

**FAO INPUTS IN RELATION TO RESOLUTION A/RES/72/73
CONCERNING “OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA”
FOR THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**SECTION I - IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND RELATED AGREEMENTS AND
INSTRUMENTS**

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 5

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continues to provide legislative assistance to Member States including, in the development of fisheries and aquaculture legislation, and related legislation. In the provision of legislative advice and assistance, congruity of national legislation with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (the Convention), is paramount. Certain aspects that particular attention is placed upon include: the rights, jurisdiction and duties of States within waters under national jurisdiction, monitoring control and enforcement rights and duties within the exclusive economic zone, territorial sea, archipelagic waters (in the case of an archipelagic State), and internal waters, jurisdiction over flagged vessels, navigation on the high seas and in waters under the jurisdiction of a coastal State, the implementation of rights and obligations related to fishing, and, the implications of binding decisions of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs).

With the Convention, FAO legislative assistance also takes into account international fisheries treaties and other instruments. Provisions of the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, the FAO Compliance Agreement, and the Port State Measures Agreement are examples of treaties applied. Instruments such as the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its supplementary instruments, the Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas are examples of soft law instruments used, at the very least, in the formulation of principles for decision-making. Although such soft law instruments are non-binding by nature, they are however based upon provisions of the Convention, and are binding when incorporated in measures of RFMOs or national legislation.

RFMOs are established and recognized within the framework of the Convention. Given their functions and management competence, RFMOs are elaborating upon provisions of the Convention, including but not limited to provisions relating to straddling fish stocks, highly migratory fish stocks, discrete high seas fish stocks, anadromous fish stocks, and catadromous fish stocks. Specific binding decisions of RFMOs build upon the provisions of the Convention and are to be implemented by States Parties or cooperating non-parties within national legislative frameworks. In the provision of legislative assistance, the FAO includes obligations and requirements of RFMOs as well.

Since 2017, Member States that the FAO has provided legal assistance for implementation of the Convention and international fisheries instruments to include: Bahamas, Cambodia, Chile, Costa Rica, Papua New Guinea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago.

SECTION II - CAPACITY-BUILDING

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 15

Development of technical legal skills at national level for the implementation of the UNCLOS

The FAO develops technical legal skills in support of the implementation of the Convention at the national level through capacity building activities under technical cooperation programmes, capacity development in the implementation of international fisheries instruments, and increasing awareness of the rights and obligations of States. Capacity building activities under technical cooperation programmes include

increasing awareness of rights and obligations under the Convention and international fisheries instruments, and legislative measures to implement the Convention and international fisheries instruments, implementation of international and regional commitments to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and related activities in support of such fishing.

With respect to capacity development in the implementation of international fisheries instruments, the FAO is actively strengthening national institutions, through among others, its global programme on the implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement. Activities focus on: (i) ascertaining the need to strengthen national legislation, institutional set up, and MCS systems and operations consistent with the provisions of the PSMA and related instruments and tools; (ii) formulating and/or revising relevant fisheries policies, laws and by-laws; (iii) strengthening MCS, compliance and enforcement institutions and systems, including through South-South Cooperation and mechanisms for regional harmonization, coordination and cooperation; (iv) enhancing capacity to improve flag State performance in line with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines, and; (v) as appropriate, implementing market access measures, such as catch documentation and traceability schemes.

National capacity on the Law of the Sea and fisheries law is also strengthened through training workshops on the obligations of States under the Convention and international fisheries treaties. For example, recently the FAO conducted training in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on its rights and obligations as a coastal State, flag State, chartering State, port State and market State, as well as rights and obligations under RFMOs. The training covered fundamental provisions of the Convention, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, the Compliance Agreement, and the Port State Measures Agreement. Soft law instruments such as the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance were also covered.

Since 2017, Member States that the FAO has assisted in training and capacity building in support of the implementation of the Convention and related fisheries instruments include: Cambodia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago and Vanuatu.

A competency-based Fisheries Law Training Course to provide relevant government officials with a sound knowledge of fisheries law, both in theory and practice, has been designed by FAO and the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Upon successful completion of the course in June/ July 2017, participants will, *inter alia*, be able to: (i) assist in the management of living marine resources; (ii) implement relevant international instruments in national laws and practice; (iii) identify the elements of offenses in fisheries legislation; (iv) develop an understanding of the evidentiary requirements; (v) apply best practice in the detection, investigation, and prosecution of fisheries offenses and violations.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 33

Capacity development for implementation of the FAO 2009 Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA)

FAO has continued to expand its efforts to support the implementation of the PSMA which is consistent with the call of the parties made at the May 2017 Meeting of the Parties in Oslo. The activities undertaken by FAO not only facilitate the implementation of the PSMA but also contribute to the development of national and regional capacity to maximize the benefits available through the effective use of the PSMA and promote bilateral, subregional and/or regional coordination. FAO has continued to conduct regional capacity development workshops, country-specific trainings and take initiatives to further assist States in building their capacity to effectively implement the PSMA, including through the FAO Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCP) at national, regional and inter-regional levels, and through the FAO Global Capacity Development Programme. The Global Capacity Development Programme and its projects supported by the FAO TCPs as well as funding from Norway, Sweden, the European Union and the United States of America, provides technical and capacity building assistance through FAO and other parties to strengthen policy, legal, institutional and operational frameworks to help States be better prepared to implement the PSMA. To date, over 41 countries from Africa, Asia and Pacific and the Latin America and the Caribbean region have received FAO assistance on matters concerning the adoption and implementation of the PSMA or related to the broader context of combatting IUU fishing.

Capacity development for small-scale fisheries (SSF)

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) are a globally agreed framework for small-scale fisheries development and governance. The following key milestones to support capacity development in the context of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines have been achieved in 2017/18:

Awareness raising events:

