

**FAO INPUTS IN RELATION TO RESOLUTION A/RES/75/239
CONCERNING “OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA”
FOR THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE SEVENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provides legal advice and assistance to Member Nations including, in the development of fisheries and aquaculture legislation and contributing to national efforts towards realising the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such advice and assistance is provided to ensure that national legislation conforms with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (the Convention). Great effort is put into ensuring that national legislation incorporates and effectively implements the provisions of the Convention, the rights and duties of Member Nations within waters under national jurisdiction such as fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), and the effective exercise of 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 legislative assistance provided by FAO to Member Nations also takes into account the international instruments related to the conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources such as the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA), the FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (Compliance Agreement), and the FAO 2009 Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA). Further, the assistance takes into account relevant non-binding instruments such as the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and its supplementary instruments, the Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance (VGFSP), the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear. These non-binding instruments refer to and promote certain principles, approaches and tools which 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 Human Rights Based Approach to fisheries conservation and management, stakeholder participation in decision making including

through co-management, the application of environment impact assessment in deep sea fisheries, and the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) and aquaculture.

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic has greatly affected FAO's assistance programmes and projects in general and reduced the delivery and level of technical assistance provided by FAO in strengthening fisheries and aquaculture legislation and related capacity building activities. Nevertheless, virtual means of consulting Governments and other stakeholders of certain Member Nations were employed to review and strengthen their fisheries and aquaculture legislation to align them with the Convention and related international instruments. Such assistance was and is being provided to Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire, Kiribati, Mauritius, Guyana, St. Vincent and the Granadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Assistance was provided to FAO Member Nations to ensure that they are aware of and can implement the requirements of the Convention and relevant international fisheries instruments on the conservation of living marine resources and their sustainable use including through the use of relevant approaches and tools for assessing and strengthening fisheries and aquaculture legislation. In this regard assistance was provided, through virtual workshops, to government officials and other stakeholders on legislating for the EAF using "A diagnostic tool for implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries through policy and legal frameworks" (EAF Legal Diagnostic Tool). Such assistance was provided to: Bangladesh, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Maldives, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, and Togo.

In addition to the EAF Legal Diagnostic Tool, FAO also produced the following assessment tools to assist countries in aligning their national legislation with the Convention and relevant international instruments: "Legislating for sustainable small-scale fisheries: A guide and considerations for implementing aspects of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication in national legislation"; and, "Implementing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) through national fisheries legal frameworks: a study and a guide".

SECTION II - CAPACITY-BUILDING

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 36 - Capacity-building for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources

Capacity development for small-scale fisheries (SSF) under the FAO SSF Umbrella Programme

The 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 2019/20, and are organized according to the four interrelated components of the FAO SSF Umbrella Programme: (i) Awareness raising: knowledge products and outreach; (ii) Strengthening the science-policy interface: sharing of knowledge and supporting policy reform; (iii) Empowering stakeholders: capacity development

and institutional strengthening, and (iv) Supporting implementation: programme management, collaboration and monitoring.

- (i) Awareness raising knowledge products and outreach.

The importance of small-scale fisheries has been reemphasized during Thirty-Fourth Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI 34) by the endorsement of the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture¹. The Declaration calls on States and all stakeholders to:

Promote policies that support and recognize the contribution of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in food security, employment and income, improve data collection systems, especially from small scale and artisanal fisheries, and further support the access of small-scale fishers and fish farmers to local, national, and international markets, ensuring equitable and non-discriminatory trade for small-scale fisheries and aquaculture products, including through the implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small Scale Fisheries (VGSSF).

Examples of events, activities and materials for creating awareness and promoting the uptake of the SSF Guidelines at the global level include:

- The FAO-hosted session called Empowering Women in Small-Scale Fisheries for Sustainable Aquatic Food Systems in the African Great Lakes Region on 3rd June during the Virtual Ocean Dialogues by the World Economic Forum 1-5 June 2020, where initiatives to reduce poverty and improve food security and nutrition in small-scale fisheries in the African Great Lakes region by empowering women in the post-harvest sector were presented.
- The FAO-led webinar in collaboration with the One Ocean Hub on ‘Small-Scale Fisheries and Blue Justice: Procedural and Substantive Rights of Fisherfolks’ for the UN-Nippon Fellows and Alumni which explored the role and practical relevance of international legal instruments for the recognition and full realisation of the human rights of small-scale fisherfolk, with particular attention to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.
- A side event on ‘Exploring the application of CFS instruments to address gender, youth, inequality and data systems in small-scale fisheries’ at the 47th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in February 2021 which discussed the mutually reinforcing nature of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) and four related CFS instruments mentioned above.
- The FAO led a series of virtual regional workshops from September 2020 to April 2021, on fisheries policy and legal matters delivered under the EAF-Nansen Programme dedicated to implementing the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) in

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ne472en/ne472en.pdf>

African and South-East Asian countries and the CFI Programme on coastal fisheries initiatives (CFI) and small-scale fisheries (SSF) in Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal. 135 participants (including 47 women) from 31 countries participated in the five virtual regional workshops on the use of A diagnostic tool for implementing an EAF through fisheries policy and legal frameworks. The SSF workshops on the use of the Legislating for sustainable small-scale fisheries guide and the SSF Policy and Legal Diagnostic Tool (yet to be published) covered a total of six countries (which had also participated in the EAF workshops) and about 73 representatives (including 28 women)

- FAO's participation in the 'Small-Scale Fisheries Open House' organised by the Too Big To Ignore (TBTI) network for World Oceans Week 2021 to discuss the issues facing the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
 - FAO's contributions for World Ocean Week 2021 which brought together all of the different work streams supporting of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines..
 - The 2020 FAO publication of the card game 'Go-Small-Scale Fishing!' which is an interactive tool designed to deepen the understanding and experience small-scale fisheries stakeholders have of the SSF Guidelines.
 - The development and dissemination of information briefs showing how the SSF Guidelines and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security; the Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forest in the Context of National Food Security; the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems; and the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises reinforce each other.
 - The endorsement and launching during World Ocean Week 2021 of the International Year for Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022) Global Action Plan (GAP) by the IYAFA 2022 International Steering Committee .
- (ii) Strengthening the science-policy interface: sharing of knowledge and supporting policy reform - FAO continues to work with partners on generating and facilitating specific knowledge on small-scale fisheries issues to better inform related policies, in fisheries, but also beyond. Partners from research and academia play an important role in work under this component. Key developments and achievements include:
- The first Global Expert Workshop on the Fisheries Co-Management Guidebook in September 2020. The Guidebook aims to allow governments, fishers, and other sector stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of their fisheries co-management systems in achieving expected goals, to adapt the assessment results, and monitor progress over time.

