

166th Session of the Council
Written Correspondence Procedure – inputs from Members - English version
Item 7.2 - Report of the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries

Member Name	Comments
<p>Zimbabwe – Member (Wed 14/04/2021 09:37)</p>	<p>Zimbabwe expresses its appreciation for the document which highlights the importance of fisheries, particularly in the lives of the world’s poorest populations. Fisheries are a source of much needed nutritious food as well as a source of employment. The document is rich in observations, plans, solutions and recommendations to promote sustainable, organised, registered and legal fishing on both small and large scales. Zimbabwe welcomes the Committee’s request for increased support for small scale and artisanal fisheries and promoting the importance of small scale and artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in relevant countries during the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2022.</p> <p>Zimbabwe commends the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) on its work in achieving sustainable fisheries and aquaculture through collaborative approaches with relevant stakeholders that include Member States, regional organisations, civil organisations and other initiatives. The country is a beneficiary of this invaluable cooperation. Recently, with the support of FAO, Zimbabwe launched a project for small scale fisheries to enhance community resilience and the sustainability of small-scale fisheries for communities around Lake Kariba and the Zambezi River. The ecosystem-based management project aims to utilise inland fisheries resources for enhanced food security in the country. The project is set to contribute towards poverty reduction at the grassroots level and plays a critical role in generating household incomes and contributing to food and nutrition security. Zimbabwe appreciates the technical support it is receiving from the FAO.</p> <p>Zimbabwe supports the recommendations to grow blue economies in countries with this potential. It further supports initiatives to overcome challenges faced in the fisheries sector, including the reduction and elimination of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.</p> <p>Zimbabwe supports and endorses the findings and recommendations of the 34th Committee on Fisheries as outlined in document C 2021/23.</p>
<p>Dominican Republic – Member (Wed 14/04/2021 16:00)</p>	<p>The Dominican Republic welcomes the report.</p> <p>We applaud FAO’s work in producing the 2020 edition of The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA), which took account of the worrying effects of COVID-19 on this sector.</p> <p>In relation to the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in December 2020 the Council of Ministers of OSPESCA approved the Regional Strategy for Blue Growth in SICA (Central American Integration System) countries. This aims to lay foundations for growth based on the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, thus contributing to an improvement of the quality of life, while also aligning with the 2030 Agenda.</p>

	<p>The Dominican Republic reiterates its recognition and support for small-scale and artisanal fisheries, as reflected in the efforts being made at both the national and regional levels to implement the SSF Guidelines.</p> <p>In this regard, we express our support for the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022, to draw international attention to the important role that small-scale fishers, fish farmers and fish workers play in food security and nutrition.</p> <p>We recognize as priorities the formulation of sustainable rural development projects based on fishery production and trade, which create jobs in this important sector of the economy.</p> <p>We are also grateful for the technical assistance received from FAO to develop policies to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.</p> <p>We commend FAO for its work on the impact of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture; and we urge it to continue supporting actions to promote countries' adaptation, resilience and mitigation, particularly in the case of Small Island Developing States.</p>
<p>The United States of America – Member (Wed 14/04/2021 16:56)</p>	<p>Fisheries and aquaculture are a vital source of food and nutrition in the diets of many around the world - supplying both critical protein and high-quality nutrition to billions around the world. This is particularly true in small scale and artisanal fisheries. They are crucial components in sustainable development: key to food security, livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, supporting trade and more, throughout the world. The disruptions we have all seen from COVID-19 have only underscored this point.</p> <p>They also play an important role in developing climate-resilient food systems. In particular, aquaculture with sustainable inputs can be both an additional source of seafood to strengthen nutrition and food security and a tool for economic diversification in coastal communities.</p> <p>Twenty-five years after its adoption, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries remains the gold standard for sustainably managing our fisheries and aquaculture sectors and supporting sustainable development.</p> <p>To that end, the United States welcomes the COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, which sets a clear path for our next 25 years of collaborative efforts under the Code for fisheries and aquaculture, while highlighting the sector's essential contributions in the fight against poverty, hunger and all forms of malnutrition.</p> <p>At COFI, the United States highlighted key priorities for the Programme of Work and Strategic Framework, notably that seafood is a critical part of food security, nutrition, and sustainable development and urged FAO to further incorporate fisheries and aquaculture issues into its internal and external-facing work on food security and nutrition.</p> <p>In particular, we want to reiterate COFI's call on FAO and COFI Members, consistent with the COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, for the UN Food Systems Summit to recognize the unique role of fisheries and aquaculture in the global food system and promote actions to safeguard the important contributions of fisheries and aquaculture to global food security.</p> <p>Fisheries and aquaculture products represent a significant portion of animal protein consumed by humans globally (up to 17 percent in 2015, according to the FAO), and this percentage continues to rise. Although some similarities to agriculture exist, there are significant differences relative to both the challenges and the solutions to ensuring that the</p>