- **4th International Marine Protected Area Congress, 4-8 September, Chile:** A session on *MPAs and food security* was organized with a small-scale fisheries representative from Chile and IUCN.
- **2017 WTO Public Forum, 27 September 2017, Geneva:** Working session 42 on *Challenges and opportunities for small-scale fishers in international fish trade*. This event was co-organized with UNCTAD. Among the speakers was also a representative from the International Collective in Support of Fish Workers (ICSF).
- **44th Session of the Global Committee on World Food Security (CFS44), 13 October 2017, Rome:** Side event on *SDGs and small-scale fisheries: meeting commitments and realizing the right to adequate food* with the following co-organizers: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), IFAD, IPC Fisheries Working Group, ECOWAS, Norway.
- **KFW 2017 Development Finance Forum**, which was dedicated to the oceans and included a session on the human dimension of the Blue Economy. The SSF Guidelines were discussed in this context and are specifically identified as guiding framework.
- *A handbook on gender-equitable small-scale fisheries development and governance* has been published and is available online ([link](#)). In addition, an animated video on the same issue was produced and is available online ([link](#)).
- Together with the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights an information note on the relationship between the governance of small-scale fisheries and the realization of the right to adequate food in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals was prepared ([link](#)).
- FAO has embarked on the challenge to revise and update the 2012 World Bank, FAO and WorldFish Center report *Hidden Harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries*. The new study is supposed to deepen the knowledge and encourage data-sharing on small-scale fisheries and their socio-economic contributions, and aims to make policy- and decision-makers aware of the sector's importance. To start this process, an expert workshop was organized in FAO in June 2017. This project is conducted in collaboration with Duke University and World Fish.
- Through collaboration with the Too Big to Ignore Research network, a book on the SSF Guidelines: Global implementation has been published gathering experiences and suggestions to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in 34 chapters. The book was launched at a web-streamed event in FAO and at the MARE Conference in Amsterdam in July 2017.
- In Central America, OSPESCA members met in Costa Rica, in May 2017 and released the *Manifiesto de San Jose* which reconfirms the commitment to implement the SSF Guidelines in the region.
- In Southeast Asia, SEAFDEC organized an expert workshop on the human rights-based approach and gender equitable small-scale fisheries in Bangkok in September 2017 to advance the regional approach to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, including through a regional policy brief.
- For the Mediterranean and Black Sea area, the first session of the GFCM working group on artisanal and recreational fisheries took place in Rome in September 2017. An initial mapping of small-scale fisheries organizations in the GFCM region was presented among others at this first session.
- For inland fisheries in the Central Asia and Caucasus region, CACFish conducted a regional study on small-scale fisheries which was validated at the 2nd Regional Expert Group Meeting on small-scale fisheries, held in Turkey in September 2017.
- In Central America, FAO has collaborated with the Fondo para el desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y El Caribe (FILAC) to deliver a capacity development for Indigenous Peoples on the SSF Guidelines in August 2017 in Panama.
- Within the context of a FAO Multi-Partner Programme Support Mechanism (FMM) project focussing on value-chains, awareness raising on the SSF Guidelines in selected African countries took place and national workshops with a focus on chapters 6-8 of the SSF Guidelines targeted women in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana and Tunisia took place between May and August 2017. A regional workshop in Ghana on the network of fish safety, technology, quality and socio-economics in Africa in November 2017 pulled together key experiences from the national level work and country-specific guides have been drafted. A number of additional country-level activities have taken place in Guinea, Tanzania, Costa Rica, Philippines and Cambodia.

SECTION VIII - MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY AND FLAG STATE IMPLEMENTATION

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 108 AND 114

Safety at sea in the fisheries sector

Following the adoption of the Cape Town Agreement in 2012, FAO agreed to IMO's request for FAO's assistance in developing and conducting subregional seminars on the implementation and ratification of the Cape Town Agreement. So far, such seminars have been held in Morocco, Peru, Belize, Indonesia, Cote d'Ivoire, the Cook Islands, and South Africa.

The Third Session of the Joint FAO/IMO Ad Hoc Working Group on IUU Fishing and Related Matters (JWG), held at IMO Headquarters in London, United Kingdom, on 16-18 November 2015, recommended that FAO and IMO, and ILO, as appropriate, enhance their cooperation on a number of subjects related to the fight against IUU fishing, including on actions that would facilitate the entry into force of the ILO Convention 188 and to the Cape Town Agreement of 2012. At its 32nd Session (11-15 July 2016), the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) broadly welcomed the work of the JWG and recommended that meetings should be more frequent and that the ILO formally joins the JWG. The fourth JWG meeting on IUU fishing is planned to be held in 2019.

COFI has repeatedly highlighted the importance of safety at sea in the fisheries sector. At its 31st Session (9-13 June 2014), many Members stressed the link between safety at sea and forced labour and the occurrence of IUU fishing activities. They referred, in this context, to the ILO Convention 188 and to the Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the implementation of the provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993. At its 32nd Session (11-15 July 2016), the Committee expressed its satisfaction with the close collaboration between FAO and ILO and IMO, which is being further strengthened within the framework of the PSMA and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance (VGFSP).

In 2018, FAO published a global review of safety at sea in the fisheries sector.¹ The document focuses in particular on the small-scale fisheries sector in developing countries. Among other relevant safety issues, it considers existing legislation, fisheries management measures and data recording. The global review will be discussed at the 33rd Session of COFI, Rome, 9-13 July 2018.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 110

Promoting decent working conditions in fisheries and aquaculture

In 2014, COFI also adopted the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-Scale Fisheries which call on governments and other concerned actors to take actions to promote social development, employment and decent work.

The Joint FAO/IMO Ad Hoc Working Group on IUU fishing and related matters (JWG) recommended international inter-agency collaboration to promote International Labour Standards concerning forced labour, including human trafficking, and jointly consider linkages between fisheries governance, seafood industry and forced labour. The JWG recommended that: a) the FAO and IMO Secretariats cooperate with the ILO Secretariat in activities to promote the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) and ILO's standards concerning forced labour, including human trafficking, bearing in mind the potential relevance of these instruments to combat IUU fishing, and the potential contribution of IUU fishing to substandard working conditions in the sector; b) FAO collaborate, as appropriate, with the UNODC, ILO and Interpol, in order to raise awareness on forced labour, including human trafficking, in the fisheries sector, and explore initiatives to address such issues; and c) FAO consider the relationship between the matters of fisheries governance, seafood industry, and forced labour, in cooperation with IMO and ILO. The 2015 ILO conference on labour exploitation in the fishing sector recognized widespread human and labour rights violations and discussed good practices and innovations to eradicate forced labour and other decent work deficits in the fishing industry. The ILO and UNODC have repeatedly called for action on forced labour, trafficking and transnational crime in fisheries. Recently the ILO initiated programmatic work on decent

¹ FAO. 2018. Global review of safety at sea in the fisheries sector, by Adriana Oliva Remolà and Ari Gudmundsson. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular No. 1153. Rome, Italy.

work in global supply chains, which will also cover agricultural commodities and supply chains, including seafood.

Small-scale fishers and fish farmers and workers, as well as fish processing workers, are often poor and vulnerable, and generally tend to have little recognized access to resources, credit and loans, productive services and markets; they often lack access to social protection, institutional support and education. Most are self-employed or engaged informally, i.e. often without any formal employment contracts. In addition, despite their contribution to the sector, the role of women tends to be overlooked. Furthermore, international fishery trade policies and practices, such as export-led fishery development and import liberalization, are not always structured in ways that provide equal benefits to small-scale producers and their communities.

The sector is also characterized by cases of human rights violations and labour abuses, including instances of human trafficking, fraudulent and deceptive recruitment, modern-day-slavery, physical, mental and sexual abuse, homicide, child labour, debt bondage, refusal of fair and promised pay, abandonment, discrimination, excessive working hours, poor occupational safety and health, and denial of rights to association and collective bargaining negotiations and labour agreements. Violations take place at different stages of seafood value chains - especially in fish harvesting, farming and processing stages - and across different geographical areas. Women, migrant labourers and youth are exposed to these violations and are particularly vulnerable.