- A virtual dialogue in early December 2020 between FAO and representatives from the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET), the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and WorldFish on further understanding the link between food loss and gender equality in African fisheries value chains.
 - The FAO-organised and hosted virtual seminar in collaboration with Dried Fish Matters, fish4food, Small Fish Food, IKAN-F3 in February 2021, on the contribution of small, low-cost fish (mainly epipelagic forage fish) to food security. The webinar considered a food systems approach to examining the role of the various segments of the small fish value chains in meeting the four dimensions of food and nutrition security – availability, accessibility, quality (utilization) and stability.
 - A course developed by the FAO and the International Ocean Institute of Southern Africa the ‘Regional Small-scale Fisheries Governance Training for Africa’ which recognizes the challenges of governing small-scale fisheries and aims at creating an enabling environment for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines by capacitating practitioners to address key small-scale fisheries governance issues using holistic and participatory methods. The first course was held online in February 2021 with government representatives from Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda participating.
- (iii) Empowering stakeholders: capacity development and institutional strengthening - the 3rd component of the FAO SSF Umbrella Programme supports improved technical and organizational capacities of governments and stakeholders at the local, national and regional levels. The events, activities and materials under this component include:
- Support provided to fishers and fishworkers in Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana and Sierra Leone under the auspices of the Norad-funded project ‘Empowering women in small-scale fisheries for sustainable food system’ for adapting to the trying circumstances of Covid-19 by promoting and maintaining hygiene and sanitation at fish markets through establishing handwashing stations and educating stakeholders through hygiene promotion workshops.
 - A project funded by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) on Systems and methodologies of data collection in inland fisheries of Europe 2018-2020 to assist West Balkans countries with data systems for monitoring their inland fisheries, which are primarily small-scale fishers and anglers in rivers and lakes. The project is developing good practices guidelines that highlight regional success stories such as co-management arrangements between government and fishers/angler associations, as well as the potential for citizen science in data collection. National workshops will provide training to stakeholders in small-scale freshwater fisheries of West Balkans, namely in the participating countries of Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Moreover, a technical publication documenting data collection system relevant for small-scale inland and recreational fisheries in European countries was produced

jointly with the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC).

- The publication in September 2020 of, ‘Legislating for sustainable small-scale fisheries: A guide and considerations for implementing aspects of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication in national legislation’ was published. This highly relevant document is a tool for States to strengthen their fisheries legislation in order to establish conditions for inclusive and sustainable small-scale fisheries development, taking into account the interrelatedness of social, economic and environmental sustainability. Currently, under preparation to complement this Guide is the SSF Legal Diagnostic Tool, which will assist interested stakeholders in better understanding the extent to which existing national policy and legal instruments align with the SSF Guidelines, and in identifying gaps and strengths of policy and legal instruments with respect to the SSF Guidelines.
- The publication in January 2021 of the handbook, ‘Information and communication technologies for small-scale fisheries (ICT4SSF)’ . The publication aims to provide a reference framework for uses of ICTs in small-scale fisheries, specifically towards achieving the objectives of the SSF Guidelines and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is hoped that this handbook will be a reference tool for public sector fisheries and development officers and non-governmental workers in identifying new opportunities to leverage ICTs, but also to guide their design and development to avoid risks and common pitfalls.
- The publication over the course of 2020 of the ‘Safety-at-Sea for Small-Scale Fishers’ manual in English, Chinese, Tegulu, Portuguese, Spanish, Singhalese, Bengali, French, Tamil, Malayalam and Russian.
- The manual aims to contribute to a culture of safety awareness among fisherfolk, reduce the number of accidents and increase the chances of survival if accidents occur. The manual guides the user on safety matters related to the work on a small-scale fishing vessel (e.g. fire safety, deck safety, lifesaving equipment, lighting and ventilation), personal safety and navigation safety.
- The development of the ‘National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines Implementation’ (NPOA-SSF) - a toolkit for the preparation of a National Plan of Action in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, supporting the preparation of a participatory, robust and adaptive NPOA-SSF, based on and guided by the recommendations of the SSF Guidelines. Alongside the NPOA-SSF, FAO has developed a user guide for practitioners to build a clearer sense of how the NPOA-SSF toolkit should be adapted to national contexts.
- FAO's Regional Office for Africa (RAF) gender unit online training under the Norad-funded project ‘Empowering women in small-scale fisheries for sustainable food

system' t. The training was to build the capacity of trainers to enable them to organise training at the national level.

(iv) Supporting implementation: programme management, collaboration and monitoring. component has two main streams of work: the development of the SSF Global Strategic Framework (SSF-GSF) as a partnership mechanism to support SSF Guidelines implementation, and monitoring of progress toward securing sustainable small-scale fisheries, including the design of a monitoring system. The events, activities and materials under this component include:

- Online consultation in May 2020 entitled, 'How to monitor implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries?' to solicit views, recommendations, suggestions, and good practices from a diverse group of practitioners.
- The formation of an African Advisory Group in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in June 2020 by the partners for the implementation of the Global Strategic Framework, the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) Fisheries Working Group. The African Advisory Group is composed of representatives of global and regional civil society networks with small-scale fisheries organizations in the African continent as their members. The African Advisory Group exchanges information with the already existing global Advisory Group, which is part of a Global Strategic Framework facilitated by FAO and IPC Fisheries Working Group to help implement the SSF Guidelines.
- A webinar in January 2021 by the Global Strategic Framework in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines group, the Friends of the SSF Guidelines, consisting of selected FAO members², and the Advisory Group (AG) representing small-scale fisheries and Indigenous peoples organisation³, to showcase experiences of applying the SSF Guidelines at different scales, by different actors, and in different contexts. The webinar allowed for the sharing of approaches and lessons learnt and discussed how the implementation of the SSF Guidelines can be further promoted to enhance the contribution of the small-scale fisheries sector to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including ensuring food security and nutrition and equitable development for men and women in the sector and beyond.

