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Продовольственная и
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Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 6.2 of the Provisional Agenda

Twentieth Regular Session

Rome, 24–28 March 2025

**REPORT OF THE THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES**



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

NFI/R1459 (En)

**FAO
Fisheries and
Aquaculture Report**

ISSN 2070-6987

Report of the Thirty-sixth Session of the

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Rome, 8–12 July 2024

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Required citation:

FAO. 2024. *Report of the Thirty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, 8–12 July 2024*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report, No. 1459. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd2423en>

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ISSN 2070-6987 [Print]
ISSN 2707-546X [Online]

ISBN 978-92-5-139111-2
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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is the final version of the report as approved by the Thirty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, held from 8 to 12 July 2024.

ABSTRACT

1. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held its 36th Session in hybrid modality from 8 to 12 July 2024. Significant outcomes of the Committee included:
 - a) adoption of the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) and requests for FAO's technical assistance and support for their implementation;
 - b) strong support for Blue Transformation as a Programme Priority Area and roadmap and commendation of the 2024 edition of the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) report;
 - c) emphasis on the importance of aquatic foods for food security and nutrition, and the crucial contribution of small-scale and artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers;
 - d) recognition of the important role of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and encouragement for Members to accelerate implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14;
 - e) support for FAO's engagement in international agreements and processes, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, and requested continuation of FAO's technical assistance to Members in those processes;
 - f) recognition of the need to continue to address illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and requested FAO guidance on preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing;
 - g) continued emphasis on the critical role of regional fisheries management organizations/arrangements (RFMO/As) and regional fishery bodies (RFBs) in achieving effective fisheries management, and called on FAO to continue supporting their work;
 - h) recognition of the need to address biodiversity loss and climate impacts, and requested FAO to support Members develop adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk management solutions for fisheries and aquaculture;
 - i) strong support for FAO's engagement in new and existing global biodiversity frameworks and fora such as the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and requested FAO support for Members in the ratification and implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement);
 - j) appreciation for the increasing global commitment to reduce marine plastic pollution, including from fisheries and aquaculture sources, and appreciated the contributions by FAO to the prevention and reduction of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG);
 - k) welcomed the FAO fisheries and aquaculture priority actions for 2024–2025 and called for greater consideration of fisheries and aquaculture in the context of integrated water resources management (IWRM) approaches, and welcomed the suggested priority actions on fisheries and aquaculture;
 - l) endorsement of the reports of the Twelfth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, the Nineteenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, and the First Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management.
2. The Committee on Fisheries brings to the attention of the Council and the Conference its findings and recommendations.

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OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held its Thirty-sixth Session from 8 to 12 July 2024. The session was convened in hybrid modality. The session was webcast, and the recording would be made available in the webcast archive on the FAO internet site.
2. The session was attended by 110 Members of the Committee, observers from 20 other FAO Members, the Holy See, by representatives from the United Nations and eight specialized agencies of the United Nations and by observers from 39 intergovernmental organizations, and 36 international non-governmental organizations. A list of delegates and observers is available as COFI/2024/INF/3 on the Committee's webpage and in Appendix B.
3. Mr Mohammed Ahmed Alghamdi, Chairperson, Thirty-sixth Session of COFI, opened the session and welcomed the participants.
4. Dr Qu Dongyu, Director-General of FAO, delivered an opening statement via video message. The text of the statement is available as COFI/2024/INF/4 on the Committee's webpage and in Appendix D.
5. Ministers of eight Members¹ and Vice-Ministers of six Members² made their statements.
6. The Committee welcomed the COFI High-Level Special Event on the 10th anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (VGSSF), commended the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines, and encouraged Members to continue implementing them.
7. The Committee appreciated the information shared on the 2nd Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) Summit, held prior to COFI 36, and encouraged FAO to continue holding SSF Summits prior to future COFI meetings.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SESSION

8. The Committee adopted the Agenda and Timetable for the Session. The adopted Agenda is attached as Appendix A to this Report. The list of documents which were placed before the Committee is shown in Appendix C.

DESIGNATION OF DRAFTING COMMITTEE

9. The following Members were elected to the Drafting Committee:³ Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Gabon, India, Japan, Kuwait, Marshall Islands, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Russian Federation, Spain, Sudan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Ms Emma Hatcher, Australia, chaired the Drafting Committee.

STATE OF WORLD FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE AND PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES AND RELATED INSTRUMENTS

10. The Committee:
 - a) commended FAO for the 2024 edition of the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) publication including its emphasis on Blue Transformation⁴ to efficiently support Members, partners and key stakeholders, particularly small-scale fishers, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

¹ Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Maldives, Norway, Peru, South Sudan and United Republic of Tanzania.

² India, Liberia, Oman, Philippines, Spain and United States of America.

³ The European Union and its Member States and Ukraine chose to disassociate themselves from the nomination of the Russian Federation as a member to the Drafting Committee, while the Russian Federation chose to disassociate itself from any member that disassociated itself from the nomination of the Russian Federation to the Drafting Committee.

⁴ With reference to the 172nd Session of the FAO Council, Blue Transformation as FAO's Programme Priority Area and Roadmap.

- b) reiterated that SOFIA is the only high-quality benchmark publication for global status and trends in fisheries and aquaculture, and congratulated FAO on the greater accessibility of SOFIA through a diversification of associated products, and the wide visibility achieved through the public launch of SOFIA at the high-level “Immersed in Change” conference in San Jose, Costa Rica, on 8 June 2024;
- c) urged FAO, within its mandate, to continue enhancing the visibility and dissemination of fisheries and aquaculture issues within and outside FAO;
- d) acknowledged the challenges faced by FAO in the timely release of the SOFIA publication before COFI meetings, and encouraged Members and FAO to work together to meet the reporting deadlines;
- e) stressed that, as highlighted in the 2024 SOFIA report, effective fisheries management leads to stock recovery and increases catches, and encouraged FAO and its Members to continue efforts in this direction, seize every opportunity to make fisheries management more effective;
- f) while noting variability between and within regions, expressed concern for the continuously degrading accumulated trends at the global level in the status of marine fish stocks, due to unsustainable practices, challenges from illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, overcapacity and overfishing, climate change, loss of biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems degradation, and welcomed the progress made in some regions, emphasizing the need to improve fisheries management measures acknowledging the management challenges concerning fisheries undertaken by small-scale fishers, particularly multi-stock fisheries, including through strengthened collaboration with and within regional fisheries management organizations/arrangements (RFMO/As) and other relevant regional fishery bodies (RFBs), as appropriate;
- g) stressed the important technical role of FAO in assessing and addressing, within its mandate, the impact of ongoing conflicts on fisheries and aquaculture sectors, while noting Members’ interventions on this matter;
- h) appreciated FAO’s ongoing innovative methodological improvements to better reflect the regional and subregional status of fish stocks, taking into account the increasing number of stocks with assessments, and encouraged FAO to continue working in this regard;
- i) underscored the importance of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in meeting current and future food security and sustainable growth needs, while achieving sustainable and resilient agrifood systems, and welcomed global initiatives to promote sustainable aquatic foods from marine and inland waters, including by addressing food loss and waste;
- j) stressed the crucial contribution of small-scale and artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers, and the need to promote gender equity and reduce inequalities in the fisheries and aquaculture sector; recognized the importance of the SSF Summit as a platform for small-scale fisheries actors to exchange views and express needs to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries, and continued to encourage the Summit be held every two years prior to COFI;
- k) noted that for the first time, and according to the available statistics, the production of aquatic animals from aquaculture surpassed the production from capture fisheries, highlighting the importance of sustainable aquaculture in meeting food demands particularly in food deficit countries;
- l) underscored the importance of capture fisheries and encouraged FAO to continue to provide the necessary technical support for sustainable fisheries management;
- m) noted FAO’s work regarding the report on institutional and economic perspectives on distant-water fisheries access arrangements and encouraged continued work on that issue;
- n) reiterated the value of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) for achieving sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and recognized the progress made in its implementation

since its adoption, while noting that further improvements in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture are needed to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

- o) welcomed the record response rate to the questionnaire for monitoring the implementation of the Code and related instruments, the efforts of FAO in re-developing the questionnaire web-application, and called on FAO to continue supporting Members in the implementation of the Code and related instruments, including through the development of additional technical guidelines;
- p) reiterated FAO's role in monitoring and reporting on the SDG 14 indicators under its custodianship, commended FAO's role in supporting Members' work to track their progress on SDG 14 indicators, and encouraged FAO to continue its integrated assessment of SDGs under its custodianship and those SDG targets that directly impact small-scale fisheries;
- q) encouraged FAO to continue assisting Members in strengthening their capacity to collect, manage, analyse and communicate timely and disaggregated data to support decision-making processes, in close collaboration with RFMO/As and RFBs, where appropriate;
- r) encouraged Members to accelerate the implementation of SDG 14 taking ownership in monitoring and reporting processes of the relevant 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development indicators for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture; and
- s) called upon Members to increase their funding towards SDG 14, given the low levels of funding currently available in the framework of SDG 17 and other relevant sources of finance.

DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE, 16-19 MAY 2023

11. The Committee:

- a) endorsed the report of the Twelfth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI:AQ);
- b) highlighted the importance of aquaculture to food security and nutrition, livelihoods, economic development and human health, and its contribution to the SDGs;
- c) adopted the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) and noted their relevance to the implementation of the Blue Transformation roadmap;⁵
- d) encouraged FAO to raise awareness of the GSA, promote good practices and seek funding to provide technical assistance and support in their implementation;
- e) requested FAO to prioritize attention to small-scale aquaculture through capacity building, means of commercialization and biosafety practices;
- f) appreciated FAO's work on biosecurity, aquatic animal health and antimicrobial resistance (AMR), including the designation of FAO Reference Centres for AMR, and noted continued activities in the context of One Health;
- g) called for more prominent actions toward the improvement of gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture, and called on FAO to encourage and assist Members in compiling and disseminating disaggregated data;
- h) recognized the need to build diversified sustainable agrifood systems and food sources through multiple approaches while noting the opportunities associated with sustainable seaweed aquaculture, and requested FAO to support sustainable seaweed aquaculture with technical assistance and capacity building;

⁵ As a PPA and roadmap of FAO.

- i) noted the importance of monitoring implementation of the Code and called on FAO to use the results from the FAO Expert Workshop to revise the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries Aquaculture Questionnaire;
- j) encouraged the Secretariat to continue work on developing and disseminating case studies in line with the GSA; and
- k) welcomed the kind invitation of the Government of Türkiye to host the Thirteenth Session of the COFI:AQ in Antalya, Türkiye (7–11 April 2025).

DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE, 11-15 SEPTEMBER 2023

12. The Committee:

- a) endorsed the report of the Nineteenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT);
- b) emphasized the adverse effects of non-tariff measures on international fish trade, urging Members to promote fair and equitable trade and remove unnecessary barriers to fish trade;
- c) encouraged Members to accept the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to bring it into force and complete further negotiations as soon as possible on outstanding issues to conclude a comprehensive negotiated agreement, and called for increasing technical cooperation between FAO and WTO;
- d) stressed the importance of enhancing the efficiency and transparency of fisheries value chains and requested that FAO continue to provide technical expertise and support in this area, particularly regarding food loss and waste, market access, compliance with import requirements, traceability and the specific needs of SSF;
- e) recognized the importance of harmonizing catch documentation, and encouraged Members to use the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes;
- f) reiterated the importance of the scientific advice provided by FAO to other international instruments and mechanisms, particularly the Codex Alimentarius and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and encouraged FAO to engage with CITES with the aim of increasing harmony in the assessment of CITES listing proposals for aquatic species;
- g) recognized the importance of the FAO Blue Ports Initiative in fostering regional cooperation and invited FAO and its Members to strengthen this cooperation;
- h) invited FAO to accelerate the development of the FAO Guidance on Social Responsibility in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains;
- i) highlighted the adverse effects of IUU fishing on national economies and the sustainability of fisheries, and valued FAO's work on the economic, trade and market impacts of IUU fishing;
- j) requested FAO's assistance to address challenges in market access, fisheries statistics and cross-border trade, especially for SSF in the context of fish trade, including by updating the FAO ecolabeling guidelines to align with global instruments such as the VGSSF.

DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT, 15-18 JANUARY 2024

13. The Committee:

- a) endorsed the report of the First Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management (COFI:FM);

- b) reaffirmed the role of COFI:FM as a technical forum to identify priority issues, and advance discussions and future work on how to improve fisheries management in line with the Code and related instruments;
- c) encouraged FAO to develop and deliver a capacity development and training programme on data collection systems, stock assessment and fisheries management;
- d) noted the need to address SSF management issues in the COFI:FM in support of the Code and of the implementation of the VGSSF;
- e) confirmed the importance of considering and addressing IUU fishing, biodiversity loss and climate change impacts in relation to fisheries management actions and processes;
- f) highlighted the importance of gender equity in fisheries management and requested the COFI:FM to continue including this approach in its work;
- g) encouraged the Sub-Committee to further discuss the issue of distant water fishing vessels that are not subject to sufficient management and control, potentially having negative impacts on SSF especially in developing countries;
- h) recalled the role of RFMOs, RFBs and arrangements in achieving effective fisheries management and called on FAO to continue supporting their work, including through the RFBs Secretariats Network;
- i) encouraged FAO to facilitate expert work to fill data gaps and share expertise on stock assessment methodologies; and
- j) called upon FAO to further increase its support to marine and inland regional and subregional organizations, and continue supporting the establishment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden aquaculture and fishery organization.

COMBATING ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING

14. The Committee:

- a) noted the progress reported by FAO Members in combating IUU fishing and recognized the value of the information provided through the Code questionnaire to monitor the progress by FAO Members in implementing international instruments to combat IUU fishing;
- b) called for enhanced coordination and effective implementation of international instruments, including through RFBs, and encouraged the uptake of internationally agreed practices and standards at national and regional levels;
- c) reiterated the importance of vessel tracking in monitoring compliance and surveillance measures and high seas boarding and inspection, and looked forward to receiving the results of the global study on vessel tracking to be conducted by FAO;
- d) welcomed the increase in Parties to the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA), as well as concrete actions by Parties to enhance the implementation and effectiveness of the Agreement, including through the implementation of the Strategy to Improve the Effectiveness of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (the 'Bali Strategy') and the operationalization of the PSMA Global Information Exchange System;
- e) urged Members and RFMOs to ensure that they have a comprehensive framework for monitoring and control of transshipment operations, taking into account the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment, and called on FAO to support their work and monitor progress;
- f) welcomed the technical assistance delivered through FAO's PSMA global capacity development programme, and called for its expansion and additional support to ensure effective and coordinated implementation of international instruments;

- g) encouraged FAO to start identifying successful initiatives at national and regional levels to promote South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the context of combating IUU fishing;
- h) acknowledged the view expressed in the background document that fishing activities of foreign fleets operating in national exclusive economic zones without the benefit of national or bilateral agreements is classified as IUU fishing, and requested COFI:FM to address this concern;
- i) noted the recommendations from the fifth session of the FAO-ILO-IMO ad hoc Joint Working Group on IUU fishing and related matters, and requested COFI:FM to consider the outcomes of this session and of future sessions of the Working Group;
- j) noted the conclusions of the expert workshop on the Compliance Agreement including identifying pragmatic options for the States Parties to the agreement, stressed the importance of building on the improvements achieved so far and to continue exploring the possibility to strengthen the implementation of the Compliance Agreement, encouraging that future work be based on flag state responsibility more generally, taking into account the provisions of the compliance agreement itself and other relevant instruments such as United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and the Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance as well as work on compliance in RFBs;
- k) encouraged Members to design, implement and strengthen Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) regimes and effective accountability frameworks to combat IUU fishing, and to support the establishment of high seas boarding and inspection schemes in RFMOs where they do not currently exist, given their demonstrated contributions to filling gaps in high seas MCS regimes, supporting cooperation against IUU fishing and building MCS capacity in developing countries;
- l) recognized the importance and challenges of identifying beneficial ownership of fishing vessels and encouraged COFI and its Sub-Committees to further consider this issue; and
- m) highlighted the high priority Members place on combating IUU fishing, and encouraged FAO to source additional resources and funding to be allocated towards preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing.

INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

15. The Committee:

- a) recognized the need to consider fisheries and aquaculture in the context of integrated water resources management (IWRM) approaches;
- b) welcomed the suggested priority actions on fisheries and aquaculture for IWRM, recommended further refinement of the goals and requested FAO to integrate inland fisheries and aquaculture in related work areas, including in global, regional, basin-level and national development agendas, and invited FAO to enhance partnerships and mobilize resources to design and implement these priority actions;
- c) recognized the significant contributions of inland fisheries and aquaculture to food security, nutrition and sustainable livelihoods, and emphasized the importance of taking an ecosystem-based approach to their management including disease management and addressing AMR; and
- d) acknowledged the importance of multi-sectoral and participatory management approaches in IWRM that promote sustainable resource use, support biodiversity and advance climate resilience, and encouraged FAO to support Members in enhancing capacities to manage inland fisheries and aquatic environments.

THE ROLE OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

16. The Committee:

- a) acknowledged the importance of aquatic foods as a source of protein as well as essential fatty acids and micronutrients for nutrition, food security and health;
- b) underscored the role of aquatic foods to reduce malnutrition in vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons and refugees, among others through school feeding, nutrition and education programmes, and the important contributions of SSF as well as the diversity of gastronomic heritage in this regard;
- c) recommended FAO to further study reducing food loss and waste, including post-harvest losses, and the potential of utilizing fish by-products in aquatic value chains to ensure the more sustainable production of aquatic foods;
- d) called on FAO to provide technical assistance to Members with a view to integrating the role of aquatic foods in healthy diets and promoting the consumption of sustainable and safe aquatic foods, in alignment with national food-based dietary guidelines, where they exist, and national priorities;
- e) recognized the importance of integrating aquatic foods in nutritional strategies, and the need to increase knowledge on the risks and benefits of aquatic foods, as recommended by the FAO/World Health Organization (WHO) expert consultation;
- f) emphasized the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to ensuring that capture fisheries and aquaculture are sustainable with science-based management and to support Members, especially developing countries, in improving the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of high-quality, country-specific data on the consumption and nutrient composition, including food safety risk factors of aquatic foods;
- g) noted FAO's collaboration with coalitions and networks⁶ on sustainable food from the ocean and inland waters for food security and nutrition, and encouraged FAO to continue its technical support in this area; and
- h) encouraged FAO to continue discussions on the contribution of SSF and sustainable aquaculture to food security and nutrition.

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE, AND AQUATIC FOODS AS A CLIMATE SOLUTION

17. The Committee:

- a) commended the work carried out by FAO in assessing, projecting and responding to the impacts of climate change on aquatic food systems, and welcomed the publication of the latest projections⁷ of exploitable fish biomass up to 2100 under different climate scenarios, and encouraged FAO to disseminate the results of this publication and other scientific work;
- b) requested FAO to provide guidance on adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk management in the sector, including aquaculture, recognizing the reference to climate change in the GSA;
- c) encouraged FAO, in line with its Strategy on Climate Change 2022–2031, to continue supporting Members in conducting climate change vulnerability assessments, accessing climate finance, developing climate policy and strategies, and implementing suitable climate solutions, especially in developing countries, in particular in Small Island Developing States

⁶ Aquatic Blue Food Coalition, Global Action Network on Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition, Global Sustainable Aquaculture Advancement Partnership, and Center for Ecological Aquaculture.

⁷ Blanchard, J.L. & Novaglio, C., eds. 2024. *Climate change risks to marine ecosystems and fisheries – Projections to 2100 from the Fisheries and Marine Ecosystem Model Intercomparison Project*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper, No. 707. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1379en>

- (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), with due attention to small-scale fishing and farming communities, Indigenous Peoples, and other vulnerable groups;
- d) acknowledged the role of RFBs in addressing climate change impacts on fisheries and ecosystems, encouraged Members to advance efforts to fully consider climate change in RFB conservation and management measures, appreciated FAO's engagement with RFBs on these issues, and encouraged FAO to facilitate information exchange and enhance regional cooperation and coordination with and among RFBs;
 - e) commended the development of a set of FAO actions on climate resilient fisheries and aquaculture, in support of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change for 2022–2031 and aligned with the Blue Transformation roadmap, and called upon FAO to mobilize additional resources to scale up climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions; and
 - f) welcomed the progressive discussions on aquatic foods under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and requested FAO to continue engaging with the UNFCCC and other relevant global fora, while encouraging Members to include consideration of aquatic foods into their Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans with the support from FAO.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE OF GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORKS AND AGREEMENTS

18. The Committee:

- a) welcomed FAO's progress in the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors, and related 2024–2027 Action Plan, in particular in relation to fisheries and aquaculture actions;
- b) welcomed FAO's proactive work in engaging with new and existing global biodiversity frameworks and fora, including FAO's active participation in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) meetings, and encouraged FAO to continue this in a well-planned and strategic manner;
- c) urged FAO to support effective cooperation between fisheries and aquaculture bodies and environmental bodies at national and regional levels for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the context of fisheries and aquaculture, recognizing the important role of small-scale fishery and aquaculture actors in this regard;
- d) called on FAO to integrate sustainable aquatic products into the broader implementation of bioeconomy programmes, especially those related to SSF, Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
- e) recognized the role that RFBs play in considering biodiversity in the conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources, and called on FAO to continue strengthening its support to RFBs, including through the RFBs Secretariats Network;
- f) reiterated the important role of FAO in informing CITES parties of the best available scientific data and technical information on fisheries issues, including through the Expert Advisory Panel, and encouraged FAO to strengthen support to Members and RFBs in implementing CITES listings;
- g) invited FAO to raise awareness, for all relevant stakeholders including Members and RFBs, on the implications of the Agreement 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 (the 'BBNJ Agreement') for the fisheries and aquaculture sector and support Members, as appropriate, in the ratification and implementation of the Agreement;

- h) encouraged Members, as appropriate, to actively participate in meetings of MEAs to contribute fisheries expertise to the discussions; and
- i) highlighted FAO's contribution to information sharing on aquatic biodiversity in order to support Members' implementation of environmental instruments, including the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPA).

MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION AND FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

19. The Committee:

- a) welcomed the increasing recognition of and global commitment to reducing marine plastic pollution, including from fisheries and aquaculture operations, and appreciated the contributions by FAO to the prevention and reduction of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG);
- b) encouraged FAO to further strengthen its activities to better understand the impacts of plastic pollution from fisheries and aquaculture sources, and provide technical guidance on its prevention and reduction;
- c) called upon all countries to actively participate in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) and Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR), specifically on discussions on the introduction of mandatory marking of fishing gear, and reporting of gear losses and under Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL);
- d) noted that there are multiple parallel processes and discussions relevant to issues of plastics in the fisheries and aquaculture sector such as on the Voluntary Code of Conduct (VCoC) on sustainable use of plastics in agriculture under the FAO Committee on Agriculture and on a legally binding instrument on plastics under the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) of the UN Environment Programme, and requested coordination by FAO and Members to participate and contribute technical expertise within these processes to prevent contradictory outcomes;
- e) appreciated FAO's collaboration with IMO in global and regional projects that prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from shipping and fishing operations, including ALDFG, such as the GloLitter Partnerships and regional projects; and
- f) emphasized the need for interdisciplinary research, policy and legislative framework development, and testing and dissemination of fishing gear innovations that prevent and reduce plastic pollution from fishing and aquaculture operations in inland and marine environments.

FAO'S PROGRAMME OF WORK IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE UNDER THE FAO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

20. The Committee:

- a) considered FAO's Programme of Work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31, and appreciated the significant results achieved since COFI 35;
- b) welcomed and supported the continued presence of fisheries and aquaculture across the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), and its contribution to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- c) highlighted the importance of Blue Transformation as a PPA and roadmap, reflecting FAO's vision to maximize the contribution of sustainable aquatic food systems to food security, nutrition and livelihoods;
- d) appreciated the thematic alignment of the three COFI Sub-Committees to the three pillars of the Blue Transformation PPA and roadmap;

- e) called upon FAO, including through its relevant Decentralized Offices, to work closely with relevant global, regional and subregional institutions and arrangements in supporting Members to collectively and effectively deliver the proposed programme of work on fisheries and aquaculture;
- f) endorsed the specific technical areas of emphasis for 2024–2025 and beyond, along the three pillars of sustainable aquaculture, sustainable fisheries and sustainable value chains, noting the growing importance of the fisheries and aquaculture sector for food security, nutrition and livelihoods; and
- g) urged FAO to continue supporting and promoting the importance of aquatic food systems in relevant regional and international fora.

MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK (MYPOW) OF THE COMMITTEE

21. The Committee:

- a) approved the progress report of the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2022–2025;
- b) commended the Secretariat for the productive dialogue with Members through the COFI Bureau and the transparency exercised through frequent bureau meetings during the intersessional period;
- c) reiterated the importance of the timely distribution of the COFI documents;
- d) called on FAO to include in the MYPOW 2024–2027, under subparagraph 18 (b) that as from COFI 37, all the COFI session documents be uploaded on the COFI website as soon as they are available in all language versions and, in any case, at least four weeks before the COFI session;
- e) requested the Secretariat to review and apply good practices in the running of the Committee and its Sub-Committees;
- f) stressed the importance of ensuring that aquatic food systems, including aquatic food systems transformation in accordance with national contexts, priorities and capacities, as appropriate, are adequately reflected and considered in the FAO’s programme of work in relation to its Strategic Framework 2022–31; and
- g) approved the proposed MYPOW 2024–2027 (Appendix E), including items discussed as priority areas during the Session of COFI 36 and amended with subparagraphs (d), (e) and (f) above.

ANY OTHER MATTERS

22. No other matters were raised by the Committee.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE 37TH SESSION OF COFI

23. The Committee elected Mr James Brown (New Zealand) as Chairperson and the representative of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) in the COFI 37 Bureau as First Vice-Chairperson. Canada, Ecuador followed by Chile, France, Lebanon, Philippines and South Africa were elected as Vice-Chairpersons.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE 37TH SESSION OF COFI

24. The Committee agreed that the 37th Session of COFI will be held in Rome in the third quarter of 2026. The exact date would be determined by the Director-General in consultation with the COFI Bureau, for presentation to the next FAO Council, in December 2024, and 44th Session of the FAO Conference in June 2025.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

25. The Report of the 36th Session of COFI was adopted, after incorporating all changes agreed upon by consensus, on 12 July 2024.

Agenda

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Session
3. Designation of the Drafting Committee
4. State of world fisheries and aquaculture and progress in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related instruments (*for information and discussion*)
5. Decisions and recommendations of the Twelfth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, 16–19 May 2023 (*for information and endorsement*)
6. Decisions and recommendations of the Nineteenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, 11–15 September 2023 (*for information and endorsement*)
7. Decisions and recommendations of the First Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, 15–18 January 2024 (*for information and endorsement*)
8. Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing (*for information and discussion*)
9. Integrated water resources management in fisheries and aquaculture (WCP)⁸
10. The role of fisheries and aquaculture in food security and nutrition (*for information and discussion*)
11. Impact of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture, and aquatic foods as a climate solution (*for information and discussion*)
12. The implications for fisheries and aquaculture of global biodiversity frameworks and agreements (*for information and discussion*)
13. Marine plastic pollution and Fisheries and Aquaculture (*for information and discussion*)
14. FAO's Programme of Work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework (*for information and discussion*)
15. Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the Committee (WCP) (*for information and discussion*)
16. Any other matters (*for information*)
17. Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the 37th Session of COFI
18. Date and place of the 37th Session of COFI
19. Adoption of the Report

⁸ Item subject to Written Correspondence Procedure

List of delegates and observers

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

ALGERIA

Head of Delegation
Rachid BOUKEDJOUTA
Deputy Director
The National Centre for
Research and
Development of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Bou Ismaïl

Alternate(s)
Mammar DERMECHE
Director
Fisheries Development
The National Centre for
Research and
Development of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Bou Ismaïl

Abderrahmane HENTOUR
Director
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Activities Control and
Market Regulation
The National Centre for
Research and
Development of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Bou Ismaïl

Boualem MOHAMEDI
Assistant Director
Aquaculture and Fresh Water
The National Centre for
Research and
Development of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Bou Ismaïl

ANGOLA

Head of Delegation
Carmen SACRAMENTO
NETO

Minister for Fisheries and
Marine Resources
Ministry of Fisheries and
Marine Resources
Luanda

Maria de Fátima JARDIM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative to
FAO
Rome

Victor CHILAMBA
National Director
Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries and
Marine Resources
Luanda

Carla BARATA
First Secretary
Embassy of the Republic
of Angola
Rome

Gerson DOS SANTOS
FRANCISCO
Third Secretary
Embassy of the Republic
of Angola
Rome

Cristovão MUZUMBI
Protocol Assistant to the
Minister for Fisheries and
Marine Resources
Ministry of Fisheries and
Marine Resources
Luanda

Marta FERNANDES DOS
SANTOS
Multilateral Assistant to the
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic
of Angola
Rome

ARGENTINA

Head of Delegation
Lucía RAFFIN
Secretary
Directorate-General for
Legal Advice
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Buenos Aires

Alternate(s)
Gabriela Susana NAVARRO
Director
Fisheries Planning
Secretariat of Bioeconomy
Ministry of Economy
Buenos Aires

Carlos Bernardo CHERNIAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alicia Silvana BARONE
Minister Plenipotentiary
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Carolina HERNÁNDEZ
Third Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

AUSTRALIA

Head of Delegation
Adam CAMILLERI
Assistant Director
Multilateral Fisheries
Department of
Agriculture, Water
and the Environment
Canberra

Alternate(s)
Emma HATCHER
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Ruth MALLET
Agriculture Advisor
Embassy of Australia
Rome

Filippo MINIATI
Intern
Australian Embassy
Rome

AUSTRIA

Head of Delegation
Günter WALKNER
Minister Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

AZERBAIJAN

Head of Delegation
Rashad ASLANOV
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Azerbaijan to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Tarlan ASKAROV
Head
Animal Services Sector
Organization and Monitoring of
Livestock Husbandry
Department
Ministry of Agriculture
Baku

Nigar GURBANOVA
RAMAZANLI
Third Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

BANGLADESH

Head of Delegation
Sayed Mahmood Belal
HAIDER
Secretary
Ministry of Fisheries
and Livestock
Dhaka

Alternate(s)
Syed Md ALAMGIR
Director-General
Directorate of Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries
and Livestock
Dhaka

Samir Kumer SARKER
Assistant Director
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Fisheries
and Livestock
Dhaka

BELGIUM

Head of Delegation
Lieven DE LA MARCHE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate
François HIRSCH
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

BOTSWANA

Head of Delegation
Jacob MOMENE
Deputy Permanent Secretary
Corporate Services
Directorate of Public Service
Management
Gaborone

Alternate(s)
Kagisanyo BEDI
Acting Director
Fisheries and Apiculture
Ministry of Agriculture
Gaborone

Masego MOGWERA
Superintendent
Apiculture
Ministry of Agriculture
Gaborone

BRAZIL

Head of Delegation
Carla BARROSO CARNEIRO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Paulo José CHIARELLI
VICENTE DE AZEVEDO
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Cristiano Wellington
NOBERTO RAMALHO
National Secretary
Artisanal Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Brasília

Luís Gustavo CARDOSO
National Secretary
Registration
Monitoring and Research for
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Ministry of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Brasília

Ricardo GINICOLO
BACELETTE
Head
International Special Advisory
Ministry of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Brasília

BURUNDI

Head of Delegation
Emile BUTOYI
First Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Deó NDUWAYAEZU
Director
Fisheries Sector

Alternate
Joel RUSEGURA
Counsellor in charge of
Fisheries Monitoring

CABO VERDE

Head of Delegation
Elsa Barbosa DE OLIVEIRA
MARCELINO SIMÕES
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Carlos MONTEIRO
National Director
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Ministry of the Sea
Praia