In many seafood value chains, it is difficult to trace fish back to the source and to ensure quality of products and accountability and responsibility of practices. Often illegal transshipment practices allow fishing vessels to avoid port checks, staying excessively long periods out at sea where enforcement of fisheries and labour regulations is often not possible. Human rights violations on fishing vessels occur along with illegal fishing practices and other crimes.

To address these concerns, national and international initiatives supported by governments, civil society organizations, private sector, auditing and certification schemes, media, consumers, etc., are calling for social sustainability and accountability in fisheries and seafood value chains to be addressed more effectively, and for better understanding of the issues and possible measures to resolve them.

Based on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its recent Blue Growth approach, the FAO has been supporting states, regional fisheries bodies and a wide range of actors in establishing sustainable fisheries policies including sustainable small-scale fisheries, promoting decent work and safety at sea, fighting IUU fishing and increasing traceability in fish value chains.

The Port State Measures Agreement which entered into force on 5 June 2016 represents the first binding instrument to fight illegal fishing activities through the implementation of strong port measures and provides a significant tool for governments to discourage labour violations at sea. FAO has developed and is implementing a global umbrella programme to develop and strengthen the capacities of port States to set up effective inspections schemes, and, among other activities, to help set up National Interagency Committees including port, fisheries, labour, health and law enforcement authorities.

FAO facilitated the development of the Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes that will enhance traceability, transparency and accountability in fish value chains and thereby help combat IUU fishing and, secondarily, instances of labour exploitation on board fishing vessels. Suggested Catch Documentation Scheme risk assessment criteria include fisher's income and livelihood.

Supporting the implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-Scale Fisheries, FAO is strengthening fishers' organizations and promoting women's empowerment (through better access to markets, reduced food losses) and improved occupational health (through the provision of improved fish processing technologies). In 2016, FAO organized two workshops to discuss how to implement the SSF Guidelines with a view to promote gender equality and explore how to apply the human rights-based approach to the SSF Guidelines implementation.

In 2014, FAO started a consultative multi-stakeholder process, called the Vigo Dialogue, that includes fisheries and aquaculture representatives from government administrations, private sector industries, civil society organizations (small-scale fishers, workers' unions), auditing and certification schemes, and international organizations. In 2015, the meeting recognized that promoting decent working conditions has

become a central issue for sustainable business development in fisheries supply chains. The 2016 Dialogue called for ratification of 2007 ILO Work in Fishing Convention (No. 188) and for more effective and coordinated multi-agency labour inspections on board fishing vessels. Some participants suggested the development of an international instrument providing guidance on the implementation of labour standards for the seafood sector, all along the seafood supply chain. The meeting also discussed the challenges of ensuring responsible sourcing of seafood products. A number of multi-stakeholders programs, retail consortia and seafood eco-labelling and certification schemes are including social and labour rights issues into their auditing requirements.

Ongoing relevant processes include the promotion of international instruments emphasizing human rights and due diligence such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD/FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains. It was recognized that buyers will increasingly demand that the seafood industry does apply risk-based due diligence measures throughout seafood supply chains. Overall, there is a general convergence towards the need of ensuring responsible sourcing solutions of seafood products, and the need to ensure social development and human rights for seafood workers.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 176 & 182

Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance

The Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance were endorsed by COFI at its 31st Session in June 2014. The Guidelines seek to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing through the effective implementation of flag State responsibilities. The Guidelines are being promoted by FAO alongside the PSMA through the Global Capacity Development Programme related to the latter.

FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

On 22 November 2009 the FAO Conference approved the PSMA. The objective of the PSMA is to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing through the implementation of effective port State measures, and thereby to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources and marine ecosystems. Pursuant to Article 29, the PSMA entered into force on 5 June 2016. As at 15 June 2018, there are 55 parties to the PSMA, comprising 54 States and the European Union.

1st Meeting of the Parties to the PSMA was held in Oslo, Norway, from 29 to 31 May 2017. The Meeting was attended by 36 Parties, 16 other States, 11 Intergovernmental Organizations, and four Non-Governmental Organizations. At the Meeting, among others, the Parties: a) called for the establishment of an open-ended technical working group to provide guidance on the development of data exchange mechanisms; b) tasked FAO with developing templates for reporting of information on national contact points, designated ports and other relevant information for the implementation of the Agreement; c) established the Working Group under Part 6 of the Agreement and adopted its Terms of Reference; d) called upon FAO to develop a specific web-based questionnaire to monitor implementation of the Agreement and record challenges faced, and; e) agreed to hold meetings every two years, along with technical meetings as required. The second meeting of the Parties will be held in Chile in 2019. The Parties also accepted the invitation from Indonesia to host a meeting of the Parties in 2022. The meeting to review and assess the implementation of the Agreement will be hosted by the European Union in 2020.

The 1st Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group (Part 6 Working Group), held in Oslo, Norway, from 1 to 2 June 2017, discussed the main requirements and priorities of developing States in the implementation of the Agreement and recommended that support should consider legal and policy aspects, institutional set-up and capacity, and operations and procedures. It recognized that assistance should be tailored to accommodate the specific needs of countries and regions, and highlighted the importance of linking individual and institutional capacity building. It recognized the important support that existing RFMO mechanisms can provide in delivering assistance to developing States Parties. At the meeting, participants agreed on: a) draft Terms of Reference for the funding mechanisms to assist developing States Parties to be considered by the Parties at their next meeting; and b) that funding mechanisms shall include contribution schemes towards an Assistance Fund to be administered by FAO, including for projects in support of the implementation of the Agreement.

The first meeting of the PSMA Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE) was held in London, United Kingdom, from 16 to 20 April 2018. The TWG-IE is an informal open-ended technical working group created by the Parties to provide guidance on elaborating information exchange mechanisms and other technical matters, including the need to provide for varying levels of access depending on the nature of the information provided.

As already reported under Section II, FAO continues to engage in awareness and capacity building at national, regional and global levels to improve implementation of the PSMA in general as well as to increase the numbers of parties to the Agreement.

Global Record of Fishing Vessels Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record)

The Global Record, as a tool that supports the implementation of international instruments such as the PSMA and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) in the concerted fight against IUU fishing, aims to increase transparency and traceability through the dissemination of official and certified data on the global fishing fleet and its operations. Through the unique vessel identifier (UVI), it is expected that, in synergy with the Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes, the Global Record will enhance traceability of fish and fishery products from the sea to the consumer.

The development of the Global Record has progressed in a number of areas. The Global Record Informal Open-Ended Technical and Advisory Working Group (GRWG) was established to provide advisory services, specifically to clarify outstanding issues and to find a solution for the long-term financing. So far, four meetings of the GRWG were convened (23-25 February 2015, 21-23 March 2016, 26-28 June 2017, and 11-13 April 2018) to review the advancements and provide guidance on the general way forward for the Global Record. The GRWG recommended the creation of Global Record Specialized Core Working Groups (GRCGs) to deal with particular matters at the technical level, and three GRCGs were launched to discuss issues related to data requirements, data exchange and third party data, respectively. The outputs of these groups are being consolidated in the form of draft guidelines that define the technical specifications for Members to contribute to the Global Record programme.