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

On 22 November 2009 the FAO Conference adopted the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA). The PSMA aims to prevent fish caught through illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing from entering national and international markets by prohibiting the entry into and use of ports by foreign

² Canada, Indonesia, Norway, Peru and Tanzania

³ [WFF](#), [WFFP](#), [IITC](#), and [LCV](#), collaborating within the alliance space of the [IPC](#).

vessels engaged, or believed to be engaged, in IUU fishing. The effective implementation of the port State measures set out in the PSMA to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing will 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 with 30 Parties, including the European Union as one Party representing its Member States. As of June 2021, there are 69 Parties to the PSMA, comprising 68 States and the European Union. The number of Parties has, therefore, more than doubled since the entry into force of the Agreement, and now comprises 56% of all port States globally.

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* (The Programme). 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. Developing States and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), both Parties and non-parties to the Agreement, can benefit from the Programme. Since its inception, the European Union (EU), Germany, Iceland, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and the United States of America have committed over USD 20 million for the implementation of the programme through fifteen projects, of which eleven are currently ongoing.

The Programme includes activities to:

- (a) Assess the needs for strengthening national legislation, institutional setup, and monitoring control and surveillance (MCS) systems and operations with respect to port, flag, coastal, and market State responsibilities, including the drafting of national strategies and road maps to implement related measures.
- (b) Support the formulation or review 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 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 (Global Record), the PSMA global capacity development portal, and a global information exchange system (GIES) to support the implementation of the PSMA.
- (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 fishing in 34 developing States;
- (ii) support to align national policies and legislation with the requirements of the PSMA and complementary international instruments to combat IUU fishing to 20 developing States;
- (iii) support to review and update monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems and procedures in line with the PSMA and complementary international instruments to combat IUU fishing to 11 developing States;
- (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 to four States;
- (v) support to effectively implement catch documentation schemes to two States
- (iv) legal training in international fisheries law to 54 officials from 16 developing States;
- (v) international MCS and port inspection training to 24 officials from seven developing States; and
- (vi) national-level seminars on the PSMA to four States.

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.

As of June 2021, the results of the capacity development activities funded by the programme could be quantified in 20 developing States and Small Island Developing States in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America and the Caribbean, as follows:

- (i) three further ratifications/accessions to the PSMA;
- (ii) 13 revised laws in line with the PSMA and complementary international instruments of which six have been adopted and enforced;
- (iii) 10 drafts for MCS-related regulations of which two have been adopted;
- (iv) one formulation and three updates/revisions of NPOA-IUUs;
- (v) two 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 11 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 has also been producing 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 which are in the final stages of production will be published by the third quarter of 2021 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”,
- (3) “A checklist of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) procedures and systems to combat IUU fishing”, and
- (4) a technical guidance document entitled “Understanding and implementing Catch Documentation Schemes for detecting and deterring IUU fishing”.

SECTION VIII - MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY AND FLAG STATE IMPLEMENTATION

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 117 – *Decent work and employment in fisheries and aquaculture*

FAO’s work on decent work and employment in fisheries and aquaculture is conducted in collaboration with member country and partners, including ILO, and includes knowledge generation, advocacy in regional and global fora, capacity development and provision of country-level policy support to achieve basic labour standards in the rural areas and to promote the access to decent work and social protection for fishers and fish workers.

The importance of decent work and employment and social protection has been reemphasized during COFI 34th by the endorsement of the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture⁴ which calls on States to:

“...13) Promote the attainment of safe, healthy and fair working conditions for all in the sector, support efforts to prevent and halt forced labour, facilitate access to social protection programs for fishers and aquaculture producers and their communities, support measures to improve safety at sea, and work towards enhancing the standards of living for all in the sector, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, including the International Labour Organization and the International Maritime Organization.”

During the 34th COFI Session, Member Nations also analysed the decisions and recommendations of the report of the 17th Session of the FAO Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT), which reports and updates the ongoing trade-related activities performed by FAO associated with COFI:FT. Institutionally, the COFI:FT has a specific mandate to promote social sustainability in fisheries value chains, mainly the recognition and protection of human and labour rights in national and international value chains. Based on this report, COFI called on “FAO to continue the work on fisheries and aquaculture specific, voluntary, non-binding and practical guidance on social responsibility in the fisheries value chains based on existing international instruments and guidelines in cooperation with relevant specialized agencies and stakeholders”.

In order to be able to continue the development of this work in an inclusive and collaborative way, FAO is planning to organize a series of regional meetings around the world in 2021 with the participation of country representatives, FAO experts based in regional or national offices and

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/3/ne472en/ne472en.pdf>

designated regional or national officials also, in collaboration with other UN agencies, such as IMO, ILO, UNCTAD and OECD.

FAO published the FAO/IMO/ILO brochure on *Joining forces to shape the fishery sector of tomorrow: Promoting safety and decent work in fisheries through the application of international standards*⁵. This brochure gives a summary overview of four international binding fisheries instruments (conventions and agreements) that promote the safety of fishing vessels, safety of fishers, training of fishers, and responsible and safe fisheries operations. This brochure has been prepared by IMO, ILO, and FAO to provide guidance to policy and decision-makers and other stakeholders in the fisheries, maritime, and labour sectors with a view to promoting ratification and implementation of key fisheries instruments.

Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has been negatively affecting the fisheries sector. For instance illness of crews, vessel labour shortages, reduced or stopped fishing activities and reduced demand from value chain partners as well as generating multi-faceted consequences on fish workers, small-scale fishers, fish farmers, fish companies, restaurants, retailers, among others. These impacts were global, causing changes in employment and business orientation in both developing and developed countries.

In line with earlier editions, the Vigo Dialogue continued focusing on promoting human and labour rights along the fish value chains in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The 2020 edition put a special emphasis on social problems associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and raised awareness of the situation faced by fish workers and the industry due to the pandemic. In addition, the Dialogue allowed FAO to continue its inclusive collaboration with relevant stakeholders, by providing a clear outline of the major challenges on social issues in fish value chains, including gaps and key elements, to support the ongoing activities associated with FAO's mandate on social responsibility.

FAO prepared a policy brief on *The role of social protection in the recovery from COVID-19 impacts in fisheries and aquaculture*⁶. The COVID-19 pandemic shows that many individuals working in the sector operate in the informal market with no coverage from labour market policies – not registered in mandatory social security, paid less than the legal minimum wage, without a written contract, or self-employed. These individuals include small-scale fishers, migrant, fish workers, ethnic minorities, crew members, harvesters, gleaners and vendors – especially women who were the most affected by the pandemic. Social protection has been a key response that governments took to alleviate the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 restrictions for fishery-dependent communities. The brief also shows that countries with strong social protection systems in place were the most flexible to respond rapidly by adapting social protection programmes to the impact of COVID-19. Countries with weak social protection systems were less able to tailor programmes to attend the sector which is characterized by high informality. Several people who lost their employment were also left without any access to income support.

