UNCTAD in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Commonwealth, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) and the International Ocean Institute (IOI), with the support of the Republics of Portugal and Kenya.

4th Oceans Forum on Trade-related aspects of SDG 14

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"*A shift to a sustainable ocean economy: Facilitating post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience*"

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Chair's Summary
14 April 2022

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The Oceans Forum ("the Forum") is a unique global platform to take stock, exchange experiences and explore options to implement trade-related targets of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (Targets 1, 4, 6, 7 and b) through the involvement of leading United Nations agencies, regional bodies, governmental institutions, and civil society organizations.

The objective of the 4th Oceans Forum was to identify opportunities for the ocean economy and trade to contribute to post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience within the mandates under the UNCTAD 15 outcome document - the Covenant. The Forum focused on new and emerging ocean economy topics, including:

- The seaweed sector as a lever for a sustainable economic recovery
- Fish subsidies, and non-tariff measures (NTMs) reform
- Social sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture value chains
- The decarbonization of shipping and maritime supply chains
- Plastic litter and other ocean waste challenges.

The Forum also placed a particular emphasis on the importance of securing sufficient and reliable longterm investment, the creation of scientific capacities, and the development of ocean-based innovations. It also called for a global trade, investment, and innovation Blue Deal.

This document presents a summary of the main points and recommendations made at the Forum by panellists, member States, and participants. This document was shared with Forum partners and drafted in a consultative process. Nearly 500 stakeholders including representatives from member States, international and regional organizations, NGOs, private sector, academia, and civil society – particularly the youth and fisherfolks – participated both in person and virtually at this Forum.

Participants commended the coalition comprised of UNCTAD, FAO, UNEP, the Commonwealth, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the development bank of Latin America (CAF) and the International Ocean Institute (IOI) with the support of the Republics of Portugal and Kenya, on their joint efforts to organize this 4th Forum.

In my capacity as the Chair of the Forum, I would like to join these commendations. The key points raised during the Forum on trade-related targets of SDG14 included:

I. High-level segment: Towards a Blue Deal for post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience

1. The ocean represents more than 70 per cent of the biosphere, sustains human health, stable climate, and the livelihoods of more than 3 billion people worldwide. It also carries 80 per cent of global trade (in volume). The economic value of the ocean economy, in terms of exports of goods and services, is at least $2.5 trillion per year. However, the real value of the ocean, while difficult to quantify, is much larger. The ocean makes the largest contribution to mitigate the impact of climate change. However, the increase in fishing has led to the overexploitation of more than 34 per cent of fish species while 50 per cent of coral reef is dying.

2. The global economy is directly dependent on the health and productivity of the ocean. However, trade and commerce can give rise to human activities that threaten marine life and the resilience of aquatic ecosystems, thereby impeding the implementation of SDG 14. Several speakers noted that that pressures on ocean and marine resources have increased significantly because of overfishing, pollution and climate change.

3. At the same time, SDG 14 is the least funded of all the SDGs, representing 0.01per cent of all SDG funding from official development assistance (up to 2019), and 0.56per cent of all SDG funding from philanthropy (2016 to 2020). It is also the SDG which receives the lowest impact investment of all SDGs. It is also almost non-existent in climate funding, accounting for less than 2per cent of the Green Climate Fund and only 0.7per cent of the Global Environmental Facility funding. This underscores the big gap which exists between the financing required for ocean conservation and the funding currently available. The need for sustainable finance, particularly in Small Island Development States (SIDS),

can thus not be overemphasized enough. Some progress has been made, particularly regarding philanthropic funding, and should be stepped up.

4. It was noted that that 2022 presents a unique opportunity to address the main challenges faced by the ocean. given that several conferences and other events will take place. These will offer the opportunity to create partnerships, increase investment in science-driven approaches and achieve an international agreement on fisheries subsidies.

5. Portugal highlighted that the ocean and its ecosystems are at the nexus of the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing pollution and waste. As an intrinsically maritime country and given that the ocean is a key pillar for its development and international stance, promoting its sustainable management has been a strategic priority for Portugal since the beginning of the 2030 Agenda negotiations. Co-hosting, together with Kenya, the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference is another step Portugal is taking in fulfilling the shared global responsibility of accelerating the implementation SDG Goal 14.