FAO has been collaborating with its Members to implement an operational Global Record pilot project with broad regional coverage and the first working version of the Global Record system that was released to FAO Members on 21 April 2017. The public version of the Global Record information system will be released shortly.

There is a long-standing cooperation between IMO and FAO on subjects related to the fisheries sector. With regard to the Global Record, the IMO number is being used as the UVI for Phase 1, and Members are encouraged to ensure that IMO numbers are assigned to the relevant fishing vessels of their fleets. In this regard, the Third Session of the Joint FAO/IMO Ad Hoc Working Group on IUU Fishing and Related Matters (JWG), held at IMO Headquarters in London, United Kingdom, on 16-18 November 2015, recommended that FAO and IMO explore the further possibility to expand the application of the IMO number scheme to fishing vessels that are currently outside its scope. All these joint efforts, finally materialised the 6 December 2017 by the adoption of the IMO Resolution A.1117(30) which extended the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme to fishing vessels of non-steel hull construction and to all motorized inboard fishing vessels of less than 100GT down to a size limit of 12 metres in length overall authorized to operate outside waters under the national jurisdiction of the flag State.

SECTION IX – MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE RESOURCES

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 184

SDG indicators and process/methodology

FAO is the proposed custodian agency for several SDG indicators. These include 14.4.1, 14.6.1, 14.7.1 and 14.b.1.

As a custodian agency, FAO is responsible for:

- Collecting data from national sources, validating and harmonizing them, estimating regional and global aggregates and making them available for international reporting.

- Contributing to annual SDG progress reports, feeding into the High-Level Political Forum's follow-up and review processes. Flagship publications are set to broaden their scope to include both a storyline and statistical annexes on relevant SDG indicators under FAO custodianship.
- Establishing partnerships with other international agencies to monitor the increased number of indicators, crucial to achieving interrelated goals.

The 32nd Session of COFI agreed that the data submitted through the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) questionnaire could be used by Members for reporting on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators. On that occasion, the Committee also highlighted the importance of the ongoing processes related to Agenda 2030 on SDGs and encouraged FAO to support Members in the preparation of national reports on the relevant SDG targets. FAO is now proposing the methodologies for the indicators for target 14.b and 14.6, both of which are currently Tier III indicators and would be solely based upon responses to the Code questionnaire.

The FAO as a contributing agency to a related SDG indicator 14.c.1, is collaborating with other UN Oceans Members under the leadership of UN-DOALOS as the custodian agency, to develop a methodology for collecting data, monitoring the target and measuring progress with a view to ensure the upgrading of the indicator to the next tier.

In April 2018, the indicator SDG 14.6.1 and 14.b.1 were upgraded to Tier II. In order to support countries in achieving SDG 14.b and report on indicator 14.b.1, FAO developed an e-learning course which is available online and held an expert workshop on Exploring SDG 14.b and its indicator 14.b.1. in November 2017 in Gaeta, Italy.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 185

Our ocean, our future: call for action

FAO voluntary commitments; co-lead of Community of Ocean Action #9 on Sustainable Fisheries

At the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) - The Ocean Conference - held in June 2017 at UN headquarters in New York, close to 1,400 voluntary commitments for concrete action to advance implementation of SDG 14 were made. To follow-up on the implementation of these voluntary commitments; to catalyze and generate new voluntary commitments; and to facilitate collaboration and networking amongst different actors in support of SDG 14, the United Nations launched nine thematic multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action (COA).

FAO, along with UNEP, are co-focal points of COA #9 – Sustainable Fisheries. In collaboration with the UN DESA and Mr. Thomson, FAO and UNEP are working to:

- Generate multi-stakeholder interest and engagement in the Communities of Ocean Action and in the follow-up to The Ocean Conference in general;
- Participate in online and in-person meetings as necessary;
- Consult broadly with the relevant community to provide assessments of progress of voluntary commitments, and collect examples of successful implementation of voluntary commitments;
- Consult with the relevant thematic community to identify challenges to implementation of voluntary commitments;
- Help identify gaps in implementation in the Ocean Action area and spur the creation and registration of new voluntary commitments by all stakeholders;
- Collect expertise in areas related to the community of action and help channel best practices and policies to the voluntary commitments follow-up process;
- Contribute to the preparation of materials such as briefing notes and online newsletters;
- Identify experts who could be qualified to participate in expert meetings and panel discussions.

Additionally, FAO made a number of voluntary commitments, which are currently underway. For additional information please reference UN Oceans webpage on Communities of Ocean Action and voluntary commitments.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 186 AND 208

Marine pollution, marine debris, and especially plastics (including abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear)

In response to concerns regarding the impacts on fish stocks, marine life and the marine environment of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), FAO convened an Expert Consultation on the Marking of Fishing Gear on 4-7 April 2016 at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy (Expert Consultation). The Expert Consultation produced draft Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear and a report containing associated recommendations. The Recommendations of the Expert Consultation commended that the draft guidelines be further developed through a Technical Consultation. The Thirty-second Session of COFI welcomed the work of FAO with respect to the issue of ALDFG and the recommendations from the Expert Consultation, noting that gear marking can be a critical tool for reducing ALDFG and IUU fishing. The Committee supported the proposed Technical Consultation to further develop the guidelines on marking of fishing gear, and Members encouraged FAO to conduct pilot projects to avoid ghost fishing by retrieving ALDFG and on fishing gear marking in developing countries. In response, a global feasibility study focusing on the marking of Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) and a field project in Indonesia focusing on the practical application of gear marking and lost gear retrieval in small scale coastal fisheries were carried out. Thereafter, a Technical Consultation on the Marking of Fishing Gear was held on 5-9 February 2018 at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy to further develop the concept and text of the draft Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear. The report of the Technical Consultation will be discussed at the 33rd Session of COFI, Rome, 9-13 July 2018.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 232-234

Ecosystem approach

The FAO has developed or supported the development of numerous normative products under the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) and ecosystem approach to aquaculture (EAA) framework to improve the understanding and furthering its implementation, in line with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the relevant technical guidelines. Online support is available through the EAF-net (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/eaf-net/toolbox/en>).

FAO continues to support the implementation of an ecosystem approach in a number of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, through a number of projects funded by extra budgetary resources.