In relation to regional processes, FAO:

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb0627en>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/3/cb3385en/cb3385en.pdf>

- published the *Accra Call for Action from the Gulf of Guinea Regional Technical Seminar on safety, IUU fishing and decent work*⁷ as well as the *Mahé Call for Action from the Regional Technical Seminar for the West Indian Ocean on safety, decent work and the fight against IUU fishing*⁸. These brochures present the outcomes of these regional technical seminars which have been organized by the FAO, the Apostleship of the Sea, the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), IMO, ILO and the UNODC. Participants of the technical seminars included experts from safety, labour and fisheries authorities along with trade unions, small-scale fishers representatives, national human rights institutions and fisheries associations. The brochures highlight the measures and actions to increase awareness on the protection of human rights in the fishing sector along with the main international legal frameworks covering the issue; promote increased cooperation among responsible international agencies like FAO, IMO, ILO and UNODC and related regional and national authorities; increase political commitment and the development of regional/national actions and measures to fight labour abuses and IUU fishing in the fishing sector; and identify possible ways of inter-agency collaboration and future actions by concerned stakeholders.

FAO is planning to organize another Regional Technical seminar on safety, decent work and the fight against IUU fishing in Latin America, in 2021.

- FAO prepared a Sub-regional Working Conditions Review and guide for fishers and fish workers in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

FAO and INVEMAR (the Colombian institute for marine and coastal research), hosted a meeting for Buenaventura's *platoneras* (post-harvest female fish-workers) as a result of the work on the role women play in the post-harvest sector and the need to support the participation of women in such work. The meeting highlighted the results of the work emphasizing the needs of the post-harvest female fish-workers, the value of the fishproducts they transform and commercialize, and the key role in their community's food security and socio-economic development. The meeting was the result of a project supported by FAO and INVEMAR where they built the capacity of government stakeholders to integrate gender and nutrition into a value chain analysis and entrepreneurship endeavours. Similarly, the project mapped the barriers and opportunities to female entrepreneurship, in the fisheries sector, in Buenaventura and supported the formalization of an organization called "Pez & Pez" as well as of the *platoneras*, to enhance their connection with public procurement processes. The meeting highlighted the need to i) generate spaces for collaboration between different local actors and representatives of the *platoneras*; ii) apply a gender-sensitive approach to sector analysis; iii) further the characterization of Buenaventura's *platoneras* to understand how many there are in the region, even if working informally, and what are their characteristics; iv) strengthen all steps within the value chain; v) improve organizational capacity and access to finance; and vi) link the current mechanisms

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB1588EN/>

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9214en>

supporting the *platoneras* with social protection ones, either universal or sectoral to help them overcome structural barriers to development.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 124 - *Safety of fishers and fishing vessels*

At its Fourth Session of the Joint FAO/ILO/IMO Ad Hoc Joint Working Group on IUU Fishing and Related Matters (JWG) on 24-25 November 2019, in Torremolinos, Spain, the JWG recommended among others that IMO develop guidance to assist competent authorities in the implementation of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement, welcomed the initiative of the Indian Ocean MoU on Port State Control (IOMOU) to explore a collaborative programme with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and called on FAO, ILO and IMO to review the terms of reference of the JWG to be considered at, and adopted as appropriate by its Fifth Session. The 34th session of FAO's Committee on Fisheries held on 1-5 February 2021 recognized the important role the FAO/ILO/IMO JWG plays in engaging multiple agencies and stakeholders, including on measures to attain safe, healthy and fair working conditions and improve safety at sea.

As recommended by COFI, a focus group of FAO, ILO and IMO is currently working on the revision of the JWG's terms of reference to reflect its broadened composition and functions as well as its focus areas, given the recent developments in the fishing sector. With inputs from IMO and ILO, FAO has developed information material to promote ratification and implementation of the four main international fisheries and safety instruments, the 2009 FAO PSMA, 2012 IMO Cape Town Agreement, 1995 IMO STCW-F and the 2007 ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188)⁹. Since the convening of the Fourth Session of the JWG, the IOTC and IOMOU have developed their exchange through a Letter of Understanding and building upon this, with the support of FAO, IMO and ILO, have started concrete cooperation with a view to coordinate port inspections and to promote interagency cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region. Under FAO's Global PSMA Capacity Development Programme, FAO is providing technical assistance in a number of developing countries and SIDS to integrate the implementation of port State measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing into the broader system of port State controls.

Moreover, FAO developed with IMO and ILO inputs a brochure¹⁰ to promote ratification and implementation of the four main international fisheries and safety instruments, such as the 2009 FAO PSMA, 2012 IMO Cape Town Agreement, 1995 IMO STCW-F and the 2007 ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188).

In 2020 -2021, FAO conducted various safety at sea capacity building projects, particularly in the Caribbean and South-Pacific regions and in South Asia. Capacity building materials¹¹ were developed in close collaboration with the Bay of Bengal Programme – Intergovernmental Organization (BOBP-IGO) for trainers on safety at sea and small-scale fishers, and training workshops were organized. An online environment with training resources for safety at sea

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb0627en>

¹⁰ FAO 2020. Joining forces to shape the fishery sector of tomorrow: Promoting safety and decent work in fisheries through the application of international standards. Rome. Italy. Available online in English, French and Spanish languages.

¹¹ FAO 2019/2020. Safety at sea for small-scale fishers. Rome. Italy. Available on line in Bangla, Chinese, English, French, Malayalam, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Singhalese, Tamil and Telugu languages.

professionals in the Caribbean was introduced, which is being used also by safety trainers in other regions. FAO also continued the promotion of a formal and voluntary accident and fatality reporting system for fisheries in the Caribbean. In 2020 FAO developed a “maritime rules of the road for small-scale fishers” training which aims to increase awareness among small-scale fishers to the maritime traffic rules.

Less than five percent of the world’s fishing fleet and the fishers working on the fleet are presently covered by insurance. Many fishers who get an accident during their working life, cannot work for some time or end up disabled. This creates financial and social hardship for these fishers and their families. Insurance services have shown to be able to reduce the vulnerability of fishers and their families to shocks caused by accidents in fishing and to contribute to sustainable fisheries livelihoods.

