

**FAO INPUTS IN RELATION TO RESOLUTION A/RES/76/72  
CONCERNING “OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA”  
FOR THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**17 JUNE 2022**

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

**OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 4 - Harmonizing national legislation with the Convention**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continues to provide legal assistance to Member Nations, including in the development of fisheries and aquaculture legislation and contributing to national efforts towards realising the relevant SDGs. Such assistance is provided with emphasis placed on ensuring that national legislation harmonises with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (the Convention) and relevant agreements and instruments. Great effort is put into ensuring that national legislation effectively implements the provisions of the Convention including the rights and duties of Member Nations within waters under national jurisdiction, relating to matters such as fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), and the effective exercise of States’ jurisdiction over flagged (fishing) vessels on the high seas and in waters under the jurisdiction of other States. The development of national fisheries legislation also takes into account the binding decisions of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and arrangements (RFMOs) which are recognised under the Convention as bodies through which States may cooperate including elaborating upon the provisions of the Convention for the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks, highly migratory fish stocks and discrete high seas fish stocks.

The agreements which FAO takes into account in providing assistance to Member Nations include:

- the 1995 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 (UNFSA) – 92 parties,
- the FAO 1993 Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (Compliance Agreement) – 44 parties, and
- the FAO 2009 Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA) – 72 parties.

The relevant non-binding instruments that FAO takes into account in providing assistance to develop national legislation of Member Nations include the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and its supplementary technical guidelines, international plans of action and voluntary instruments, such as the 2008 International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas, the 2014 Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance (VGFSP), the 2014 Voluntary

Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), the 2017 Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Scheme, and the 2018 Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear. These non-binding instruments and their principles, approaches and tools are incorporated into national fisheries and aquaculture legislation with the agreement of the concerned government in consultation with stakeholders. Among the principles and approaches and tools that are important to guide the development of legislation are the precautionary principle, the principles of stakeholder participation in decision-making, including through co-management, the application of environmental impact assessment (EIA) in deep sea fisheries, as well as the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF), Ecosystem Approach to Aquaculture (EAA) and the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to fisheries conservation and management.

Since 2020, FAO provided legal assistance including training for the implementation of the above mentioned agreements and international fisheries instruments to a number of Member Nations, including: Cambodia, Guyana, Kenya, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Somalia, and Trinidad and Tobago. The legal assistance provided included reviewing and developing national policy and legislation for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture including gaps analysis of legal and institutional frameworks; coordinating and supervising research and providing technical support for the publication of international legal and policy instruments.

## **SECTION II - CAPACITY-BUILDING**

### ***OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 13 to 19 - Capacity-building for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources***

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

FAO develops technical skills in support of the implementation of the Convention at the national level through capacity building activities under technical cooperation programmes and projects. Such capacity building activities include increasing awareness of the rights and obligations of Member Nations under the Convention and the related international fisheries instruments. Such assistance has been provided in 2021 and 2022 on the following activities:

- training of government officials and technical experts (from Angola, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mozambique, Mauritius, São Tomé e Príncipe) on the use of [\*A diagnostic tool for implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries through policy and legal frameworks\*](#);
- training of government officials and technical experts (from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam) on the use of the *Aquaculture Legislation Assessment and Revision Tool (ALART)*, which assists states to review and enhance their national legislation for sustainable aquaculture;
- assistance to Indonesia in capacity building for assessing and reviewing legal frameworks for sustainable aquaculture;
- training of government officials and technical experts in Pacific Island Countries (Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu) and in the Caribbean region

(Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago), on the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) through national fisheries legal frameworks, and the use of the [FAO-CITES Legal Study and Guide](#);

FAO and the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have designed and delivered a competency-based Fisheries Law Training Course to Member Nations' government officials in English, French and Spanish. The most recent course, conducted in English in 2021, trained participants to, inter alia: (i) be more engaged in the management of living marine resources; (ii) implement relevant international instruments in national laws and practice; (iii) identify the elements of offences in fisheries legislation; (iv) develop an understanding of evidentiary requirements for the purposes of prosecutions; (v) apply best practices in the detection, investigation, and prosecution of fisheries offences and violations.

FAO continues to strengthen its cooperation and collaboration with numerous international and regional institutions including the CITES Secretariat, UNEP, UNODC, IMO, ILO, and the Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency.

### **Capacity Development to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing**

In 2017, FAO launched the *Global Programme to support the implementation of the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) and complementary international instruments to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing* (hereafter the 'Programme'). This launch marked the beginning of a concerted effort by FAO and its partners to enhance capacity building of States to combat IUU fishing in a programmatic manner. The Programme, which aims to contribute to national, regional and global efforts to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, represents the overall framework within which FAO and its development partners articulate and mobilize coordinated actions in support of the implementation of port State measures and complementary international instruments. Since its inception, the European Union (EU), Germany, Iceland, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and the United States of America have committed approximately USD 28 million for the implementation of the programme. Developing States including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), both Parties and non-parties to the PSMA, are benefiting from the Programme. The Programme includes activities to:

- (a) assess the needs for strengthening national legislation, institutional set up, and MCS systems and operations with respect to port, flag, coastal, and market State responsibilities, including the drafting of national strategies and roadmaps to implement related measures;
- (b) support the review and development or revision of relevant fisheries policies and laws;
- (c) support the strengthening of MCS institutions, systems and operations, including through mechanisms for regional coordination and cooperation;
- (d) improve flag State performance and implement market access measures, such as catch documentation schemes (CDS) and traceability schemes;
- (e) develop and implement training, capacity building, and operational support material and programmes;
- (f) develop and implement global information systems in support of the implementation of the PSMA, including the FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels

and Supply Vessels (FAO Global Record), the PSMA global capacity development portal, and a global information exchange system (GIES) to support the implementation of the PSMA; and

- (g) support travel to relevant PSMA meetings, including the meetings of the Parties and subsidiary working groups, and relevant Global Record meetings.