	<p>important contributions of fisheries and aquaculture to global food security continue in the future. These differences merit consideration and specific action in the context of the Summit.</p> <p>Finally, the United States strongly supports the initiation of an open, transparent, and information-driven process to continue to explore the proposal for creating an additional COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management through a Friends of the Chair process, organized through COFI Bureau.</p> <p><u>2021-23 Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors</u></p> <p>We listened carefully to members’ discussions in the 34th Committee on Fisheries on the biodiversity strategy and its use of geographical indications. Members were concerned that GIs continue to be listed as a method of ensuring biodiversity despite a lack of evidence and despite conclusions from technical and expert meetings that expressed the same.</p> <p>Paragraph 17 (b) of the Report of the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries expressed concerns with the proposed Action Plan; in particular, over actions included in geographical indications and market-oriented biosecurity.</p> <p>Additionally, following the 34th COFI, in two other subsequent documents, the 130th Programme Committee (PC 130/7 Inf. Note 1) in paragraph 10 (d) and the Report of the First Part of the Second Meeting of the Group of National Focal Points for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA/NFP-BFA-2.1/21/Report) in paragraph 19 (d) -- highlighted that there is no peer-reviewed evidence demonstrating that geographical indications contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.</p> <p>United States requests FAO to explain why on the conclusions of the Group of National Focal Points for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture and COFI Member requests that the four references to “geographic indications” in FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors on page 24 in FAO Core Function 7 be addressed, yet these references remained in the version of this FAO strategy that was presented to Members of the Programme Committee.</p>
<p>Argentina – Member (Wed 14/04/2021 16:58)</p>	<p>Argentina participated actively in the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and welcomed its conclusions.</p> <p>In particular, Argentina stresses that in future “State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture” (SOFIA) reports, FAO should consider additional information and use improved methodology in order to better reflect the regional status of fish stocks, recognizing initiatives to restore stocks and increase the number of stocks under evaluation, without undermining the integrity of the chronological series. Argentina is also pleased that the Committee recommended conducting a more robust and participatory peer review process and distributing the SOFIA report to Members well before its publication.</p> <p>Argentina also reaffirms its observations regarding the recommendations set out in various COFI working documentations regarding the fact that all Flag States, Port States, Coastal States and Market States must ratify and implement the Port State Measures Agreement to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing (PSMA Agreement), clarifying that the decision over whether or not to ratify an international instrument</p>

is a sovereign decision of each State and the inclusion of prescriptive expressions must be avoided for this reason. We therefore welcome the wording of section 67 of the final report.

However, Argentina once again feels it necessary to state that no reference should be made to the “blue economy” – a term used in various documents produced by COFI and even FAO – since no international agreements are in place regarding this concept and it is not specifically referred to in the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, Argentina is committed to continue addressing aspects of “sustainable and inclusive ocean economies”. This is the agreed term used in the Declaration on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture adopted by the relevant COFI Session. It has now been incorporated throughout the text of the Committee’s final report to replace the expression to which our country objects. Under this agenda item, Argentina also wishes to express its commitment to establishing rules to remove fisheries subsidies within the WTO framework, submitting proposals at regional level and also cooperating with countries outside the region. Argentina also welcomes and appreciates the support and technical advice that FAO has provided to negotiations on fisheries subsidies in the WTO and hopes that an agreement can be reached soon.

With regard to the recommendation on food losses and waste, we note that this does not necessarily depend on the length of the chain, but rather on whether good practices are (or are not) applied. We therefore suggest encouraging the strengthening of all chains, regardless of their length, in order to encourage the production and supply of healthy and nutritious food from areas further away from the main centres of consumption.

However, Argentina agrees with COFI that any trade measures – including import restrictions, tariff increases, the establishment of quotas or sanitary measures – must be compatible with WTO rules. Such measures must not be applied in a way that would amount to a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. In particular, sanitary measures must comply with the regulations laid down in the WTO "Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures". They must be based on supporting scientific evidence and not arbitrarily or unjustifiably discriminate between Members where identical or similar conditions prevail. It should also be recalled that bound tariff changes must respect “Modification of Schedules” procedures laid down in the GATT Agreement.

