from a non-governmental organization stressed the importance of consulting FAO and RFMO/As before adding species into a CITES Appendix. In this regard, the delegation pointed to a specific instance in which it considered that the recommendations of external experts had not been followed by the CITES Contracting Parties, thereby possibly undermining science-based decision-making. Mr. Vasquez noted that there was a formal process for the consultation of external experts whenever the addition of marine species to the CITES Appendices was being considered. He stressed that the goal of the consultation process was to provide policy-makers with sound scientific advice, but

noted that it was then up to the States Parties to decide how best to implement such advice. He further clarified that in most instances, the scientific advice had been followed by the Contracting Parties to CITES.

32. In response to a question regarding whether fisheries would be sustainable if existing instruments were fully implemented, Mr. Camilleri noted that implementation, in its broader sense, required proper data collection and scientific research, appropriate regulation, monitoring, enforcement and review, and that not all States were in a position to fully implement even minimum standards under international instruments. The FAO was providing assistance to countries in this regard. He further noted that tackling IUU fishing was essential, alongside the development of science-based policy, to ensure that policy initiatives were not undermined. In addition, Mr. Camilleri recalled that the Port State Measures Agreement also allowed port States to use measures to enforce compliance with CITES restrictions.

33. The Chairperson inquired as to how chapters of the second world ocean assessment relating to the status of fisheries would relate to the work conducted by FAO, in particular the biannual State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) report. Ms. Lind, in her response, noted that in the first cycle of the Regular Process, the first World Ocean Assessment took due account of the work carried out by FAO.

34. Several delegations recalled the many international commitments aimed at combatting IUU fishing, but noted that IUU fishing continued to undermine management measures and threaten the effectiveness of the science-policy interface, given that unreported fishing affected data collection and assessment efforts, and could ultimately lead to the collapse of stocks. They expressed the hope that IUU fishing would be tackled in a more stringent manner in the future. Mr. Vasquez stated that the international community should strengthen compliance mechanisms to combat this trend.

## **B. Segment 2: Experiences, challenges and opportunities at the regional level**

35. Mr. Peter Flewwelling, Compliance Manager, North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), reported on the practice of NPFC in relation to the science-policy interface from that organization's perspective. He highlighted barriers to, and solutions for, improving the scientific advice and management decisions taken, including the continued awareness and use of basic fisheries management principles; the precautionary and ecosystem approaches; and reliance on the best scientific advice available at the time of decision-making. He reviewed possible ways to strengthen the science-policy interface, including improving technology, strengthening compliance mechanisms, sharing information and best practices with other bodies and developing common approaches in overlapping regulatory areas. He also emphasized the importance of cooperation and coordination with other fisheries bodies to identify ways and means to strengthen the science-policy interface.

36. Mr. Darius Campbell, Executive Secretary, North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), highlighted the need for transparency in the science-policy interface and shared the experience of NEAFC in receiving its scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). He pointed out the role of the RFMO in providing scientific data for decision-making, the importance of science for formulating technical measures, as well as conservation and management measures particularly for vulnerable marine ecosystems. He emphasized the need for integrated scientific advice in common or

overlapping regulatory areas, as well as opportunities for using science in an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management which took into account other human impacts such as plastic pollution and ongoing environmental change.

37. Mr. Michael Schirripa, Chair, Stock Assessment Methods Working Group, International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), stressed the risk of mismanagement of stocks if complex stock assessment results were not communicated clearly and effectively to policy-makers. He pointed out how the KOBE process had promoted more consistent and effective approaches in the communication of scientific advice across different tuna RFMOs. In this regard, he highlighted the effectiveness of visual communication methods to overcome linguistic challenges, but emphasized that communication approaches needed to be updated to reflect the evolution in scientific approaches, such as the move towards the use of management strategy evaluation (MSE) models.

38. Mr. Sebastian Rodriguez Alfaro, Scientific Officer, European Commission, shared the experience of the European Union on the interface of science and policy, including regarding the use of advisory councils and joint scientific committees. In terms of challenges and opportunities, he noted the development of strategic plans for science, adoption and implementation of management strategies, improving communication between scientists and managers, linking scientific work in RFMO/As with career development, the adequacy of resources for increasingly complex scientific needs, capacity-building, involvement of stakeholders, coordination of large-scale research initiatives, and developing synergies and cooperation between tuna and non-tuna RFMOs.

