



Remarks by

**Mr. Viwanou Gnassounou
ACP Assistant Secretary-General**

**2nd Oceans Forum on Trade-related Aspects of SDG 14
Geneva, 16 – 17 July 2018**

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, the ACP Group, I would like to express our appreciation for the opportunity to be associated with the 2nd UN oceans forum on trade related aspects of SDG 14. The Forum is unique in its approach in bringing together diverse actors and experiences of what is truly global seafood value chains, and we believe it is an important event to advance the sustainable development of fisheries value chains. We therefore look forward to the successful outcomes of this year's forum on the theme *Enabling sustainable and integrated seafood and living marine resources value chains and related services*.

The ACP recognizes the crucial role of fisheries sector as a source of the much needed employment, and trade. Fisheries value chains in fact plays an irreplaceable role in the food and nutritional security and indeed the lifeline of many communities ACP countries, particularly for Small Island Developing States.

Thanks to improvements in technology, the ACP exports of fish and fisheries products to the global markets in the last few decades increased substantially to reach as much as US\$5.3 billion in value, from at least 65 ACP countries. However, in recent years the growth in exports has remained flat in aggregate and reduced for specific countries.

This trend is unacceptable and concerns us greatly if we are to have a real impact to the fight against poverty and the integration of our economies to the global economies. In this context, we would like to highlight a few challenges which undermine the growth and sustainable development of sea food value chains, of course secure in the knowledge that we shall indeed learn a lot more of it in the coming two days.

First and foremost, we know that productive and resilient fisheries resources is the foundation of a thriving sustainable development of seafood value chains that meet the economic and food and nutritional security needs of many countries. Yet, it is worrying to note from recent FAO data, that no less than 33% of the assessed fish stocks are presently fished at unsustainable levels. IUU fishing,

weak governance, excessive fishing capacity are some of the key drivers for this situation. In this respect ACP past projects have supported the implementation of policy actions to improve fisheries governance and management. We note that this is not enough and much more is required to curtail IUU fishing, enhance fisheries management systems and improve the scientific basis for policy management measures in order to improve and maintain the productivity of our fisheries.

We also want to highlight the negative impacts of non-tariff barriers especially the stringent quality norms of the export markets states which undermine fish processing firms from accessing the export markets. This is particularly frustrating for seafood value chains that rely on produce from the small scale operators. This clearly undermines the attainment of SDG 14 target 14 b). We want in this regard, to encourage market states to live up to their commitments and provide the much needed support to ensure that affected value chains can adjust to these measures. Even more importantly is ensuring that the price premium and benefits of access to export markets trickle down to the local small scale operators.

We are also very concerned with the unacceptably high post-harvest losses along the sea food value chains of many ACP countries. The effect of this food loss can be overwhelming considering the need to achieve the food and nutritional security and to ensure a steady supply to the markets. Post-harvest losses also contribute to increased fishing pressure in order to replenish the losses. In this regard, we look forward to learning from experiences elsewhere and especially technological solutions and innovations to maintain the quality of fisheries products especially for small scale operators.

It will be remiss of me not to mention the effect of climate change on the sustainable development of seafood value chains. We know that tropical fisheries bear the greatest impacts from destruction of coastal production assets to the negative impacts to productivity and habitats of marine fisheries resources. In this context we just want to emphasize that now is the time for countries to implement their commitments to enhance the adaptation and mitigation of the fisheries sector to climate change to ensure productive and resilient fisheries value chains.

Finally, we share some thoughts on the ACP approach to developing sustainable fisheries value chains. The ultimate goal of the New Approach is to holistically empower actors along the value chains to participate fully in the transformation and modernization especially empowering the firms to move up the value chain through value addition. Our main focus is to mobilize resources from our partners for enhancing the production capacity, facilitate value chain actors to access finance, investments and markets. To implement this commitment, we launched the ACP blue growth initiative to specifically improve the productivity and competitiveness of ACP fisheries and aquaculture value chains.

We believe that through such actions and promoting more partnerships for development cooperation, investments and innovations we can reinforce the sustainable development of our sea food value chains and contribute significantly to the attainment of SDG 14.

Thank you.