Regarding the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022), Argentina reiterates its support for the initiative and notes that it is working towards drawing up an agenda of events to increase recognition for the sector and expand on work with fishing communities, in cooperation with the Office for Coordination of Artisanal Fisheries of the Department of Family Farming (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries). We also call on all Members to actively participate in its development through in-kind and financial contributions.

Combating IUU fishing must be a priority for all in order to ensure the proper conservation of fishery resources. Argentina is committed to fighting this scourge. Our country therefore welcomes the smart and relevant “Other effective area-based conservation measures” (OECM) designation and underscores the fundamental role of fisheries in conserving ocean biodiversity and contributing to human well-being in a much broader way than Marine Protected Areas.

The concept of OECM as defined in the 2018 COP/CBD represents an important opportunity for countries with sound fishery management practices such as Argentina, which have reliably established extensive areas closed to fishing

	<p>through strict and proven controls, with the aim of protecting biological processes that are important for ensuring the sustainability of stocks that constitute our main fishery resources in order to comply with commitments laid down in relation to Aichi Target 11 and SDG 14.5.</p> <p>With these comments, Argentina asks the Council to endorse the conclusions and recommendations made by the Committee on Fisheries in its 34th Session.</p>
<p>Australia – Member (Wed 14/04/2021 17:09)</p>	<p>Australia highlights the significance of fisheries issues for the South West Pacific Region, in particular the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and we welcome the FAO’s on-going commitment to fisheries matters. We note the findings and recommendations of the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), and we respectfully highlight the following points:</p> <p>We welcome the endorsement of the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture and support the calls, consistent with this Declaration, to ensure fisheries and aquaculture are fully integrated into the preparations for the UN Food Systems Summit.</p> <p>We underline the importance of FAO continuing to support Members in the framework of negotiations on fisheries subsidies carried out in the World Trade Organization (WTO).</p> <p>We highlight the importance of the FAO continuing to work closely with Pacific SIDS in building their statistical capacity and delivery of data, and in their Monitoring, Control and Surveillance efforts, including in implementation of Port State Measures and in the management of high seas transshipment.</p> <p>With regard to the proposal to establish a COFI Sub-committee on Fisheries Management:</p> <p>Australia welcomes further transparent and inclusive discussion on the proposal to establish a sub-committee under the leadership of the Chairperson of COFI.</p> <p>We consider that it will be particularly important to explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What global fisheries issues would be best addressed at the international level, as opposed to what are regional issues or national issues. • How issues of participation can be addressed, noting barriers of attendance (for both physical and virtual meetings) especially for Pacific Island countries. <p>Budgetary implications.</p>
<p>European Union – Member (Wed 14/04/2021 23:10)</p>	<p>The EU welcomes the report of the 34th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), in which the EU actively participated, promoting a post-COVID 19 recovery for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors based on enhanced resilience and sustainability.</p> <p>Given the circumstances, in particular the fact that this was the first virtual COFI meeting, the EU and its Member States appreciate positively the outcome of the COFI session as reflected in its meeting report, and are resolutely engaged in the follow-up work for the achievement of its decisions.</p> <p>However, the EU and its Member States take this opportunity to share their frustration that the time devoted to discussing substantial issues was insufficient in view of their importance and did not allow the appropriate involvement</p>