39. In a video presentation, Ms. Johanne Fischer with Ms. Marianne Vignaux and Mr. Jongkwan Ahn, secretariat of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO), described the science-policy interface within SPRFMO and highlighted the importance of science-based measures in its management decisions, including in relation to bottom fishing. Scientific advice also played an important role in the development of new or exploratory fisheries, in particular when developing fisheries operational plans and data collection plans, as well as a by-catch measure for seabirds. The presenters highlighted the following challenges relating to science-based management: fostering the science-policy interface, strengthening the observer programme as an important tool for generation of data, advancing new conservation and management measures, continuing the development of appropriate spatial management for bottom fisheries and resulting measures, addressing important future science and policy questions, such as those related to climate change, and strengthening collaboration in both science and management with other organizations.

40. Ms. Susan Jackson, President, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), in a video presentation, explained the work and role of ISSF in promoting science-based initiatives for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of tuna stocks, reducing by-catch and promoting the use of ecosystem approaches. She highlighted the link between the presentation of data and adoption of management measures and legislation, as well as the need for capacity-building to improve the understanding of the fisheries management process and how to implement, monitor and enforce the various relevant instruments. A key objective of the ISSF Strategic Plan was to cooperate with and support RFMO/As and to advocate the adoption and implementation of science-based management measures to

RFMO/A members so that tuna stocks and marine ecosystems were managed comprehensively and sustainably.

41. In the ensuing discussion, some delegations and panellists observed that RFMOs had adopted different structures and processes for producing and receiving scientific information. The view was expressed that, rather than one “best approach”, there were a variety of possible approaches. A panellist indicated that better stock assessments were produced when there was good knowledge within RFMO/As of both the fisheries and the industry. Another panellist highlighted the benefit of keeping science separate and independent of policy in order to promote and ensure a robust scientific process. The importance of cooperative and ongoing research in assessing migration, natural mortality and stock structure was considered to be crucial for fisheries management.

42. Some delegations and panellists also identified the benefits of strengthened cooperation and coordination among RFMO/As. A panellist noted that RFMO/As are moving towards a more cooperative approach, including through the sharing of scientific information and best practices. It was suggested that increasing the capacity of individual contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties to implement RFMO/A measures could help create common practices in RFMO/As. Several delegations cited examples of strengthened cooperation among RFMO/As, such as joint research initiatives and surveys, including cost-sharing, as well as the establishment of memoranda of understanding between RFMO/As. Delegations also noted the benefits of the first KOBE process to fisheries management, which promoted interaction between scientists and policy makers/managers and allowed scientific information to be communicated more clearly to managers.

43. Several delegations noted the benefits of involving contracting parties in data collection in RFMOs and scientific bodies, such as reducing costs and duplication, improving the quality of research surveys, increasing understanding in the research community and allowing for cross-fertilization between organizations. The need for capacity-building to allow for the participation of developing States was also emphasized in that regard.

44. Delegations underscored the importance of facilitating effective communication between scientists and managers so that decisions in RFMO/As could be made in accordance with the best scientific information available. The representative of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) highlighted the organization’s approach to the science-policy interface, including the use of formal and informal meetings bringing together scientists and policy-makers and the application of an ecosystem approach.

45. Several delegations and a panellist highlighted the benefits of a management strategy evaluation to determine whether management objectives would be achieved in the future. It was noted that a better understanding of risks and implications would allow managers to be better prepared to accept risks or adopt restrictions. A panellist noted the technical challenges to implementing a management strategy evaluation approach and noted the potential need for capacity-building in this regard. Support was also expressed for the use of harvest control rules as a way to de-politicize decision-making processes and take into account all management objectives and uncertainties, including those from IUU fishing and climate change.

46. Delegations and panellists also reaffirmed the importance of applying an ecosystem approach in RFMO/As to ensure the long-term management of stocks. The complexities of

science and challenges in applying an ecosystem approach in practice were noted by both delegations and panellists, including the need for close interaction between different sectors and among RFMO/As. It was noted that an ecosystem approach could be promoted through diversification of scientific expertise in RFMO/As, so as to ensure that the complexities of the marine environment could be taken into account beyond stock assessment. Some delegations supported a proposal to meet on the twentieth anniversary of the 2001 Reykjavik Conference on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem to discuss relevant developments in scientific capacity since then, in particular with regard to the application of an ecosystem approach. A delegation stressed the need for further progress in applying ecosystem-based management plans as well as the advantages of exchanging best practices. It was suggested to strengthen or expand the KOBE process, and also to evolve from a single management objective approach to a management strategy evaluation.