Iolanda BRITES
Senior Official
Fisheries Directorate
Ministry of the Sea
Praia

CAMBODIA

Head of Delegation
Kaing KHIM
Deputy Director-General
Fisheries Administration
Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries
Phnom Penh

Alternate
Leakhena CHIN
Deputy Director
Administrative Affairs and
Litigation Department
Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries
Phnom Penh

CAMEROON

Head of Delegation
Dr. TAIGA
Minister for Livestock, Fisheries
and Animal Industries
Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries
and Animal Industries
Yaoundé

Alternate(s)
Sébastien FOUMANE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Moungui MÉDI
Second Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Guy Irené MIMBANG
Director
Fisheries
Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries
and Animal Industries
Yaoundé

Marie Thérèse Viviane
OMBWA
Sub Director
Industrial and Artisanal Fishing
Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries
and Animal Industries
Yaoundé

Divine Ngalla TOMBUH
Sub Director
Aquaculture
Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries
and Animal Industries
Yaoundé

CANADA

Head of Delegation
Heather WOOD
Director
International Fisheries Policy
Ministry of Fisheries, Oceans
and the Canadian Coast Guard
Ottawa

Alternate(s)
Dale MARSDEN
Deputy Director
International Fisheries Policy
Ministry of Fisheries, Oceans
and the Canadian Coast Guard
Ottawa

William HARRIS
Policy Analyst
International Fisheries Policy
Ministry of Fisheries, Oceans
and the Canadian Coast Guard
Ottawa

Julie ÉMOND
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Kathryn SCHLEIT
Fisheries Director
Oceans North Conservation
Society
Ottawa

Melanie SONNENBERG
President
Canadian Independent Fish
Harvesters Federation
Shediac

Carl ALLEN
Treasurer
Canadian Independent Fish
Harvesters Federation
Shediac

CHILE

Head of Delegation
Ennio VIVALDI VÉJAR
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Alejandro BARRIENTOS
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Constanza SILVA
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Daniela DÍAZ
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Francisco FERNÁNDEZ
National Fisheries Service
Ministry of Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Gonzalo GARRIDO
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Gonzalo PEREIRA
Director
Fisheries Development Institute
Valparaíso

Héctor BACIGALUPO
Manager
SONAPESCA
Santiago

Ivonne MONTENEGRO
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Jacqueline SALAS
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Javiera CALISTO
Programme Officer
Oak Foundation
Santiago

José Javier GOROSTEGUI
OBANOZ
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Juan SANTIBÁNEZ
Chief
Fisheries Development Division
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Julio CORDANO
Director
Environment, Climate Change
and Oceans
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Santiago

Julio JORQUERA
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Mario VALENZUELA
Naval Captain
Chilean Military, Naval and Air
Attaché in Italy
Rome

Marisol ALVAREZ
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

María Alejandra PINTO
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

María Soledad TAPIA
Director
National Fisheries Service
Ministry of Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Mauro URBINA
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Paula REYES
CONAPACH
Valparaíso

Rocío PARRA
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Ruben PINOCHET
Fisheries Undersecretariat
Ministry of the Economy,
Development and Tourism
Santiago

Zoila BUSTAMANTE
President
CONAPACH
Valparaíso

CHINA

Head of Delegation
Rong WAN

President
Shanghai Ocean University
Shanghai

Alternate(s)
Xinzhong LIU
Director-General
Fisheries Bureau
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Affairs
Beijing

Kaiyong JIANG
Party Groups Secretary and
Director
Fisheries Law Enforcement for
Yangtze River Basin Office
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Affairs
Beijing

Ying JING
Division Consultant II
Bureau of Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Affairs
Beijing

Jiangfeng ZHU
Professor
College of Marine Living
Resource Sciences and
Management
Shanghai Ocean University
Shanghai

Wenbo ZHANG
Associate Professor
College of Fisheries and Life
Science
Shanghai Ocean University
Shanghai

Qinqin LIN
Post Doctor
College of Marine Living
Resource Sciences and
Management
Shanghai Ocean University
Shanghai

Jie LU
Doctor
College of Foreign Languages
Shanghai Ocean University
Shanghai

Lu ZHANG
Vice President
Tongwei Co Ltd
Chengdu

Siquan TIAN
Director

Leilei ZOU
Professor

Menglu LIU
Staff

COLOMBIA

Head of Delegation
Armando Alberto BENEDETTI
VILLANEDA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Sergio Alejandro PENS
First Secretary

Andrés Felipe ORTIZ
ASTUDILLO
Advisor

Leonel BOHRQUEZ
Advisor

Carlos Guillero BARRETO
REYES
Professional

Chiara QUAGLIOZZI
Permanent Mission of Colombia
to the United Nations
Rome

Nancy Bibiana ROMERO
ADAMES
Permanent Mission of Colombia
to the United Nations
Rome

Nestor PONGUTA
Permanent Mission of Colombia
to the United Nations
Rome

CONGO

Head of Delegation
Henri OKEMBA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Boniface ESSEA
Director-General
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Fisheries
Brazzaville

Emma Madelandre
LOUVOUEZO
Director
Inland Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Fisheries
Brazzaville

Tite Romuald AKÉNDZÉ
Director
Marine Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Fisheries
Brazzaville

Hamed Stanilas Belvere
NAKAVOUA
Director
Aquaculture
Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Fisheries
Brazzaville

Bienvenu NTSOUANVA
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Grégoire KANDZA
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Jean SAMBA
Counsellor to the Minister for
Agriculture, Livestock and
Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Fisheries
Brazzaville

Richard NTSE
Attaché to the Minister for
Agriculture, Livestock and
Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Fisheries
Brazzaville

Glaspie Benedie NGANGOOU
Technical Attaché
Embassy of the Republic
of Congo
Rome

Armel MOUASSIPOSSO
MACKONGUY
Protocol Officer
Embassy of the Republic
of Congo
Rome

Christelle Carine OLLANDET
Assistant to the Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic
of Congo
Rome

COSTA RICA

Head of Delegation
Federico ZAMORA CORDERO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Jorge Arturo AGUILAR
CASTILLO
Minister Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Carla SIERRA ZÚÑIGA
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Carlos ALVARADO RUIZ
Director-General
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Development
Costa Rican Institute of
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Puntarenas

Jorge LÓPEZ ROMERO
Head
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Extension Department
Costa Rican Institute of
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Puntarenas

CROATIA

Alternate
Igor SURDICH
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

CUBA

Head of Delegation
Claudia GONZÁLEZ TOLEDO
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

CZECHIA

Head of Delegation
Roman DIATKA
Counsellor
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Tomas PARYS
Civil Service
Game Management and Fishery
Department
Ministry of Agriculture
Prague

Tereza STASTNA
Assistant to the Counsellor
Embassy of the Czech Republic
Rome

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Head of Delegation
Sidi Tiémoko TOURÉ
Minister for Animal and
Fisheries Resources
Ministry of Animal and
Fisheries Resources
Abidjan

Alternate(s)
Seydou CISSÉ
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Shon Roland ABE
Coordinator
National Poultry Production
Support Program
Ministry of Animal and
Fisheries Resources
Abidjan

Bina FOFANA
Director
Fisheries Directorate
Ministry of Animal and
Fisheries Resources
Abidjan

Yapo Guillaume DAGOU
Minister Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Koffi ADJOUANI
Minister Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Gisèle COULIBALY NEE
LEGBEDJI
First Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Larissa HOUENENOU NEE
SOUKOU LALET
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

**DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

Head of Delegation
Chon Gil KIM
First Secretary
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate
Kyong Dok JON
Third Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

DOMINICA

Head of Delegation
Wynnona JOSEPH

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Head of Delegation
Manuel Bernardo DÍAZ
FRANJUL
Director
Trade Negotiations
Vice-Ministry for Economic
Affairs and International
Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Santo Domingo

Alternate(s)
Mario ARVELO CAAMAÑO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative to
FAO
Rome

Iris Joseline PUJOL
RODRÍGUEZ
Alternate Ambassador
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Berioska MORRISON
GONZÁLEZ
Minister Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Julia Antonia VICIOSO
VARELAS
Minister Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Larissa Caridad VELOZ
SANTANA
Minister Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Patricia Ivannia RODRÍGUEZ
DE CAVALLARO
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Moira Rafaela VARGAS
FRANCISCO
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

ECUADOR

Head of Delegation
María Rafaela HURTADO
ESPINOSA
Deputy Minister for
Aquaculture and Fisheries
Ministry of Production, Foreign
Trade, Investment and
Fisheries
Quito

Alternate(s)
Dana Bethsabé ZAMBRANO
ZAMBRANO
Under-Secretary of Fisheries
Resources
Ministry of Production, Foreign
Trade, Investment and
Fisheries
Quito

Esteban Assar MOSCOSO
BOHMAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Designate to FAO
Rome

Juliana Monserrate GARCÍA
CEUNCA
Head
Fisheries Control
Ministry of Production, Foreign
Trade, Investment and
Fisheries
Quito

Luigi BENINCASA AZUA
Executive Director
Asociación de Atuneros del
Ecuador
Manta

Patricia CASTILLO BRICENO
Director
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Policy
Ministry of Production, Foreign
Trade, Investment and
Fisheries
Quito

Monica MALDONADO
Executive Director
Cámara Ecuatoriana de
Industriales y Procesadores
Atuneros
Manta

Patricio Estebán TROYA
SUAREZ
Minister
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

José Isidro ANDRADE VERA
Director
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Policy
Ministry of Production, Foreign
Trade, Investment and
Fisheries
Quito

Rafael Eduardo TRUJILLO
BEJARANO
Executive Director
Cámara Nacional de Pesquerías
Guayaquil

Verónica Alexandra GÓMEZ
RICAURTE
Minister
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Nancy Janneth CONTRERAS
PARRA
Specialist
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Policy
Ministry of Production, Foreign
Trade, Investment and
Fisheries
Quito

Rebeca ESPINOZA BERNAL
Specialist
Sustainable Fisheries
Management and Development
Ministry of Production, Foreign
Trade, Investment and
Fisheries
Quito

Jorge Roberto JIMÉNEZ
VELASTEGUÍ
Specialist
Aquaculture Management and
Sustainable Development
Ministry of Production, Foreign
Trade, Investment and
Fisheries
Quito

Juan Fernando TINOCO
CÓRDOVA
Second Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Carlos Isaias BODERO MALA
Attaché
Ecuador's Defense in Italy
Rome

EL SALVADOR

Head of Delegation
Efrén Arnoldo BERNAL
CHÉVEZ
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Carlos Eduardo SOSA
ESCOBAR
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Numa Rafael HERNÁNDEZ
RODRÍGUEZ
Chief
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Administration and
Management Division
Centre for the Development of
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Ministry of Agriculture and
Livestock
San Salvador

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Head of Delegation
Mariano NGUEMA
ASANGONO
Director-General
Industrial Fisheries and
Fisheries Coordination
Ministry of Fisheries and Water
Resources
Malabo

ESTONIA

Head of Delegation
Eduard KOITMAA
Line Manager
Producing and Marketing of
Living Aquatic Resources
Fisheries Economics
Department
Ministry of Rural Affairs
Tallinn

ETHIOPIA

Head of Delegation(s)
Demitu Hambisa BONSA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Kaba Urgessa DINSSA
Minister Plenipotentiary
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

**EUROPEAN UNION
(MEMBER
ORGANIZATION)**

Head of Delegation
Charlina VITCHEVA
Director-General
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE)
European Commission
Brussels

Alternate(s)
Matthijs VAN HUIJGEVOORT
First Secretary
EU Delegation
Rome

Alexandra VALKENBURG
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Céline IDIL
Acting Director
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.3)
European Commission
Brussels

Annette SCHNEEGANS
Minister Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Raphael GOULET
Head of Unit
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.1)
European Commission
Brussels

Roberto CESARI
Head of Unit
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.4)
European Commission
Brussels

Emmanuel BERCK
Deputy Head of Unit
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE D.1)
European Commission
Brussels

Mindaugas KISIELIAUSKAS
Deputy Head of Unit
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE C.1)
European Commission
Brussels

Blaga POPOVA
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Marc RICHIR
Senior Expert
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.1)
European Commission
Brussels

Pavlina NIKOLOVA
International Relations Officer
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.4)
European Commission
Brussels

Lil KERHERVE
International Relations Officer
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.4)
European Commission
Brussels

Stavroula KREMMYDIOTOU
International Relations Officer
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.4)
European Commission
Brussels

Bianca WILES
International Relations Officer
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE D.1)
European Commission
Brussels

Giacomo Chato OSIO
Policy Officer
Directorate-General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission
Brussels

Vassilis DOKALIS
International Relations Officer
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.1)
European Commission
Brussels

Eva DE BLEEKER
International Relations Officer
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.2)
European Commission
Brussels

Anais DEMAILLE
International Relations Officer
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.3)
European Commission
Brussels

Charlotte GOBIN
International Relations Officer
Directorate General for
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
(DG MARE B.3)
European Commission
Brussels

Beata-Dorota GOLENSKA
Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Oda STEY
Trainee
EU Delegation
Rome

Alexandre RODRIGUEZ
Executive Secretary
EU Long Distance Advisory
Council
Market Advisory Council
Brussels

Pedro Emanuel DOS REIS
SANTOS
Secretary General
Market Advisory Council
Brussels

María Yobana BERMUDEZ
RODRIGUEZ
Chair
Market Advisory Council
Brussels

FIJI

Head of Delegation
Tekata TOAISI
Director
Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries and
Forestry
Suva

Alternate(s)
Laitia TAMATA
Fiji National Coordinator
Suva

Shanil DAYAL
First Secretary
Permanent Mission of Fiji to the
United Nations Office and
other International
Organizations
Geneva

Pranishma KUMAR
Manager
Economic Planning, Policy,
Statistics, IT, and Library
Division
Ministry of Fisheries
Suva

Prashneel CHANDRA
Senior Research Officer
Aquaculture
Ministry of Fisheries and
Forestry
Suva

FINLAND

Head of Delegation
Tanja GRÉN
Minister Counsellor
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate
Heli HÄMÄLÄINEN
Advisor
Embassy of the Republic
of Finland
Rome

FRANCE

Head of Delegation
Ms Céline JURGENSEN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Andrée SONTOT
Chief
FAO and Codex Alimentarius
Bureau
General Secretariat for
European Affairs
Paris

Sébastien COUDERC
Head
Marine Fisheries and
Sustainable Aquaculture
Assistant Service
Directorate-General for
Maritime Affairs, Fisheries and
Aquaculture
Ministry of Agriculture and
Food Sovereignty
Paris

Anahit PANOSSIAN
Chief
European and International
Affairs Bureau
Directorate-General for
Maritime Affairs
Ministry of Agriculture and
Food Sovereignty
Paris

Maeve KIEFFER
Assistant to the Head of Office
Directorate-General for
Maritime Affairs, Fisheries and
Aquaculture
Ministry of Agriculture and
Food Sovereignty
Paris

Esther DELRIEU
Chargé de mission
Permanent Representation of
France to the United Nations
Rome

Sylvain FOURNEL
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Michel LEVEQUE
Counsellor Agriculture and
Food Security
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Euriel GODEBERT
Editor
General Secretariat for
European Affairs
Paris

GABON

Head of Delegation
Chantal MOUKOUTOU
LEGNONGO
First Counsellor
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate
Gislain MOUSSAVOU
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

GERMANY

Head of Delegation
Annegret FINKE
Senior Policy Officer
Division 614
Federal Ministry of Food and
Agriculture
Berlin

Alternate(s)
Reinhold HANEL
Director
Fisheries Ecology
Thuenen Institute
Braunschweig

Oliver MELLENTHIN
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Anneli EHLERS
Head
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Project Food and Nutrition
Security Sector
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit
Bonn

Henrice STOEBESAND
Senior Policy Officer
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development
Berlin

Clemens WIRBEL
Alternate Permanent
Representative
Permanent Representation of
Germany to the United Nations
Organizations
Rome