Therefore, FAO has been technically assisting 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 Asia¹², which were endorsed by APRACA membership in 2019 and are being implemented in 2020-2021 in the Asian region. In the Caribbean region, FAO assessed the possibility of introducing third-party liability insurance in fisheries, on request of fishers’ organizations in the region, and is advising various countries on the related legal requirements and capacity building to be conducted.

SECTION IX – MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE RESOURCES

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 195 – *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 at global and regional levels is based on FAO’s indicator on the status of fish stocks, a time series maintained since 1970 and updated and disseminated every two years through FAO’s flagship SOFIA publication. 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 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 worked during the period 2016-2019 to develop methodologies for stock assessment applicable in data-limited situations. This included the convening of two global expert workshops in Rome (November 2017, May 2019), which conclusions were used to develop during the period 2018-2019 an e-learning course on SDG Indicator 14.4.1. This e-Learning Course was eventually published in English on the FAO SDG indicators website in February 2020 and will be also published into all FAO official languages by the end of 2021. The

¹² FAO 2019. Guidelines for increasing access of small-scale fishers to insurance services in Asia, by Uwe Tietze and Raymon van Anrooy. Rome. Italy.

e-learning includes the “Stock Monitoring Tool” Virtual Research Environment designed for training marine biologists with hands-on practice on the data-limited methods.

Thanks to its Regular Program resources complemented with the FMM Trust Fund, FAO has rolled out since 2019, a capacity building program proceeding through regional workshops to train countries on the SDG indicator 14.4.1 methodology. A first workshop involving 17 countries of South Asia was organized in collaboration with SEAFDEC in Bangkok (October 2019), and a second one was organized in Zanzibar (March 2020) in collaboration with the GIZ funded FIDEA project for 10 countries of the South-West Indian Ocean region. A third workshop will take place during the period July-November 2021 with the Pacific countries in collaboration with Infofish and SPC. And 3 to 4 other language/region oriented workshops will be conducted during the second part of 2021 and in 2022 for the other regions, including West Africa, Middle East, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

In November 2019, the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire was dispatched for the first time to 165 countries with marine borders with a call for reporting on their indicator. Eighty-two States submitted their response and two reported independently. The reported indicator values were reviewed by FAO under a quality assurance process. As a result, FAO reported for the first time in February 2021 the indicator values of 13 countries to UNSD. The lessons learned from this first call will be used to improve the questionnaire for the second call planned for the end of 2021.

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. Small Island Developing States (SIDS), faced with particular challenges in fully implementing these instruments due to their large amounts of waters under their jurisdiction, registered a medium level of implementation both in 2018 and in 2020. The same level of implementation was found in the 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.

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

The SDG 14.7.1 indicator has a vital inclusion and development dimension since it deals with calculating the “sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries”. FAO is the custodian agency of SDG indicator 14.7.1. In order to reduce burden reporting by countries, all data used in the calculation of this indicator is drawn from already available international sources. Nevertheless, limitations exist, particularly associated with the use of proxies. In this regard, FAO is continuously assessing alternative and more precise methodologies to increase data accuracy.

In 2020, FAO developed a comprehensive dialogue with the Pacific Community (SPC) involving specific SDG indicators. For SDG 14.7.1, it was identified the importance of streamlining and enhancing data reporting in the region with activities scheduled for 2021 aiming to reassess inputs for the current methodology.

SDG indicator 14.b.1 – Progress by countries in the degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small –scale fisheries

A virtual workshop on Asia Regional Workshop: SDG 14.b and Its Associated Indicator 14.b.1 was organized in July 2021.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 198 – *Ecosystem approach*

The FAO has developed or supported the development of numerous normative products under the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) and the ecosystem approach to aquaculture (EAA) framework to improve the understanding and furthering its implementation, in line with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the relevant technical guidelines. Online support is available through the EAF-net (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/eaf-net/toolbox/en>). Best practices for EAF implementation in Latin America have been published (www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB2229ES) and a similar publication is under development in the Mediterranean Sea.

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

An example of FAO’s activities with respect to EAF is the EAF-Nansen Programme.

FAO, in collaboration with its Norwegian partners, Norad and IMR, is implementing the current phase of the EAF-Nansen Programme (2017–2022), supporting the application of the ecosystem approach to marine fisheries management while considering climate and pollution impacts. The Programme collaborates with 32 countries in Africa and the Bay of Bengal, and with regional organizations.

The R/V *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* is the Programme’s platform for collecting data, and surveys with the *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* have provided countries in Africa and Asia with key knowledge on the state of marine resources and ecosystems. Important data and information are being collected on marine

resources, marine environment, habitats and marine pollution in the EEZ of partner countries, as well as in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction covering areas where limited knowledge is available. About 800 days of research surveys with almost 700 participants (approximately 25 percent women) have been carried out since 2017. In these, 33 species new to science have been discovered, and 28 scientific papers and two taxonomic guides have been published.

To support countries to monitor EAF implementation in fisheries management, two tools have been made available and training in their use have been provided. Firstly, a diagnostic tool has been published to help legal practitioners, policymakers and fisheries managers in assessing and implementing EAF in policy and legal frameworks published (www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb2945en) and secondly the EAF-Implementation Monitoring Tool (EAF IMT) and user guide that can be used to identify gaps and needs for support to implement fisheries management plans considering ecological, institutional, and socio-economic components, assess the effectiveness of fisheries management measures and assess the attainment of outcomes has been validated. Using the first tool, a first gap analysis has been made for the partner countries of the EAF-Nansen programme and using the EAF-IMT baseline reviews for the implementation of selected EAF management plans were achieved for the beach seine fishery in the Gulf of Guinea, and on the small and medium pelagic fisheries in Tanzania. These will be used to monitor how the countries advance on achieving the objectives set in their EAF-compatible fisheries management plans.

The EAF-IMT has also been tested outside the original scope of the analysis, focusing on four EAF pilot studies in the Mediterranean Sea in the framework of the workshop “*Transition towards an ecosystem approach to fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea: lessons learned through selected case studies*”. A publication is in preparation with the double objective of comparing and analysing selected experiences with the implementation of EAF-like approaches to fisheries management in the Mediterranean Sea, and of identifying lessons learned regarding the enabling conditions/factors that facilitated the progress achieved and the main challenges to strengthen EAF implementation.

Several countries are also receiving support to develop or implement EAF compatible fisheries management plans through various field projects and various regions. The preparation of fisheries management plans is a key element for supporting the implementation of an EAF and the 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. In Africa, 16 countries have been assisted to prepare fisheries management plans coherent with the EAF principles in earlier phases of the EAF-Nansen Programme, and currently, seven countries are being supported to either develop or implement management plans consistent with an ecosystem approach.