Examples with regard to EAF include:

- The EAF Nansen project supports the implementation of the ecosystem approach in the management of marine fisheries, mainly in Africa. To date, the project collaborates with more than 30 African coastal countries. Thanks to the availability of the Research Vessel “Dr. Fridtjof Nansen”, deployed in collaboration with the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) of Bergen, Norway, knowledge on the state of resources and ecosystems is provided to developing countries. Important data and information are being collected on marine resources and the marine environment in the EEZ of partner countries in Africa. In addition, two ecosystem surveys and one for habitat studies have been completed in Myanmar in Asia.
- Furthermore, the project supports capacity development on various aspects of fisheries research and management (institutional strengthening) in partner countries for them to be able to generate and use the knowledge required for EAF and to manage their fisheries following the EAF principles and methodologies. Training packages have been designed to address different target audiences, and “on the ground” capacity development support is provided to support the development of fisheries management plans in accordance with EAF. As examples, in partnership with a number of African universities, the EAF-Nansen Project has developed university-level training course on the EAF that targets professionals in fisheries research and management institutions, environmental agencies and the private sector. A Handbook has been developed to complement the resources for the course for the purpose of supporting both trainers and trainees². A Teaching Kit on the EAF for Schools in Africa has been prepared in collaboration with selected schools in Senegal and the Gambia. The preparation of fisheries management plans is a key element for supporting the implementation of EAF and the

² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5787e.pdf>

improvement of the fisheries management process in partner countries, including the use of best available knowledge and risk assessment to address ecological social and economic sustainability issues. Sixteen countries in Africa have been assisted to prepare fisheries management plans coherent with the EAF principles.

- The EAF Nansen project carried out a review on the implementation of EAF in national legislation in Africa (Legislating for an ecosystem approach to fisheries – A review of trends and options in Africa). A follow-up document (How to Guide on legislating for an ecosystem approach to fisheries³) is now available to support development and drafting of new legislation and fisheries managers to implement EAF through national legislation.
- In May 2017, a new phase of the programme, called the EAF-Nansen Programme started with the new research vessel also called R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen. The long term objective of the new programme is that “Sustainable fisheries improve food and nutrition security for people in partner countries”. This new five-year phase is intended to further strengthen the knowledge base and the overall institutional capacity for the implementation of the EAF in developing countries with additional effort on the impact of climate variability and change, pollution and other anthropogenic stressors. The programme continues to be implemented in close collaboration with IMR.

FAO is also supporting countries with the implementation of EAF, and its integration to cross sectoral discussions through the work with several Large Marine Ecosystem projects, as outlined in some highlights below:

- In collaboration with the FAO-executed project “Protection of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME)” and the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission, the EAF-Nansen Project has also assisted four countries in Northwest Africa (Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and The Gambia) to prepare a sub-regional management framework for the Shared Small Pelagic Fishery of Northwest Africa. This document is the output of three stakeholder workshops that identified overall sustainability objectives and the key issues to be addressed in order to achieve them.
- Through the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) project a case study was implemented on the shared stocks of shrimp and groundfish fishery of the Guianas-Brazil shelf aimed at mainstreaming EAF in the management of the shrimp and groundfish resources. Further support to fisheries administrations will be provided by FAO through the CLME+ which is the next phase of the CLME project launched in 2016. Within this second phase, FAO will support the development and implementation of EAF sub-regional management plan.
- In collaboration with UNIDO and NOAA, FAO is providing technical assistance to the project “Implementation of the Strategic Action Program of the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem” (GEF ID 6952; 2016-2020 – GoM SAP Implementation Project). This is a 5-year project specifically aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Mexico/U.S. endorsed Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA – 2011) and Strategic Action Plan (SAP – 2013) for the integrated management of the GoM-LME. FAO is providing technical assistance to the national executing agency (INAPESCA) for the execution of two interlinked Outputs. One to support the implementation of existing fisheries management plans for the red grouper fishery from Yucatan and the brown shrimp fishery from Tamaulipas and the other to implement the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries.
- Through the FAO component of the Mediterranean Sea LME (MEDLME) three main activity areas were carried out including (a) mainstreaming EAF into fisheries management and research, under which a number of trainings on EAF have been carried out, (b) increasing fisher’s participation in fishery monitoring, thus increasing simultaneously the knowledge base, stakeholder participation and the legitimacy of management, and (c) addressing by-catch and discards in the Tunisian bottom trawl fishery in the Gulf of Gabes. The whole FAO component addressed the improvement of fisheries management through increased and improved implementation of the EAF in its multiple dimensions. Following the closure of the MEDLME project in 2015, FAO continues to support the mainstreaming of EAF into fisheries management in the region, with the support of the FAO Mediterranean Regional

³ FAO EAF-Nansen Project. 2016. A How-to Guide on legislating for an ecosystem approach to fisheries. FAO EAF-Nansen Project Report No 27. Rome, Italy. (see <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5966e.pdf>)

Projects (AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed) and in close collaboration with the General Fisheries Commission of the Mediterranean (GFCM). The approach has been applied in the development of subregional management plans for shared resources by the GFCM and also in the development of national management plans for fisheries in Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon.

- The Indonesian Sea LME, also includes the adoption of the EAF as part of their work. The implementation of EAF is also a key element under the FAO led projects under the ABNJ Programme.
- The Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the U.S. Coral Triangle Initiative (USCTI) and the Coral Triangle Support Program (CTSP) developed an EAF Management training course.⁴ Training of trainers has taken place in the Asia-Pacific with Malaysia, Philippines, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia undertaking national training courses using the course already developed.

FAO has supported regional fisheries bodies (e.g. GFCM, APFIC, SWIOFC, CECAF) to formally adopt the EAF and its integrated principles as part of their mandate.

- For example, APFIC endorsed EAF as an approach at its 32nd Session⁵ and provided an overview of the way that APFIC/FAO member countries have embraced EAF and moved forward with it. Countries that explicitly embrace EAF include Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, Philippines.
- The SWIOFC has created a dedicated EAF Regional Task Group for the EAF under its Scientific Committee, that assists countries in putting in place EAF-compliant management and assessment. It also regularly supports member countries in assessing the level of compatibility of their national fisheries management with EAF, and has served as the Steering Committee for all regional activities of the EAF-Nansen project in the South-West Indian Ocean region. Several member countries of the SWIOFC have adopted the EAF as the main guiding principle of their fisheries regulatory system.
- The Review of current fisheries management performance and conservation measures in the WECAFC area included the implementation of EAF and integrated decision-making in the review.

FAO has provided extensive support to member countries of both SWIFC and CECAF for the development and implementation of EAF fisheries management plans. Examples are the Banks line fishery of Mauritius, the Mozambican deep-sea shrimp as well as linefish fisheries and the shrimp fisheries in Gabon, Congo and Nigeria, to mention some.

At the national level, FAO carried out reviews and supported the development of draft fisheries legislation in a number of countries and regions, in which the implementation of the EAF is particularly emphasized including in Belize, Maldives and the South-West Pacific Region. In the SWIOFC region, countries that have revised their fisheries laws (e.g. Mauritius, Mozambique and Seychelles) have explicitly included EAF as a key management approach.

SECTION X – MARINE BIODIVERSITY

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 245

Deep-sea Fisheries and Areas beyond national jurisdiction

The FAO programme on deep-sea fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction focuses both on applying an ecosystems approach to fisheries and protecting marine biodiversity in the deep seas and has been ongoing since the adoption of the *FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas (Deep Sea Fisheries Guidelines)* in 2008.