47. Delegations and panellists noted that there were ongoing concerns due to continued IUU fishing and bottom fishing. Several delegations stressed the importance of taking into account IUU fishing in catch estimates and encouraged better information sharing among enforcement institutions, scientists and policy-makers. A panellist noted challenges in receiving accurate reports on fishing activities from contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties. In this regard, the Review of Studies Estimating IUU Fishing and the Methodologies Utilized conducted by FAO in 2016 was highlighted. Another panellist observed that traditional assessments were not effective for measuring the impacts of bottom fishing given the sensitive nature of the stocks and highlighted the move towards adaptive management strategies.

### **C. Segment 3: Experiences, challenges and opportunities at the national level**

48. The third segment was an interactive discussion in which delegations shared information on their national experiences, challenges and opportunities in relation to the science-policy interface.

49. The delegation of the United States noted that the science-policy interface was a crucial mechanism to ensure that managers and decision-makers had access to the best scientific advice available. In this regard, in the United States, the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act* required that fisheries conservation and management measures be based upon the best scientific information available. The Act provided guidance on what constituted best information available, scientific peer review standards, and the role of scientific and statistical committees in the review of scientific information. Regional fishery management councils, which comprised a wide range of stakeholders, were responsible for fisheries management in United States federal waters. These councils were required to develop and amend fishery management plans within their individual regions in accordance with the latest scientific evidence.

50. The delegation of the United States also affirmed its support for ecosystem-based fishery management and noted the development of an ecosystem-based fishery management policy by its National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries body (NOAA Fisheries), together with a road map that will guide implementation of this policy over the next five years. The delegation also highlighted its ongoing work to build an ecosystem assessment programme, as well as the development of a systematic peer review process and the creation of a management strategy evaluation working group by NOAA Fisheries.

51. The delegation of Canada highlighted the importance of the oceans to Canadian coastal communities and to its economy. Global ocean issues, including fisheries and the impact of climate change on those fisheries, were a key global priority to be discussed as a main theme at the G7 Leaders' Summit to be held in Quebec, Canada, in June 2018.

52. The delegation of Canada indicated that the collection of scientific data and information critical to making sound and sustainable fisheries management decisions was a priority. It also emphasized the importance of seeking stakeholder participation, in particular by engaging with indigenous peoples and factoring in their traditional knowledge into scientific advice and in decision-making. The delegation of Canada suggested that there was a need to look beyond single-species management to further the goal of ecosystem management.

53. Support was expressed by several delegations for the inclusion of traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples as part of the knowledge base for taking management decisions. It was further noted that knowledge acquired by people that had fished in a particular area for a long period of time should also be taken into account. The delegation of the European Union highlighted the positive effect of its advisory councils, which were stakeholder-led organizations, on fisheries management by the EU.

54. The delegation of Spain highlighted its own experience in relation to the application of the science-policy interface as a fishing nation, including with regard to the collection of data necessary for scientific research and the formulation of scientific advice. It emphasized the responsibilities of flag States in this regard. The delegation of Spain noted that fluid cooperation between science, industry and administrations was necessary to create fisheries management policies that produced a healthy state of fisheries resources.

55. The delegation of Iceland noted the importance of fisheries in the development of its economy, and emphasized that fisheries management and science were at the core of its national debate on the use of natural resources. It also noted that the Minister for Fisheries of Iceland was required to consult the national maritime research institutes before taking any fisheries management decisions, such as decisions relating to the setting of total allowable catch.

56. FAO shared insights on challenges in implementing sustainable fisheries management, in particular for developing countries. It was emphasized that capacity-building assistance should be provided in a cohesive manner to ensure the success of such initiatives beyond the period of assistance. In this regard, it was important to build complementarity between law and policy, and to ensure that scientific programmes, institutional structures, enforcement mechanisms and operational procedures all worked together so that their effectiveness could continue in a holistic manner. The need for effective coordination and cooperation between national agencies was also highlighted.

57. The delegation of the European Union made reference to its bilateral sustainable fisheries agreements as an example of its scientific cooperation with third countries and highlighted its Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement with Guinea-Bissau as a successful example of how such cooperation could strengthen the science-policy interface.