Furthermore, FAO, including through the various projects supports capacity development on EAF to be able to generate and use the knowledge required for an 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 the EAF. A Handbook is available to complement the resources for the course for the purpose of supporting both trainers and trainees (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5787e.pdf>). A Teaching Kit on the EAF for Schools in

Africa is available, prepared in collaboration with selected schools in Senegal and the Gambia. Building on these experiences currently, an e-learning course is under development on EAF in marine fisheries.

FAO is also supporting countries with the integration of EAF in the work of regional fisheries bodies and cross-sectoral discussions through work under several Large Marine Ecosystem projects, as outlined in some highlights below:

- 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 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 past and now for the EAF-Nansen Programme 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 Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) also works to promote and support countries to implement EAF. They also act as a regional steering committee for the EAF-Nansen Programme.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 224 – *Marine pollution, marine debris and plastics*

Following the recommendations contained in the Manila Declaration 35, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML)¹³ 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 is contributing to the development of the GPML Digital Platform¹⁴. 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, from prevention of litter and waste, design and production, use and consumption, to 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 Team to prepare the requested system-wide contribution. Two FAO representatives from the Climate and Environment Division and from the Fisheries Division are

¹³ <https://www.gpmarinelitter.org/>

¹⁴ <https://www.gpmarinelitter.org/what-we-do/gpml-digital-platform>

operating as FAO focal points for the EMG Task Team on Marine Litter and Microplastics. The group has held a number of coordination meetings and collated all relevant information and work that FAO has carried out on this subject matter.

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 October 2019, the WG43 had its first face-to-face meeting in Rome hosted by FAO to report and discuss findings 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. The second interim report of WG43 is available here¹⁵.

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 IMR. Based on the results of these studies one aspect will be to identify and quantify the proportion of litter generated by the fishing sector. It is certain that marine litter has a significant social and economic impact on a number of fisheries, is most clearly demonstrated for the artisanal beach seine fishery in the Gulf of Guinea. In addition, large quantities of seafloor litter have been observed offshore in this region. Currently, there is no evidence that microplastics pose a threat to seafood safety.

FAO was invited to join the Plastic Waste Partnership (PWP) launched in November 2019 and operated by the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions³⁶. 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. Whenever relevant, FAO will contribute with 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 289 – Discarded fishing gear**).

ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Information exchange systems in support of the implementation of the international instruments aimed at combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

¹⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0724en/cb0724en.pdf>

Information sharing enables coordinated actions and international cooperation, crucial for the effective implementation of the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) and other complementary international instruments and initiatives. By exchanging data, States contribute to increased transparency of fishing operations and traceability of fish products, crucial for the effective monitoring of fisheries and States' actions. Data sharing allows for verification and feedback and is central for optimizing processes and the formulation of management measures.

To facilitate the electronic exchange of information between States, the FAO has been requested to develop and maintain the global information-sharing systems reported below, which required the harmonization and standardization of data formats, procedures and mechanisms for data exchange.

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

The FAO Global Record constitutes one of the basic tools developed by FAO to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. It aims to increase transparency and traceability by gathering and disseminating certified and comprehensive information, provided by official sources, on vessels and vessel activities. The FAO Global Record is ideally suited to become the backbone of international fisheries management to which all other information will have to be invariably connected. It is thus expected to support the implementation and be interconnected with the Global Information Exchange System (GIES) foreseen under the PSMA, and other complementary instruments and tools.

As of April 2021, the FAO Global Record contains close to 12,000 vessel records of all sizes and types, provided by 65 FAO Member Nations 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 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 an automated mechanism, better system performance, a more robust architecture and an improved user experience with the inclusion of statistics and a renovated dynamic interface. Additionally, the new version of the Global Record Information System would be compatible and interlinked to other relevant systems, such as the Global Information Exchange System (GIES) foreseen under the PSMA.

Global Information Exchange System (GIES) foreseen under the PSMA

Throughout several provisions of the PSMA, information exchange stands consistently as a key element for its effective implementation. As Parties to the PSMA, Parties are obliged to cooperate and exchange information with relevant States, FAO, other international organizations and regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs). In particular, all Parties are requested to

transmit their list of designated ports and national contact points to FAO, for due publicity, and exchange compliance information on inspection results and port entry or use denials.

Following the guidance provided by Parties through the meeting of the Parties to the PSMA and its Technical Working Group on Information Exchange, the information-sharing mechanism for the PSMA was developed following a two-staged approach. First, it has 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 of 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 Global Information Exchange System (GIES) requested by the Parties, to exchange information on inspection results and port denials. Due to the travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the third meeting of the TWG IE, scheduled to be held in 2020 was postponed until further notice. The FAO convened a series of webinars in preparation for the third Meeting of the Parties (MOP3), to present the GIES prototype.

Following instructions from the Parties, the GIES prototype version developed by FAO 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 prototype version 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.

Transshipment in fishing-related operations

The international community has expressed concerns about the risks that transshipment may contribute to IUU fishing. Following a request of 32nd Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), FAO conducted a global study on transshipment regulations, practices and control mechanisms. That study was presented to the 33rd session of COFI, which called for an in-depth study to support the development of guidelines on best practices concerning transshipment. That in-depth study was welcomed by the 34th session of COFI, which called upon FAO to proceed with 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, with a view to forwarding these voluntary guidelines for COFI's endorsement at its 35th session.

FAO is currently working on a draft of these voluntary guidelines, which is expected to be completed in September. The expert consultation is planned for October, while the technical consultation will be held in the first quarter of 2022.

Estimation of the magnitude and impact of IUU fishing

Estimating 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) that was drafted in 2016 and Guiding principles and approaches on methodologies and indicators for the estimation of the magnitude and impact of IUU fishing (Volume 2) that were put forward in 2018. 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 the 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.

SECTION X – MARINE BIODIVERSITY

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 255-257 - 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 UNGA resolution 69/292 of 19 June 2015,¹⁶ 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 2017,¹⁷ the UNGA decided to convene an Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) that will meet in four sessions. By decision 74/543 of 9 March 2020, the General Assembly decided to postpone the fourth Session of the conference to the earliest possible available date to be decided by the General Assembly.

Given the potential implications this process might have on the fisheries sector, and as mandated by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2018 and 2021, FAO attended and contributed to all the three IGC Sessions to provide 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 ten 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.