Since its inception, the Programme has delivered the following capacity development activities:

- (i) formulation of national strategies and action plans for the implementation of the PSMA and complementary international instruments to combat IUU;
- (ii) support to align national policies and legislation with the requirements of the PSMA and complementary international instruments to combat IUU fishing;
- (iii) support to review and update MCS systems and procedures in line with the PSMA and complementary international instruments to combat IUU fishing;
- (iv) in-country judicial training in one developing State, in-country port inspection training in one developing State, a sub-regional workshop on flag State performance to five States, and a sub-regional MCS training;
- (i) support to effectively implement CDS;
- (iv) legal training in international fisheries law to government officials including judicial offices (judges and magistrates);
- (v) international MCS and port inspection; and
- (vi) national-level seminars on the PSMA.

Furthermore, countries have been supported in using regional and international tools and mechanisms for information-sharing and cooperation for the effective implementation of the PSMA and complementary international instruments, including importantly the FAO Global Record.

The **results** of the capacity development activities funded by the programme could be quantified in 55 developing States and Small Island Developing States in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and in Latin America and the Caribbean, as follows:

- (i) three ratifications/accessions in 2021 and one accession in May 2022 to the PSMA;
- (ii) 17 revised laws in line with the PSMA and complementary international instruments of which six have been adopted and enforced;
- (iii) 14 drafts for MCS-related regulations of which two have been adopted;
- (iv) five formulation and three updates/revisions of NPOA-IUUs;
- (v) six fully and eight partly established, formalized interagency mechanisms;
- (vi) strengthened MCS and enforcement systems through: the identification of MCS-related standard operating procedures (SOPs) in 15 countries of which two have been fully integrated into the MCS systems; the development of risk assessment tools and procedures in four countries; the development of one, and the preparation of three, national inspection plans.

Under the programme, FAO published, in 2021 and the first quarter of 2022, a number of capacity development **materials** and guidance documents to facilitate States' legal, policy-level, institutional and operational alignment with the PSMA and complementary international instruments to combat IUU fishing. These documents include:

- (1) “A consolidated checklist of coastal, flag and port State responsibilities to combat IUU fishing”,
- (2) “A legal checklist of the main duties and responsibilities of coastal, flag and port States, and internationally agreed market-related measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing”, and
- (3) a technical guidance document entitled “Understanding and implementing Catch Documentation Schemes for detecting and deterring IUU fishing”.

### **Capacity development in support of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) implementation**

FAO supports capacity development and awareness-raising for governments, small-scale fisheries organisations, including regional small-scale fisheries organizations, and other stakeholders with a view to advance and promote the participatory implementation of the SSF Guidelines, through its SSF Umbrella Programme and multi-donor mechanism, related funding provided by Sweden, Norway, and the Global Environment Facility. Partners included the Coastal Fisheries Initiative, Too Big To Ignore Global Partnership for Small-Scale Fisheries, International Ocean Institute – Southern Africa, One Ocean Hub, UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network, Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations, Fédération des Pêcheurs Artisans de L’Océan Indien, Confédération Africaine des Organisations Professionnelles de la pêche artisanale, Wageningen University and Research, and the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute.

Support has been provided on matters related to capacity development and awareness raising with respect to small-scale fisheries governance, the SSF Guidelines implementation, the National Plan of Action in support of SSF Guidelines implementation (NPOA-SSF), and other relevant instruments, and the 2022 International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) Global Action Plan. These activities included the following:

- engagement of small-scale fisheries actors in policy processes through the International Planning Committee Working Group on Fisheries and the Advisory Group of the Global Strategic Framework for SSF Guidelines implementation;
- policy review in Togo and Ecuador, within the framework of the UN Decade of Family Farming; and development and implementation of NPOA-SSF in Tanzania, Namibia, Madagascar, Senegal and Malawi;
- development of legal guidance documents: [Legislating for sustainable small-scale fisheries](#), and [A policy and legal diagnostic tool for sustainable small-scale fisheries](#);
- trainings for government officials on the SSF Guidelines implementation and related guidance, in countries in Africa and Asia; development of related e-learning courses, to be released in 2022;
- development of a new policy and legal database entirely dedicated to small-scale fisheries, the ‘SSF-LEX’ (subset of ‘FAOLEX’), to be launched in 2022;
- delivery of a webinar for strengthening the protection of human rights of small-scale fishers and the realizing multiple SDGs; and development of a policy brief to foster the recognition, protection and promotion of human rights of small-scale fishers, to be published in 2022;
- collaboration with international training institutes for inclusion of small-scale fisheries and SSF Guidelines sessions in relevant curricula; development of a curriculum for youth on the SSF Guidelines for testing in Peru; supporting the 4<sup>th</sup> World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress series for the regions of Asia-Pacific, North America, Europe, Latin America and Africa;

- the establishment of small-scale fisheries women organisations in the United Republic of Tanzania and Malawi; mapping of women's small-scale fisheries organisations in Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Uganda; and delivery of gender-transformative trainings for Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia, Madagascar;
- development of [\*A methodological guide for mapping women's small-scale fishery organizations to assess their capacities and needs\*](#); [\*Building resilience to climate change and disaster risks for small-scale fisheries communities\*](#); [\*Democratizing the implementation and monitoring of the SSF Guidelines\*](#); and [\*Financing small-scale fisheries in the Philippines\*](#).

In celebration of IYAF 2022, over 60 virtual, hybrid and in-person events at the global, regional and national level focusing either on small-scale fisheries in a specific region, or on specific topics have been organized, in addition to the preparation of publications, and the capacity-building activities outlined above. Capacity-building has also been supported on matters related to access to financial services; safety at sea; co-management of small-scale fisheries, information and communication technology for small-scale fisheries in Asia; COVID-19 impacts on small-scale fisheries; post-harvest practices for empowering women in small-scale fisheries in Africa. An ongoing study by FAO, Duke University and WorldFish, *Illuminating Hidden Harvests - the contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development*, aims at updating and expanding information and data on small-scale fisheries, compiled and analysed from 58 country case studies.

### **Capacity development in support of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)**

The 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, adopted at the thirty-fourth session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on 1 February 2021 (FAO, 2021), reiterated the importance of the ecosystem approach as an effective framework for integrating conservation and sustainable utilization objectives in fisheries management.

FAO has developed or supported the development of numerous products and initiatives for capacity development and mainstreaming EAF in fisheries management, including guidance at global, regional and national levels and FAO continues to support countries and regional organisations to develop capacity for the implementation of EAF, through specific training activities and applied support for fisheries management plan development. FAO has several larger projects running that explicitly include implementation of EAF in their scope of work in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, Africa and Asia.