58. The delegation of Mauritius shared its vision for enabling the sustainable development of the fisheries sector and ensuring continued economic growth and social development within a framework of good governance based on sound science. The delegation highlighted its active participation in the work of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), including the participation of its fishery managers in IOTC workshops aimed at connecting science and management. It noted that the issuance of a license for the fishing of tuna and tuna-like species in the exclusive economic zone of Mauritius was dependent on the licensees' compliance with the provisions of relevant IOTC resolutions regarding an ecosystem approach. The delegation of Mauritius also noted the importance of marine spatial planning in achieving a harmonious balance between conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, particularly in light of increasing demands on maritime space from a variety of sectors, and drew attention to recent efforts by Mauritius in this regard.

59. The Chairperson stressed that science should be the basis of all fisheries management, bearing in mind the need for a precautionary approach where such scientific evidence was unavailable or unreliable. He further emphasized that a participatory decision-making process, which included all relevant stakeholders, was crucial for effective management of fisheries. The Chairperson echoed the importance of interagency cooperation, noting that, in Brazil's experience, all authorities dealing directly with fisheries or fishing vessels needed to work in a cohesive manner to achieve integrated fisheries management. The crucial importance of the Assistance Fund established under Part VII of the Agreement to building national capacity for an effective science-policy interface was also reiterated by the Chairperson, as this Fund was a key tool to support the implementation of the Agreement.

**D. Segment 4: Strengthening the science-policy interface in the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks through the resumed Review Conference on the Agreement and other intergovernmental processes, and the potential contribution of multi-stakeholder partnerships**

60. Mr. Eskild Kirkegaard, Chairman, Advisory Committee of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) spoke about the contribution of ICES to the strengthening of the science-policy interface for sustainable fisheries, highlighting in particular ICES' scientific advisory work and the comprehensive framework, which had been developed for the provision of such advice. The framework included rules and criteria for the provision of scientific advice, which were consistent with the Agreement and aimed at delivering advice based on the best available knowledge, quality assured, unbiased and non-political, relevant to the clients, developed in a transparent process and provided to decision-makers in a timely manner.

61. Ms. Amanda Nickson, Director of International Fisheries, The Pew Charitable Trusts, discussed tools, which could be employed to strengthen the science-policy interface in the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. These included the use of formally constituted "dialogue groups" as a forum for exchange of information and best practices, the development of engaging and uncomplicated visual communication tools, and the development and implementation of "harvest strategies" or "management procedures" approaches, whereby multi-annual planning tools were developed through a process where managers agreed on objectives and scientists informed the roadmap to these objectives. While the development of these tools could be time-consuming, they

provided the best chance of meeting the needs of stakeholders, safeguarding the independence of the science, and ensuring transparent and effective management over time.

62. Mr. Javier Garat Pérez, Chairman, International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA), provided the perspective of the fishing industry on strengthening the science-policy interface for sustainable fisheries, with a focus on straddling stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. In this regard, ICFA's efforts were aimed at ensuring that flag State authorities took the necessary management decisions based on sound science. He also highlighted the important role of the industry in collecting scientific data by fishing vessels, as well as in informed policy-making.

63. Mr. Pierre Pepin, Senior Research Scientist, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, gave a presentation on Canada's experiences, challenges and opportunities within the science-policy interface for sustainable fisheries. He provided an overview of Canada's sustainable fisheries framework and noted a number of challenges in adopting a defined ecosystem-approach to fisheries management. These challenges included the incorporation and development of practical tools for multispecies management and environmentally sound decision-making, especially given the increasing complexity of information needed in the decision-making process and the need for evidence-based advice.

64. Mr. Michele Ameri, Legal Officer, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, underscored the role of science in the implementation of the Convention and the Agreement and highlighted the role of the Review Conference on the Agreement and the General Assembly in strengthening the science-policy interface. He drew attention to specific examples that emerged from the contributions on the science-policy interface submitted by States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organization to the Informal Consultations as possible elements of a strong effective science-policy interface. These included: funding and organizing research programmes into specific species or regions; the use of electronic reporting systems; standardization of methodology for data collection and data validation; seeking independent scientific advice; participation of different types of stakeholders in the formulation of scientific advice and in policy-making; improved communication between scientists and policy-makers; cooperation with other entities; and performance review processes.