¹⁶ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/187/55/PDF/N1518755.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁷ <http://undocs.org/en/a/res/72/249>

Moreover, FAO facilitated the contacts and exchange of views among member delegations concerning provisions of the draft text.

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 266 - *Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)*

The demands and pressures on the marine and coastal environment and resources are intensifying as the world population is reaching 10 billion people with rising levels of unsustainable consumption and increasing impacts of environmental phenomena, such as climate change. The need for integrating effective marine conservation measures into more holistic and synergetic ocean management strategies has never been greater, making marine conservation critical to any sustainable development effort. In particular, establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) and area-based management tools has received considerable attention globally. Indeed, the use of area-based management tools in marine and coastal zones has been defined by a number of global and regional agreements, and the commitment to use them has been reiterated in many international processes.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stimulates national and regional action towards Sustainable Development via 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated Targets. Specifically, SDG 14 – life below water- is a call to “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” by 2030. Target 14.2 calls on countries to “By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans” and Target 14.5 calls for countries to “By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.”

The Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Strategic Plan 2010-2020 includes 20 targets – the Aichi Biodiversity Targets - as a means to achieve the vision that “*by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.*” Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (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, therefore placing 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 still 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.

The UN Ocean Conference Call for Action (June 2017) strengthened these goals and targets by calling upon “all stakeholders to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.... on an urgent basis,” including supporting “the use of effective and appropriate area-based management tools, including marine protected areas and other integrated, cross-sectoral approaches (United Nations General Assembly, 2017).

Most recently, in February 2021, the 34th meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI34) noted the importance of considering multiple effective time and area-based management tools (ABMTs), such as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (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).

While progress towards the global area-based management goals and targets has accelerated, progress remains patchy. Many countries are still below the 10 per cent coverage target agreed to in Target 11 and SDG 14.5, many of them being below the 5 per cent of coverage. Also, numerous MPAs may be ineffective or partially effective, due to failures in design or management, making their role in achieving conservation outcomes is minimal. The extent to which area-based management tools can support the achievement of the SDGs and CBD targets depends on the effectiveness of their implementation, which relies, in large, on the active engagement of the ocean users.

The inclusion of OECMs in the global targets represents a new opportunity to recognize biodiversity conservation from a wider range of spatial management measures than ever before. Specifically, within the fisheries sector, many area-based fisheries management measures already aim to meet sustainability together with broader ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation goals and are well poised to meet the OECM criteria. OECMs offer many countries tangible prospects where MPA progress has been hindered by conflicts with the fisheries sector, as they provide an opportunity to address the linkages between the fisheries, biodiversity and other sectors and instil concrete actions toward coordinated management strategies and policies. The focus of the OECM definition and criteria on effectiveness and the delivery of biodiversity outcomes and ecosystem services enhances their ability to support the delivery of several SDGs and biodiversity targets, including food security, poverty eradication and coastal resilience, generating enduring environmental and social benefits for the oceans and people.

The definition and criteria of OECM recently adopted by the CBD can have a wide range of interpretations by various stakeholders including the issue of which sites meet this definition, particularly when it comes to fisheries management areas. FAO's Fisheries Division is focused on building the capacity of countries to report on how the fisheries sector is contributing to current and future area-based biodiversity conservation goals. In particular, the Fisheries Division's goal is to provide guidance and assist its Members, and regional fisheries bodies (RFBs) in assessing and identifying fisheries-related OECMs. To this end, FAO is planning to host a series of shared learning workshops on fisheries-related OECMs to provide the basis for a guidance document for the identification, establishment, and management of OECMs in the fisheries sector that complements existing non-sectoral guidance. FAO aims for the guidance document to be practical

and address the specific challenges and lessons learned from countries' experience in applying the CBD OECM criteria in the fisheries sector.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 272 – *Deep-sea fisheries*

FAO has published, in 2020, a report on “Technical measures and environmental risk assessments for deep-sea sponge conservation” which provides an overview of technical measures adopted by RFMOS to protect sponges and presents appropriate elements to be included in an ecological risk assessment of deep-sea fisheries stressors. This report will be finalized after comments and inputs received by reviewers. This is to be completed by June 2021.

Another survey in the SEAFO area was conducted in 2019 to further improve the data and information to enhance the understanding of the Southeast Atlantic ecosystems, to the benefit of regional science and as the base for fisheries management decisions. A planned survey across Seamounds in the Indian Ocean is due to occur before 2022, or in early 2023. This is in SIOFA area of management.

The five-year GEF-5 *Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-Sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction* (Deep Sea) Project came to the end of its tenure in late 2019 and made valuable contributions to the following areas: (i) improving the implementation of existing policy and legal frameworks, (ii) reducing adverse impacts on VMEs and enhanced conservation and management of components of ecologically and biologically significant areas, (iii) improving planning and adaptive management for DSF in ABNJ and (iv) developing and testing methods for area-based planning. The Deep-sea Project had a successful external review and terminal evaluation¹⁸ undertaken in 2020/2021. The project published FAO Technical Reports on if work of the deep sea RFMOs on the *Application of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries*¹⁹, *Monitoring, Control and Surveillance*²⁰, *Rights-based Management*²¹, and the *Worldwide review of bottom fisheries in the high seas in 2016*²². Several other reports were published by the project including joint with WCMC-UNEP on options for spatial management.

The concept note for the follow-up project under GEF-7 *Deep-sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach* (DSF project) was approved in July 2020 and the team is now developing the full project in cooperation with its potential partners. The Inception workshop was held virtually in August 2020 and the outline of the project further developed to focus on four components: (1) Governance - strengthening and implementing regulatory frameworks, (2) Strengthening effective management of DSF, (3) Improving understanding and management of cross-sectoral interactions on DSF, and (4) Knowledge management, communication, and M&E. Presentations have been given to various committees of NAFO, NPFC, SIOFA, and SPRFMO, to enhance cooperative development with RFMOs and the industry. The Project Document should be submitted in late 2021 and the project should start around the middle of 2022.