6. Kenya, the co-convenor of the Conference, welcomed the commitment to negotiate a United Nations plastic treatment reached at UNEA5.2 recently held in Nairobi. Combating plastic pollution must be a collaborative effort guided by rule-based multilateralism. Several speakers noted that to reap the dividends from the protection and sustainable use of the ocean, it is necessary to pay attention to the needs of artisanal fishers and small-scale sea farmers, particularly access to marine resources, skills, training, equipment, credit, and markets and highlighted the work of Kenya on this topic. Trade and commerce must not only empower and feed communities, and not only improve their livelihoods – it must also serve to catalyse the preservation of the health of our ocean.

7. Several speakers noted that fisheries and tourism were some of the sectors most affected by COVID-19. One speaker noted that the enormous impact of the pandemic in Latin American economies has been particularly devastating in these sectors through decreased production, lost opportunities, and declining revenues. The Caribbean is one of the hardest hit regions. In the context of a post COVID-19 recovery and resilience, it is important to understand the trade-related impediments that continue to exclude poor and marginalised communities from benefiting from the richness of ocean, including nontariff barriers, unfair subsidies, and climate change effects. Inclusivity must be central to SDG 14 in a post COVID-19 context.

8. Several speakers emphasized the need to advance the negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to eliminate harmful subsidies in the fisheries sector and to pursue an outcome supportive of SDG 14. In this regard, they noted the challenges related to addressing fisheries subsidies, non-trade measures as well as their implications. Many speakers also urged the early adoption of an agreement to eliminate plastic pollution affecting the ocean.

9. Several speakers also highlighted the importance of ocean science, transfer of technology, innovation, and capacity-building as tools for achieving the targets of SDG 14 as well as to mitigate the effects of climate change.

10. The challenges faced by SIDS in building a sustainable and resilient ocean economy were highlighted by Mauritius. It was noted that Mauritius had established an ocean strategy almost a decade ago for the purpose of making the ocean a strong pillar of its economy. In this context, institutions were set up to coordinate and manage ocean-related activities. Operationalising such a strategy is however an arduous task and requires strong multilateral support. In this context, SIDS need to be empowered, through specific measures at multilateral level, to develop the ocean economy through access to finance, technology transfer and skills development, amongst others. The Third Conference on Maritime Security will be held in Mauritius.

11. A speaker highlighted the relationship between the ocean and climate change, noting the existential threat of sea level rises, which can produce an immense impact on many ports, cities, and populations. Accordingly, there is a need to strengthen adaptation, and mitigation measures and build ocean investment management capacities, particularly in SIDS.

12. Various speakers noted the need to promote diversification with a view to increasing resilience. And preparedness, particularly, for SIDS. New and emerging economic sectors and activities such as sustainable seaweed and aquaculture, marine nutraceuticals, marine-based plastics substitutes production, marine-based biotechnology R&D, offshore renewable energy generation, among others, can allow opportunities for sunrise investment, blue jobs, and supply-side diversification.

13. Another speaker highlighted the need to combine our commitment to economic and environmental recovery to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic with more equitable, resilient ocean economies. This can be achieved through shared action as follows:

    a) Developing ocean economy and trade strategies
    b) Reviving the tourism and travel sector, especially for small states and SIDS, and promoting sustainable tourism
    c) Promoting sustainable supply chains, especially for fisheries
    d) Levering technology to support the growth and development of ocean economies
    e) Mapping the trends, dynamics, and drivers of maritime trade to build resilience through better seaport infrastructure, more sustainable shipping operations, and greater trade openness.

14. A speaker highlighted the potential of marine coastal ecosystems to foster social and sustainable development and noted the efforts of the Development Bank of Latin America to support international water governance. The speaker also stressed the need for coordinated efforts through multilateral approaches to address the challenges of lower production due to human and climate pressure on ecosystems and stocks.

15. A speaker mentioned that FAO has been providing technical support to the WTO negotiation process whenever requested by the WTO or countries. The speaker highlighted fisheries and aquaculture production as a concrete example of how an integrated sector with diverse participants is fundamental in terms of social and economic development, including food security issues and the role of developing countries in this sector. The speaker noted the importance of promoting decent work, given that millions of people depend on the sector as a source of employment, and the need to address sector challenges at a multilateral level with the main goal of managing the world's ocean in an environmental, social, and economically sustainable way.