	<p>of observers. We hope that these concerns will be taken into account in the organisation of the 35th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, regardless of its format.</p> <p>Moreover, the EU and its Member States wish to express one more time their disappointment with the late availability of the COFI session documents, although the virtual nature of the meeting made them even more necessary for an adequate preparation. We consider that this has seriously impeded the preparation of the EU and its Member States, as well as other delegations. In our view, this has also been detrimental to the quality of the discussion on certain agenda items.</p> <p>We note that it is intended to hold the next session of the COFI from 5 to 9 September 2022, i.e. right after the month of August, which, for many delegations, coincides with reduced availability. Considering this, we believe that even if respected by FAO, the four weeks' deadline for circulating the COFI documents would not be enough for allowing many COFI members to adequately prepare for the meeting, be it in virtual or in-person mode. Therefore, we reiterate our wish to the FAO Secretariat to make available a detailed draft provisional agenda of the COFI meeting at least 8 weeks before the COFI 35 Session.</p> <p>To summarise, although we fully subscribe to the content of the COFI 34 report and commit to supporting the implementation of its decisions, and we urge FAO to pay particular attention to improve the preparation of future COFI discussions.</p>
<p>Japan – Member (Thu 15/04/2021 14:32)</p>	<p>Japan welcomes the reports from the Technical Committees. Nonetheless, we would like to make the following comments.</p> <p>Report of the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japan would like to express its sincere appreciation to FAO, especially the Fisheries division, and its Members for their efforts and cooperation in the preparation and organization of COFI 34 and welcomes good results of COFI 34 toward sustainable use of fishery resources. Japan however, would also like to draw the attention of the Council that the virtual format of COFI 34 was quite challenging and exposed Members to difficult situations with multiple problems. Especially, East Asian countries, including Japan, faced a lot of difficulties due to the irrelevant meeting arrangement without considering the time difference. Japan would therefore cordially request that substantial improvements be introduced to future sessions, if organized virtually, to avoid repeating such a severe situation we had at COFI 34. • Moreover, it should be noted that a broader range of topics and agendas COFI has than other Technical Committees do has been one of the major causes for the unexpectedly prolonged discussion and the delay of schedule at COFI. In this regard, it is essential to improve the overall COFI system's efficiency, including considering the possible establishment of a new "Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management". Since the new Chairperson of COFI is appointed from Japan, under his Chairmanship, Japan intends to make its utmost efforts in securing an efficient and effective operation of the COFI system, including through the examination on the possible establishment of a new Sub-Committee.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like many other Members, Japan attaches the highest importance to combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and believes that the consensus at COFI 34 on further strengthening measures against IUU fishing is a significant step forward. In this regard, Japan looks forward to an earlier elaboration of effective voluntary guidelines for regulating, monitoring, and controlling transshipment, as recommended by COFI 34. • Japan welcomes FAO to strengthen cooperation with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and commends FAO's active involvement and participation, as the sole UN technical agency for the fisheries management, in discussions at various global <i>fora</i> such as marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Japan would urge FAO to further strengthen its contribution to those organizations. Especially, reinforcement of the cooperation with CITES with which FAO has concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is quite important. FAO has a pivotal role in providing CITES with relevant scientific and technical advice on the listing and implementing such listing of commercially exploited aquatic species. Japan believes that the provision of such advice associated with the CITES listings is a critical responsibility of FAO and expects FAO to further strengthen its activities in this regard.
<p>Iceland – Observer (Wed 14/04/2021 15:33)</p>	<p>Iceland takes note of and welcomes important initiatives taken by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in February 2021. Iceland wants to highlight the 2021 Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture which was endorsed by all members of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI). It is a milestone marking the 25th anniversary of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.</p> <p>The declaration specifically notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that urgent targeted action is needed to ensure fish and fish products continue to provide effective and sustainable pathways to reduce poverty, secure livelihoods and underpin food security and nutrition, as a prerequisite to achieving the goals set in Agenda 2030, and • that Members need to reinforce international and regional cooperative governance mechanisms, including the UN Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the FAO Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, in order to reduce overfishing, and provide adequate protection to vulnerable ecosystems. <p>Iceland observes that important progress is made in fisheries management globally but notes with alarm that still more than one third of fish stocks are overfished. IUU fishing remains a persistent problem, especially to low-income Small Island Developing States (SIDS).</p> <p>Iceland urges all to put pressure with existing legal and agreed instruments on Members which continue this malpractice. The aim is to eliminate IUU fishing.</p>

We support the call from low- and middle-income countries for assistance in capacity building for fisheries management and sustainable aquaculture production.

II.

Iceland supports the call of COFI and reiterates the need to bring fisheries and aquaculture (aquatic food) fully into the preparation of the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). We recognize the need to promote the consumption of fish and fish products derived from sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, reminding the global community that they are among the healthiest foods on the planet. “Blue food” (aquatic) should be an integral part of the UNFSS plan of action.

III.

Iceland supports the outcome of COFI, which highlighted the importance of reaching an outcome in World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations to prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Iceland likes to encourage the COFI Bureau to continue exploring the proposal for a third Sub-Committee on Fisheries. Finally, Iceland reminds the Director-General and Management that FAO has been given a key role within the UN System in respect to SDG 14, Life below water. Therefore, a new management strategy for FAO needs to take full note of this responsibility and duly reflect FAO’s leading role in achieving SDG 14.