Jonas ELOO
Intern
Permanent Representation of
Germany to the UN
Organizations
Rome

GHANA

Head of Delegation
Mavis Hawa KOOMSON
Minister for Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Alternate(s)
Merene BENYAAH
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Fred Kwasi ANTWI-BOADU
Executive Director
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Marian Wanda Afi KPAKPAH
Chief Director
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Awudu Moro KABORE
Director
Communications
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Eveva Maame Esi Bordah
QUAYSON
Director
Marine Management Division
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Rosemary ABBEY
Director
Finance and Administration
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Phyllis Martha KLORKOR
MENDS
Minister Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Quaatey SAMUEL NII
KPAKPA
Technical Advisor to the
Minister for Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Alexander ADU-ANTWI
Head
Legal and Compliance Unit
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Nana Akua Ampomaah
AGYAPONG
Personal Assistant to the
Minister for Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Richard YEBOAH
Head
Monitoring, Control and
Surveillance Division
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Samuel Kwame OTENG
Deputy Director
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Kwepu Ampiah KOOMSON
Assistant Director
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Prosper Kwame AGBENU
Head
Accounts
National Premix Secretariat
Accra

Jojo Nana SOLOMON
President
The National Fisheries
Association of Ghana
Tema

Nana Abrokwa Akwaa ASARE
Administrator
National Premix Secretariat
Accra

Michael Kwesi ZIGHA
Agricultural Officer
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Veronica Asantewaa YEBOAH
Assisting Director
Ministry of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Development
Accra

Hannah SINNIBAH FENTUO
Embassy of the Republic
of Ghana
Rome

GUINEA

Head of Delegation
Fatima CAMARA
Minister for Fisheries and
Maritime Economy
Ministry of Fisheries and
Maritime Economy
Conakry

Alternate(s)
Aminata Kobélé KEITA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Kadeba CONDE
Attaché Cabinet
Ministry of Fisheries and
Maritime Economy
Conakry

Tafsir DIALLO
Legal Counsel
Ministry of Fisheries and
Maritime Economy
Conakry

Ibrahima Sory CONDE
First Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Aminatagbe SANGARE
First Counsellor in charge of
Communication
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Yayé Hafsatou BARRY
Second Secretary
Embassy of the Republic
of Guinea
Rome

Tamba TOLNO
First Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Mohamed SOUMAH
Journalist
Delegation of Guinea

HONDURAS

Alternate(s)
Maria del Pilar Leonor
AGUILAR GUERRERO
Minister Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Silvia Xiomara GOMEZ
ROBLEDA
Assistant to the Ambassador

Enrique ORTEZ SEQUEIRA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

HUNGARY

Head of Delegation
Zsolt BELÁNSZKY-DEMKÓ
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Evelin LANTOS
First Secretary
Embassy of Hungary
Rome

Bence Dániel KOVÁCS
European Union Fisheries
Advisor
Ministry of Agriculture
Budapest

Lise POULSEN FLORIS
Horizontal Coordination
Assistant
DG Agriculture, Fisheries,
Social Affairs and Health -
LIFE
Council of the European Union
Brussels

Liliána KASZÁS
Attaché
Embassy of Hungary
Rome

Loretta Tünde KÓSA Agricultural Attaché Embassy of Hungary Rome	Árni MATHIESEN Senior Advisor Iceland Ocean Cluster Reykjavík	Alternate(s) Erma RHEINDRAYANI Counsellor Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO Rome
Zoltán KÁLMÁN Special Advisor	INDIA Head of Delegation Serraju VANI RAO Ambassador Permanent Representative to FAO Rome	Fuad Rahman TABALOLA Junior Policy Analyst Purna Cita NUGRAHA Counsellor Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO Rome
François HEAD Directorate-General Agriculture, Fisheries, Social Affairs and Health - LIFE Council of the European Union Brussels	Alternate(s) Abhilaksh LIKHI Secretary Fisheries Department Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying New Delhi	Rudy Heriyanto Adi NUGROHO Secretary General Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Jakarta
Dóra EGRI Assistant Embassy of Hungary Rome	Balaji JUJAVARAPU Minister (Agriculture) Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO Rome	Tb Haeru RAHAYU Director-General Aquaculture Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Jakarta
ICELAND Head of Delegation Matthías Geir PÁLSSON Ambassador Permanent Representative to FAO Rome	Neetu Kumari PRASAD Joint Secretary (Marine Fisheries) Fisheries Department Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying New Delhi	Victor Gustaaf MANOPPO Director-General Marine Management and Marine Space Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Jakarta
Alternate(s) Jón Erlingur JÓNASSON Special Envoy on Ocean Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Reykjavík	Bijay Kumar BEHERA Chief Executive National Fisheries Development Board Fisheries Department Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying New Delhi	Edy Putra IRAWADY Special Advisor to the Minister for Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Jakarta
Sóley KALDAL Lead Negotiator International Fisheries Agreements Ministry of Food, Fisheries and Agriculture Reykjavík	INDONESIA Head of Delegation Sakti Wahyu TRENGGONO Minister for Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Jakarta	Wahyu MURYADI Special Advisor to the Minister for Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Jakarta
Stefán ÁSMUNDSSON Special Advisor Ocean Affairs and Fisheries Ministry of Foreign Affairs Reykjavík		
Hrefna KARLSDÓTTIR Senior Advisor Fisheries Iceland Reykjavík		

Siane INDRIANI
Special Advisor to the Minister
on Inter-Institutional Relations
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Jakarta

Doni ISMANTO
Special Assistant to the Minister
for Marine Affairs and
Fisheries
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Kristia BUDIYARTO
Special Assistant to the Director
for Protocol Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Jakarta

Ari PRABOWO
Head
Public Relations and
International Cooperation
Bureau
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Trian YUNANDA
Secretary
Directorate General of Capture
Fisheries
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Muhammad Firdaus Agung
KURNIAWAN
Director
Ecosystem Conservation and
Aquatic Biota
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Machmud MACHMUD
Secretary
Directorate General of
Strengthening the
Competitiveness of Marine and
Fishery Products
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Muhammad YUSUF
Director
Coasts and Small Islands
Utilization
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Suharta SUHARTA
Secretary
Fisheries Resource Management
Directorate
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Matheus Eko RUDIANTO
Chief Fisheries Inspector
Fisheries Resource Management
Directorate
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Tomi SUWARTONO
Head
Protocol and Administration
Section
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Sitti HAMDIYAH
Coordinator
Regional and Multilateral
Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Jakarta

Andreas MAHARDIKA
Junior Interpreter
Secretariat General

Agung TRIWIBOWO
Aid to the Minister for Marine
Affairs and Fisheries
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Galuh Andhika Suryo
PRAMONO
Aid to the Minister for Marine
Affairs and Fisheries
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Alifia Noor AZIZ
Aid to the Minister for Marine
Affairs and Fisheries
Ministry of Marine Affairs
and Fisheries
Jakarta

Edwinal RAHADIAN
Third Secretary
Embassy of the Republic of
Indonesia
Rome

IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)

Head of Delegation
Seyed Ghobad MOKARRAMI
Director-General
Freshwater Aquatics
Iranian Fisheries Organization
Teheran

Alternate(s)
Reza ABBASPOUR NADERI
Director-General
Fisheries Management
Iranian Fisheries Organization
Teheran

Nasser KARAMI RAD
Director-General
Aquatics Stick Enhancement
Iranian Fisheries Organization
Teheran

Morteza AZADI
Deputy Director-General
Fisheries Affairs
Iranian Fisheries Organization
Teheran

Mehdi SHAKOURI
Deputy
Aquaculture Development
Iranian Fisheries Organization
Tehran

Vahid MADANI
General Director
Shrimp Aquaculture Division
Iranian Fisheries Organization
Teheran

Shahram SAFIYARI
Head
Aquatics Quality Improvement
Group
Iranian Fisheries Organization
Teheran

Javd MAHDAVIROSHAN
Head
Southern Waters Fishing Group
Iranian Fisheries Organization
Teheran

ITALY

Andrea ANGELI
International Relations Officer
Directorate-General for
European Union and
International Policies
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty, and Forestry
Rome

Elisabetta LANZELLOTTO
International Relations Officer
Directorate-General for
European Union and
International Policies
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty, and Forestry
Rome

Francesco Saverio ABATE
Director-General
Directorate-General for Sea
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty and Forests
Rome

Maria Isabella Angela
VERARDI
PIUE II Director
Directorate-General for
European Union and
International Policies
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty, and Forestry
Rome

Simonetta RIVELLI
International Relations Officer
Directorate-General for
European Union and
International Policies
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty, and Forestry
Rome

Maria Vittoria BRISCOLINI
Head
Environment, Agriculture and
Farmhouse Unit
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty and Forests
Rome

Irene Adelaide FORCELLA
Officer
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty and Forests
Rome

Massimo RUGGIERO
Officer
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty and Forests
Rome

Ilaria FERRARO
Expert
Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty and Forests
Rome

JAMAICA

Head of Delegation
Orville PALMER
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Mining
Kingston

Alternate(s)
Azra Blythe MALLETT
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Mining
Kingston

Gavin BELLAMY
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Mining
Kingston

Stephen SMIKLE
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Mining
Kingston

JAPAN

Head of Delegation
Yuki MORITA
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Kenichi ONO
Technical Official
Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries
Tokyo

Sayako TAKEDA
Director
Overseas Fisheries Cooperation
Office
Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries
Tokyo

Tetsuya KAWASHIMA
Counsellor
Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries
Tokyo

KENYA

Head of Delegation
Fredrick Lusambili
MATWANG'A
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Anthony Muriithi GIKANDI
Agricultural Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Rebecca MURITU
Assisting Director
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Development
Ministry of Mining, Blue
Economy and Maritime Affairs
Nairobi

Mary MWALE
Head
Food Security
Ministry of Agriculture and
Livestock Development
Nairobi

KUWAIT

Head of Delegation
Kadar KUMAR
Aquatic Biologist

Alternate(s)
Ghalia AIFAJI
Junior Aquatic Researcher

Yousef JUHAIL
Counsellor
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Sultan J. SH. ALOTAIBI
Third Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Salahuddin ALBAZZAZ
Technical Advisor
Permanent Representation of the
State of Kuwait to FAO
Rome

Massimo Ziad AMMAR
Research Executive
Permanent Representation of the
State of Kuwait to FAO
Rome

LATVIA

Head of Delegation
Santa JANSONE
Head
Fisheries Strategy Division
Ministry of Agriculture
Riga

Alternate(s)
Aelita CAKURE
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Jekaterina KOPTOVA
Senior Expert
International Affairs Division
Ministry of Agriculture
Riga

LIBERIA

Head of Delegation
Emma Catherine Metieh
GLASSCO
Director-General
National Fisheries and
Aquaculture Authority
Monrovia

Alternate(s)
Andrew W. KRONYANH
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Isaac Wehyee NYENABO II
Ambassador of Liberia to the
European Union and the
Benelux Countries
Brussel

Theresa PETERS
Commercial Attaché
Embassy of the Republic of
Liberia
Rome

Francesca PICA
Secretary (Administrative)
Embassy of the Republic of
Liberia
Rome

Paola TRIPODO
Executive Secretary
(Administrative)
Embassy of the Republic of
Liberia
Rome

Abraham SAAH
Special Assistant
National Fisheries and
Aquaculture Authority
Monrovia

Frederick Jonah VARNIE
Director
Research and Planning
Liberia Maritime Authority
Monrovia

Solomon DARYOUE
Special Assistant
National Fisheries and
Aquaculture Authority
Monrovia

Yvonne Kaulah CLINTON
Deputy Commissioner
International Vessel
Registration
Liberia Maritime Authority
Monrovia

LIBYA

Head of Delegation
Ali Amin Ahmed Ali KAFU
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Feras Mohamed Rahoma
ELGABRI
Director
Information and Documentation
Office
Ministry of Water Resources
Tripoli

Alhusayn Meelad Mohammed
ALJAWADI
Aquaculture Researcher
Ministry of Water Resources
Tripoli

LITHUANIA

Head of Delegation
Ana SEDENKO

LUXEMBOURG

Head of Delegation
Marie-Lise STOLL
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate
Rebecca ENTRINGER
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

MADAGASCAR

Head of Delegation
Paubert MAHATANTE
Minister for Fisheries and Blue
Economy
Ministry of Fisheries and Blue
Economy
Antananarivo

Alternate
Onipatsa Helinoro
TIANAMAHEFA
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Embassy of the Republic of
Madagascar
Rome

MALAYSIA

Head of Delegation
Nazri ISHAK
Director
Policy and Strategic Planning
Department of Fisheries
Malaysia
Ministry of Agriculture and
Food Security
Putrajaya

Alternate
Abdul Rahman ABDUL
WAHAB
Agriculture Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

MALDIVES

Head of Delegation
Ahmed SHIYAM
Minister for Fisheries and
Ocean Resources
Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean
Resources
Malé
Alternate(s)

Luca FIORMONTE
Honorary Consul of Maldives
Rome

Hussain SINAN
Director-General
Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean
Resources
Malé

MALI

Head of Delegation
Aly COULIBALY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate
Bagna TOURE
First Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

MALTA

Head of Delegation
Maria BUTTIGIEG
First Secretary
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Judy CASSAR
Scientific Officer
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Animal Rights
Qormi

Chantelle SPITERI
Scientific Officer
Aquatic Resources Malta
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Animal Rights
Qormi

Luke ZAMMIT
Scientific Officer
Aquatic Resources Malta
Ministry for Agriculture,
Fisheries and Animal Rights
Qormi

Michelle MIZZI
Scientific Officer
Aquatic Resources Malta
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Animal Rights
Qormi

Adam VELLA CARDONA
Assistant Manager
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Animal Rights
Qormi

Melanie FARRUGIA
Agriculture Attaché
Embassy of the Republic of
Malta
Rome

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Head of Delegation
Kalani Radford KANEKO
Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Trade
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
Trade
Majuro

Alternate(s)
Glen JOSEPH
Director
Marshall Islands Marine
Resources Authority
Delap-Uliga-Djarrit

Laurence EDWARDS
Legal Counsel
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
Trade
Majuro

MAURITANIA

Head of Delegation
Habsatou BA
Second Secretary
Embassy of the Islamic
Republic of Mauritania
Rome

MAURITIUS

Head of Delegation
R. SOOKUN
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of
Mauritius
Paris

Alternate(s)
G. DHUNNOO
Acting Assistant Director
Ministry of Blue Economy,
Marine Resources, Fisheries and
Shipping
Port Louis

R.D. MOHIT
Acting Assistant Director
Ministry of Blue Economy,
Marine Resources, Fisheries and
Shipping
Port Louis

N. JEENALLY
Acting Divisional Scientific
Officer
Ministry of Blue Economy,
Marine Resources, Fisheries and
Shipping
Port Louis

V. MUNBODHE
Acting Divisional Scientific
Officer
Ministry of Blue Economy,
Marine Resources, Fisheries and
Shipping
Port Louis

T. SOOKLALL
Acting Divisional Scientific
Officer
Ministry of Blue Economy,
Marine Resources, Fisheries and
Shipping
Port Louis

MEXICO

Head of Delegation
Miguel Jorge
GARCÍA WINDER
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Yareli BECERRIL ESLAVA
Federal Inspector of Fisheries
Secretariat of the Navy
Ciudad de México

José Luis DELGADO CRESPO
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

José Francisco ANZA SOLÍS
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Bernardino MUNOZ
RESENDIZ
Director-General
Planning, Programming and
Evaluation
CONAPESCA
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Ciudad de México

Edgar Edmundo LANZ
SANCHEZ
Director-General
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Management
CONAPESCA
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Ciudad de México

Cristina Isabel REYES
ROBLES
Director
International Affairs
CONAPESCA
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Ciudad de México

Carlos Alonso RUIZ
RODRIGUEZ
Director
Fisheries Inspection and
Surveillance
Secretariat of the Navy
Ciudad de México

Adrián SALGADO VARGAS
Coordinator
Analysts
CONAPESCA
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Ciudad de México