16. A panellist highlighted the Development Account Oceans Economy and Trade Strategies project conducted by UNCTAD and DOALOS, as an excellent example of an effective cooperation between United Nations entities with intersecting mandates. Three main insights from the project were shared with the audience: First, the tremendous socio-economic value of the ocean, particularly for developing coastal States and SIDS. The ocean economy can serve as a stable engine for sustainable development but only if ocean spaces and ocean activities are well-managed to protect the long-term health and resilience of marine ecosystems. Second, capacity-building is key to ensuring all States can realign their relationship with the ocean. Finally, there is value and need for cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination in Ocean matters and the law of the sea. This will require capacity-building and a holistic approach to ocean governance.

17. Several speakers noted that addressing concerns related to the ocean and ocean economy mut happen *now* and is closely related to the warning of the IPCC scientists in respect of climate change that action must be taken "now or never".

18. Panellists and participants made the following recommendations:

a) The need to urgently bridge the gap in ocean finance. Special efforts are needed to call for a Blue Deal that will help increase the amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) aimed at supporting the growth of the ocean economy. It is also necessary to develop services that enable online supply, initiatives that bridge the digital divide and enhance cooperation between the production and distribution of essential products.
b) Make ocean management policies more efficient. A sustainable ocean is essential to accelerating the implementation of SDG 14 and its trade related targets. Ocean science is key to achieving a truly sustainable blue economy.
c) To support a post COVID-19 recovery in the ocean economy it is necessary, amongst others, to fill governance gaps with a view to boosting conservation, sustainable use, responsible trade, and investment.
d) Implement efforts to create the incentives and tools to monitor and guarantee an adequate economic use of the ocean and their protection and sustainability.
e) Coordinate stakeholders and their actions to protect and promote sustainable management of the ocean at global level as humanity's public goods.
f) Rethink and contextualise the current development model into a scenario in which national marine resources are notoriously degraded with a view to addressing these.
g) Early warning and prevention systems, emergency support and recovery are prerequisites to be considered in future responses to future external shocks, such as pandemics, economic, or political crises or climate occurrences.
h) The acceleration of digitalisation, contactless e-payment systems and automation technologies across ocean-based private sector and public administration due to increased production costs, restrictions on travel and mobility, and social distancing make monitoring, control, and surveillance of economic activities in the ocean more efficient and effective.
i) Develop closer and shorter value chains, promote economic diversification, connectivity, and the right mix of energy security measures as essential elements for resilience.
j) Reach an agreement on fisheries subsidies at the WTO which eliminates harmful subsidies and accelerates SDG 14, hopefully at 12thWTO Ministerial Conference.
k) Advance negotiations on an internationally legally binding instrument by 2024, to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, as agreed at UNEA5.2 held recently in Nairobi.
l) Advance negotiations towards the adoption of a United Nations convention on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.
m) Generate consensus on a FAO guidance on social sustainability for fisheries and aquaculture value chains.
n) Act now to reverse the degradation of the ocean and fulfil SDG 14 to preserve life under water as an important step to addressing climate change.

II. Session 1: The seaweed sector as a lever for sustainable economic recovery

1 Aquaculture of algae (macroalgae or seaweeds and microalgae) is the second largest sector of world aquaculture production. It represented almost 30 per cent of the sector in volume and 5.3 per cent in value in 2019, with most (99 per cent) aquatic algae produced in marine areas. In addition to food consumption and carbon sequestration, seaweed can be used in other sectors such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, biotechnological applications, and biofuels. Seaweed aquaculture has a promising future as a sustainable source of nutritious food that can be give a major boost to global, regional, and local economies, and food and nutrition security. Investing in this sector could thus be an opportunity for developing countries to economically recover from the pandemic, diversify and move up within the value chain while increasing food security and contributing to climate change mitigation.

2 A panellist signalled the East Asian Seas as the centre of seaweed production, with China being the largest producer followed by Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and the Philippines. Other countries in the region with recognized potential are Viet Nam, Timor-Leste, and Myanmar. Seaweed cultivation has social, economic, and environmental benefits. It requires simple technology and low initial capital investment, is a source for human food, food additives, animal feed, pharma, medical supplements and fertilisers. It also generates jobs, reduces the over-exploitation of fisheries and pollution eutrophication in water through absorption of nutrients.

3 Seaweed can be a driver of poverty alleviation and shared prosperity provided that:

a) Linkages are created between science in sustainable processing and use of seaweed to practical production technology.
b) Technology is linked to investors in developing countries' micro-financing opportunities are created for seaweed farmers.
c) Standards of operation and management systems such as integrated coastal management/marine spatial planning are implemented to ensure the sustainability and resilience of production systems
d) There is investment in science and technology to produce good quality seedlings, combat diseases. as well as in capacity building on best aquaculture practices and the socio-economic empowerment of women.