65. During the subsequent discussions, a delegation, noting the impacts of climate change on the marine environment and fisheries resources, stressed the need to seriously consider broader, more adaptive, fisheries management approaches and regimes. Responding to a question from a delegation on how climate change impacts were being considered both in scientific advice and in decision-making, and seeking input on opportunities for adaptive strategies to factor in these changes, Mr. Pepin questioned whether the policy tools needed to make effective decisions rapidly were currently available. In this regard, it was noted that policy-makers needed to be more reactive and ready to act as the changes were already occurring. He pointed out that the biggest concern in responding to climate change was dealing with its unexpected effects. Mr. Kirkegaard also noted that an adaptive approach was necessary and agreed that unforeseen effects were a major challenge. He explained that data reference points needed to be adapted continuously to take into account these changes. Ms. Nickson referred to multi-year management framework plans as one of the best tools available to consider the key impacts of climate change.

66. A delegation noted that Management Strategy Evaluations (MSE) could be useful in depoliticizing decision-making and developing relationships and trust between stakeholders that lead to sustainable outcomes.

67. Responding to a question from a delegation on the applicability and usefulness of MSE in data-poor fisheries, Mr. Pepin pointed out that it is possible to conduct MSE on data-poor systems but stressed the limitations and difficulties of doing so. Mr. Kirkegaard queried whether a harvest strategy-based approach was the right way to deal with such stocks, as the solution might not necessarily be in gathering more data, but in developing adaptive mitigation methods. Ms. Nickson referred to ongoing work being done on the role of MSE for data poor stocks and concluded that the approach could be helpfully used, but required adaptation.

68. The importance of observer data in developing strong science for decision-making and providing information to contribute to stock assessments or other analysis was noted.

69. Several delegations and panellists noted the need to address the socioeconomic impacts of climate change on fisheries and fishing communities and emphasized the importance of taking into account socioeconomic factors when applying an ecosystem-based approach. However, it was noted that research into the socioeconomic impacts associated with fisheries, although important, remained in its infancy and needed to be strengthened. In this regard, the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, was highlighted as the global mechanism to regularly review the environmental, economic and social aspects of the state of the world's oceans, including in relation to fisheries. Mr. Perez confirmed that from a fishing industry perspective, the socioeconomic dimension was as important as the environmental dimension.

70. A delegation drew further attention to the link between fisheries and food security in developing States, as well as the need to take into account the socioeconomic resources of countries to implement conservation measures .

71. FAO shared information on two major initiatives of relevance to the implementation of the Agreement: the ABNJ Common Oceans Programme and the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (the "Global Record"). It was noted that the Global Record would shortly be publicly available and States that had not yet contributed to it were encouraged to do so, by several delegations.

#### **E. Segment 5: Addressing the special requirements of developing countries through Part VII of the Agreement**

72. The fifth segment had two presentations, which was followed by an interactive discussion in which delegations shared information regarding their national experiences, as well as perspectives, from the floor.

73. Mr. Brian Kumasi, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), gave a presentation on the special requirements of developing countries, in particular small island developing States, in terms of fisheries management. He described the experience of Pacific

small island developing States with the science-policy interface and outlined the respective roles of the FFA, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). In the context of operationalizing Part VII of the Agreement, Mr. Kumasi shared insight into the requirements of the WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure 2013/06, noting that it operated as a checklist to ensure that proposals to WCPFC considered their impact on small island developing States. Mr. Kumasi observed that the high compliance rates of FFA small island developing States with their obligations under the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean and its conservation and management measures was evidence of the success of the sub-regional support system. He concluded with the recommendation that targeted assistance to small island developing States should address capacity constraints.

74. Ms. Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli, Director, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (the Division), and Mr. Matthew Camilleri, Senior Fisheries Officer, FAO delivered a joint presentation on the role and status of the Assistance Fund under Part VII of the Agreement. Ms. Goettsche-Wanli recalled that the Fund had been established by General Assembly resolution 58/14 of 24 November 2003, and was administered by FAO in collaboration with the Division. She recalled that the Fund was the only dedicated capacity-building measure specifically aimed at assisting developing States Parties in the implementation of the Agreement, and was thus essential to meeting the aims of the Agreement. She highlighted the broad scope of the Fund's Terms of Reference and provided examples of the assistance that could be provided. Ms. Goettsche-Wanli expressed concern that the Fund remained depleted, and recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/72 of 5 December 2017, had urged States, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, national institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as natural and juridical persons, to make voluntary financial contributions to the Fund. She concluded that significantly more funds than were previously available were necessary in order to ensure that the Fund could provide sustained and meaningful assistance.