Miguel Ángel HUERTA
BELLO
Chief
Aquaculture Standards
Development Department
CONAPESCA
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Ciudad de México

MOROCCO

Head of Delegation
Youssef BALLA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Yahya BOUZID
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Bouchta AICHANE
Director
Maritime Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture and
Maritime Fisheries, Rural
Development and Water and
Forests
Rabat

Mohamed YASSINE EL
AROUSI
Chief
Cooperation Division
Maritime Fisheries Department
Ministry of Agriculture,
Maritime Fisheries, Rural
Development and Water and
Forestry
Flap

Mustapha FATIH
Chief
Competitiveness and Trade
Organization Division
Maritime Fisheries Department
Ministry of Agriculture,
Maritime Fisheries, Rural
Development and Water and
Forestry
Rabat

Fatimazohra HASSOUNI
Chief
Fisheries Sustainability and
Resource Management
Division
Maritime Fisheries Department
Ministry of Agriculture,
Maritime Fisheries, Rural
Development and Water and
Forestry
Rabat

Abdelmalek FARAJ
Director
National Fisheries Research
Institute
Casablanca

Abdelaali LAMOUDNI
Director
Animation and Commercial
Network
National Fisheries Bureau
Ministry of Agriculture and
Maritime Fisheries, Rural
Development and Water and
Forests
Rabat

Jilali BENSBAI
Head
Department
National Fisheries Research
Institute
Casablanca

Amine MANSOURI
Head
Studies Department
National Agency for
Aquaculture Development
Rabat

Jihane ABDERRACHID
Cadre
Directorate of Control of
Maritime Fishing Activities
Maritime Fisheries Department
Ministry of Agriculture,
Maritime Fisheries, Rural
Development and Water and
Forestry
Rabat

MYANMAR

Head of Delegation
Myat Khine MAR
Deputy Director
Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Irrigation
Nay Pyi Taw

Alternate
Aung Naing SOE
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

NETHERLANDS (KINGDOM OF THE)

Head of Delegation
Dirk-Jan VAN DER STELT
Senior Policy Officer
International and Enforcement
Team
Fisheries and Larger Waters
Directorate General of Nature &
Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture, Nature
and Food Quality
The Hague

Alternate(s)
Yvonne VAN LAARHOVEN
Agricultural Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Pieter VAN DALEN
Intern
Permanent Representation of the
Kingdom of the Netherlands to
the UN Organizations
Rome

NEW ZEALAND

Head of Delegation
James BROWN
Manager
International Fisheries
Ministry of Primary Industries
Wellington

Alternate(s)
Jenny Louise REID
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Adam BERRY
Senior Analyst
International Fisheries
Ministry of Primary Industries
Wellington

NICARAGUA

Head of Delegation
Monica ROBELO RAFFONE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Edward Jackson ABELLA
Director-General
Nicaraguan Institute of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Managua

Idalia GONZALEZ
Director
Development
Nicaraguan Institute of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Managua

Itzamna UBEDA
Director
Aquaculture
Nicaraguan Institute of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Managua

Brenda BRENES SOTELO
Assistant Director
Nicaraguan Institute of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Managua

Roberto CHACON
Legal Counsel
Nicaraguan Institute of Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Managua

Junior Andrés ESCOBAR
FONSECA
Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

NIGERIA

Head of Delegation
Yaya Olaitan OLANIRAN
Minister
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

NORWAY

Head of Delegation
Marianne SIVERSTEN NAESS
Minister for Fisheries and
Ocean Policy
Ministry of Trade, Industry and
Fisheries
Oslo

Alternate(s)
Kjersti SOMMERSET
Ambassador
Permanent Representative to
FAO
Rome

Elisabeth NORDGARD
GABRIELSEN
Director General
Ministry of Trade, Industry and
Fisheries
Oslo

Astrid HOLTAN
Director
Seafood Trade and WTO
Section
Ministry of Trade, Industry and
Fisheries
Oslo

Anita UTHEIM IVERSEN
Specialist Director
Ministry of Trade, Industry and
Fisheries
Oslo

Kristoffer BJORKLUND
Specialist Director
Department of Fisheries
Ministry of Trade, Industry and
Fisheries
Oslo

Thord MONSEN
Head of Section
Norwegian Directorate of
Fisheries
Bergen

Johanne NORDBY
FREMSTAD
Senior Advisor
Climate, Nature and the Private
Sector Department
Norwegian Agency for
Development Cooperation
Oslo

Gunnstein BAKKE
Senior Advisor
Fisheries Directorate
Ministry of Trade, Industry and
Fisheries
Oslo

Bendik SKOGLUND
Senior Advisor
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Trade, Industry and
Fisheries
Oslo

Nicklas SIMONSEN
Political Advisor
Ministry of Trade, Industry and
Fisheries
Oslo

Alf Håkon HOEL
Professor
University of Tromsø
Institute of Marine Research
Bergen

Rita HANNISDAL
Senior Researcher
Institute of Marine Research
Bergen

OMAN

Head of Delegation
Yaqoob ALBUSAIDI
Undersecretary for Fish
Resources
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries Wealth and Water
Resources
Muscat

Alternate(s)
Abdullaziz ALMARZOUQI
Director-General
Fisheries Development
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries Wealth and Water
Resources
Muscat

Dawood ALYAHYAAI
Director-General
Fisheries Research
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries Wealth and Water
Resources
Muscat

Abdullatif ALBELUSHI
Director-General
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries Wealth and Water
Resources
Muscat

Ibrahim ALQARTOBI
Assistant Director-General
Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries Wealth and Water
Resources
Muscat

Rahma ALHAJRI
International Cooperation
Department
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries Wealth and Water
Resources
Muscat

Ms Fadia ALJAMAL
Technical Coordinator to the
UN Agencies
Embassy of the Sultanate of
Oman
Rome

PAKISTAN

Head of Delegation
Qaiser AHMED SHEIKH
Federal Minister for Maritime
Affairs
Ministry of Maritime Affairs
Islamabad

Alternate(s)
Ali JAVED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Umar ZAFAR SHEIKH
Additional Secretary for
Maritime Affairs
Ministry of Maritime Affairs
Islamabad

Khalid MEHBOOB
Advisor/Alternate Permanent
Representative
Embassy of the Islamic
Republic of Pakistan
Rome

Sadia GOHAR KHANUM
Counsellor
Embassy of the Islamic
Republic of Pakistan
Rome

Masood GUL
Counsellor
Embassy of the Islamic
Republic of Pakistan
Rome

Muhamamd Farhan KHAN
Assistant Fisheries
Development Commissioner

PANAMA

Head of Delegation
Tomás Alberto DUNCAN
JURADO
Counsellor
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Leyka MARTÍNEZ
Director-General
Integral Management and
Management
Water Resources Authority of
Panama
Panama

Eduardo CARRASQUILLA
Administrador General
Water Resources Authority of
Panama
Panama

Hamed TUÑÓN
General Administrator
Water Resources Authority of
Panama
Panama

Yarkelia VERGARA
Director
International Cooperation
Water Resources Authority of
Panama
Panama

Eliana Ordenes BRUGIATI
Analyst
Environment and Climate
Change Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Panama

Gerardo IRIMIA
Envoy
Water Resources Authority of
Panama
Panama

María Esther SIERRA Biologist Water Resources Authority of Panama Panama	PERU Head of Delegation Sergio GONZÁLEZ GUERRERO Minister for Production Ministry of Production Lima	Jorge Eduardo MAGUIÑA ALIAGA Director-General Directorate-General for Supervision, Supervision and Punishment Ministry of Production Lima
Yazmin VILLAREAL Biologist Water Resources Authority of Panama Panama	Alternate(s) Jesús Eloy BARRIENTOS RUIZ Vice Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministry of Production Lima	Noe Augusto BALBÍN INGA Director-General Directorate-General for Fisheries for Direct and Indirect Human Consumption Ministry of Production Lima
Carlos LA CASA Biologist Water Resources Authority of Panama Panama	Manuel José Antonio CACHO- SOUSA VELÁZQUEZ Ambassador of Peru to Italy Rome	Ricardo Gabriel HERBOZO COLQUE Director-General Directorate-General for Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Regulatory Analysis Ministry of Production Lima
Boris RIVERA Biologist Water Resources Authority of Panama Panama	Edward BARRIGA RIVERA Director-General Demersal and Coastal Resource Research Institute of the Sea of Peru La Punta	Arturo AIVAR GUILLEN Director Normativity National Fisheries Health Authority Ministry of Production Lima
Alexis PENA Biologist Water Resources Authority of Panama Panama	David Humberto MENDOZA RAMÍRE Director-General Artisanal Fishing Directorate-General for Small Scale Fishing Ministry of Production Lima	Ricardo CONTRERAS CALLA Director Promotion and Formalization of Artisanal Fishing Directorate-General for Small Scale Fishing Ministry of Production Lima
PARAGUAY Head of Delegation Enrique María José CARRILLO GÓMEZ Counsellor Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Deputy Permanent Representative to FAO Rome	María Elvira VELÁSQUEZ RIVAS PLATA Director-General Sovereignty, Limits and Antarctic Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lima	Gladys Liliana ROCHA FREYRE Director Sectoral Programme and Directorate-General for Aquaculture Ministry of Production Lima
Alternate Miguel Dario DIONISI BATTILANA First Secretary Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO Rome	Edgard Fabricio FLORES YSLA Director-General Aquaculture Ministry of Production Lima	

Muriel María GÓMEZ
SÁNCHE OREZZOLI
Director
Health and Safety
National Fisheries Health
Authority
Ministry of Production
Lima

Carlos Alberto CASTRO
BARRIGA
Director
Monitoring and Evaluation
Directorate-General for Policy
and Regulatory Analysis
Ministry of Production
Lima

Miguel Luis Martín ALEMÁN
URTEAGA
Minister
Embassy of the Republic of
Chile
Rome

Jorge Manuel PAZ ACOSTA
President
Board of Directors
Institute of the Sea of Peru
Valle

Mónica Patricia SAAVEDRA
CHUMBE
Executive President
National Fisheries Health
Authority
Ministry of Production
Lima

Félix Fabián PUENTE DE LA
VEGA CHUMBE
Executive Coordinator
A National Program Eat Fish
Lima

Jacqueline PALACIOS LEÓN
Coordinator
Bentonian and Coastal
Demersal Fish Research
Functional Area
Institute of the Sea of Peru
Chucuito

Lincol Roller POLO
BORDENABE
Coordinator
Technical Support for Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Directorate-General for
Supervision, Supervision and
Punishment
Ministry of Production
Lima

Alan SEGUNDO
MARCELIANO
Chief
Technical Cooperation Unit
National Fisheries Health
Authority
Ministry of Production
Lima

Emanuel MONTERO GOMEZ
Head
Joint Unit
A National Program Eat Fish
Lima

Jorge RISI MUSSIO
General Manager
National Fisheries Society
Lima

Vanessa BOHÓRQUEZ
COTRINA
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Daniel Hugo COLLACHAGUA
PEREZ
Advisor
Ministry of Production
Lima

Nelly Silvana QUINTEROS
MALPARTIDA
Advisor
Ministry of Production
Lima

Jennifer Lizetti CONTRERAS
ALVAREZ
Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Giancarlo RÍOS CRUZ
Specialist
Directorate-General for
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Environmental Affairs
Ministry of Production
Lima

Katia FAJARDO CUEVAS
Specialist
Directorate-General for
Environment, Fisheries and
Aquaculture
Ministry of Production
Lima

Jocabed CANCHARI SOTO
Specialist
Directorate-General for
Fisheries for Direct and
Indirect Human Consumption
Ministry of Production
Lima

Antonino MORENO MACEDO
Specialist
Monitoring and Evaluation in
International Commitments
Ministry of Production
Lima

Bruno ARROYO SOSA
Professional
A National Program Eat Fish
Lima

Mario Alfonso MIRANDA
Lima

PHILIPPINES

Head of Delegation
Drusila Esther BAYATE
Undersecretary for Fisheries
Department of Agriculture
Manila

Alternate(s)
Nathaniel IMPERIAL
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Nina CAINGLET
Minister
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Roy ORTEGA
Chief
Fisheries Resource Management
Division
Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
Bureau
Department of Agriculture
Manila

Janice CUBO
Senior Aquaculturist
Office of the Assistant Director
for Technical Services
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Bureau
Department of Agriculture
Manila

Joseph Gabriel LIGAN
Executive Assistant III
DA-Office of the Secretary for
Agriculture
Department of Agriculture
Manila

Jezreel MENDOZA
Executive Assistant IV
DA-Office of the
Undersecretary for Fisheries
Department of Agriculture
Manila

Atty. Felizardo PULUMBARIT
JR.
Market Specialist IV
DA-Office of the
Undersecretary for Fisheries
Department of Agriculture
Manila

Angel ENCARNACION
Assistant Director for Technical
Services
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Bureau
Department of Agriculture
Manila

Jacqueline NICOLAS
Agriculture Assistant
Office of the Agriculture
Attaché
Embassy of the Republic of the
Philippines
Rome

Josyline JAVELOSA
Agriculture Attaché
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Nolet FULGENCIO
Agriculture Attaché
Embassy of the Republic of the
Philippines
Rome

Wennie BERGANIO
Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

POLAND

Head of Delegation
Leszek DYBIEC
Counsellor
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Warszawa

Alternate(s)
Joanna ZURAWSKA-
LAGODA
Chief Specialist
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Warszawa

Marcin RYCHLY
Third Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

PORTUGAL

Head of Delegation
Luís LOPES
Senior Expert
Directorate-General for Natural
Resources, Safety and
Maritime Services
Lisbon

Alternate
Nuno MANANA
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

QATAR

Alternate(s)
Abdulaziz Mohammed AL-
DEHAIMI
Director
Fisheries Wealth Department

Mohammed Mahmoud AL
ABDULLA

Nahed Abdulla AL-KHALAF

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Alternate(s)
Myung-Jin KIM
Director-General
International Cooperation Policy
Bureau
Ministry of Oceans and
Fisheries
Sejong-si

Jeonghwa KIM
Director
Fishing Community and Port
Development Division
Ministry of Oceans and
Fisheries
Sejong-si

Holim LEE Director Korea Maritime Institute Busan	Alternate(s) Ekaterina KAZANTSEVA Head of Division Fleet Department Ports and International Cooperation Federal Agency for Fisheries Ministry of Agriculture Moscow	Alternate(s) Khaled bin Saleh AL SHAYE Advisor Fisheries Department Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture Riyadh
Sukjin LEE Deputy Director International Cooperation Division Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries Sejong-si	Damir BEKYASHEV Head International Fisheries Law Division International Cooperation Department Russian Federal Research I Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography Moscow	Mansour Mubarak S. AL ADI Attaché Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO Rome
Sang Woo PARK Chief Director Korea Maritime Institute Busan Seung Eun LEE Policy Analyst Korea Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Center Seoul	Margarita MIRKUKHINA Division Lead Specialist Russian Federal Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography Moscow	SENEGAL Head of Delegation Ngor NDIAYE Ambassador Permanent Representative to FAO Rome
ROMANIA Head of Delegation Catalina Maria CONSTANTIN Minister Counsellor Deputy Permanent Representative to FAO Rome	Anastasia PODOLYAN Third Secretary Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO Rome	Alternate(s) Marie Gnama BASSENE Minister Counsellor Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO Rome
Alternate(s) Alexandru GHEORGHE Counsellor National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture Bucharest	Anna SHULAEVA Representative Russian Federal Agency for Fishery Ministry of Agriculture Moscow	Diene NDIAYE Director Continental Fisheries Ministry of Fisheries, Maritime and Port Infrastructure Dakar
Ancuta KAZIMIROVIC Public Manager National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture Bucharest	SAUDI ARABIA Head of Delegation Al Shaikhi ALI BIN MOHAMMED Deputy Minister for Animal and Fisheries Resources Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture Riyadh	Madiagne TALL Second Secretary Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO Rome
RUSSIAN FEDERATION Head of Delegation Dilyara RAVILOVA- BOROVIK Minister Counsellor Deputy Permanent Representative to FAO Rome		Mamadou SEYE Chief Adaptation Division Maritime Fisheries Directorate Ministry of Fisheries, Maritime and Port Infrastructure Dakar