4 Seaweed offers many sustainability solutions, including as a means to tackle ocean warming and acidification, preserve and restore marine ecosystems and to support coastal communities' livelihoods and boost their resilience. It is increasingly seen as a blue/ocean food that can significantly advance the sustainable shift of food systems and contribute to food security and the implementation of the global Ocean Agenda. The expansion of sustainable seaweed farming should be seen as integral to sustainability initiatives.

5 Despite microalgae's potential as novel protein, polyunsaturated fats sources, health supplements and nutraceuticals, there are several barriers to their product and trade development, including, that only a limited number are recognized as being safe for human consumption by the primary markets for algae food products. There is also the low productivity yield and relatively high cost when considered alone for a single use.

6 A panellist noted that the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need to build more resilient and diversified economies, generate new jobs and prepare their region for the challenges associated with economic recovery in a global warming context and weakened coastal and marine ecosystems. However, it is essential to recognize that before COVID-19, the economic activity associated with the ocean was already in a critical situation, with the reduction of fish stocks, the decline of the fishing fleet, and the increasing risks in coastal and marine tourism investments. The panellist noted the need to reinforce the capacity of States to work together through multilateral approaches to address the challenges of lower production and potential food security risks due to human and climate pressure on ecosystems and stocks. To benefit from the myriad opportunities in the ocean economy, it is necessary to enhance collaboration aimed at generating sophisticated services clusters and to address the limited capacities of national stakeholders to identify and harness opportunities arising from sustainable ocean-based sectors.

7 Panellists and participants made the following recommendations:

a) Incorporate an expansion of seaweed cultivation, the restoration of degraded kelp forests and the establishment of new kelp forests into national and multilateral development plans, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

b) To scale up seaweed production there are several measures that could be considered: the coordination of technical assistance, policy infrastructure, harmonization of legal frameworks, linking private sector investors with technologies and environmental requirements; establishing partnerships to share knowledge, promote south-south cooperation on seaweed sector development as part of broader ecosystems-based fisheries management approach and the application of marine spatial planning.
c) Consider the integration in a multiple product biorefinery of products such as food, bulk chemicals, bioplastic production from microalgae biomass and other high value products to improve the overall economic feasibility of such production; algae biorefineries will allow co-sourcing different products, minimizing waste and maximizing the productivity.
d) Consider the development of space allocation, through marine spatial planning, to support the necessary expansion of seaweed farming.
e) Seaweed as, a component of a sustainable diet, should be the main driver for the next years but emerging sectors, namely new bio-based materials, may push seaweed production to higher volumes. It will be key to focus on fast, high-quality and results driven interaction between businesses and R&D both in developed and developing countries so that funding bodies can have access to the best information and support the sector's growth.
f) Promote the sustainable biomass production of seaweed (from harvest but mainly farming) as well as literacy of the youngest to assist its market evolution and consistency of seaweed. This is because considering the various species produced and traded, seaweed is a key raw material for the present and future generations.

III. Session 2: Transparency and implementation mechanisms to support fisheries subsidies and non-tariff measures (NTMs) reform

1. Policy reforms need to be accelerated to achieve the goal of restoring all fish stocks at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics The upcoming FAO SOFIA 2022 report concludes that for the purpose of achieving SDG 14, there has only been progress in protected areas of the Ocean , otherwise, there has rather been a regression in relation to the goals set out. This session addressed three crucial issues to achieve this goal: Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs), fisheries subsidies and transparency.

2. There is a high incidence of NTMs across the various sectors of the ocean-based economy. Nearly 97 per cent of imported products face at least one NTM and on average, some 6.7 per cent different import measures apply to each product. For exports, NTMs apply to nearly 57per cent of exported products and on average each exported product needs to comply with about two different requirements before leaving the home country for destination markets. The prevalence of NTMs is highest for marine fisheries, followed by seafood processing, with 14.5 per cent and 12.7per cent NTMs applied per traded product, respectively.

3. Marine fisheries and seafood processing products are subjected to pre-shipment inspections in many countries at the time of import. The requirements and practices of border inspections are not always harmonized, fit for the purpose, or aligned with the WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreements. Developing countries have regularly pointed to the challenge presented by NTMs that vary from one jurisdiction to another. This multitude of approaches imposes significant costs on exporting countries, unnecessary duplication and represents a severe handicap for export from many developing countries with limited resources and capacity for management and infrastructure. As fish and seafood products are often perishable, NTMs can add an additional burden on exporters due to time constraints in delivery of fresh products to markets.