75. Mr. Matthew Camilleri, Senior Fisheries Officer, FAO, stressed the important role the Part VII Fund had played in facilitating the participation of developing States in the meetings of RFMOs, noting that since the Fund's depletion, RFMOs had expressed concern that attendance of delegates from some developing States has substantially decreased. Mr. Camilleri added that besides requests for assistance with travel, requests for training had also been received in the past. However, he pointed out that even when receiving contributions, the average annual costs of travel assistance covered by the Fund had nearly equaled the average fund balance, which meant that there were very limited funds available for other purposes. Mr. Camilleri stated that FAO had taken note of concerns raised by States regarding their inability to contribute to general trust funds, and also that it was ready to adapt the structure of the Fund should any future amendments to the Terms of Reference require it.

76. The Chair stressed that it was difficult for developing States to bring experts from capital to attend meetings without financial assistance. He emphasized that the low level of participation at the Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement was indicative of the need for assistance from the Fund to meet the costs of travel of developing States Parties.

77. During the discussions, the importance of the special requirements of developing States as recognized in the preamble of the Agreement was emphasized. In this regard, it was noted that without capacity-building, the gap between developing and developed States would widen .

78. Several States concurred with the panellists on the importance of the Part VII Fund. They also highlighted the importance of broader and effective participation of developing States in the scientific bodies of RFMO/As. It was noted that such participation should go beyond raw data collection and include analytical work and provision of advice as well.

79. A delegation highlighted the need for targeted cooperation and training at the regional and sub-regional level, noting that it carried out such projects in regional Pacific forums as well as bilaterally. That delegation underlined its support for the Fund, and noted that it was in the process of making a voluntary contribution to it. An observer delegation highlighted the capacity-building assistance it was currently providing to African States.

80. It was underlined that while numerous capacity-building efforts had taken place in the areas of monitoring and control, the Agreement also contemplated assistance to developing States to access high seas fisheries and develop their own fisheries.

81. In response to comments on the participation of developing States in RFMO/As, Mr. Kumasi stated that FFA had been trying to facilitate not just attendance, but full participation of developing States in the work of RFMO/As, and had focused on acquiring targeted assistance for its members.

82. In response to a question on the respective roles of the DOALOS and the FAO in administering the Part VII Assistance Fund, Ms. Goettsche-Wanli and Mr. Camilleri clarified the internal procedures for receiving and considering applications, emphasizing the strong cooperation between the two entities.

83. Support was expressed for amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Fund that could facilitate future contributions. In response to a question on the resource implications of the amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Fund proposed by Norway, Mr. Camilleri informed delegations that an increased variety of projects, which could take place if the amendments of the Terms of Reference were to be adopted, would require more administrative work on the part of FAO. He noted, however, that this workload was anticipated and would be reflected in agreements with donors.

#### **V. Initial preparatory work for the resumption of the Review Conference on the Agreement and consideration of the next round of Informal Consultations of the States Parties to the Agreement.**

84. The Chair indicated to delegations his intention to treat agenda items 7 and 8 concurrently. In that regard, he noted that, in 2016, the resumed Review Conference had agreed to keep the Agreement under review through the resumption of the Review Conference at a date not earlier than 2020, to be agreed at a future round of Informal

Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement. He further noted that in its resolution 71/123, the General Assembly had decided to conduct the next review of actions taken by States and RFMO/As to implement the General Assembly resolution provisions on the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks in 2020. With regard to agenda item 8, on the next round of Informal Consultations, the Chair reminded delegations that, as indicated in General Assembly resolution 72/72, the fourteenth round of Informal Consultations, to be held in 2019, would focus on the topic of “Performance reviews of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements”.

85. On the resumption of the Review Conference, many delegations expressed their support for the Conference to be held in 2021, citing their desire to avoid time conflicts with other events. The review of actions taken by States and RFMO/As to implement the General Assembly resolution provisions on the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep sea fish stocks, as well as the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction were cited in this regard.

86. Many delegations also expressed their support for the new format of the Informal Consultations as a means of exploring issues related to the implementation of the Agreement. However, disappointment was expressed by several delegations with the limited number of submissions by States as well as with the low participation in the meeting. In this regard, it was proposed holding future rounds of Informal Consultations back-to-back with other relevant meetings held at United Nations Headquarters. The need to avoid overlaps with other meetings held outside of the United Nations, such as those of RFMO/As was also highlighted, in order to increase participation in the Informal Consultations. Some delegations proposed providing States with specific questions on the topic of the next round of Informal Consultations in advance of the meeting as means to encourage additional submissions and interactive dialogue during the meeting. A suggestion was made to focus one round of the Informal Consultations on challenges faced by developing States in implementing the Agreement. It was also recalled that another delegation had previously proposed the topic of “Ecosystem approach to fisheries management” for a future round of Informal Consultations.