⁴ Available online as a three volume training course at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3778e.pdf>; <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3779e.pdf>; <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3780e.pdf>; <http://www.eafmlearn.org/> <http://www.apfic.org/eeafm-materials/viewcategory/44-ecosystem-approach-to-fishery-management-training.html>

⁵ See <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3141e/i3141e00.pdf> See <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3141e/i3141e00.pdf>

Since 2016 In 2017, the ABNJ Deep Seas project Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Resources in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, implemented by FAO in collaboration with UN Environment, continue to implement its activities as per the agreed workplan, in close synergies with the other FAO projects related to deep-sea issues, such as the deep-sea fisheries component of the Japan-funded project *Fisheries Management and Marine Conservation within a Changing Ecosystem Context*, and the Horizon 2020 funded project *Deep-sea Sponge Grounds Ecosystems of the North Atlantic: an integrated approach towards their preservation and sustainable exploitation* (SponGES Project).. The ABNJ Deep Seas Project, which is part of the ABNJ Common Oceans Programme (funded by the Global Environment Facility - GEF) engages the full range of stakeholders and partners involved with the management of deep-sea fisheries, such as RFMO/As, Regional Seas Organizations, the fishing industry, and those groups involved with biodiversity conservation of deep-sea areas in the areas beyond national jurisdiction. A direct output of the ABNJ Deep Seas Project, Horizon 2020 SponGES Project, project is a study entitled “Review and the ongoing deep-sea component Analyses of the Japan-funded project generally International Legal and Policy Instruments Related to Deep-sea Fisheries and Biodiversity conservation in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction⁶. The study provides expert advice and technical tools an overview of the international governance framework for fisheries conservation and management, with the collective aim in the ABNJ and includes summary of matters that need to improve deep-sea fisheries management practices, and increase knowledge of and protect vulnerable deep-sea marine areas be addressed in legislation for implementation of the areas beyond relevant international instruments at the national jurisdiction level.

The Horizon 2020 SponGES project aims to raise awareness on deep-sea sponge ecosystem function in the North Atlantic, and potential impacts on them that may be caused by extractive activities, including fisheries, through bringing relevant research information on sponges to the attention of policy developers and fisheries managers and to support exchange of knowledge and information. Two policy dialogues have taken place to raise awareness on these issues for policy-makers, and a high-level dialogue meeting is planned with the European Parliament Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development” in November 2018.

The continued work on support for the implementation of the FAO Deep Sea Fisheries Guidelines encompasses the above mentioned projects focusing on sustainable use of deep-sea resources, prevention of significant adverse impacts and conservation of marine biodiversity in the deep-seas. Work has been done on identifying best practices and assisting with capacity development and knowledge sharing in different regions on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, including the use of the criteria for identification and appropriate management actions.

Example activities include work associated with: the updating of the World Wide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas, the improvement of the assessment of orange roughy stocks and other deep-sea species, the use of catch documentation schemes for deep-sea fisheries, and the impact of deep ocean climate change on habitat, fish and fisheries^{7, 8}.

Follow up scientific work in 2016 in relation to the 2015 research cruise with the R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen in the Southeast Atlantic Fisheries Organisation convention area, provided additional scientific knowledge on deep-sea species and ecosystems. The survey mapped and identified vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and fisheries resources on selected seamounts and seamount complexes in the SEAFO convention area.

The development of tools to support improved identification and reporting of vulnerable species groups such as deep-water sharks, sponges and corals is continuing, as well as associated training continued. Species catalogues and field guides for deep-sea shark in the eastern Pacific were produced and training conducted, and posters on Sponge (Indian Ocean and Mediterranean) and Deep-sea corals (Mediterranean) were produced.

Further information on VME related activities are provided under operative paragraph 259.

⁶ Review and Analyses of the International Legal and Policy Instruments Related to Deep-sea Fisheries and Biodiversity conservation in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, FAO 2017

⁸ Reports for these areas of work will be published in 2018.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 246

Development of 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

FAO continues to actively participate and contribute to the on-going discussions taking place in the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292: Development of 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 (BBNJ PrepCom). In particular, FAO is providing technical inputs and clarifications to delegations through the delivery of statements under each of the informal working group, providing information on FAO's work with regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements (RFMO/As) on the conservation and management of fisheries in ABNJ, highlighting FAO's experience and work on genetic resources in particular on access and benefit sharing (ABS), area based management tools (ABMT), including marine protect areas (MPAs), marine scientific research (MSR) and capacity building and technology transfer. Technical inputs are also provided through the delivery of side events in the margins of the meeting. FAO participated in the third and fourth session of the Preparatory Committee on Marine Biodiversity Beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction held in 2017 and organised or participated in side events to contribute to the understanding of the international governance framework for fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction and FAO's efforts in this regard.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 259

Guidance for the identification of vulnerable marine ecosystems through the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations continues to support countries and regional organization with the implementation of the Guidelines for the Management of deep-sea fisheries in the high seas with the support of several projects (see also paragraph 239). With respect to guidance in relation to Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, two additional regional workshops were conducted in 2016 in the Mediterranean (Rome, Italy, July 2016) and in the Central Eastern Atlantic (Dakar, Senegal, November 2016) that addressed issues relating to the definition and management of deep-sea fisheries and vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) in the respective regions. Work related to the development of identification tools for deep-sea sponges and corals was finalized in late 2016/early 2017, for the Indian Ocean (Sponges) and the Mediterranean (Sponges and corals).

The Database on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME database), launched in 2014⁹, is fully operational and is continuously updated in collaboration with the respective RFMOs to include information relating to their recent conservation and management measures on VMEs, including spatial information on VME and other areas. The VME database can be accessed through the VME portal, which contains additional VME-related information. The VME database was developed in collaboration with the regional bodies with mandates to manage deep-sea fisheries in ABNJ and provides interactive maps and factual information on management measures taken to reduce current or potential impacts on areas where VMEs are known or likely to occur.

Complementing the information in the VME database, and contributing to sharing practices and information globally, a FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical paper on: "Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems: Processes and Practices in the High Seas" was finalised in 2016 and published in early 2017¹⁰.

SECTION XI – MARINE SCIENCE

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 292

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/vme-database/en/vme.html>

¹⁰ FAO. 2016. *Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems: Processes and Practices in the High Seas*, by Anthony Thompson, Jessica Sanders, Merete Tandstad, Fabio Carocci and Jessica Fuller, eds. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 595. Rome, Italy.

UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

FAO is working with IOC-UNESCO, and other partners, to co-design the Decade over a three-year period (2018-2020).

Collaborative platforms on data and information

FAO continues to play a leading role in EU funded iMarine related initiatives to develop data services enabling multidisciplinary collaborative science for policy development and implementation, towards the goal of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries management and conservation of living marine resources. By connecting all actors in related domains (in particular fisheries, biodiversity, environment) around shared data and information, this initiative fosters the emergence of global partnerships and related community of practices, in support of the big societal challenges that responsible fisheries face such as the ecosystem approach and climate change. The iMarine initiative relies on a public partnership between IT specialized institutions and global, regional, and national marine knowledge institutions, such as FAO, EC, ICES, and other Regional Fishery Bodies, IRD, GRID Arendal.