Examples of recent capacity development activities include:

- Scaling up the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and the SSF Guidelines
- Training on "Applying Ecosystem approach for Fisheries (EAF) in the establishment of community managed fishing areas and the development of local artisanal fisheries management plans in Mozambique".
- EAF Implementation Monitoring Tool training
- Setting of EAF Implementation baselines
- Training on data and capacity poor fisheries in the context of EAF

- Ongoing activities to support EAF fisheries management plan implementation in various countries (including, amongst others: Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Sénégal, Tunisia)

Furthermore an EAF Course and EAF IMT Training of trainers are planned for August 2022.

## **SECTION VIII - MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY AND FLAG STATE IMPLEMENTATION**

### **OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 117 - *Decent work and employment in fisheries and aquaculture***

#### **Advancing the social protection agenda in the fisheries sector**

FAO, in adherence to the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, the SSF Guidelines and the Agenda 2030, in addition to supporting the ILO 2007 Working in Fishing Convention (No. 188) and the ILO 2012 Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202), is working towards advancing the social protection agenda in the fisheries sector. To achieve the latter objective, FAO, with the financial support from Norway, has developed and delivered the following capacity building activities:

- two sessions in the Small-Scale Fisheries Forum hosted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) on “Social Protection: what is it and how to overcome barriers for access” and “How Small-Scale Fisheries organization can promote community-based social protection for members”;
- three course modules for the International Training Center of the ILO Social Security Academy, relating to social protection in rural areas, building responsive systems in the context of Covid-19; responsive systems in the fisheries sector; and social protection in the fisheries and aquaculture sector;
- two training sessions on social protection in the fisheries sector, respectively as part of GFCM-LEX regional training session in Spain, and the workshop of the GFCM-MAVA project towards a region-wide legal framework for the conservation of the Mediterranean living and marine resources and ecosystems;
- addressing the climate change and poverty nexus in the Caribbean, through an eLearning initiative for leaders and change makers from 15 CARICOM countries working in fields related to small-scale fisheries, climate change, social development and poverty reduction, in collaboration with the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies and the Global Institute for Climate-Smart and Resilient Development of the University of the West Indies;
- integrating with IYafa 2022 activities in the Western Central Atlantic region through a course to support national and local initiatives reducing exposure and vulnerability and enhancing the resilience of the poor and vulnerable in coastal communities and the fisheries sector to climate change and natural hazards.

### **OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 128 - *Safety of fishers and fishing vessels***

In 2021 -2022, FAO conducted various safety at sea capacity-building projects, particularly in the Caribbean, Near-east and Northern Africa and South-Pacific regions and in South Asia. Capacity-

building materials<sup>1</sup> were developed in close collaboration with the Bay of Bengal Programme – Intergovernmental Organization (BOBP-IGO) and the FISH Safety Foundation for trainers on safety at sea and for small-scale fishers, and training workshops were conducted. An on-line platform with training resources for safety at sea professionals in the Caribbean was introduced, which is also being used by safety trainers in other regions. FAO also continued the promotion of formal and voluntary accident and fatality reporting system for fisheries in the Caribbean. In 2020/2021 FAO developed a “maritime rules of the road for small-scale fishers”<sup>2</sup> which aims to train and increase awareness among small-scale fishers to the maritime traffic rules.

The FAO World review of capture fisheries and aquaculture insurance 2022, estimates that only 16 percent of the global motorized fishing vessels operates with insurance coverage<sup>3</sup>. The number of fishing vessels covered by marine hull insurance is estimated at around 450 000 worldwide. Insurers, re-insurers and insurance brokers indicated that their underwriting experiences in fishing vessel insurance have generally been good over the period 2009–2019. While large-scale industrial fishing vessels can purchase insurance cover on the international market, many small- and medium scale vessels have challenges to access insurance services. Between 50 percent and 60 percent of the semi-industrial fishing vessels (12–24 m in length) are covered by marine hull insurance. Among the small-scale fishing vessels only 1 out of 20 is currently insured. Access to accident, life and health insurance services for crew on fishing vessels and small-scale fishers in developing countries has improved in recent years.

Therefore, FAO has been providing technical assistance to States with the introduction and promotion of insurance services for small-scale fishers in particular. Together with the Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) FAO developed Guidelines for increasing access of small-scale fishers to insurance services in Asia<sup>4</sup>, which were endorsed by APRACA in 2019 and are being implemented in 2020-2022 in the Asian region. In the Caribbean region, FAO has assessed the possibility of introducing third-party liability insurance in fisheries, on request of fishers’ organizations in the region, and is advising various governments on the related legal requirements and the need for capacity-building.

## **SECTION IX – MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE RESOURCES**

### **OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 199 – *FAO Custodianship of SDG indicators***

#### ***SDG indicator 14.4.1 – Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels***

FAO is the custodian agency of SDG indicator 14.4.1 which is based on FAO’s indicator on the status of fish stocks at global and regional levels, a time series maintained since the 1970, and updated and disseminated every two years through FAO’s flagship publication, SOFIA. With the SDG framework, there is now an objective for countries to report on the status of their national stocks, which creates both an opportunity for countries to develop strategies for sustainable fisheries, but also sets a

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<sup>1</sup> FAO 2019/2021. Safety at sea for small-scale fishers. Rome. Italy. Available on line in 16 languages.

<sup>2</sup> This elearning course is available from FAO’s elearning academy at:

<https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=704>

<sup>3</sup> FAO 2022. World review of capture fisheries and aquaculture insurance 2022. Available at:

<https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9491en>

<sup>4</sup> FAO 2019. Guidelines for increasing access of small-scale fishers to insurance services in Asia, by Uwe Tietze and Raymon van Anrooy. Rome. Italy.

challenge in terms of actual capacity for many developing countries to estimate the indicator and report in ways globally comparable.

Faced with this challenge, FAO developed methodologies for stock assessment applicable in data-limited situations, which resulted in the development of an eLearning course on SDG Indicator 14.4.1, published in English (2020) and in French and Spanish (2021). The e-learning includes the “Stock Monitoring Tool” Virtual Research Environment designed for training marine biologists with hands-on practice on the data-limited methods.

