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World Leaders Summit, High-Level Events, Round Tables, Side Events

WIF World Investment Forum

Civil Society Forum

Global Commodities Forum

Youth Forum

UNCTAD-FAO-UNEP Joint Statement on Fisheries Subsidies

Room Tsavo 3

Kenyatta International Convention Centre, Nairobi

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Statement

from

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FAO

FAO: Perspective on joint statement (UNCTAD-FAO) on Fisheries Subsidies

1. Thank you Dr. Kituyi, SG UNCTAD, for opening remarks and, more importantly being a key partner in this initiative. FAO values our longstanding partnership with you, and today we are announcing another joint effort which will produce meaningful results and long lasting impact.
2. Excellencies, dear colleagues from the press and other development partners
3. It is an honor for me to share few words at this important moment, which reflects our joint commitment to move together for “**from proclamations and decision to action**”, in line with the theme of UNCTAD XIV.
4. I must acknowledge and appreciate the kind support of around 90 Member States, partner UN agencies and the civil society. We are humbled but also strengthened by this great support.
5. Allow me to share few words on contents of this statement. As you know, with adoption of the SDGs, the Target 14.6 specifically sets a goal of prohibiting fisheries subsidies that lead to overcapacity and overfishing by 2020. The target also calls for eliminating subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
6. There is a strong correlation between fisheries subsidies and the main pillars affecting the sustainability of fisheries resources in the world – overcapacity and overfishing.
7. The share of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels decreased from 90 percent in 1974 to 68.6 percent in 2013. Thus, 31.4 percent of fish stocks were estimated as fished at a biologically unsustainable level and therefore overfished.
8. In terms of fishing capacity, some studies estimate that the current world fleet capacity of fishing vessels would be able to catch 250% of the sustainable ocean supply of fisheries.
9. Many studies point out to an alarming figure associated with fisheries subsidies – governments provide funds to this end ranging from US\$ 25 billion and US\$ 35 billion a year (*estimate*).

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

10. We are not here to fight fisheries, fish or fishing: Quite the opposite. We are here to ensure that fish and fisheries play their important role in the diets and economic development of the world:
11. Fisheries is an important element for economic development in developing countries, specifically and play a particular role in the inclusion of small communities and women in economic activities. The role of fish in the diets of poor people is well known.
12. At the same time, developed countries rely considerably on the supply of fisheries from developing countries to fulfil its local demand for this protein.
13. For many countries, and for numerous coastal and riverine regions, exports of fish and fishery products are essential to their economies, accounting for more than 40 percent of the total value of traded commodities in some island countries.
14. In terms of international trade, developing economies, whose exports represented just 37 percent of world trade in 1976, saw their share rise to 54 percent of total fishery export value by 2014, an important source of foreign earnings.
15. Fishery trade represents a significant source in income generation, employment, food security, and nutrition.
16. Government action in the domain of fisheries subsidies can take several forms. The interventions associated with research and development, monitoring, sustainability, evaluation, and other activities related to the assessment and maintaining of the resources cannot be seen as a subsidy that should be prohibited.
17. On the other hand, there are several types of subsidies that create “artificial competitive advantages” for some private players that put fish resources under pressure. Under normal market conditions, those resources would not face this sustainability pressure.
18. As you may know, the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) came into force on June 5, 2016. This was a historic achievement in this area. It provides a good platform to manage the IUU fishing and certainly for the elimination of harmful fisheries subsidies.
19. As the IUU fishing is estimated to strip between \$10 billion and \$23 billion from the seafood industry, the Port State Measures Agreement will be the first ever legally binding international treaty focused specifically on IUU fishing.
20. In addition to the aforementioned points, this joint statement reflects position of the FAO Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, on the importance of revitalizing negotiations on fisheries subsidies in the WTO and FAO’s important role in providing specialized technical expertise to countries and to other international organizations.

21. We believe that a positive outcome in the WTO subsidies negotiations will improve international efforts to address many of the negative impacts of fisheries subsidies.
22. For subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity, we cannot look for a regulatory solution that fits all. It is necessary to take into consideration the specific needs of developing countries, including least developed countries. SDG 14.6 target itself is clear about that.
23. Let me assure you that the, FAO and UNCTAD will reinforce their readiness to provide capacity building and technical assistance to contribute to member countries' efforts to achieve targets under SDG 14, specifically target 14.6.

[Thank you]