87. In summarizing the discussions under agenda items 7 and 8, the Chairperson noted that delegations supported the new format for the Informal Consultations. However, the low number of written contributions and limited attendance in the meeting was a common concern. There was agreement to provide a list of questions to delegations in order to guide future discussions and to stimulate delegations to prepare themselves for the meetings. He further noted the recommendation that the Division take into account other fisheries meetings when recommending the best possible dates of future rounds of Informal Consultations. Higher attendance by fisheries experts could be facilitated by holding future rounds of Informal Consultations in proximity with other oceans-related meetings. He concluded that following the discussion, 2021 would be targeted as the year for the resumption of the

Review Conference, with a decision to be taken at next year's round of Informal Consultations.

88. A suggestion was made for delegations to indicate the presumptive Chair of the next round of Informal Consultations to facilitate the role of the Secretariat in organizing the meeting. In this regard, several delegations expressed their support for the current Chairperson, Mr. Fabio Hazin, to continue chairing the Informal Consultations during the fourteenth round in 2018. Mr. Hazin confirmed his availability.

## **VI. Other matters**

### **A. Proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Part VII Assistance Fund**

89. The delegation of Norway presented its proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Part VII Assistance Fund. It identified some shortcomings, and noted, in particular, that the Fund had been used exclusively for travel-related expenses. It recalled that there had been agreement at the resumed Review Conference in 2016 to broaden ways in which the Fund would be used, noting that it had predominantly been used to fund travel.

90. A number of delegations expressed their gratitude to Norway for the proposal, and agreed that the Fund should be used for the other purposes set out in its Terms of Reference as well. These delegations also expressed their support for the proposal to allow "earmarking" of funds for specific projects and activities, but expressed their concern regarding the proposed limit on the use of funds for travel.

91. A revised draft of the proposal was subsequently circulated by the delegation of Norway, which took into account feedback received from other delegations, including with respect to the limit on spending for travel expenses. The delegation of Norway further announced that it could accommodate two proposals had been received after the circulation of the revised text.

92. Several delegations expressed their support for Norway's proposed changes and the flexibility that they would afford to States in making contributions to the Fund.

93. However, some delegations indicated that they would need more time to consider the proposed amendments, citing concerns about how the proposed changes would affect the roles of the Division and the FAO. It was noted that ambiguity existed regarding who would decide on projects proposed by the United Nations itself as no specific entity within the United Nations had been designated, and about the potential problems that could be caused by allowing donors to impose reporting requirements on States receiving assistance.

94. While some delegations proposed reverting to the issue at the fourteenth round of Informal Consultations, other delegations expressed the view that the changes were needed urgently and therefore preferred to deal with the proposal intersessionally.

95. Delegations agreed to continue to consult intersessionally and to convene an informal working group of States Parties to the Agreement in the margins of the informal consultations on the annual General Assembly draft resolution on sustainable fisheries to be held from 6 to 13 November 2018 to consider the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference.

96. The Chairperson invited Norway to chair the informal working group and requested that it report to the Chair of the Informal Consultations on whether an agreement on the amendment of the terms of reference had been reached. In case no agreement could be reached at that stage, it was decided that the issue be dealt with at the next round of Informal Consultations in 2019.

## **VII. Closing of the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement**

97. The Chairperson noted that, as in the past, a report of the present round of Informal Consultations would be prepared with the assistance of the Secretariat. The report would again only be made available in English since no translation of the document into all official languages of the United Nations had been budgeted for. The report would be posted on the website of the Division for two weeks to allow delegations the opportunity to make comments before the report was finalized.

98. The key points relating to the strengthening of the science-policy interface that emerged from the presentations and discussions during the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations have been summarized by the Chairperson and are presented in annex I to the present report.

99. The Chairperson expressed his appreciation to all delegations for their efficient work and cooperation, as well as to the Secretariat for its excellent assistance in the organization of the meeting. He expressed his particular appreciation to all of the panellists who had provided their expertise in the context of the discussion panel.

## **Annex I. Key points relating to the strengthening of the science-policy interface raised during the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations, summarized by the Chairperson**

On the basis of the presentations and discussions at the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement, the Chairperson would like to draw attention to the following key points that, in his personal view, emerged from the meeting. It is noted that since these key points were not discussed at the meeting, they remain under the sole responsibility of the Chairperson.