Since 2019, FAO has rolled out a capacity-building program through regional workshops to train countries on the SDG indicator 14.4.1 methodology. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the workshops were held virtually, including with the RECOFI countries in August 2021, the Pacific countries in collaboration with Infofish and SPC during the period July-November 2021, and three language/region oriented workshops conducted between November 2021 and March 2022 with particular focus on the regions poorly covered including West Africa, Middle East, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and Latin America. FAO, in collaboration with the regional fishery bodies (RFBs) strengthen the use of the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System, through dissemination of available information on individual stock status and the framework for information and data exchange at various levels. This collaboration aims at supporting the monitoring of SDG Indicator 14.4.1, and to facilitate RFBs involvement in a progressive convergence between global–regional indicators and national estimates.

In November 2019, the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire was dispatched for the first time to 165 countries with marine border with a call for reporting on their indicator. Eighty-four out of the Eighty-six countries, which reported, could be assessed by FAO. The reported indicator values were reviewed by FAO under a quality assurance process which led to FAO’s submission of assessed results to UNSD in February 2022: Indicators for 18 countries failed quality assurance (QA) level 1, 36 passed QA level 1 (completeness, quality) and 30 passed QA levels 1 and 2 (reliability and robustness).

The lessons learned from this first call are being used to improve the questionnaire in perspective of a second call planned for the second part of 2022.

The current regional and global estimates of sustainable fish stocks cannot be aggregated from country data submitted through the questionnaire because of quality concerns, and this practice will remain for the foreseeable future. However, a convergence of the two distinct processes of countries reporting their national indices and FAO estimating the regional indices is, to the extent possible, desirable but will need to follow a progressive pathway.

### ***SDG indicator 14.6.1 – Progress by countries in the degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing***

Reporting by States on SDG indicator 14.6.1 is facilitated through the FAO questionnaire for monitoring the implementation of the Code of Conduct of Responsible Fisheries and related instruments. The first SDG indicator 14.6.1 score collection exercise was carried out in 2018 followed by the second exercise in 2020.

Between 2018 and 2020, the average degree of implementation of international instruments to combat IUU fishing has improved across the world. A composite measure of the degree of implementation of the five principal instruments, the world score for SDG indicator 14.6.1 rose

from 3/5 to 4/5 over this period. On the basis of their reporting for SDG indicator 14.6.1, States have thus made good progress overall in carrying out the recommended measures to combat IUU fishing, with close to 75 percent scoring highly in their degree of implementation of relevant international instruments in 2020 compared to 70 percent in 2018. SIDS, faced with particular challenges in fully implementing these instruments due to vast marine areas under their jurisdiction, registered a medium level of implementation both in 2018 and in 2020. The same level of implementation was found in least developed countries (LDCs) between 2018 and 2020, which often face challenges to implement these instruments. In terms of regional groupings, most have either remained at the same level of implementation or improved, the exception being Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Sub-Saharan Africa.

As part of the FAO Programme to implement the PSMA, a number of activities have been carried out to enhance the degree of countries' implementation of international instruments aiming at combating IUU fishing. These activities include developing and maintaining the **global information-sharing systems**, which required the harmonization and standardization of data formats, procedures and mechanisms for data exchange:

- The Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (FAO Global Record) aims at increasing transparency and traceability by gathering and disseminating certified and comprehensive information, provided by official sources, on vessels and vessel activities. It is ideally suited to become the backbone of international fisheries management to which all other information will have to be invariably connected, supporting the implementation of the GIES, other complementary instruments and tools. As at April 2021, the FAO Global Record contains close to 12,000 vessel records of all sizes and types, provided by 65 FAO Member States from all regions. This represents about a third of the overall number of existing fishing nations and over a third of the total number of vessels with IMO numbers. The most represented regions are Europe, North America and Latin America, followed by Africa, Asia and the Pacific. To render the FAO Global Record more operational and boost participation, a new version of the Global Record Information System is currently under development and expected to be released by mid-2021. The improvements featuring in the new version of the system will offer new and improved mechanisms for data exchange, including automated mechanism, better system performance, a more robust architecture and an improved user experience with the inclusion of statistics and a renovated dynamic interface.
- The Global Information Exchange System (GIES) launched in December 2021 is foreseen under the PSMA. It was developed following a two-staged approach. First, it was prioritized the need for Parties to share and access basic information on designated ports and national points of contact for which FAO released two dedicated applications in June 2018. As at April 2021, 24 Parties (42 States) have provided information on designated ports, and 20 Parties (45 States), along with seven non-Parties, have provided information on national contact points. The FAO then initiated development on an integrated and modular prototype of the GIES requested by the Parties, to exchange information on inspection results and port denials. FAO convened a series of webinars in the period leading up to and after the third Meeting of the Parties (MOP3) to present the GIES prototype. Following instructions from the Parties, the GIES includes functionalities, features and standards such as, but not limited to, online forms for manual data input for denials of entry or use of port and port inspection reports; reference lists for data input; and a connection with the FAO Global Record that prefills relevant vessel information fields and provides data verification from flag State certified

information. In addition, the GIES also incorporates Application Programming Interphases (APIs) to enable automatic connection with regional and national systems electronic port State measure (e-PSM) systems. Further developments envisaged for the GIES may include, information on the advance request of entry, advanced user management and facilities for creating regional or national e-PSM systems (multitenancy functionality) fully compatible with the standards in the GIES.

As regards **transshipment in fishing related operations**, the international community has expressed concerns about the risks that transshipment may contribute to IUU fishing. FAO conducted a global study on transshipment regulations, practices and control mechanisms and an in-depth study to support the development of guidelines on best practices concerning transshipment. That in-depth study served as the basis for developing draft voluntary guidelines for the regulation, monitoring and control of transshipment, and to convene an expert consultation to review the draft, followed by a member-led negotiation process through the convening of a technical consultation. FAO convened an Expert Consultation on 11 to 15 October 2021 which developed draft voluntary guidelines for the regulation and monitoring of transshipment. On 30 May to 3 June 2022, FAO convened a Technical Consultation where States met to consider and finalised the draft guidelines which will be submitted to FAO's Committee on Fisheries in September 2021 for adoption.