Adama FAYE
Directorate of Continental
Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries, Maritime
and Port Infrastructure
Dakar

SEYCHELLES

Head of Delegation
Sheriffa MOREL
Director-General
Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries and the
Blue Economy
Victoria

Alternate(s)
Jan ROBINSON
Chief Executive Officer
Seychelles Fishing Authority
Victoria

Stephanie RADEGONDE
Principal Policy Analyst
Ministry of Fisheries and Blue
Economy
Victoria

SINGAPORE

Head of Delegation
Lim Huan SEIN
Senior Consultant Scientist
Singapore Food Agency
Singapore

Alternate(s)
Melissa WONG
Scientist
Singapore Food Agency
Singapore

Esther GOH
Senior Scientist
Singapore Food Agency
Singapore

SLOVAKIA

Head of Delegation
Jan SUKOVSKY
Senior State Counsellor
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Bratislava

Alternate
Matej HUDEC
Counsellor
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

SLOVENIA

Head of Delegation
Snezana DOLENC
Undersecretary
Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Food
Ljubljana

Alternate
Blaza NAHTIGAL
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

SOUTH AFRICA

Head of Delegation
Nosipho Nausca-Jean JEZILE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Bernacia MULLINS
Director
Small Scale Fisheries
Department of Forestry,
Fisheries and Environment
Pretoria

Sue MIDDLETON
Deputy Director-General
Fisheries Management
Department of Forestry,
Fisheries and Environment
Pretoria

Belemane SEMOLI
Chief Director
Aquaculture Development and
Freshwater Fisheries
Department of Forestry,
Fisheries and Environment
Pretoria

Barend Jacobus LOMBARD
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

SOUTH SUDAN

Head of Delegation
Onyoti Adigo NYIKWEC
Minister for Livestock and
Fisheries
Ministry of Livestock and
Fisheries
Juba

Alternate(s)
Dhanojak OBONGO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Jackson Elisoma MOGGA
Director
Fisheries, Aquaculture and Blue
Economy
Ministry of Livestock and
Fisheries
Juba

SPAIN

Head of Delegation
Isabel ARTIME GARCÍA
Vice Minister for Marine
Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food
Madrid

Alternate(s)
Juan PRIETO GÓMEZ
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Gonzalo EIRIZ GERVÁS
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Laura SÁNCHEZ
HERNÁNDEZ
Deputy Director
Legal Affairs and International
Fisheries Governance
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food
Madrid

Carlos LORENZO AMIGO
Chief
International Fisheries Legal
Affairs and Governance
Service
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food
Madrid

Manuel PABLOS LÓPEZ
Advisory Member
General Secretariat for Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food
Madrid

SRI LANKA

Head of Delegation
Kohularangan
RATNASINGAM
Minister
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Herath Mudiyansele
BUDDHIKA
PRIYADARSHANI HERATH
Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Wilarachchige Melki
CHANDIMAPERERA
Third Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

SUDAN

Head of Delegation
Eiman Musa AHMED FADUL
First Secretary
Embassy of the Republic of the
Sudan
Rome

Alternate
Saadia Elmubarak Ahmed
DAAK
Agricultural Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

SWEDEN

Head of Delegation
Pernilla IVARSSON
Minister Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Esbjorn ANDERSSON
Deputy Department Head
Marine and Water Authority
Göteborg

Lina WAARA
Agricultural Policy Analyst
Jordbruksverket
Jönköping

Rebecka RAMSTEDT
Programme and Policy Officer
Embassy of Sweden
Rome

Ana Carolina MARCIANO
Programme Officer
Stockholm University
Stockholm

Hanna WETTERSTRAND
Programme Officer
Stockholm University
Stockholm

Fredrik ARRHENIUS
Desk Officer

SWITZERLAND

Head of Delegation
Kathrin BACHER
Scientific Officer
Federal Office for Food Safety
and Veterinary Affairs
Federal Department of the
Interior
Berne

Alternate
Rafaella SIMONETTI
Academic Intern
Permanent Mission of
Switzerland to the United
Nations
Rome

THAILAND

Head of Delegation
Thitiporn LAOPRASERT
Deputy Director-General
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Agriculture and
Cooperatives
Bangkok

Alternate(s)
Pathumwadee IMTOUR
Minister (Agriculture)
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Choltisak CHAWPAKNUM
Director
Fisheries Foreign Affairs
Division
Ministry of Agriculture and
Cooperatives
Bangkok

Montakan TAMTIN

Director

Coastal Aquaculture Research
and Development Division

Fisheries Department

Ministry of Agriculture and
Cooperatives

Bangkok

Ratchanok SANGPENCHAN

Counsellor

Deputy Permanent

Representative to FAO

Rome

Supajit SRIARIYAWAT

Counsellor

Alternate Permanent

Representative to FAO

Rome

Aunchalee NONGNOUL

Chief

Technical Group

Inland Aquaculture Research
and Development Division

Fisheries Department

Ministry of Agriculture and
Cooperatives

Bangkok

Ratthanin SANGSAYAN

Acting Chief

Multilateral Cooperation and
International Organization

Group

Fisheries Department

Ministry of Agriculture and
Cooperatives

Bangkok

Jariya JIWAPIBANTANAKIT

Economist, Professional Level

Fisheries Development Policy
and Planning Division

Fisheries Department

Ministry of Agriculture and
Cooperatives

Bangkok

TÜRKIYE

Head of Delegation

Burcu BİLGİN TOPÇU

EU Expert

Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry

Ankara

Alternate(s)

Necip Murat ŞAHİN

Coordinator

Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry

Ankara

Erdoğan GÜNEŞ

Agriculture and Forestry Expert

Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry

Ankara

Esra Fatma DENİZCİ

ÇAKMAK

Fisheries Engineer

Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry

Ankara

Yeşim ASLANOĞLU

Engineer

Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry

Ankara

UGANDA

Head of Delegation

Siragi WAKAABU

Agricultural Attaché

Alternate Permanent

Representative to FAO

Rome

UKRAINE

Head of Delegation

Oleksii NOHAREV

Deputy Director

Organization of Water

Bioresources Use, Aquaculture
and Scientific Support
Department

The State Agency of

Melioration and Fisheries of
Ukraine

Kyiv

Alternate(s)

Tetiana YAKOVLIEVA

Head

Aquaculture Division

Organization of Water

Bioresources Use, Aquaculture
and Scientific Support
Department

The State Agency of

Melioration and Fisheries of
Ukraine

Kyiv

Ihor HONCHARUK

Chief Specialist

International Cooperation
Division

The State Agency of

Melioration and Fisheries of
Ukraine

Kyiv

Ihor MATIIV

Chief Specialist

International Cooperation
Division

The State Agency of

Melioration and Fisheries of
Ukraine

Kyiv

Yuriy GRYNEVETSKY

First Secretary

Alternate Permanent

Representative to FAO

Rome

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Head of Delegation
Ebrahim Abdulla Husain AL
JAMALI
Director
Fisheries Sustainability
Department
Ministry of Climate Change and
Environment
Dubai

Alternate(s)
Dario PINELLO
Head
Fisheries Assessment and
Research Unit
Environment Agency
Abu Dhabi

Hamad Ahmed ALMANSOORI
Head
Aquaculture Unit
Environment Agency
Abu Dhabi

Rumaitha Abdulaziz
ALSHEHHI
Aquaculture Research Assistant
Ministry of Climate Change and
Environment
Dubai

**UNITED KINGDOM OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND
NORTHERN IRELAND**

Head of Delegation
Jess KEEDY
Joint Head
International Fisheries
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Alternate(s)
Chris PIRIE
Policy Lead
UN and International Fisheries
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Alice CARDY
Team Leader
IUU Fishing Team
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Richard PARSONS
Head
Seafood Trade Policy Team
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Matthew WHITTLES
Head
Trade in Seafood
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Antony OVENS
Senior Policy Advisor
Aquaculture
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Freya MITCHISON
Senior Policy Advisor
UN and International Fisheries
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Gerlinde SCHAEFFTER
Senior Policy Advisor
IUU Fishing Team
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Elena SAGE
Policy Advisor
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

Johannes SCHWEIGER
Policy Advisor
UN and International Fisheries
Negotiations
Ministry of Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
London

**UNITED REPUBLIC OF
TANZANIA**

Head of Delegation
Mahmoud Thabit KOMBO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Riziki Silas SHEMDOE
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Livestock and
Fisheries
Dodoma

Lilian J. IBENGWE
Principal Fisheries Officer
Ministry of Livestock and
Fisheries
Mtumba

Jacqueline Boniface MBUYA
Agriculture Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Frank NYABUNDEGE
Managing Director
Tanzania Agricultural
Development Bank
Dar er Salaam

Michael William SANGIWA
Personal Assistant to the
Minister for Livestock and
Fisheries
Ministry of Livestock and
Fisheries
Dodoma

Madeleine JAMES
Representative
Ministry of Livestock and
Fisheries
Dodoma

Omari M. KISATU
Secretary
Ministry of Livestock and
Fisheries
Dodoma

Zuwena M. MTULIA
Secretary
Tanzanian Women Fish
Workers Association
Kigoma

Salum S. HAMED
Director
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Ministry of Blue Economy and
Fisheries
Zanzibar

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Head of Delegation
Mahlet MESFIN
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Ocean, Fisheries and Polar
Affairs
Department of Oceans and
International Environmental
and Scientific Affairs
Washington

Alternate(s)
Angel DROBNICA
Director
Government Affairs and
Fisheries
Aleutian Pribilof Island
Community Development
Association
Alaska

Danielle BLACKLOCK
Director
Aquaculture Office
National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
Washington

Deirdre WARNER-KRAMER
Deputy Director
Office of Marine Conservation
Department of Oceans and
International Environmental
and Scientific Affairs
Washington

Terra LEDERHOUSE
Chief
International Affairs Division
National Marine Fisheries
Service
Washington

Eric REID
General Manager
Cheryl Sexton MCCARTY
Foreign Affairs Specialist
National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
Washington

Stephanie MURPHY
Foreign Affairs Officer

Rebecca WINTERING
Foreign Affairs Officer

Derek PETTY
Liaison Officer
Coast Guard
Washington

Gerry LEAPE
Principal Officer
International Relations
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Philadelphia

Christopher F.M. TATUM
Second Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Natalie BOLL
Political Officer
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Madison ROMO
Intern
United States Mission to the
United Nations Agencies
Rome

Juan SAN NICHOLAS

URUGUAY

Head of Delegation
Alvaro IRAZOQUI
Director
Aquatic Resources
Ministry of Livestock,
Agriculture and Fisheries
Montevideo

Alternate(s)
Ricardo Javier VARELA
FERNÁNDEZ
Embajador
Representante Permanente ante
la FAO
Roma

Mariella CROSTA
RODRÍGUEZ
Ministro Consejero
Representante Permanente
Adjunto ante la FAO
Roma

VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)

Head of Delegation
Prisangel PEREZ
Deputy Minister for Taxation
and Fisheries Processing
Ministry of People's Power for
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Caracas

Alternate(s)
Rony LEIVA
Vice Minister for Primary
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Production
Ministry of People's Power for
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Caracas

Marilyn Giuseppina DI LUCA
SANTAELLA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Maria Verónica LÓPEZ
Director-General
Aquaculture
Ministry of People's Power of
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Caracas

Jeiris GALICIA
Director-General
Industrial Fisheries
Ministry of People's Power of
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Caracas

María Inés NOVAS
Director
Integration and International
Affairs Office
Ministry of People's Power for
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Caracas

Arlis SALAS
Director
Multilateral Affairs of the
Integration Office
Ministry of People's Power for
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Caracas

Giovanna GIANDOLFI
Director
Maritime Artisanal Fishing of
the Vice-Ministry of Primary
Production
Ministry of People's Power for
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Caracas

Erielis PINA
Analyst
Multilateral Affairs of the
Directorate for Integration and
International Affairs
Ministry of People's Power for
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Caracas

Fabiola MENDOZA
Representative
Vice-Ministry of Multilateral
Issues
Ministry of People's Power for
Foreign Affairs
Caracas

Luis Geronimo REYES VERDE
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Johan Enrique VALERO
RAMIREZ
Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Magdalena COROMOTO
SATURNO
Executive Secretary
Permanent Representation of the
Bolivarian Republic of
Venezuela to FAO
Roma

VIET NAM

Head of Delegation
Dinh Luan TRAN
Director General
Directorate of Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Hanoi

Alternate(s)
Thi Phuong Dung NGUYEN
Director
Science, Technology and
International Cooperation
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Hanoi

Thi Trang Nhung NGUYEN
Director
Science and International
Cooperation
Fisheries Resources
Surveillance Department
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Hanoi

Thi Thanh Huong NGO
Officer
Fisheries Resources
Surveillance Department
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Hanoi

YEMEN

Head of Delegation
Mohmood Awad Ali BAHABIB
Fisheries Advisor
Ministry of Agriculture,
Irrigation and Fish Wealth

Alternate
Ahmed Saleh FADAAQ
Manager MCS
Ministry of Agriculture,
Irrigation and Fish Wealth

ZAMBIA

Head of Delegation
Patricia Chisanga KONDOLO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Nkumbu NALWIMBA
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Delight MUTALE
First Secretary Multilateral
Embassy of the Republic of
Zambia
Rome

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

FAROE ISLANDS

Head of Delegation
Janet SKAROSÁ
Advisor
Government of the
Faroe Islands
Tórshavn

Alternate
Olavur DALSGARD
Head of Section
Government of the
Faroe Islands
Tórshavn

**OBSERVERS FROM
FAO MEMBER NATIONS**

ARMENIA

Head of Delegation
Silva HAKOBYAN
Chief Specialist
Fish farming and Beekeeping
Division
Animal Husbandry Department
Ministry of Economy
Yerevan

Alternate
Jon SIMONYAN
Chief Specialist
Fish farming and Beekeeping
Division
Animal Husbandry Department
Ministry of Economy
Yerevan

BELARUS

Head of Delegation
Olga BOREYSHA
Deputy Head
Industrial Livestock Breeding
and Fisheries Activities
Department
Ministry of Agriculture and
Food
Minsk

Alternate(s)
Tatyana KONYUCHKO
Leading Assistant
Bilateral Relations with the CIS
Countries and International
Organizations
Ministry of Agriculture and
Food
Minsk

Vladimir KOSTOUSOV
Deputy Director
Institute of Fisheries
National Academy of Sciences
of Belarus
Minsk

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Head of Delegation
Abdul Azim JAMBOL
Fisheries Officer
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Primary Resources
and Tourism
Bandar Seri Begawan

Alternate(s)
Muhammad Abdul HAKEEM
JULAIHI
Fisheries Officer
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Primary Resources
and Tourism
Bandar Seri Begawan

Zuliza JOLKIFLI
Fisheries Officer
Fisheries Department
Ministry of Primary Resources
and Tourism
Bandar Seri Begawan

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF THE CONGO**

Head of Delegation
Moise MANYABE
ESANGELA
Minister Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate
Marco MUJINGA LIMBOMBE
Second Secretary
Embassy of the Democratic
Republic of Congo
Rome

GEORGIA

Head of Delegation
Marina MGELADZE
Head
Fisheries
Aquaculture and Aquatic
Biodiversity Department
National Environmental
Agency of Georgia
Tbilisi

Alternate
Irine LOMASHVILI
Second Category Senior
Specialist
Biodiversity Division
Biodiversity and Forestry
Department
Ministry of Environmental
Protection and Agriculture
Tbilisi

HAITI

Head of Delegation
Emmanuel CHARLES
Minister Counsellor
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Jean Bony ALEXANDRE
Minister Counsellor
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Rose Stéphanie BOISROND
First Secretary
Embassy of the Republic of
Haiti
Rome

Alternate(s)
Margherita FRATANTONIO
Office of the Permanent
Observer of the Holy See
to FAO
Vatican City