4. Additionally, fish exporters face a wide range of private standards. These private standards have emerged in areas where there is a perception that public institutions are failing to achieve desired

outcomes. These include food safety and quality, responsible fisheries management, or social and environmental sustainability.

5. Seychelles was highlighted as an example of a global leader in increasing transparency in fisheries management which includes information on fisheries subsidies. Voluntary efforts are crucial to make the sharing of credible and timely information with all relevant stakeholders. Valuable. Transparency supports good governance and the sustainable management of fisheries, especially for migratory fish stocks. The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) is a good tool to ensure a level playing field through transparency and notifications, not only for governments, but also for other stakeholders. The good governance of the world's fish stocks would be enhanced by greater participation in FiTI.

6. Madagascar has joined FiTI and is currently working on the domestic implementation efforts and goals to improve transparency and fight corruption. Cooperation with civil society contribute to the formulation of national strategies, implementation, and monitoring. The Minister of Fisheries of Madagascar calls on all governments globally to fight illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

7. One speaker highlighted that market access for Pacific Island countries to the European Union is difficult due to complex SPS regulations. To abide by importing country SPS requirements, many nations subsidize upgrades to their vessels. As examples: Tuvalu, with 11,000 inhabitants, is expected to provide systems and controls equivalent to those of European Union Members States; the Marshall Islands, with a population of 59,000, needs to authorize vessels to land and containerize catch before it is sent to Thailand for canning. The requirement to establish a Competent Authority is not always practically feasible due to the size of the country and resources available.

8. SDG 14.6 aims to eliminate subsidies which contribute to IUU, overcapacity and overfishing. Even when fisheries subsidies are not targeting the export sector, they are often a source of inequality and unfair competition within countries, as industrial fishing vessels receive more than 80 per cent of subsidies at the expense of small-scale fishing communities. Subsidies in the fisheries sector can have consequences on fish stocks afar, especially as some fish stocks are migratory. Subsidies account for approximately 30 per cent of the total value of all the world's fish. Fisheries subsidies were rescinding between 2012 and 2016 but, since then, the total aggregate of subsidies has increased. Disciplines are urgently required to regulate the use of subsidies and pursue the elimination of harmful subsidies as per SDG 14.6.

9. Fisheries subsidies are difficult to estimate and monitor, in part because of a lack of transparency due to low levels of notification under article 25 of the WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM), to under reporting or to data-poor fisheries in developing countries. Only the subsidies of 38 countries are monitored by the OECD. Several big fishing nations are not featured on the monitored list. It is therefore difficult to have a comprehensive view of the state of global fisheries subsidies. It is expected that fisheries subsidies reform will limit the most harmful forms of fish subsidies and enable public resources to shift towards more sustainable public activities including ocean research, fish stock management and restoration.

10. Determining the impact of domestic support is difficult, weighing both positive and negative effects. Subsidies can encourage over-fishing and could therefore have the unintended consequence of contributing to depleting fish stocks. Unsustainable fisheries subsidies will ultimately hurt the fisheries industry in the long term. The world needs to transition to sustainable food systems, also in the area of fisheries. There is strong evidence supportive of taking a cautious approach and rather avoid subsidizing the fisheries sector in order not to have unintended consequences by damaging fish stocks and avoiding IUU fishing.

11. The reform of subsidies can have positive effects in supporting social and climate action. Fuel subsidies constitute the most harmful kind of resource transfer to fishermen. Most of this support is absorbed by the fuel sellers and this support encourages pollution. Fuel subsidies, vessel construction subsidies and subsidies to support the construction of fish processing facilities are considered to have the most detrimental effect on fish stocks and their management. The OECD is working to collect better data which would support policy makers to make better policy decisions.

12. After more than 20 years of negotiations WTO Members are closer than ever to reaching an agreement. The Chair of the fisheries negotiations referred to the WTO Subsidies and Countervailing agreement which sets out the framework for disciplining subsidies in general, whereas the fisheries agreement will address the particularities of harmful fisheries practices. Ministers have a draft agreement on fisheries subsidies before them with strong disciplines that could make a substantive improvement in fisheries sustainability while taking into consideration the special and differential needs of least developed countries. The fisheries negotiations must be concluded to ensure the world's food security situation for future generations. WTO Members will need to resolve the few remaining issues by the twelfth Ministerial Conference, now rescheduled for the week of 13 June 2022. The Chair of the fisheries negotiations at the WTO encouraged Members to conclude the negotiations during the upcoming Ministerial.