**Estimating the magnitude and impact of IUU fishing** is key to understanding progress in combating it: a baseline estimate, plus indicators to follow trends, are required to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of instruments, initiatives and tools to fight IUU fishing. Thus, FAO has been coordinating the work to develop a series of Technical Guidelines on methodologies and indicators for the estimation of the magnitude and impact of IUU fishing since 2015. This series is made up of a Global Review of IUU estimation Studies (Volume 1) and Guiding principles and approaches on methodologies and indicators for the estimation of the magnitude and impact of IUU fishing (Volume 2). In 2021, a two-part third volume has been developed: Volume 3.1 provides a theoretical step-by-step process that practitioners can follow to set up an estimation of IUU fishing for any given fishery or region and was presented at COFI-34. Volume 3.2 considers a number of case-studies and applies the steps from Volume 3.1 to these, thus providing a more detailed approach for most common situations. This work is ongoing. The next steps will be the development of a fourth volume of this series that will apply this approach to a series of case studies. A fifth volume could address the estimation of the impact of IUU fishing, including social, environmental and economic impact. These FAO Guidelines, as requested by COFI, will ensure the comparability of future estimates of IUU fishing, allowing trends to be observed.

***SDG indicator 14.7.1 – Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries***

Fisheries support the livelihoods of millions worldwide, providing an important source of income and food security. Ensuring that fisheries resources are appropriately safeguarded is inextricably linked to their continued contribution to economies and sustainable development, especially for LDCs and SIDS.

Indicator 14.7.1 combines the value-added of fisheries and the biological sustainability of regional stocks into a single, internationally comparable indicator, allowing countries to better assess the importance of sustainable fisheries for their national economies. FAO, as the custodian of this Indicator, is in charge of collecting data, ensuring its comparability and consistency, and disseminating the same on global, regional and national scales. Considering that the indicator is

based on data previously provided by governments and international organizations, there is no need for additional reporting to FAO.

Sustainable fisheries' contribution to GDP at the global level has decreased somewhat, from 0.11 percent in 2011 to 0.10 percent in 2019. In SIDS and LDCs, it is 0.46 percent and 0.88 percent respectively. The value of sustainable fisheries as a percentage of GDP in some countries has increased significantly. For example, in Comoros, the rate increased from 4.5 percent in 2011 to 7 percent in 2019.

***SDG indicator 14.b.1 – Degree of application of legal/regulatory/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries***

As part of the SSF Umbrella Programme, FAO has been working to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and related instruments that recognize and protect access rights for small-scale fisheries. This work includes the delivery of a virtual workshop for countries in Asia, held in 2021, focused on the SDG14b and its associated indicator 14.b.1. Additionally, FAO developed and published [A policy and legal diagnostic tool for sustainable small-scale fisheries](#), through which countries and relevant stakeholders can assess the level of alignment of national policy and legal instruments with the SSF Guidelines and other relevant instruments relevant to small-scale fisheries. Under the Coastal Fisheries Initiative, the assessment of laws and policies using the diagnostic tool has been carried out for Cabo Verde, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, resulting in reports to be published in 2022.

**OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 229 – *Marine debris***

Following the recommendations contained in the Manila Declaration, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML)<sup>5</sup> was launched in June 2012 at Rio + 20 in Brazil and seeks to protect human health and the global environment by the reduction and management of marine litter. The GPML is a global partnership gathering international agencies, governments, NGOs, academia, private sector, civil society and individuals. FAO has a permanent seat at the Steering Committee of the GPML through which it contributes to the development of the GPML Digital Platform<sup>6</sup>. The Digital Platform is an open-source, multi-stakeholder platform that compiles different resources, connects stakeholders and integrates data to guide action. The resources have been collected through research based on publicly available information, interviews with experts, and inputs received through submissions. They cover all stages in the plastics life cycle, with respect to prevention of litter and waste, design and production, use and consumption, waste management and marine litter monitoring and capturing.

At the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly, the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) was invited to engage in and contribute to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics by providing inter alia a mapping of all relevant United Nations agencies, programmes, initiatives and expertise with relevance to marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics. In response to this call, in May 2019, the EMG Senior Officials decided to establish an Interagency Task Force to prepare the requested system-wide contribution.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gpmarinelitter.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://digital.gpmarinelitter.org/>

<sup>7</sup> A copy of the report is available here: [https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UNEP\\_EMG-REPORT\\_Marine-Litter-Microplastics-220317-05-Small-web.pdf](https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UNEP_EMG-REPORT_Marine-Litter-Microplastics-220317-05-Small-web.pdf)

The 45th Session of the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) (17-20 September 2018, Rome, Italy) supported the establishment of a working group on sea based sources of marine litter including fishing gear and other shipping related litter (GESAMP Working Group 43), sponsored by FAO and IMO and in partnership with UNEP. The Working Group 43 (WG43) was established in April 2019 and held its first virtual meeting to develop a work plan and timeline of deliverables as set forth in its Terms of Reference. In 2021, the WG43 published a report on the sources, level and impact of marine litter, their relative contributions, the impacts of different sea-based sources of marine litter and data gaps.<sup>8</sup>

The EAF Nansen Programme has a comprehensive Science Programme comprising 11 themes. Theme-6 covers the occurrence and impacts of marine litter and microplastics on marine ecosystems, and theme-8 includes the potential impact of microplastics on seafood safety. The distribution of seafloor marine litter (recovered in demersal trawls), floating microplastics and microplastics in fish has been studied off the West and East coasts of Africa and in the Bay of Bengal, off Myanmar. These studies include the determination of the polymer composition using advanced analytical techniques at the Marine Research Institute (Norway). Currently there is no evidence that microplastics pose a threat to seafood safety. It is certain that marine litter has a significant social and economic impact on a number of fisheries, being most clearly demonstrated for the artisanal beach seine fishery in the Gulf of Guinea. In 2021 the EAF-Nansen Programme initiated a study to identify and quantify marine litter associated with the beach seine fisheries in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo, and assess the economic, social and ecological impacts. This included surveying litter on the beaches where beach seine fisheries were carried out, examining and recording the contents of the seine nets and interviewing representatives of the fishing community to assess the impact. The overall aim is to identify potential measures to reduce the impact on the fishing communities, working with local and regional partners to implement these. In addition, large quantities of seafloor litter have been observed offshore in this region, in part reflecting a lack of adequate land-based waste management infrastructure. One aspect of these studies is to identify and quantify the proportion of litter generated by the fishing sector, particularly in regions that are generally data-poor, thus contributing to wider aspects of FAO's interests and obligations in reducing ALDFG.

