



PRESS RELEASE

Summary

The 11th World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference will be taking place from the 10 to the 13th December 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. To support an effective outcome on this year's upcoming [Ministerial](#), the [UN Conference on Trade and Development](#), the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#), and UN Environment, in partnership with the Commonwealth, will host a high-level session on fisheries, entitled "Fish Trade, Fisheries Subsidies and [SDG 14](#)". The session aims to improve WTO negotiators' understanding on recent trends in fish trade, the value of the existing UN regulatory framework on the law of the seas and fisheries, and discuss most relevant fish-related non-tariff measures for developing countries.

Event Description

Worldwide, more than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods. However, globally, the proportion of fully fished stocks and overfished, depleted, or recovering fish stocks has increased from just above 50 per cent of all assessed fish stocks in the mid-1970s to almost 90 per cent in 2013. This has disastrous impacts on our marine ecosystems and biodiversity, while undermining the very basis of our well-being and economic prosperity.

Some forms of fisheries subsidies contribute significantly to this problem by encouraging overcapacity of the fisheries industry and therefore lead to overfishing. Regulating harmful fisheries subsidies can therefore assist to reduce economically damaging and unfair fisheries practices, whilst helping to restore productive fisheries resources, healthy marine ecosystems and biodiversity.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 of the [2030 Agenda](#) commits UN Member States "to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development", fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and phase out certain forms of fisheries subsidies by 2020. UN Environment, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have been very active in jointly putting these topics on the agenda, issuing a [voluntary commitment](#) at this year's [Ocean Conference to support](#) States in implementing these goals by 2020.

Advancing a multilateral solution towards realizing SDG 14 has gained traction in the lead up to the upcoming [World Trade Organization \(WTO\) Ministerial Conference](#), which is taking place in Buenos Aires in December this year. An agreement on disciplining fisheries subsidies at WTO level has been on the agenda since the Doha round negotiations in 2001, however has since seen limited progress. Reaching an outcome in Buenos Aires could provide a significant step forward towards reducing trade-distorting subsidies and safeguarding marine ecosystems and therefore to contribute to States' commitments under SDG 14 by 2020.

To support an effective outcome on this year's upcoming WTO Ministerial, UNCTAD, FAO, and UN Environment, in partnership with the Commonwealth, will host a high-level session on fisheries, entitled "Fish Trade, Fisheries Subsidies and SDG 14". The session aims to improve WTO negotiators' understanding on recent trends in fish trade, the value of the existing UN regulatory framework on the law of the seas and fisheries, and discuss most relevant fish-related non-tariff measures for developing countries.



Key Discussion Issues:

- The significance of fish and fish products to international trade, food security, nutrition and poverty reduction and development
- The Regulatory Framework and Relevant International Instruments applicable to fisheries: key international instruments that underlie and contribute to a functional fisheries management system and the development of potential disciplines on fish subsidies.
- Trade barriers in fish trade: an overview of non-tariff measures faced by the fish sector in accessing international markets – which may include harmful fishing subsidies - and how they affect market access, particularly for developing countries.

Expected outcomes:

- Contribute to consensus-building at the Ministerial level for disciplining fish subsidies
- Provide a platform for deeper understanding of trade-related aspects of SDG 14, including regulatory issues, market access and fish management systems.

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Key Documents

[FAO Trade Policy Brief - Trade in fish and fishery products](#)
[Trade and Environment Review 2016](#)
[Trade and Environment Review 2016](#)
[Trade-Related Fisheries Targets: Sustainable Development Goal 14. Summary Document, Informal Preparatory Working Group 4](#)
[Fishery Exports and the Economic Development of LDCs: Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Comoros, Mozambique, Myanmar and Uganda](#)
[Fish Trade and Policy: A primer on Non-Tariff Measures](#)

See also:

Web page of the Environment and Trade Hub, UN Environment, on Fisheries
<http://web.unep.org/greeneconomy/what-we-do/environment-and-trade-hub/fisheries-subsidies>
Joint PAGE by UNCTAD-FAO and UN Environment on the Joint Voluntary Commitment:
<http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DITC/Trade-and-Environment/UNCTAD-FAO-UNEP-joint.aspx>