13. One speaker highlighted that it is crucial that commercial fisheries are commercially viable, otherwise the sector would not be economically sustainable. Subsidies encourage exploitation of fisheries that might not otherwise be sustainable. Subsidies also have the knock-on effects for unsubsidized fishermen who must compete with subsidized competitors. Subsidies lead to unsustainability in the long run as they contribute to depletion of stocks. Subsidies go contrary to SDG 14, especially as concerns about overfishing, the effective exclusion of non-subsidized fleets, and ineffective impact of fines for infringements.

14. Another speaker noted that the current WTO draft Fisheries Subsidies Agreement text remains unbalanced and shifts the burden of obligations and implementation to developing countries that contribute little to overcapacity and overfishing. The text, as it currently stands, will maintain a *status quo* regarding current subsidies, which are already at an unsustainable level. Relatively small tweaks to the text could improve clarity on fishing licensing and the transparency provisions – which pose the greatest risks to fisheries management and stability in the fisheries industry. The speaker also underlined that the implementation of the draft agreement will be more burdensome for smaller countries due to lack of resources. Technical assistance will therefore be necessary to implement the agreement.

15. Systems to ban, regulate and monitor the granting of public resources in the fisheries sector do not exist in most countries today. Furthermore, the lack of data gathering systems, particularly, in developing countries, hinders progress and implementation. Implementing reforms will require significant regulatory, administrative, and institutional and coordination challenges. At the same time SDG target 14.6 has the fewest voluntary commitments and reports under the United Nations Ocean Conference. Panellists and participants made the following recommendations:

    a) To adopt and sign a WTO fisheries Subsidies Agreement supportive of SDG 14, with due attention given to addressing the burden of obligations between Members and clarifying the implementation process.
    b) To identify and implement policy and technical changes ahead of the entry into force of the agreement.

c) To disavow the subsidization of vessels fishing outside the country's Economic Exclusive Zone. To provide adequate investments in data collection and analysis tools to support evidence-based fisheries management, implementation, and enforcement.
d) To implement comprehensive and transparent regulations and policies to fight IUU fishing.
e) To encourage the use of transparency tools to improve the understanding of NTMs, the management of resources and subsidies.
f) To put in place adequate technical assistance and capacity development programs by FAO and UNCTAD, to support Members' implementation of the fisheries agreement to be agreed at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference. These efforts will contribute to fish subsidies reform (especially for IUU fishing, overcapacity, or overfishing), governance, transparency, data collection and processing and enforcement, as well as addressing existing standards, so that they would not be barriers to trade.

IV. Session 3: Social sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture value chain

1. Millions of people depend on the fisheries and aquaculture sector for their lives and livelihoods. It is a vital source of nutrition and food security, employment, and income. It is a globalized sector with about 34 per cent of all production entering international markets. Its global nature and long supply chains also make its workers vulnerable, and respect for human and labour rights throughout the fisheries and aquaculture value chain remains one of its biggest challenges. The failure to implement effective social and sustainable practices may trigger different social problems due to the lack of social protection. Poor practices and a lack of uniform regulation globally, leave many vulnerable workers in situations akin to modern slavery, bondage, or abuse, especially children, women, migrant workers, minorities, and other disadvantaged groups.

2. A panellist highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges, jeopardizing health and social protection systems and the jobs of millions of fishers and fish workers worldwide. COVID-19 has highlighted the vital role of social protection systems in safeguarding the livelihoods and dignity of small-scale fishers, fish farmers, and fish workers and to increase their resilience.

3. Although fish was declared an essential food, and fishing and fish processing were declared essential services by early-2020, disruptions to access to resources, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, persist.

4. Panellists stressed the need to build back better from the pandemic and ensure the resilience of the fisheries and aquaculture value chain in the face of future crises and to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The recovery needs to be human-centred and inclusive.

5. There is a need to strengthen national legal frameworks in consultation with existing workers' and employer organizations, to eliminate child and forced labour and guarantee adequate working and living conditions. The enforcement of the legal framework should use effective inspections and penalties to achieve tangible impacts on the ground.