FAO was invited to join the Plastic Waste Partnership (PWP) launched in November 2019 and led by the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. The goal of the Partnership is to foster sound management of plastic waste at the global, regional and national levels, and prevent and minimize their generation, including in the marine environment. FAO will contribute with relevant information and provision of technical advice, as well as the sharing of lessons learned from its ongoing activities within the EAF-Nansen programme (data collection and processing) and the GloLitter Partnerships Programme (see **operative paragraph 293 – Discarded fishing gear**).

## **SECTION X – MARINE BIODIVERSITY**

***OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 260-262 - Technical support to 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***

Marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) represent 64 percent of the total surface area of the oceans and around half of the planet's surface area. Pursuant to UNGA resolution 69/292 of 19

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<sup>8</sup> The report of WG43 is available here: <http://www.gesamp.org/site/assets/files/2213/rs108e.pdf>

June 2015,<sup>9</sup> negotiations are under way for a new international legally binding instrument (ILBI) under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). In its Resolution 72/249 of 24 December 2017,<sup>10</sup> the UNGA decided to convene an Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) that will meet in four sessions.

Given the potential implications this process might have on the fisheries sector, and as mandated by the FAO COFI in 2018 and 2021, FAO attended and contributed to all the four IGC Sessions by providing fisheries and other pertinent technical information on issues related to FAO's mandate. FAO contributed to IGC through statements and providing technical information. FAO organized or directly contributed to eleven events held in the IGC context. FAO facilitated information exchange with RFMO secretariats attending IGC to discuss elements of common concern, establishing network and coordination around fisheries related issues in BBNJ. Moreover, FAO facilitated the contacts and exchange of views among member delegations concerning provisions of the draft text, and in view of the fifth session of IGC, is preparing a document that provides an overview of FAO's work relevant to the BBNJ process.

Sustainable utilization of fisheries resources in ABNJ cannot be achieved without biodiversity conservation. Many of FAO's current areas of work have direct links to biodiversity. Technical assistance and capacity development are key factors to support an ILBI on BBNJ and FAO Members are invited to consider the multidisciplinary portfolio of capacity development programmes implemented by the Organization.

#### **OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 271 - *Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures***

The Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 called for conserving "at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures" by 2020. By this call, Target 11 places an important focus on the potential of using area-based management to achieve dual objectives of conserving biodiversity and providing benefits to people. Interest in area-based management tools, particularly MPAs and equivalent "other-effective area-based conservation measures" (OECMs), is on the rise internationally, with the Parties to the CBD currently negotiating the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes a draft target of proposing MPAs and OECMs to cover 30% of the ocean by 2030.

In February 2021, the 34th meeting of the FAO COFI (COFI34) noted the importance of considering multiple effective time and area-based management tools (ABMTs), such as protected areas and OECMs for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. COFI also noted the relevance of OECMs to achieving a number of the SDGs and global biodiversity targets, and requested that FAO produce and disseminate practical guidelines to support Members in their identification and implementation (para.17d and 17e of the 34th COFI report).

Following the request by COFI 34, FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Division began to develop the practical guidance called for by COFI. The guidance aims to explain the role of OECMs in mainstreaming biodiversity, provide both a general and technical understanding of OECMs and the CBD Decision 14/8, and outline a process by which governments and rights holders can identify areas

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<sup>9</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/187/55/PDF/N1518755.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>10</sup> <http://undocs.org/en/a/res/72/249>

in which ABMTs used in fisheries have led to positive and long-term biodiversity outcomes. The guidance poses questions that agencies and entities assessing potential OECM should consider, with case studies that illustrate the different approaches that can be taken for assessing whether protected areas lead to the kind of biodiversity protection that the OECM label signifies.

In parallel, FAO developed a series of shared learning workshops with the following objectives:

- To support countries, fisheries related agencies and stakeholders to understand, discuss and apply the CBD's criteria for identifying fisheries-related OECMs;
- To synthesize lessons learned from countries' experience in applying the CBD criteria in support of the development of the practical guidance called for by COFI34. The workshops aim to build the capacity of states and experts in the region by:
- increasing their understanding of OECMs and the benefits associated with identifying/creating OECMs;
- increasing their understanding of the criteria to identify and report OECMs, and their ability to apply these criteria in the context of marine fisheries measures, and
- applying the OECM criteria on a test basis on selected illustrative case studies in the region.
- To date, regional OECM workshops have been held in the following regions/countries: Baltic Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and the Caribbean.

FAO will continue to help build the capacity of its Members to report on how the fisheries sector is contributing to current and future area-based biodiversity conservation goals. In order to assist its Members and RFBs assess and identify fisheries OECMs, FAO is undertaking six main activities:

1. Continue to host and participate in shared learning events in additional regions. The goal of these events is 1) to bring stakeholders, experts and governments together and help guide countries in the identification, establishment, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of ABFMs that can contribute to marine biodiversity conservation; and 2) to learn from countries' experience in using area-based management tools in the marine context, which will support Activity c) below. Such workshops are envisioned to include staff from fishery related agencies as well as staff from RFBs. The CBD Secretariat has proposed joining FAO in planning and facilitating these events.
2. Build general awareness on the use of spatial management tools and their benefits to fisheries and biodiversity, both at global and regional levels through advisory processes and communications materials.
3. Continue to solicit input and finalize practical guidance for the establishment and management of OECMs in the fisheries sector. Activity a) will inform preparation and review of this guidance, allowing for both global and regionally specific guidance to be developed.
4. Provide on the ground assistance to states at regional/national level to share experience on the implementation of ABFM that delivers biodiversity co-benefits with the aim of increasing OECM coverage.
5. Support FAO Members in applying the guidance to ABFM in their national waters with the intent of assisting countries meet global area-based management targets while increasing food security and nutrition.
6. Assist FAO Members in developing social, economic and environmental indicators that can be used to monitor MPA and other ABFM (including OECMs) performance so that they

effectively contribute to fishery and biodiversity conservation, food security and meeting the SDGs.