Marilena MONTANARI
Office of the Permanent
Observer of the Holy See
to FAO
Vatican City

Stefania CIGNETTI
Office of the Permanent
Observer of the Holy See
to FAO
Vatican City

IRAQ

Head of Delegation
Ahmed Qasim Naji NAJI
Chief Agricultural Engineer
Ministry of Agriculture
Baghdad

Alternate
Saba Saadi Taha TAHA
Deputy Chief Agricultural
Engineer
Ministry of Agriculture
Baghdad

LEBANON

Head of Delegation
Abbas HAJI HASSAN
Minister for Agriculture
Ministry of Agriculture
Beyrouth

Alternate
Imad LAHOUD
Head
Fisheries and Wildlife
Department
Lebanese Ministry of
Agriculture

MOZAMBIQUE

Head of Delegation
Maria Ascensao PINTO
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters
and Fisheries
Maputo

Alternate(s)
Santos ÁLVARO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Cassamo HASSANE C.
JÚNIOR
Director-General
National Fisheries
Administration
Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters
and Fisheries
Maputo

Paula SANTANA AFONSO
Director-General
National Institute for Fisheries
and Aquaculture
Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters
and Fisheries
Maputo

António Mubango HOGUANE
Director-General
InOM
Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters
and Fisheries
Maputo

Victor ZIMBA
Deputy Director-General
DIPOC
Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters
and Fisheries
Maputo

Sónia MUANDO
Director
GSSA
Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters
and Fisheries
Maputo

Dalepa Stanley Luís DALEPA
Counsellor for Agricultural
Affairs
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Leonid CHIMARIZENE
Administrator
INAMAR
Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters
and Fisheries
Maputo

NAMIBIA

Head of Delegation
Graca Bauleth D'ALMEIDA

Alternate(s)
Olivia SHUULUKA

Rudolph CLOETE

NAURU

Head of Delegation
Karlic AGIR
Catch Data Officer
Oceanic Division
Nauru Fisheries and Marine
Resources Authority
Nauru

NIGER

Head of Delegation
Fatimata CHEIFFOU
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

Alternate
Moustapha ABDOU
Second Secretary
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

SAMOA

Head of Delegation
Moli AMOSA IAKOPO
Principal Fisheries Officer
Ministry of Agriculture and
Fisheries
Honiara

SOMALIA

Head of Delegation
Ahmed Hassan ADAN
Minister for Fisheries and Blue
Economy
Ministry of Fisheries and Blue
Economy
Mogadishu

Alternate(s)
Abdi Cise DIRSHE
Director-General
Ministry of Fisheries and Blue
Economy
Mogadishu

Abdullahi Abdi ADOW
National Project Coordinator
Ministry of Agriculture and
Irrigation
Mogadishu

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Head of Delegation
Ibrahim ALNASER
Counsellor
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Alternate Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Alternate(s)
Marzat ABOOD
Attaché
Alternate Permanent
Representative Designate
to FAO
Rome

Yara BORRELLO
Diplomatic Staff Assistant
Permanent Representation of the
Syrian Arab Republic to FAO
Rome

TOGO

Head of Delegation
Domtani ALI
Director
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Ministry of Maritime Economy,
Fisheries and Coastal
Protection
Lomé

Alternate(s)
Gado Aboudou BOUKAYA
Chief
Livestock Promotion Division
Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Rural
Development
Lomé

P'ham BEIGUE ALFA
Biologist
Acting Chief of Fisheries
Ministry of Maritime Economy,
Fisheries and Coastal
Protection
Lomé

Dodzi Koffi EDZOE
Biologist
Directorate of Fisheries and
Aquaculture
Ministry of Maritime Economy,
Fisheries and Coastal
Protection
Lomé

Koffi Mawoulivi WOMPA
Engineer
Aquaculture
Ministry of Maritime Economy,
Fisheries and Coastal
Protection
Lomé

TONGA

Alternate
Sione Vailala MATOTO

TUNISIA

Head of Delegation
Ali CHEIKH SEBOUI
Director-General
Ministry of Agriculture, Water
Resources, and Fishing
Tunis

Alternate(s)
Haikel HOCHLEF
Director-General
Ministry of Agriculture, Water
Resources and Fishing
Tunis

Nadia KASSRAOUI
First Secretary
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

Mourad BOURELHA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

TUVALU

Head of Delegation
Siouala MALUA
Senior Fisheries Officer
Honiara

UZBEKISTAN

Head of Delegation
Nuriddin KUSHNAZAROV
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent
Representative to FAO
Rome

HOLY SEE

Head of Delegation
Fernando CHICA ARELLANO
Permanent Observer of the
Holy See to FAO
Vatican City

**REPRESENTATIVES
OF UNITED NATIONS,
SPECIALIZED AGENCIES
AND RELATED
ORGANIZATIONS**

**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

Joseph APPIOT
Programme Management
Officer for Marine
New York

**INTERNATIONAL
MARITIME
ORGANIZATION**

Loukas KONTOGIANNIS
Head
Marine Pollution Section
Geneva

**SOUTHWEST INDIAN
OCEAN FISHERIES
COMMISSION**

Vasco SCHMIDT
Fishery Officer for Southern
Africa
Marseille

**UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON TRADE
AND DEVELOPMENT**

Chantal Line CARPENTIER
Head
Trade, Environment, Climate
and Sustainable Development
Geneva

Vincent DOUMEIZEL
Senior Advisor Ocean
Geneva

David VIVAS
Chief of Section
Geneva

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Ludovico FEDON
Agronomist
International Diplomatic
Institute
New York

**UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAMME**

Tatjana HEMA
Coordinator
Mediterranean Action Plan
Athens

**UNITED NATIONS
SECRETARIAT**

Athina CHANAKI

Michele AMERI
Legal Officer
Ocean Affairs and the Law of
the Sea Division
United Nations Office of Legal
Affairs

Peter THOMSON
United Nations
Secretary-General's Special
Envoy for the Ocean
New York

WORLD BANK GROUP

Julia BARRERA
External Affairs Officer
Rome

Xavier F. P. VINCENT
Senior Fisheries Specialist
The World Bank Group Level 2
Suva

Gunilla TEGELSKÄR GREIG
Social Protection and Jobs
Global Practice
Washington

**WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION**

Angela ELLARD
Deputy Director-General
Genève

Jonathan WERNER
Manager
Fish Fund
Genève

Sainabou TAAL
Head
Fisheries Subsidies
Geneva

Pati PYALE
Director
International Economic Affairs
Branch
Foreign Affairs Department
Geneva

**OBSERVERS FROM
INTERGOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

**AFRICAN UNION
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

Bernice MCLEAN
Head
Blue Economy Unit
Midrand

Blessing MAPFUMO

Chamouine SOIDRI
Director of Fisheries

Chantal De Cupertino KOKO
Regional Director
Fisheries and Blue Economy
Midrand

Haladou SALHA
Ambassador
AU Senior Liaison Officer to
the Rome-based UN Agencies
Rome

Hamady DIOP
Support
Midrand

Jemima MAKANDA
Assistant
Nairobi

Linda ETTA
Advisor
Senior Blue Economy
Midrand

Malebo Hellen GUEBAMA
AFFAGA
Fisheries Officer
Midrand

Manuela NASCIMENTO
BANDEIRA
Director of Fisheries
Obinna ANOZIE
Coastal and Marine Ecosystem
Specialist
Nairobi

Simon Olok OWANI
Fisheries Policy Expert
Addis Abeba

Georges H MBA ASSEKO
Head
Blue Economy
Midrand

Kwame MFODWO
Legal Officer
Interafrican Bureau for Animal
Resources
Nairobi

**AGREEMENT ON THE
CONSERVATION OF
ALBATROSSES AND
PETRELS**

Christine BOGLE
Executive Secretary
Battery Point

**BAY OF BENGAL
PROGRAMME**

Krishnan PAULPANDIAN
Director
Chennai

Sri Hari MURUGESAN
United Nations Nippon
Foundation Fellow

**BENGUELA CURRENT
COMMISSION**

Xolela WELLEM
Compliance Manager
Swakopmund

**CARIBBEAN REGIONAL
FISHERIES MECHANISM**

Maren HEADLEY
Programme Manager
Fisheries Management and
Development

Milton HAUGHTON
Executive Director
Belize City

Sanya COMPTON
Research Graduate
Research and Resource
Assessment

**COMMISSION FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF
ANTARCTIC MARINE
LIVING RESOURCES**

David AGNEW
Executive Secretary
North Hobart

**CONFÉRENCE
MINISTERIELLE SUR LA
COOPÉRATION
HALIEUTIQUE ENTRE LES
ÉTATS AFRICAINS
RIVERAINS DE L'OCÉAN
ATLANTIQUE**

Abdennaji LAAMRICH
Head
Cooperation and Information
Systems Department
Rabat

Atsushi ISHIKAWA
Fisheries Expert
Rabat

Taoufik EL KTIRI
Executive Secretary
Rabat

**COMISIÓN TÉCNICA
MIXTA DEL FRENTE
MARÍTIMO**

Ramiro SANCHEZ
Technical Secretary
Montevideo

Zapican BONINO
President
Montevideo

**COMMISSION FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF
SOUTHERN BLUEFIN
TUNA**

Dominic VALLIÈRES
Executive Secretary
Canberra

**FISHERIES COMMITTEE
FOR THE WEST CENTRAL
GULF OF GUINEA**

Antoine Gaston DJHINTO
Docteur en Sciences Techniques
Secrétaire Général du CPCO

INFOPESCA

Federica ROSATO
Consultant
Montevideo

Graciela PEREIRA
RODRIGUEZ
Executive Director
Abidjan

Helga JOSUPEIT
Senior Advisor
Abidjan

**INTER-AMERICAN
TROPICAL TUNA
COMMISSION**

Arnulfo FRANCO
Director
La Jolla

Jean-François PULVENIS
Senior Policy Advisor
La Jolla

**INTERNATIONAL
COUNCIL FOR THE
EXPLORATION OF THE
SEA**

Lotte WORSØE CLAUSEN
Head
Advice Department
Copenhagen

**INTERNATIONAL
MONITORING, CONTROL
AND SURVEILLANCE
(IMCS) NETWORK**

Sarah May LENEL
IMCS Network

**INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC
HALIBUT COMMISSION**

David WILSON
Executive Director
Seattle

**INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION**

Sarah DOLMAN
Bycatch Expert Panel Member
Cambridge

Martha ROJAS URREGO
Executive Secretary
Cambridge

Cecilia PASSADORE
Coordinator
Bycatch
Cambridge

Imogen WEBSTER
Lead
Programme Development
Cambridge

Elizabeth CAMPBELL
Programmes Officer
Cambridge

**INTERNATIONAL
COMMISSION FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF
ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT)**

Camille Jean Pierre MANEL
Executive Secretary
Madrid

**LAKE TANGANYIKA
AUTHORITY**

Sylvain TUSANGA
MUKANGA
Executive Director
Bujumbura

Nyakorema Beatrice MARWA
Director
Fisheries
Bujumbura

**NETWORK OF
AQUACULTURE CENTRES
IN ASIA AND PACIFIC**

Eduardo M. LEAÑO
Director-General
Bangkok

**NORTH ATLANTIC
MARINE MAMMAL
COMMISSION**

Geneviève DESPORTES
General Secretary
Tromsø

**NORTH ATLANTIC
SALMON CONSERVATION
ORGANIZATION**

Emma HATFIELD
Secretary
Edinburgh

**NORTHEAST ATLANTIC
FISHERIES COMMISSION**

Darius CAMPBELL
Secretary
London

**NORTH PACIFIC
ANADROMOUS FISH
COMMISSION**

Yoshikiyo KONDO
Executive Director
Vancouver

**NORTHWEST ATLANTIC
FISHERIES
ORGANIZATION**

Brynhildur
BENEDIKTSDÓTTIR
Executive Secretary
Halifax

**NORTH PACIFIC
FISHERIES COMMISSION**

Robert DAY
Executive Secretary
Tokyo

**ORGANIZACIÓN DEL
SECTOR PESQUERO Y
ACUÍCOLA DEL ISTMO
CENTROAMERICANO**

Bernal Alberto CHAVARRIA-
VALVERDE
Coordinator
International Fisheries Policy
and Management
La Libertad

**ORGANIZATION FOR
ECONOMIC
COOPERATION AND
DEVELOPMENT**

Claire DELPEUCH
Head of Fisheries and
Aquaculture Unit

Will SYMES
Fisheries Policy Analyst

**ORGANIZATION OF
AMERICAN STATES**

Joyce IKWAPUT NYEKO
Deputy Executive Director
Lake Edward and Albert
Fisheries and Aquaculture
Organization
Entebbe

Robert KAYANDA
Director
Fisheries Resource Monitoring
and Research
Jinja

**PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM
FISHERIES AGENCY**

Pio MANOA
Deputy Director-General
Honiara

Sieni Manumatavi TUPOU
ROOSEN
Director-General
Honiara

**REGIONAL COMMISSION
OF FISHERIES OF GULF
OF GUINEA**

Emmanuel Sabuni KASREKA
Executive Secretary
Libreville

**SOUTH PACIFIC
REGIONAL FISHERIES
MANAGEMENT
ORGANISATION**

Craig LOVERIDGE
Executive Director
Wellington

**SOUTHEAST ASIAN
FISHERIES
DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

Pattaratjit
KAEWNURATCHADASORN
Senior Policy Officer
Bangkok

Worawit WANCHANA
Policy and Program Coordinator
Bangkok

Suttinee
LIMTHAMMAHISORN
Secretary-General
Bangkok

**SOUTHERN INDIAN
OCEAN FISHERIES
AGREEMENT**

Thierry CLOT
Executive Secretary
Saint-Denis

**SUB-REGIONAL
FISHERIES COMMISSION**

Mouhamadou Makhtar SECK
Chief
Financial and Accounting
Services
Dakar

**SECRETARIAT OF THE
PACIFIC COMMUNITY**

Graham PILLING
Deputy Director
Fisheries, Aquaculture and
Marine Ecosystems Division
Noumea

Watisoni LALAVANUA
Community-Based Fisheries
Advisor
Noumea

**SOUTH EAST ATLANTIC
FISHERIES
ORGANISATION**

Elizabeth VOGES
Executive Secretary
Swakopmund

**WESTERN AND CENTRAL
PACIFIC FISHERIES
COMMISSION**

Rhea MOSS-CHRISTIAN
Executive Director
Kolonias

**WORLD FISH CENTER
(WFC)**

Delvis FORTES
Senior Fisheries Officer
Nairobi

Jacinta Wanjiku KURIA
Project Office
Blue Economy
Midrand

Jörn SCHMIDT
Director
Sustainable Aquatic Food
Systems
Batu Maung

Rodrick Kundu WAKUKHA
Secretary
Fisheries and Blue Economy
Nairobi

**OBSERVERS FROM
NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

**AFRICAN
CONFEDERATION OF
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Project Officer
Marine and Fresh Water
Fisheries Program
M'bour

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Advocacy Director
Bristol

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Bristol

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Maritime Policy
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Policy and Initiatives
Washington

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Washington

Ariadna BARTRA BARON
International Policy Associate
Washington

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Laura DEL CASTILLO-
MUNERA
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Sustainable Development Goals
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Venugopalan
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Programme Manager
Chennai

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Programme Officer
Chennai

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FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**

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Working Group on Fisheries
Rome

Carsten PEDERSEN
IPC member

Chief Gary Duane HARRISON
Member
Working Group on Fisheries
Rome

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Rome

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WFFP

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Rome

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Rome

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Working Group on Fisheries
Rome

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WIJETHUNGE
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Rome

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Member
Working Group on Fisheries
Rome

Velia LUCIDI
Facilitator
Working Group on Fisheries
Rome

Giulia LECCHI
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Working Group on Fisheries
Rome

Elhadji Daouda NDIAYE
Member
Working Group on Fisheries
Rome

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John BURTON
Board Member
London

