



Second Oceans Forum on Trade-related aspects of SDG14

UNCTAD, FAO, UN Environment, UNECE, the Commonwealth, ACP, and IOI
Palais des Nations, Room XXVI, 16-17 July 2018

Chair's Conclusions

Mr. Peter Thomson

United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean

The objective of the Second Oceans Forum was to identify challenges and opportunities that were raised on sustainability and integration of the seafood value chain and related services within the framework of the oceans/blue economy. The Forum provided a platform for presenting state of the art analysis, sharing country experiences and identifying public and private best practices. The Forum provided a timely opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to present their views on various trade-related aspects of SDG14.

Participants commended the joint efforts by a coalition comprised of UNCTAD, FAO, UN Environment, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the ACP Group, the IOI, and UNECE to organize the Forum. In my capacity as Special Envoy of the Secretary General, I would like to join these commendations, noting that I am impressed by the cooperation being exercised in order to pursue our shared goal of a healthy and sustainable ocean.

Achieving SDG14 targets requires an integrated, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach, along with coordination and policy coherence at all levels. To achieve this, stakeholders need to have the capacity to design, implement and streamline policies, mobilize finance, and apply innovations that integrate best practices. This will require new partnerships and enhanced cooperation towards sustainable seafood trade.

UNCTAD/FAO/UN Environment have proposed an SDG14 Trade-related Joint Plan of Action to support this process. The Joint Plan of Action was welcomed by Forum participants, noting that it will serve as an important means of implementation to mobilize resources, technical expertise and partnerships, building on the UNCTAD/FAO/UN Environment roadmap that was committed to at the United Nations Ocean Conference in June 2017.

Key points raised during the Forum on trade-related targets of SDG14 included:

Session 1: Meeting SDG 14: the role of trade and seafood value chains

1. Upstream and downstream activities along the fish and seafood value chain can provide significant employment and economic benefits, particularly for coastal communities. Post-harvest processing, distribution and marketing of fish and seafood can catalyse further economies of scale to promote competitive value chains and sustainable trade;
2. The influence of major private sector players in fisheries and aquaculture must be better understood in order to advance SDG14. These actors should play a role in promoting sustainable solutions driven by international trade and innovations;
3. Intersectoral linkages between fisheries and related industries are often underexplored. Seafood value chains need to be better understood to design interventions that boost value addition for developing countries, towards integrating horizontal and vertical aspects of value chains and to share benefits more equitably.
4. There is a need to mainstream capacity building activities, training and education, tools and strategies of Oceans Forum partners and other technical cooperation agencies for practitioners, policy makers and stakeholders of the general public committed to a sustainable interaction with oceans or engaged in oceans/blue economy activities.

Session 2: Addressing barriers to value chain integration: fish subsidies

5. The urgency of SDG targets 14.4 and 14.6 to be met by 2020 highlights the necessity to act swiftly and address overfishing, overcapacity, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and harmful fisheries subsidies. The existing political momentum needs to be translated into disciplines that are enforceable, practical and acceptable to all Member States;
6. In the case of countries with low fishing capacity, subsidies granted for fleet development must be accompanied by effective fisheries management systems;
7. Recent data analysis by UNCTAD on levels of fish subsidization based on OECD and FAO data was welcomed. The analysis identified that the largest fishing nations are also the largest subsidizers, hence fish subsidies represents an issue that goes beyond the developed-developing country categorization.
8. Gathering data on fish subsidies remains a challenge, but it should not prevent Members from pursuing and achieving SDG14.6. There is an urgent need to compile data on structure, nature and level of subsidization in developed and developing countries alike, to facilitate reform and to monitor the implementation of any potential outcome;
9. Preferential treatment of industrial fishing fleets by way of fisheries subsidies needs to end in order to provide equal opportunities for artisanal and small-scale fisheries;

10. Special and differential treatment for developing countries, especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and those with low fishing capacity was considered an essential aspect of any WTO fish subsidies negotiation outcome;

11. The involvement of agencies such as UNCTAD, FAO and UN Environment, as well as scientific advisory bodies that provide technical expertise and fora for discussion has been invaluable in the negotiation process and their continued engagement will be essential.

Session 3: Making marine-based value chains sustainable in developing countries

12. Healthy and productive oceans and seas underpin human livelihoods and all ocean-based economic activity including fish and seafood trade. Restoring and maintaining healthy marine ecosystems and species must therefore form a central consideration in the design of oceans/blue economy strategies and trade and trade-related policies. UNCTAD, FAO and UN Environment are working together on oceans issues related to the trade, food security, environment and development at the national, regional and international levels. Their joint offer for building policy capacity and coherence and promoting structured dialogues between their respective constituencies was appreciated by Forum participants.

13. Achieving the trade-related targets of SDG14 requires the appropriate use of policies, investment and innovation to restore the productive capacity of the oceans and to increase economic benefits through sustainable marine-based value chains, particularly for coastal developing countries including SIDS and LDCs;

14. Several good practices from developing countries, notably Malta, Maldives, Ecuador and Peru were proposed to promote: 1) the sustainability of the fishing and processing industries, 2) the expansion and implementation of good fish stock management practices; 3) responsible small-scale fisheries programmes; 4) the incremental use and cultivation of algae-based products, and 5) the growth in other sustainable oceans/blue economy sectors. This included ecosystem and precautionary based approaches, pole and line fishing, access and benefit sharing, and community and fisher-friendly practices;

15. Sustainable seafood labels should also consider labour conditions and potential human rights violations within the fisheries sector;

16. Traceability and electronic messaging systems such as the UN/CEFACT FLUX standard can help prevent illegally caught fish from entering the marketplace, reduce overfishing, and promote sustainable fisheries management, and were encouraged for adoption.

17. Interagency and public-private partnerships need to be enabled with the participation of Forum organizers, CITES, ITC, ILO, the private sector and civil society organizations for the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources within relevant value chains.

Session 4: The role of transport, port and logistical services in seafood value chains

18. Global value chains in fishing involve a wide range of port, shipping, transport and distribution activities in which developing countries are increasingly participating;

19. The efforts of FAO, UNCTAD and other cooperating agencies to craft definitions on trade in fisheries services were commended by Members;

20. Connectivity, sustainable transport and resilient port infrastructure are essential to bring seafood and other marine products to markets at the lowest cost possible.

21. Sustainable artisanal fishing depends on tapping into value chains, including adhesion to ILO Convention 188.

22. Transport and logistical services for seafood products secure the safety, uninterrupted refrigeration and quality of fish products to manufacturers and consumers alike.

23. According to participants, the Second Oceans Forum provided a good example of the cooperation and the partnerships that we require to realize the goals that we have set ourselves under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In closing, let me remind us again that timely implementation of SDG14.4 and SDG14.6 by 2020 is essential to the 2030 Agenda.