Underpinning the sustainable exploitation, an MoU is ready for signature between FAO and CNR (the Italian Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche owning the IT platform) with the goal to exploit the iMarine infrastructure beyond the project, and to further shape an iMarine.org Partnership. The MoU is instrumental in ensuring that the data policies respect the providers' rights and entitlements. Through the MoU, a single agreement opens Big Data solutions for resource poor organizations that can thus benefit from advanced data services without large investments.

This collaboration is supported through the BlueBRIDGE project. The overall objective of this 30 months project which started in September 2015, is to support capacity building in interdisciplinary research communities involved in increasing scientific knowledge about resource overexploitation, environmental and ecosystem degradation, with the aim of providing informed advice to competent authorities. BlueBRIDGE will extend the iMarine platform with data services for well-defined communities concerned with four main Blue Growth Challenges: Fisheries, Aquaculture, Livelihoods and Food systems, and Ecosystem Services. The project will incorporate, and where necessary adapt, existing data work-flows to meet with 21st century data and computing needs. This implies opening data, sharing computing resources, and relying on open source software to support reproducible work-flows.

BlueBRIDGE products will include the Global Record of stocks and fisheries, an adaptable Regional DataBase for Fisheries Management support (RDB), semi-automated processing of geospatial data (including remote sensing) to support inventories of aquaculture systems (e.g. cages, ponds), and a dedicated spatial planning environment that can access and share data from all of the above. Many solutions rely on Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning approaches in a Science 2 environment. BlueBRIDGE recognizes the need for technology and knowledge transfer to resource poor entities, and dedicates a significant amount of efforts to the incorporation of an educational environment in the fisheries domain, based on the shared experience of ICES (a full consortium partner) training and extension programs. BlueBRIDGE will offer these training courses also to provide a base for Regional DataBases, where participants immerse themselves in a training environment to define and design a solution that meets their specific environment, e.g. through identified opportunities in the WECAFC and other FAO projects.

The research vessel Dr Fridtjof Nansen, is the primary tool of the Norad-funded Nansen programme (now EAF-Nansen Project in the current transitional phase). For over four decades two successive vessels (bearing the same name) have worked in tropical and sub-tropical maritime waters, carrying out oceanographic and fisheries surveys. The vessel has become a unique floating platform for research, training and the exchange of knowledge. It has provided opportunities for hundreds of scientists from developing countries to improve their learning and research capabilities. The surveys carried out and information collected over the decades constitute an invaluable archive of scientific data and information on fisheries and marine ecosystems.

Fishery Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS)

FAO is leading the Fishery Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) partnership which major aim is to facilitate access to a wide range of high-quality information on the status and trends of global marine fishery resources, fisheries and their management. FIRMS is expected to provide decision-makers with necessary information to develop effective fisheries policies in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code). The partnership, steadily growing, now brings together 14 Institutions representing 19 RFBs, and disseminates through the FIRMS website status and trends reports structured on an inventory backbone of over 1000 marine resources and about 300 fisheries with 80 updated reports for the reporting years 2016 and 2017.

On-going efforts aim at broadening geographic and thematic coverage; facilitating the usage of FIRMS data by various actors including national governments, champions of the State of the marine environment, actors involved in seafood traceability and certification; and data monitoring and reporting; the latter includes a standard protocol for streamlining national contribution on fishing activities through the partner RFBs and related capacity building in RFBs of developing regions (e.g. CECAF, SWIOFC, RECOFI, WECAFC, BOBLME).

Towards this goal, FIRMS is currently involved in the following projects with capacity building components:

- Strengthening national data collection and regional data sharing through FIRMS to support priority regional fishery management plans in the WECAFC area;
- Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem project (CLME+), the strategic action programme for the sustainable management of the shared living marine resources of the Caribbean large marine ecosystem and adjacent regions
- Strengthening routine fisheries data collection in West Africa: Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo and Fishery Committee of the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC);
- Development of a global record of stocks and fisheries (BlueBRIDGE project - Building Research environments for Innovation, Decision making, Governance and Education)

Through these combined efforts, FIRMS together with the Global Capture Production database, provide support to the implementation of SDG 14.4.1 indicator: "Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels".

SECTION XII – REGULAR PROCESS FOR GLOBAL REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING SOCIOECONOMIC ASPECTS

Assistance to the 2nd cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment

The second cycle of the Regular Integrated Marine Assessment including social economic aspects lasts from 2017 to 2020. The global assessment covers fisheries and aquaculture that are related to FAO's mandate and working areas. As a UN agency specialized in fisheries, FAO has provided the Global Assessment in the first cycle with data support and technical assistance as required on the following chapters: 1) The oceans and seas as sources of food; 2) Capture fisheries; 3) Aquaculture; 4) Fish stock propagation; 5) Social and economic aspects of sea-based food and fisheries, 6) Sharks and other elasmobranchs, and 7) Tunas and billfishes. FAO reviewed its final report and provided comprehensive comments. Through its network, FAO also contributed to the awareness raising and identification of experts for the Pool of Experts during the first cycle and will continue to do so in its second cycle.

SECTION XIII – REGIONAL COOPERATION

Regional fishery bodies are key instrumental actors for regional cooperation towards sustainable development

A growing human population and growing per capita demand for food, nutrition and other goods and services means an expansion of fisheries and aquaculture activities in the oceans and inland water bodies and along the coasts, and increased pressure on the environment and on the use of other resources. As awareness of this pressure rises, it becomes increasingly evident that sustainability can only be achieved through cooperation.

Regional fisheries bodies (RFBs), and regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), are gaining importance in the international fora for discussion of issues related to fisheries management and sharing of living marine resources. RFBs have been intensifying their work to ensure that all possible mechanisms for cooperation are used in the development and management of fisheries and aquaculture.

FAO has been supporting this evolution by reinforcing the work of individual RFBs through the Organization's technical work on fisheries and aquaculture, and promoting and supporting linkages, exchange and mutual support among RFBs through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN). RSN is hosted and supported by FAO and comprises 58 RFBs (including 25 RFMOs). Its purpose is to strengthen information sharing offer a framework for discussion among RFB secretariats on emerging issues related to fisheries management, research and aquaculture development in their regions and, in the case of RFMOs, regulatory areas; enhancing regional cooperation and provide communication services and visibility to the RFBs' work¹¹. This two-pronged approach is contributing to rapid development in the capacity of RFBs to support the much-needed improvement in the planning and management of fisheries and aquaculture.

In the context of regional cooperation relevant actions and developments are being made. FAO and UNEP have facilitated discussions between RFBs and the corresponding Regional Seas organizations to strengthen collaboration on issues of common interest, taking into account the different mandates and roles of these bodies. The two organizations also cooperate with CBD, within the framework of its Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI), to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration among RFBs and Regional Seas organizations in addressing issues such as the SDGs, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs).