### **OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 277 – *Deep-sea fisheries***

FAO is committed to supporting responsible fisheries, including in the ABNJ and in accordance with international law, through the implementation of its Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its associated international plans of actions and guidelines. The most relevant to deep-sea fisheries (DSF) is FAO's International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas ("the DSF Guidelines") that were adopted in 2008. These support States and RFMO/As to implement paragraphs 76-95 of UNGA Resolution 61/105 (adopted December 2006). However, much of the follow-up action by States and RFMOs has focused on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) from significant adverse impacts from bottom fishing. This is achieved particularly through area closures. There has been associated work on establishing the bottom fishing footprint, exploratory fishing protocols outside of the footprint, and VME encounter protocols, that work synergistically to manage bottom fisheries more generally whilst also ensuring protection to known and unknown VMEs. Also, and as reinforced in UNGA Resolution 64/72 paragraph 119d, (adopted December 2009) and included in the DSF Guidelines, is the need to adopt, monitor and enforce conservation measures to ensure that targeted fish stocks are maintained at levels commensurate with long-term sustainability.

VMEs and the reduction or elimination of significant adverse impacts (SAIs) from bottom fisheries was identified by the UNGA in 2004 (UNGA Res 59/25) and in 2006 (UNGA Res 61/105), when the UNGA adopted some tight deadlines for identification and management action. FAO was invited to develop a VME database (UNGA Res. 61/105 para 90) that shows the global progress of the implementation of UNGA Resolution 61/105 (supported by the DSF Guidelines) in protecting VMEs. The FAO VME DataBase<sup>11</sup> contains all management measures adopted by RFMOs from 2006 and continues to be updated. This is the only global source that shows the management of bottom fisheries in a map and factsheet interface and shows that most of the oceans are actively and adaptively managed. Most of the VMEs that were identified by RFMOs in the ABNJ were closed to bottom fishing by around 2015. These are subject to regular review, particularly in the northwest and northeast Atlantic and south Pacific. For example, NAFO in the northwest Atlantic undertook a scientific review of its VMEs in 2020 and delineated and closed new VMEs and modified the boundaries on others in 2022. New interim protected areas were adopted in the Indian Ocean in 2018 to protect benthic habits. The challenge in many regions where fisheries are newer is that the benthic ecosystems are poorly known. Habitat modelling is being refined to help with this, but a degree of ground truthing is still needed.

FAO, through the EAF-Nansen Programme in collaboration with CECAF and SEAFO, has conducted two scientific surveys in the ABNJ of the Atlantic Ocean in 2022, and a third survey in the SEAFO area has just started, all with the aim to improve knowledge on deep-sea ecosystems and to provide scientific inputs into the discussions on management and conservation measures related to VMEs and Deep-sea fisheries resource.<sup>12</sup>

FAO, through its Common Oceans programme (2014-2021) and the "Sustainable fisheries management and biodiversity conservation of deep-sea living marine resources and ecosystems in

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<sup>11</sup> [Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems Database \(fao.org\)](https://www.fao.org/vme-database/)

<sup>12</sup> [Example news: https://www.fao.org/in-action/eaf-nansen/news-events/detail-events/en/c/1476447/](https://www.fao.org/in-action/eaf-nansen/news-events/detail-events/en/c/1476447/)

the ABNJ” (DS) project, supported by GEF, provided a forum for discussions and exchanges of ideas, including at independent expert multi-stakeholder meetings. The DS project also conducted several studies of importance, including in relation to: (i) EAF, working closely with RFMO/As,<sup>13</sup> and (ii) review of the DSF in the ABNJ<sup>14</sup>; (iii) publication on “Vulnerable marine Ecosystems – Process and Practices”<sup>15</sup>; (iv) study of Monitoring Control and Surveillance<sup>16</sup> (MCS) and of the legal support<sup>17</sup> necessary; (v) a multi-authored publication on “Deep-ocean climate change impacts on habitat, fish and fisheries” in 2018.<sup>18</sup> The new phase of the Common Ocean Programme is starting in 2022 through which continued support will be provided to advance the management of DSF under the DS project.

FAO has also produced information on how DSF in the high seas has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, as part of FAO’s overall response.<sup>19</sup>

## **SECTION XI – MARINE SCIENCE**

### **OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 293 – *Discarded fishing gear***

There are five FAO fisheries management instruments, which address the issue of Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG):

- FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995) makes reference to the fact that fishing gear should be marked.
- Port State Measures Agreement to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (2009) which can be linked to intentional discarding of gear at sea.
- International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards (2011) makes reference to reducing the impact of lost fishing gear
- FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (2018) provides a comprehensive framework for the marking, reporting and retrieval of abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear covering all fishing gears with a separate section on FADs.
- Technical Guidelines for the Reduction of Marine Mammal Bycatch in Capture Fisheries (in prep., to be published before end of 2020) makes reference to the entanglement of marine mammals in ALDFG and ghost fishing.

In 2018, the thirty-third Session of FAO’s Committee on Fisheries (COFI33) endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG)<sup>20</sup>. The Voluntary Guidelines complement FAO’s Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and are an important tool to guide Members in preventing and reducing Abandoned, Lost and otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) and its impact such as ghost fishing, and in combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

In 2019, FAO in collaboration with the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) convened four regional workshops around the globe on best practices to prevent and reduce ALDFG. The aim of these workshops was to raise awareness and understanding of the VGMFG and GGGI’s Best Practice Framework for the Management of Fishing Gears (BPF). Each workshop produced a set of

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb1509en>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/ca7692en/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/818f123e-a492-45d6-86a2-b458c7d481f9/>

<sup>16</sup> [Monitoring, control, and surveillance of deep-sea fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction \(fao.org\)](https://www.fao.org/3/ca5628en/CA5628EN.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5628en/CA5628EN.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/ca2528en/ca2528en.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> [FAO Fisheries & Aquaculture - COVID-19 and its impact on the fisheries and aquaculture sector](https://www.fao.org/3/ca5184en/ca5184en.pdf)

See paragraph 105 of the report. <https://www.fao.org/3/ca5184en/ca5184en.pdf>

recommendations on actions that need to be taken up in the respective regions. The report of the four regional workshops is available<sup>21</sup>.