Maia PERRAUDEAU
Consultant
London

**INTERNATIONAL
SEAFOOD
SUSTAINABILITY
FOUNDATION**

Hilario MURUA
Senior Scientist
Washington

**INTERNATIONAL OCEAN
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Managing Director
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Sigrid LUEBER
Focal Point
Waedenswil

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FOR CONSERVATION OF
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Fisheries Expert Group
Gland

Despina SYMONS
Coordinator of Fisheries Expert
Group and Director of the
European Bureau for
Conservation and
Development
Gland

Serge Michel GARCIA
Member
Fisheries Expert Group
Gland

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ARISTIN
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London

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Directorate General Capture
Fisheries
Ministry of Marine Affairs and
Fisheries
Jakarta

OCEANA

Sonia SHARAN
Senior Manager
Impact and Economics
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Sustainable Fisheries and Ocean
Policies
Washington

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Officer
Washington

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VANDEVELDE
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Washington

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Senior Manager
Ending Illegal Fishing
International Fisheries
Washington

Andrew CLAYTON
Project Director
International Fisheries
Washington

Daniel STEADMAN
Officer
International Fisheries
Washington

Elaine YOUNG
Officer
Ending Illegal Fishing
Washington

STOP ILLEGAL FISHING

Sandra DAVIES
Technical Expert
Gaborone

Maya BERGH
Intern
Gaborone

TOO BIG TO IGNORE

Svein JENTOFT
Professor Emeritus
Bangkok

Ratana CHUENPAGDEE
Global Director
Bangkok

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FERREIRA
Researcher
Joaquim Nabuco Foundation
Ministry of Education
Brasilia

TRYGG MAT TRACKING

Gareth JOHNSTONE
Executive Director
Oslo

**THE NATURE
CONSERVANCY**

Robert JONES
Global Director
Aquatic Food Systems
Arlington

Sui Chian PHANG
Deputy Director
Freshwater Fisheries
Arlington

Emily LANGLEY
Fisheries Policy Advisor
Arlington

Grace HOWE
Senior Associate
Fisheries Policy
Arlington

**WORLD AQUACULTURE
SOCIETY**

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**WORLDWIDE FUND FOR
NATURE**

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Senior Policy Advisor
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Director
Marine Programme
Gland

Alison CROSS
Director
Fishery Sustainability
Gland

Audrey CHEVALIER
Ocean Program Manager
French Guiana
Cayenne

Marina GOMEI
Manager
Coastal Communities Initiative
Gland

Alfred Lee COOK JR
Manager
Western and Central Pacific
Tuna Programme
Gland

Robin DAVIES
Sustainable Fisheries Lead
Gland

Miarisoa Lalaina
RAKOTONAIVO
Fisheries Coordinator
WWF Madagascar
Antananarivo

**WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

Alfred DEGEMMIS
Director
International Policy
New York

S. Hoyt PECKHAM
Director
Community Fisheries
New York

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Chairperson: Mr Mohammed Ahmed Alghamdi (Saudi Arabia)
First Vice-Chairperson: Mr James Brown (New Zealand)
Vice-Chairpersons: Chile, Malaysia, Norway, Senegal and United States of America

DRAFTING COMMITTEE

The Committee elected Ms Emma Hatcher (Australia) as Chairperson of the Drafting Committee, with the following membership: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Gabon, India, Japan, Kuwait, Marshall Islands, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Russian Federation, Spain, Sudan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

FAO FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE DIVISION

Assistant Director-General and Director: Mr Manuel Barange

SECRETARIAT

Secretary: Ms Alice McDonald
Drafting Committee: Mr Matthew Camilleri

List of documents

COFI/2024/1/Rev.1	Provisional Agenda
COFI/2024/2	State of the world fisheries and aquaculture, progress in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 indicators under FAO custodianship
COFI/2024/3	Decisions and recommendations of the Twelfth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, 16-19 May 2023
COFI/2024/4	Decisions and recommendations of the Nineteenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, 11-15 September 2023
COFI/2024/5	Decisions and recommendations of the First Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, 15-18 January 2024
COFI/2024/6	Integrated water resources management in fisheries and aquaculture (WCP)
COFI/2024/7	The role of fisheries and aquaculture in food security and nutrition
COFI/2024/8	Impact of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture, and aquatic foods as a climate solution
COFI/2024/9	The implications for fisheries and aquaculture of global biodiversity frameworks and agreements
COFI/2024/10/Rev.2	Marine plastic pollution and Fisheries and Aquaculture
COFI/2024/11	FAO's Programme of Work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework
COFI/2024/12	Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the Committee on Fisheries: A progress Report of MYPOW 2022-2025 and a Draft MYPOW 2024-2027 (WCP)
COFI/2024/13	Towards coordinated and effective implementation of international instruments, mechanisms and tools to combat IUU fishing
COFI/2024/INF/1/Rev.1	Provisional timetable
COFI/2024/INF/2/Rev.3	Provisional list of documents
COFI/2024/INF/3	Provisional list of participants
COFI/2024/INF/4	Statement by the Director-General

COFI/2024/INF/5/Rev.1	Annotations to the Provisional Agenda
COFI/2024/INF/6	Report of the Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, 5-9 September 2022
COFI/2024/INF/7	Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture
COFI/2024/INF/8	Report of the Twelfth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, 16-19 May 2023
COFI/2024/INF/9	Report of the Nineteenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, 11-15 September 2023
COFI/2024/INF/10	Report of the First Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, 15-19 January 2024
COFI/2024/INF/11	Statement of Competence and Voting Rights submitted by the European Union and its Member States
COFI/2024/INF/12	Safety at sea in the fishing industry
COFI/2024/INF/13	Stocktaking of the 10 th anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication
COFI/2024/INF/14/Rev.1	Social protection for Blue Transformation
COFI/2024/INF/15	A regional framework among Regional Fishery Bodies: Scaling up cooperation and coordination towards sustainable fisheries
COFI/2024/INF/17	Blue Transformation actions on climate resilient aquatic food systems - Supporting the FAO Strategy on Climate Change
COFI/2024/INF/18	Bioeconomy for sustainable food and agriculture
COFI/2024/INF/19	Progress in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related instruments
COFI/2024/INF/20	Fisheries and aquaculture within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14)

**Opening statement by Dr Qu Dongyu
FAO Director-General**

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The FAO Committee on Fisheries – COFI – is the largest global gathering of policymakers, experts and partners in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

An increasingly expanding global aquaculture sector is driving the supply of fish and fishery products to new records. In 2022 aquaculture overtook capture fisheries as the main supplier of aquatic (animal) foods. Ensuring the expansion of the sustainable aquaculture is of fundamental importance for consumers. And policymakers must ensure that national programmes, legal frameworks, guidelines and standards are conducive to such development, including on biosecurity.

The fisheries and aquaculture sector faces many challenges, but also huge opportunities – many of which you will be discussing this week. Challenges include the important of supporting the sustainable growth of aquaculture, especially in food deficit regions, as well as the urgent need for effective fisheries management, and the consequent need to turn around unsustainable practices: for example, too many commercial stocks in capture fisheries are being harvested beyond safe biological levels.

But these challenges also provide an enormous opportunity of developing the value chains of aquatic products, and for strengthening implementation of biodiversity agreements, of addressing the issue of plastic pollution, of ensuring integrated water resources management, and for mitigating the impacts of the climate crisis, among others.

On the margins of this session, we will also be marking the 10th anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-Scale Fisheries. This is of particular relevance as the livelihoods of 600 million people depend on fisheries and aquaculture, most of them in the small-scale sector.

We are just six years away from the deadline of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which fisheries and oceans play an important role. We have much work to do, and we must act now.

At the 3rd UN Oceans Conference in 2024, SDG14 will be under the spotlight. FAO is custodian of 4 SDG14 indicators. Although progress has been made on some targets, others are lagging behind. To close this gap, we need policies, programmes and investments that ensure future generations can benefit from sustainable and nutritious aquatic foods.

We already have a number of important international instruments to support our efforts, including: the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture, which will further assist in mobilizing the needed resources and technical expertise, as well as supporting FAO's Blue Transformation Initiative; the FAO Port State Measures Agreement, and the newly established COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, can all further strengthen our work in addressing challenges and turning them into opportunities for the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Finally, I also wish to underline the importance of value chains, trade and markets. International trade is growing, with exports reaching a record USD 195 billion in 2022, up 19 percent from pre-pandemic levels.

Exports are particularly important for low- and middle-income countries, for whom net export revenues of aquatic products exceeded that of all other agricultural commodities combined. For this reason, we need agrifood trading systems that are considerate of food security objectives. We need to continue emphasizing the importance of a free, non-destructive and reliable trading system.

Dear colleagues,

Let us continue to work together in an efficient, effective and coherent manner to make aquatic food systems a central part of the transformation of global agrifood systems as we progress towards the Four Betters – *better production, better nutrition, a better environment* and a *better life* – leaving no one behind.

Thank you.

MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK (MYPOW) OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES 2024–2027

I. OVERALL OBJECTIVES FOR THE COMMITTEE

1. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) shall:⁹
 - a) review the programme of work of FAO in the field of fisheries and aquaculture and their implementation;
 - b) conduct periodic general reviews of the world situation in fisheries and aquaculture, as well as challenges of an international character, and appraise them and their possible solutions with a view to concerted action by countries, FAO, and other intergovernmental bodies;
 - c) review specific matters relating to fisheries and aquaculture referred to the Committee by the FAO Conference, Council, or the Director-General, or placed by the Committee on its agenda at the request of a Member under the Rules of Procedure of the Committee, and make recommendations as appropriate;
 - d) consider the importance of preparing and submitting to Members an international convention under Article XIV of the Constitution to ensure effective international cooperation and consultation in fisheries and aquaculture on a global scale; and
 - e) report to the Council or advise the Director-General, as appropriate, on matters considered by the Committee.

II. RESULTS FOR 2022–2025

A. Review of the World Situation in Fisheries and Aquaculture

2. Result:

The FAO Conference, Council, and international community, as appropriate, are provided with updated information and specific guidance on the global situation in fisheries and aquaculture, and in relation to the specific issues of significance addressed during the planned Committee sessions.
3. Indicators and targets:

Clear, precise, and consensual recommendations based on updated information on the global situation in fisheries and aquaculture are presented to the Conference and Council as a solid basis for its guidance and decision.
4. Output:

Clear, precise and consensual recommendations are favourably considered by the Conference and the Council for its recommendations and decisions.
5. Activities:

⁹ Rule XXX.6, General Rules of the Organization.

The Committee is informed of the current global state of fisheries and aquaculture, including the report on the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA).

Specific issues of current importance are also covered during the scheduled Committee sessions.

6. Working methods:

SOFIA and pertinent documents are prepared in advance to provide a solid basis for discussion at the Committee.

B. Strategy and Priority Setting and Budget Planning

7. Result:

The Committee's decisions and recommendations provide a solid basis for the recommendations and decisions of the Conference and Council on strategy, priorities, programmes, and budget for the Organization.

8. Indicators and targets:

- a) The Committee promotes the FAO's Questionnaire on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) to improve response rates.
- b) Members respond to the FAO Questionnaire on the implementation of the Code and provide relevant information on fisheries and aquaculture for FAO via the Committee and its Sub-Committees.
- c) Clear and specific recommendations are made by the Committee to the Council regarding the strategies, priorities, programmes and budget for fisheries and aquaculture.
- d) The Committee's recommendations made on the Strategic Framework, the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme of Work and Budget are reflected in the Council Report.

9. Outputs:

The report of the Committee that provides clear, precise and consensual recommendations for the Council on sectoral strategies, priorities, programmes and budgets.

10. Activities:

- a) Review decisions and recommendations from the Sub-Committees on Fish Trade, Aquaculture, and Fisheries Management, statutory bodies and other relevant organs or institutions.
- b) Review advice from the Regional Conferences in the field of fisheries and aquaculture.
- c) Review the implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget in fisheries and aquaculture.
- d) Develop recommendations on the strategies, priorities, programmes and budget in fisheries and aquaculture.

11. Working methods:

- a) Close consultation with the Chairperson and other Bureau Members.
- b) Close collaboration with relevant FAO Divisions, Centres and Offices.
- c) Liaise with the Sub-Committees on Fish Trade, Aquaculture, Fisheries Management, and other statutory bodies.
- d) Liaise with the Finance Committee on financial and budgetary matters.

- e) Liaise with the Programme Committee on strategy and priority matters.
- f) Report the outcome of the Committee on programme and budgetary matters to the Council appropriately.

C. Advice on Global Policy and Regulatory Matters

12. Results:

The Committee's decisions and recommendations provide a solid basis for the Conference's recommendations and decisions on global policy and regulatory matters.

13. Indicators and targets:

- a) Members obtain value from the deliberations of the Committee, using the advice and recommendations to guide domestic actions and policies as reported by FAO.
- b) Clear and specific recommendations are made by the Committee to the Conference regarding global policy and regulatory matters in its areas of mandate.
- c) The Committee's recommendations made on global policy and regulatory matters are reflected in the Conference Report.

14. Output:

The report of the Committee provides clear, precise and consensual recommendations for the Conference on policy and regulatory frameworks or instruments.

15. Activities:

- a) Review the status of relevant international instruments in areas of competence of the Committee.
- b) Consider possible solutions with a view to support concerted action by Members themselves or collectively through FAO and other relevant bodies in areas of competence for the Committee.
- c) Ensure that aquatic food systems are consistently taken into consideration by other areas in FAO, including other governing bodies.

16. Working methods:

Report the outcomes of the Committee on global policy and regulatory issues to the Conference appropriately.

III. EFFECTIVE WORK PLANNING OF THE COMMITTEE

17. Result:

The Committee works effectively and efficiently in an action-oriented, inclusive way.

18. Indicators and targets:

- a) The focused agendas are properly elaborated.
- b) The COFI documents, including SOFIA, are to be uploaded on the COFI website as soon as they are available in all FAO languages, and in any case at least four weeks before the session commences.
- c) The sessions are conducted in an efficient and effective manner.
- d) MYPOW is appropriately implemented.

- e) Reports are concise and contain specific action-oriented recommendations to both the Council and the Conference.

19. Outputs:

- a) Focused agendas and concise reports containing specific action-oriented recommendations to both the Council and the Conference.
- b) Report published only electronically.
- c) COFI documents, including SOFIA, made available according to agreed schedules.
- d) Progress reports on MYPOW and draft MYPOWs prepared and made available for the following four years.

20. Activities:

- a) Review and apply good practices in the running of the Committee and its Sub-Committees.
- b) Formulate focused agendas in close consultation with the Bureau in a timely manner
- c) Prepare results-oriented COFI documents, including SOFIA, and make them available in a timely manner.
- d) Consider ways to improve the conduct of sessions more efficiently and effectively, including more efficient use of the time available, and the elaboration of new intersessional working methods.
- e) Recognizing the importance and usefulness of side events facilitates more focused and coordinated side events in line with key issues addressed in the main sessions.
- f) Facilitate further coordination and collaboration with Sub-Committees and other Technical Committees.
- g) Pay continued attention to effective arrangements for drafting the final reports.

IV. WORKING METHODS

21. The Committee collaborates with statutory and other bodies under FAO auspices, liaises with the Programme Committee on strategy and priority matters, and with the Finance Committee on financial and budgetary matters, as well as other relevant FAO Governing Bodies.
22. The Committee liaises with other international organizations active in the areas of fisheries and aquaculture.
23. The Committee undertakes regular intersessional activities facilitated by the Chairperson and the Bureau with support from the Secretariat. Liaison among the Bureaus of the Committee and the Sub-Committees is also further strengthened.
24. It encourages and facilitates the participation of observers, including civil society organizations.
25. The Chairperson liaises with FAO through the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division.

The Thirty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held in Rome, Italy, from 8 to 12 July 2024. This is a report of the Session reflecting the discussions which took place and containing all recommendations and decisions taken by the Committee. A synopsis of the outcome of the Session is presented in the abstract and all supplementary information is included in the appendices.

ISBN 978-92-5-139111-2 ISSN 2070-6987



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CD2423EN/1/09.24