¹⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0979en/cb0979en.pdf>

¹⁹ www.fao.org/3/cb1509en/CB1509EN.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7320en/CA7320EN.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0812en/CB0812EN.pdf>

²² <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca7692en>

SECTION XI – MARINE SCIENCE

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 287 – *Deep-sea biodiversity and ecosystem*

FAO is a partner with the SponGES Project, which is a research and innovation Project funded under the H2020 Blue Growth initiative. This 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, by bringing relevant research information on sponges to the attention of policy developers and fisheries managers and to support the exchange of knowledge and information. FAO during the project’s lifetime has created strong linkages between SponGES scientists and stakeholders from the policy, fisheries management, and industry sectors through a variety of fora. More in detail, four science-policy-management roundtables have been organized by FAO to raise awareness on these issues for policy-makers, including a high-level dialogue meeting, which took place with the European Parliament Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development” in November 2018. Two side events were also organized and supported by FAO: at the first session of the first BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference in New York (September 2018), and the GFCM Fish Forum (FAO HQ, December 2018). Finally, specific interventions at meetings of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NAFO) and the Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) were organized to share the results of SponGES and discuss management and policy implications.

With regards to outputs, FAO has published in mid-2020 a report on “Technical measures and environmental risk assessments for deep-sea sponge conservation” (<http://www.fao.org/3/ca8871en/CA8871EN.pdf>) which provides an overview of technical measures adopted by RFMOs to protect sponges and presents appropriate elements to be included in an ecological risk assessment of deep-sea fisheries stressors.

In December 2020, FAO has released a Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular which represents the first economic valuation of deep-sea sponge grounds based on available information (<http://www.fao.org/3/cb2331en/CB2331EN.pdf>). Tangible monetary value has been assigned when possible, to specific services provided by deep-sea sponges, such as their biotechnological potential, and their role as habitat providers for many other organisms, including commercial fish species.

Six policy briefs summarizing project findings relevant to managers and policy makers were also produced (<http://www.fao.org/in-action/globefish/news-events/details-news/en/c/1373177/>). The overall objective of the policy briefs was to make the often-complex knowledge on deep-sea sponges comprehensible to those who are interested in formulating or influencing policy.

Finally, selected SponGES tools (e.g. scientific publications, reports, policy briefs, awareness - raising and information materials) have been incorporated into FAO’s relevant portals to enhance their visibility and to facilitate access by policy makers, fisheries managers, and users with a specific interest in the management and conservation of the deep-sea.

Under the EAF-Nansen Programme, a workshop was organized to further the analysis of the data collected from the 2019 survey in the SEAFO area with the R/V *Dr Fridtjof Nansen*. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the methodological approach for refining the available dataset in order to facilitate reporting of results and to define steps for the preparation of one or more scientific publications. Outcomes of the workshop included key recommendations on the structure and contents of a scientific publication on the benthic communities of selected seamounts of the Discovery complex, as well as a much stronger basis for carrying out the required analysis. Data analysis and manuscript drafting is in progress although delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 289 – *Discarded fishing gear*

In 2018, the thirty-third Session of FAO’s Committee on Fisheries (COFI33) endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG)²³. 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 recommendations on actions that need to be taken up in the respective regions. The report of the four regional workshops is available here²⁴.

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 of 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. 15.4²⁵ for more details); and has also signed a UN to UN Agreement with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to assist, also with the assistance of Norway, developing countries to address the issue of marine plastic litter from sea-based sources: the GloLitter Partnerships (GLP) Programme²⁶. The overarching goal of the programme is to assist developing countries to prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from the maritime transport and fisheries sectors and identify opportunities for the reduction of plastic uses in both industries. The GLP 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 Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear. The

²³ <http://www.fao.org/responsible-fishing/marking-of-fishing-gear/voluntary-guidelines-marking-fishing-gear/en/>

²⁴ <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0723en/cb0723en.pdf>

²⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/ne659en/ne659en.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/PartnershipsProjects/Pages/GloLitter-Partnerships-Project-.aspx>

first phase of this programme is a three and half year project (2020-2023) funded by the Government of Norway. IMO is the lead implementing agency and FAO is the implementing partner dealing with the fisheries sector.

Five FAO fisheries management instruments that address one of the main and harmful sea-based sources of marine plastic litter, the issue of Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) and its impacts through fishing gear marking are:

- (1) FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995) – The CCRF makes reference to the fact that fishing gear should be marked.
- (2) 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.
- (3) International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards (2011) – Makes reference to reducing the impact of lost fishing gear
- (4) FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (2018) – 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.
- (5) Technical Guidelines for the Reduction of Marine Mammal Bycatch in Capture Fisheries (in prep., to be published before the end of 2020) – makes reference to entanglement of marine mammals in lost gear and the effect of ghost fishing.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 307 – *UN Ocean*

FAO, together with other UN-Oceans members, continues to actively participate in UN-Oceans’ activities and programmes to promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to oceans and coastal areas by assisting in the formulation and delivery of joint statements or side events at major international events relevant to the work of UN-Oceans and its 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 strengthening the ongoing and planned activities and identifying new areas of intervention in respect of those mandates and priorities. In this regard, FAO developed, hosts and continues to fund the maintenance and further development 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.

FAO continues to provide secretariat services to the UN Atlas of the Oceans, a web portal developed under the auspices 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.

SECTION XIII – REGIONAL COOPERATION

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 329-330 – *Enhancing regional and international cooperation*

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

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the importance of regional and subregional 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.

Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Regional Fishery Advisory Bodies (RFABs), collectively referred to as Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs), have an important role in contributing to fisheries management and scientific research of many important fisheries around the 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 an overview of these processes and developments through the Organization's technical work on fisheries and aquaculture, providing an overview and synopsis of RFBs' developments²⁷.

FAO is committed to bolstering regional cooperation through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN)²⁸, which provides a forum for promoting consultation and regional dialogue, addressing priority issues of common concern and facilitating the coordination, exchange of experiences and lessons learned by RFBs. RSN has maintained regular liaising with its members (more than 50 RFBs and other fisheries-related institutions and networks)²⁹ including through the production of a popular magazine³⁰ and making available relevant data and information related to RFBs³¹, also in international technical venues and global fora such as the UNGA³². 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 RFBs³³. The last RSN Global Meeting was organized by FAO in February 2021³⁴.

Sustainability can only be achieved through cooperation among all stakeholders, as recognized in SDG 17 (Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development). The international

²⁷ 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>

²⁸ www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/en

²⁹ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/search/en>

³⁰ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/newsletter/en>

³¹ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA0183EN>

³² <http://www.fao.org/fishery/static/news/FAOsideEvent-ICSP-14UNHQ-2May.pdf>

³³ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9279en/ca9279en.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/nems/41296/en>

community has increasingly recognized the importance of regional cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation in facilitating the achievements set by the 2030 Agenda that aims 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 Committee on Fisheries (COFI) welcomed and is supportive of the joint efforts of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat, FAO and UNEP within the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and 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; ; 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; and 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.