6. The sector's commitment, engagement, and collaborative actions to enhance compliance at ensuring socially responsible benefits to all fish workers. Such committed and collaborative efforts will act as an incentive for (i) economic sustainability- considering that decent work creates a level-playing field and puts an end to harmful and unfair competition; and (ii) ecological sustainability, by protecting both the fish and the fishers in developing a genuine enabling environment.

7. FAO is also developing guidance on social responsibility for the fisheries and aquaculture sector throughout the entire value chain, building on existing international instruments and regulations but making them more explicit and adapted to the specific needs of the fisheries and aquaculture value chains. Panellists supported the FAO Guidance and expressed the importance of having one international tool compiling existing international instruments to help the sector.

8. Panellists and participants made the following recommendations:

   a) The need to promote decent work in the fisheries and aquaculture sector through active collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders and the enforcement of better social practices in the fish value chain at a national, regional, and international level. This can be done through the implementation of relevant international instruments and tools such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and recommendations (i.e., Work in Fishing Convention – C.188) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) standards, among others
   b) The continuation of the development of the FAO Guidance on Social Responsibility in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chain, targeting business actors to facilitate the implementation of better social practices, and supporting governments to improve national frameworks in order to enhance decent working conditions throughout the fisheries and aquaculture value chain
   c) The visibility and recognition of women's role in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, particularly in the small-scale fisheries sector. It is important to respect the rights of women and they must be supported to create their own cooperatives for better organization amongst themselves and their participation in decision-making processes should be facilitated.

V. Session 4: Sustainable and resilient maritime supply chains

1. The importance of functioning and resilient maritime supply chains has come to the forefront of the development agenda since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Container shipping freight rates reached historical highs and transport capacity has been held up in congested ports. SIDS and least developed countries are affected the most, although these economies already had challenges prior to the pandemic in integrating into global supply chains. The supply chain bottleneck triggered by the pandemic and its fallout provide a glimpse of what a climate crisis would look like if left unchecked. This stresses the need for more resilient maritime supply chains – not only to face future disruptions, but also to be ready to transition to a low-carbon shipping.

2. A panellist noted that maritime supply chains are faced with multiple challenges, not just COVID-19, but also international conflict situations, amongst others. These challenges, however, should not prevent the sector from acting to fully decarbonize shipping by 2050. It is necessary to act *now* to decarbonize shipping so as to mitigate climate change effects and to ensure sustainable development. The panellist stressed that the maritime industry is committed and is ready to work with other stakeholders to achieve this ambition.

3. Also, there is an urgent need to accelerate action on adaptation and resilience-building for seaports, particularly in SIDS and other coastal developing countries, and to provide the required support in terms of capacity-building and finance. The key to achieving reduction of emission is through developing, maturing, and scaling up solutions to a level where the cost is acceptable to all stakeholders

4. It is necessary to focus on establishing public-private partnerships in line with SDG 17 to achieve common goals, while addressing multiple challenges, including those related to the legal and regulatory framework, as well as the priorities of resilience and equity. These partnerships could help establish green shipping corridors that can catalyse the production and use of scalable zero emission fuels in this decade. By focusing on reaching five per cent scalable zero emission fuels in international shipping by

2030, it could be possible to set the needed transition in motion and drive down costs to be ready for a rapid scale-up to take place in the 2030s and 2040s.

5. A panellist described the experience of Panama in terms of commitment to high environmental standards and ecologically sustainable growth. This country is one of three carbon negative countries. This status is due in part from a combination of factors – a high ratio of forest cover, a relatively small population, and relatively low industrialization. Panama has completed two environmental inventories and drafted national policies and implementation strategies. This should help maintain and improve its carbon negative status while also addressing other environmental impacts. While the strategy focuses generally on internal effects, Panama is fortunate in being a country where local action can have an effect outside national borders, particularly, through incentives and regulations applied to canal operations and Panama's merchant fleet.

6. The shipping industry has tried to effectively cope with challenges during this pandemic, and to keep global trade flowing. The panellist noted that IMO and UNCTAD, together with other United Nations agencies, have already demonstrated their capacity to assess and project solutions for countries and will continue to build on that.

7. Regarding the impact of climate change in the Caribbean, a panellist noted that the region is particularly vulnerable, and climate change is already affecting its economies. Caribbean transport infrastructure is critical to trade and remains vulnerable to climate change. Caribbean ports already face other challenges, with climate change adding an additional layer of complexity. Damage to ports and roads affects not only transport and trade but also entire national economies, which may often take long to recover. Climate events can effectively cripple entire economies and impose severe fiscal constraints.