COFI 33 mandated FAO to develop a comprehensive global strategy to tackle issues relating to ALDFG and to support implementation of the VGMFG involving relevant international bodies and other stakeholders. COFI 34 also reiterated the necessity to continue promoting the VGMFG and its provision on capacity development at regional and national levels. In response, FAO has developed a programme of work on responsible fishing operations including action on ALDFG, bycatch, marine litter and discards (see COFI/2020/inf. 15.4<sup>22</sup> for more details). FAO signed a UN to UN Agreement with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to assist developing countries to address the issue of marine plastic litter from sea-based sources: the [GloLitter Partnerships project](#)<sup>23</sup>. The overarching goal of the project is to assist developing countries to prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from the maritime transport and fisheries sectors. GloLitter will achieve its objectives by focusing on a number of areas identified in the IMO Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, including supporting the provisions of the FAO VGMFG. The project is funded by the Government of Norway, Australia and Saudi Arabia and will run until mid-2024. IMO is the lead implementing agency and FAO is the implementing partner dealing with the fisheries sector.

The report of GESAMP Working Group 43 provides an overview of the current state of knowledge in terms of the sources, relative contribution and data gaps when it comes to sea-based sources of marine litter (see operative paragraph 224 for more background information on the Working Group). Based on the recommendations from the WG, FAO has developed a series of standardized questionnaires and a methodology to implement a global survey on ALDFG. Data is being collected through surveys of fishers, and/or their representatives and stored in a database for further analysis and synthesis estimates of gear loss as well as for mapping spatial and temporal distribution of gear loss. The survey data also includes causes of gear loss, good practices to avoid gear loss, end-of-life fishing gear and marine plastic waste management and fishers' views on ALDFG.

### **SECTION XIII – REGIONAL COOPERATION**

#### ***Global achievements are built upon regional efforts - Regional fishery bodies are key actors for regional cooperation towards sustainable development***

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the importance of regional and sub regional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development. The regional level is the most appropriate level for establishing a collaborative framework to preserve and protect whole ecosystems efficiently while also providing opportunities for participating States to benefit sustainably from the services they render. Global instruments and normative processes have to be implemented and translated into actions at the country and regional levels, as appropriate. The UNCLOS provides for and encourages regional approaches. Global discussions and regional actions are two interconnected processes which feed each other and both need to be strengthened. Consequently, the articulation between global and regional governance mechanisms is becoming increasingly important.

RFBs including RFMOs and Regional Fishery Advisory Bodies (RFABs) have an important role in contributing to fisheries management and scientific research of many important fisheries around the

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0723en/cb0723en.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/ne659en/ne659en.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/PartnershipsProjects/Pages/GloLitter-Partnerships-Project-.aspx>

globe. RFMOs have the mandate to adopt legally binding fisheries conservation and management measures within their respective convention areas. RFABs provide fora for collaboration and coordination and promote sustainable utilization of fishery resources by recommending specific actions and by providing advice to members on fisheries conservation and management. Some RFBs also have aquaculture included in their mandates.

RFMOs and RFABs continue to evolve in response to calls for sustainability, improved management and governance, and as a result of lessons learned and stronger commitment by their members. FAO supports and provides overview of these processes and developments through the Organization's technical work on fisheries and aquaculture, providing overview and synopsis of RFBs' developments<sup>24</sup>.

FAO is committed to bolstering regional cooperation through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN).<sup>25</sup> RSN provides a forum for promoting consultation and regional dialogue by addressing priority issues of common concern and facilitating the coordination, exchange of experiences and lessons learned by RFBs. RSN has maintained regular contact with its members (more than 50 RFBs and other fisheries related institutions and networks)<sup>26</sup> including through the production of a popular magazine<sup>27</sup> and making available relevant data and information related to RFBs<sup>28</sup>, also in international technical venues and global fora such as the UNGA<sup>29</sup>. FAO through RSN has been able to address promptly the challenges posed by COVID-19 to regional fishery frameworks, in particular to the work of RFBs<sup>30</sup>. The RSN Secretariat also carried out a thorough review of the RFBs database by updating 44 fact sheets<sup>31</sup>. The last RSN Global Meeting was organized by FAO in February 2021<sup>32</sup>.

Sustainability can only be achieved through cooperation among all stakeholders, as recognized in SDG 17 (Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development). The international community has increasingly recognized the importance of regional cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation in facilitating the achievement of targets set by the 2030 Agenda that aim at maintaining the health of the ecosystems, including the oceans, so that they can increase their ability to contribute to food security and poverty reduction.

Regional organizations that work toward enhancing the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity can make such cooperation effective through formal mechanisms and joint activities, especially by creating linkages between existing fisheries management and biodiversity conservation initiatives, as the achievement of food security will require fisheries and environmental management agencies to work together.

The FAO COFI welcomed and is supportive of the joint efforts of the CBD Secretariat, FAO and UNEP within the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and

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<sup>24</sup> Terje Løbach, T., Petersson, M., Haberkon, E. and Mannini, P. 2020. *Regional fisheries management organizations and advisory bodies. Activities and developments, 2000–2017*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 651. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca7843en>

<sup>25</sup> [www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/en)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/search/en>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/newsletter/en>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA0183EN>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.fao.org/fishery/static/news/FAOSideEvent-ICSP-14UNHQ-2May.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/publications/281600>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/organization/search>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.fao.org/fishery/nems/41296/en>

Regional Fisheries Bodies to strengthen collaboration on issues of common interest, taking into account their different mandates and roles.

FAO and UNEP are supporting cooperation agreements in several areas of the world such as in the Gulf and Sea of Oman between 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 FAO Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) and the Nairobi Convention have established a cooperation agreement, and in the Western Central Atlantic, the FAO Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) strengthened its collaboration with a number of agencies among which UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, UNESCO/IOCARIBE through the Interim Coordination Mechanism for the Sustainable Management, Use and Protection of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems, signed in 2017. Further, in the Mediterranean the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) continues to closely cooperate with UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) in the context of a Memorandum of Understanding adopted to contribute to the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries and spatial-based management. This cooperation has resulted, among others, in the definition of common indicators for fisheries and ecosystems, increased complementarity in the use of area-based management tools and the improved monitoring of non-indigenous species.