In the Mediterranean area, the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM-FAO) and the UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan Secretariat to the Barcelona Convention (UNEP-MAP) are collaborating and already achieved results, including the integration of environmental concerns in the context of social and economic development, especially in relation to fisheries and aquaculture; the harmonization of existing criteria for identifying Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance and Fisheries Restricted Areas, in particular those located partially or wholly in areas beyond national jurisdiction; a stronger coordination in the implementation of the SDG strategies of the two organizations.

FAO and UNEP are also supporting cooperation agreements in other areas of the world in the Gulf and Sea of Oman, the FAO Regional Commission on Fisheries (RECOFI) and the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME); in the Southwest Indian Ocean, the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) and the Nairobi Convention have been discussing modes of cooperation; in the Central Eastern Atlantic, the Fisheries Committee for the Central Eastern Atlantic (CECAF) and the Abidjan Convention have developed a long-standing cooperative relation for supporting the sustainable use and conservation of marine living resources and their environment in the areas where the mandates of the two bodies overlap; in the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) cooperates with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in supporting implementation of the Strategic Action Programme of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+), a five-year project co-financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

In addition, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) are playing a leading role in regional and global efforts in the fight against IUU fishing, through integrated conservation and management measures, monitoring, control and surveillance requirements, as well as information exchange mechanisms, RFMOs are putting up a strong stance against perpetrators of IUU fishing. IUU levels of fishing have been significantly reduced in some RFMO regulatory areas over the years.

As regards the aquaculture sector, regional bodies aim to address issues and practices through a multidisciplinary and integrated approach, based on concerted regional strategies. Currently about one-third of existing RFBs are covering aquaculture, half of which have been established under the FAO framework, including advisory and regulatory bodies. RFBs work together with different constituencies, especially in collaboration with regional aquaculture networks around the world, in Africa (ANAF), Asia (NACA), Central and Eastern Europe (NACEE), Micronesia (MASA), Latin America and the Caribbean (RAA). The mechanism provided by RFBs facilitates knowledge sharing, technical and institutional capacity

¹¹ Website: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/en> ; newsletter: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/I8604EN>

development, management and governance and, in some cases, monitoring and evaluating of country compliance to the CCRF aquaculture related provisions¹². The work of RFBs in the sector is being increasingly considered by the FAO Regional Conferences to define regional priorities and recommendations.

RFBs are present in all regions, their membership being very diverse in terms of distribution of income groups of countries. In view to achieve equitable development, FAO promotes cooperation among Members, especially by supporting those RFBs in challenging areas, for reasons linked to food security, socio-economic development, resource management and sustainability.

SECTION XV – COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 340

Achieving Blue Growth – Building vibrant fisheries and aquaculture communities

Like the Green Economy principles that preceded it, FAO's Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) emphasizes the three pillars of sustainable development in order to make fisheries and aquaculture development, within the context of the broader blue economy (tourism, shipping, etc.), achieve maximum socioeconomic benefits while minimizing environmental degradation. The BGI harnesses the power of aquatic resources and ecosystems to improve food security or decent work while preserving life below water and on land, thereby serving as a framework for implementing a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

BGI interventions span three overarching platforms: Blue Production—which is focused on implementing ecosystem-based approaches to responsible fisheries and aquaculture management; Blue Trade—geared at supporting the economic development of countries, with an emphasis on markets and access to trade; and Blue Communities—which aims to strengthen fishing communities by promoting social development and decent work in the context of food and livelihood security.

Across these platforms, the BGI seeks to achieve its objectives through the development of enabling conditions, including: (1) law and policy; (2) public-private institutions; (3) knowledge and capacity development; and (4) innovation. Law and policy is the cornerstone of any blue growth reform and should be constructed so as to prevent the overexploitation of the environment, the mistreatment of people, and corruption of institutions. Public-private institutions are important for coordinated management across ministries and sectors because blue economy reforms are holistic in nature, and the importance of initial public-private investment in blue economy reforms which are costly. Knowledge and capacity development is required for blue economy reforms whether related to farming to farming fish or managing against IUU fishing. Innovation will drive any existing progress forward, by identifying new solutions or additional efficiencies and simultaneously generating socio-economic and environmental benefits.

Globally, there are a number of countries working with FAO that are considering, developing or implementing Blue Growth strategies as they seek to transition towards blue economies that leverage the most from their aquatic resources and ecosystems. The Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) is now supporting over 20 countries in various interventions, including \$40 million alone in implementing the FAO/World Bank/African Development Bank Africa Package for Climate Resilient Ocean Economies, launched at COP22. Technical agencies such as FAO stand ready to assist countries, in partnership with other relevant organizations, in facilitating blue economy and blue growth transitions.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 360

UN-Oceans

FAO has been an active participant in UN-Oceans since its establishment. In line with the UN-Oceans Work Programme and, as mandated in the revised terms of reference, FAO, together with the other UN-Oceans

¹² COFI/AQ/IX/2017/3, 'Progress Reporting on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) provisions relevant to the Aquaculture and culture-based fisheries', <http://www.fao.org/cofi/aq/73970/en/>

members, promotes coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to oceans and coastal areas by assisting in the development of joint statements or side events at major events of relevance to the work of UN-Oceans members. FAO also continues to work towards the development of the “inventory of the mandates and priorities approved by the respective governing bodies of UN-Oceans participating organizations” aimed at identifying on-going and planned activities in respect of those mandates and priorities.

FAO developed, hosts and continues to fund the maintenance and further refinement of the website of the UN-Oceans as well as the initial version of the electronic platform for the inventory in the form of a user-friendly online searchable database detailing the mandates and the activities of each of the members of UN-Oceans which will be continuously updated by UN-Oceans Members.

The UN-Oceans mechanisms is also used to exchange information and views on events or activities of interest to its members. It is through such an exchange, that UN-Oceans has the advantage of raising awareness of the ongoing activities of its members, which also provide the opportunity for UN-Oceans to “deliver as one” through strengthened cooperation, as done during the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, in Marrakech, where UN-Oceans delivered a consolidated side event on “Sustainable Development Goal 14: Oceans – Science-based solutions for achieving adaptation and mitigation goals”.

FAO is also supporting the development of a methodology and reporting format for the indicator for target 14.c During the 16th meeting of the UN-Oceans, FAO proposed the use of an online questionnaire to gather the data needed to measure progress in achieving target 14.c, noting that the structure of such as online questionnaire could follow that of the biennial questionnaire of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries which results are presented at the meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries held on a biannual basis. This proposal has been accepted by all UN-Ocean Members. FAO, in collaboration with DOALOS, is now working on the first model to be used for this indicator.

FAO is the Secretariat of the UN Atlas of the Oceans, a web portal developed under the authority of UN-Oceans which allows UN-Oceans members to provide relevant information on their respective activities with regards to the sustainable development of the oceans.