- An effective science-policy interface is vital to the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the Agreement, as the conservation and management of living marine resources under both instruments is to be based on the best scientific evidence available.
- Scientific research and the collection of accurate, relevant and complete data by flag States, coastal States and port States, individually and through RFMO/As, is required, so as to address data gaps and inform policy-making. Such data should be collected and compiled in a transparent and consistent manner, incorporating peer-reviewed scientific information and information from a variety of stakeholders, including indigenous people, civil society and industry groups, in such a way as to enable statistically meaningful analysis for the purposes of fishery resource conservation and management. It should also be verified, and provided in an agreed format and in a timely manner in accordance with the Agreement and its annex I.
- IUU fishing undermines the science-policy interface by reducing the reliability of fishing data. Greater efforts should be made to quantify and take into account the impact of IUU fishing on fish stocks and on the marine environment more generally in developing management measures.
- There is a need to strengthen the application of an ecosystem approach to fisheries, in particular given the increase in anthropogenic stressors on the marine environment from different sources.
- Strengthening the science-policy interface is critical for the effective application of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, in order to take into account the broader impacts of fishing activities on the marine environment, including on marine biodiversity and associated and dependent species, as well as the impact of external environmental factors, including climate change, on fisheries.
- More needs to be done in fisheries management to address the uncertainties regarding the impacts of climate change on fisheries, including through adaptive management strategies and the application of the precautionary approach where information is unavailable, unreliable or uncertain.
- Cooperation and coordination amongst different RFMO/As, as well as between RFMO/As and other relevant international organizations, as well as States should be enhanced to share information and best practices and to increase the coherence and consistency of scientific advice and management measures. Maximum use should be made, in particular, of existing cooperation mechanisms, such as the KOBE process, to enhance such cooperation and coordination.

- It is important to ensure that scientific advice is taken into account by fisheries managers. In this regard, multi-year and adaptive management tools, such as harvest control rules and management strategy evaluations can serve to depoliticize decision-making.
- It is important that science be policy-independent, while also maintaining policy relevance. To this end, there needs to be effective two-way communication between scientists and policy-makers. In this regard, formal and informal interactions between scientists, managers and policy-makers could be improved and facilitated, including through the creation of joint taskforces or working groups. Communication tools and techniques, including visual communication techniques, could also be utilized to ensure a better understanding of the information requested and the advice provided.
- The participation of a broad range of stakeholders, for example indigenous people, including through multi-stakeholder consultation processes with scientists and managers, should be encouraged as a way to improve fisheries management.
- It is important to consider not only the environmental, but also the socioeconomic dimension in the science-policy interface, and to strengthen research into the socioeconomic impacts associated with fisheries. In this regard, the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, which is a global mechanism that regularly reviews the environmental, economic and social aspects of the state of the world's oceans, enhancing the science-policy interface, is of particular relevance to fisheries managers.
- There is a need to support States and RFMO/As in strengthening the science-policy interface, including, in particular, to enhance the application of an ecosystem approach. Training and other forms of capacity-building are essential in this regard.
- The special requirements of developing States in relation to the science-policy interface must be considered and addressed, including through the Assistance Fund under Part VII of the Agreement. It is crucial that this important funding mechanism, which is an essential part of the Agreement itself, be revitalized through adequate and sustainable funding.
- The General Assembly, through its resolution on sustainable fisheries, and the Review Conference for the Agreement, through its recommendations, can play an important role in the strengthening of the science-policy interface at the global level.



## Annex II

### **Thirteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (the Agreement)**

#### **Agenda**

**22-23 May 2018  
United Nations, New York**

1. Opening of the thirteenth round of Informal Consultations by a representative of the Secretary-General.
2. Election of the Chairperson.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Organization of work.
5. General statements.
6. Discussion panel on “Science-policy interface”
  - (a) Segment 1: Legal and policy framework;
  - (b) Segment 2: Experiences, challenges and opportunities at the regional level;
  - (c) Segment 3: Experiences, challenges and opportunities at the national level;
  - (d) Segment 4: Strengthening the science-policy interface in the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks through the resumed Review Conference on the Agreement and other intergovernmental processes, and the potential contribution of multi-stakeholder partnerships;
  - (e) Segment 5: Addressing the special requirements of developing countries through Part VII of the Agreement.
7. Initial preparatory work for the resumption of the Review Conference on the Agreement.
8. Consideration of the next round of Informal Consultations of the States Parties to the Agreement.
9. Other matters.