8. The panellists made the following recommendations:

    a) To urgently factor in climate change considerations into port development, operation, and management; to tackle climate change, by providing legal certainty, increasing partnerships and investments, and particularly, recognizing the special needs from some countries in the global climate change challenge.
    b) Shipping will play a key role in the world's overall energy transition - thus, it is necessary to consider the challenges and opportunities offered by the shipping industry's path to decarbonization, enhance knowledge, as well as increase partnerships and investment whilst recognizing the special needs of some countries. Countries should pursue a collaborative approach for transport infrastructure finance and climate change projects; UNCTAD, in cooperation with other relevant, knowledge-based capacity building institutions, has developed a Global Port by Port Vulnerability Index to assess and monitor trends and identify the potential for reforms and improvements
    c) Explore the potential of South-South collaboration, when exploring sectoral strategies for decarbonization
    d) Integrate SIDS into the decision-making process regarding climate change and grant special consideration to them in the context of the shipping, transport infrastructure finance, port efficiency, capacity building etc given their particular characteristics and the challenges they face (remoteness, sea level rise, capacity deficit etc.)
    e) Embrace digitalization and automation of shipping and port operations for transparency and data sharing to build resilience and ensure efficient maritime supply chain operations. Also, promote inclusive innovation through collaborative projects and knowledge platforms to disseminate information on the trade related aspects of SDG 14
    f) Industry regulations should be supplemented by policy measures and incentives to drive technology development and emission reductions, while at the same time ensuring shipping activity remains buoyant.

VI. Session 5: Addressing trade-related aspects of marine litter and plastic pollution

1. The recent United Nations Environmental Assembly resolution on plastics pollution (UNEA 5.2) adopted in March 2022 has galvanized the commitment of the international community to tackle this issue at a global scale. As a result of this resolution, countries committed to develop by 2024, a treaty with binding elements designed to bring an end to plastic pollution. The resolution is considered one of the most important global achievements on pollution governance since the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015. The 4th Oceans Forum is one of the first opportunities to reflect on the resolution and provide clear recommendations on how to pave the way for ensuring that work towards a United Nations treaty addresses the full lifecycle of plastics, including production, design and disposal while providing the most robust protections for health, climate, biodiversity, and human rights.

2. Together with complementary efforts at the multilateral trading system, such as the continuous work of the Informal Dialogue on Plastics at the WTO, the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendment, and improvements of the Harmonized System by the World Customs Organization, the UNEA process has launched an important road towards a United Nations Treaty, which if adopted, can contribute to a policy harmonization at the national level.

3. The panellists and participants made the following recommendations based on discussions:

    a) Addressing global challenges requires global responses - the problem of plastic pollution requires a collective and coordinated response which has been acknowledged by countries' commitments at the UNEA 5.2, the Commonwealth Blue Charter, and by the ministerial statement of the Informal dialogue on Plastics at WTO; by recognizing that this problem affects us all, all nations and stakeholders must be encouraged to take meaningful action
    b) Intensify multilateral cooperation to accelerate the adoption of a United Nations treaty on ending plastic pollution, backed by recommendations from the science-policy panel established at UNEA 5.2 by 2024.
    c) At the national level, promote a more aggressive usage of economic instruments to support government's ambitions on plastic waste management and the transition to the circular economy, including by promoting material substitutes to plastics via differentiated tax strategies, regulations, industrial policy, and green public procurement
    d) At the multilateral level, promote the further development of the Harmonized System by the inclusion of special classifications relevant to material substitutes and alternatives to facilitate the adjustment of tariff schedules that will promote material substitutes and alternatives to plastics, and disincentivize trade in highly polluting, single-use plastics and hazardous plastic materials, control plastic waste trade, facilitate trade of services necessary for waste avoidance, management, and recycling; and support the development of export markets for material substitutes and alternatives, including high-quality recycled plastics
    e) Promote further research, development, and adoption of material substitutes that are less polluting to the ocean – particularly, explore the adoption of natural materials, marine by-products, and post-harvest agricultural waste, which could help spur innovation, support a more circular economy, and develop new industrial capacities in developing countries
    f) Undertake continuous statistical work monitoring and measuring the flows of plastics and non-plastic feedstocks, as well as end-use products, to produce analyses that support policy action.