



# 4<sup>th</sup> Oceans Forum

## on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14

**6–8 April 2022**  
**Geneva and online (hybrid)**  
**Salle XXVI**

UNCTAD in cooperation with FAO, UNEP, The Commonwealth, OACPS, CAF, and IOI  
and with the support of the Republics of Portugal and Kenya

### Topics to be addressed

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10 a.m.–12 p.m., 6 April 2022

HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT, DAY 1

## Towards a Blue Deal for a post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience

The emergence of economies from the COVID-19 pandemic engendered the double challenge of socio-economic recovery and resilience while ensuring environmental sustainability. Recovery remains fragile and uneven, as some countries have increased their public debts, have fewer financial resources available, or are worse hit by external shocks such as climate change and other natural- or human-related disasters and new waves of COVID-19 or other infections. Official Development Assistance (ODA) for ocean economy represents a very slim segment of only \$2.9 billion in 2019, which is insufficient compared with the level of ambition found in the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in SDG 14.

The ocean is an important source of oxygen and biodiversity and plays a vital role in the climate and water cycle while contributing to food security. Transitioning towards a sustainable ocean economy will require socio-economic recovery and greater resilience against external shocks and climate change under a Blue Deal. Adopting sustainable best practices and coherent ocean economic policies will ensure that the preservation and management of marine and coastal ecosystems offer further opportunities for healthier stocks and higher value-added activities. Sustainable fishing and aquaculture, seaweed culture ecotourism, marine biotechnology, and offshore renewable energy should all be considered to achieve this.

3–5 p.m., 6 April 2022

SESSION 1, DAY 1

## **The seaweed sector as a lever for a sustainable economic recovery**

Algae, including seaweeds and microalgae, represent nearly 30 per cent of global aquaculture production. In 2019, the 34.7 million tons of world seaweed grown generated \$14.7 billion first-sale value. In addition to food consumption and carbon sequestration, seaweed can be used in other sectors such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, biotechnological applications, and biofuels. Indeed, seaweed production offers opportunities for economic, social, and sustainable development and green job creation.

Seaweed is dubbed 'green gold' due to its high value-addition potential and its ecological footprints beneficial to the marine environment. Investing in this sector can 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. However, the development of the seaweed industry faces several challenges: (i) developing countries will need to find the capital for initial investments; (ii) in coastal areas, seaweed cultivation may compete with other economic activities such as tourism and fishing in coastal zones; (iii) marketing campaigns are needed to raise awareness of human health, social, and environmental benefits of the seaweeds; (iv) seaweed production must be well regulated and meet MEA criteria to avoid negative environmental impacts on adjacent marine ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs; and (v) social safeguards and systems for equitable sharing of costs and benefits of seaweed production must be in place.

10 a.m.–12 p.m., 7 April 2022

SESSION 2, DAY 2

## **Transparency and implementation mechanisms to support fish subsidies and non-tariff measures (NTMs) reform**

Reforming and phasing out certain forms of fish subsidies and providing access to marine resources and markets to small-scale artisanal fishers are fundamental targets under SDG 14. It is expected that fish reform will limit most harmful forms of fish subsidies and enable public resources shift towards more sustainable activities including stock management and compliance with NTMs in key markets and an emerging Blue Deal. Lack of data for both subsidies and NTMs, particularly in developing countries can hinder progress and implementation. The latter will require significant regulatory, administrative, institutional and coordination challenges at the national and international levels. It will also involve significant efforts in building capacities to identify and assess options for shifting fish subsidies towards sustainable activities and reform most impactful NTMs. Technical assistance and capacity building programs must be introduced to help countries to understand, implement and enforce fish subsidies reform, relevant NTM harmonisation and trade in fish facilitation.

3–5 p.m., 7 April 2022

SESSION 3, DAY 2

## **Social sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture value chain**

Marine fisheries and aquaculture is a sector that presents serious occupational hazards, exacerbated by weak and limited human and labour rights protection. IUU fishing and its unsustainable and disrespectful practices has led to human trafficking, forced labour and other abuses to vulnerable people, mainly migrants, women, and children in/from developing countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened these existing challenges by disrupting the industry, reducing incomes and adding a new health hazard to employment conditions.

Promoting decent working conditions in the fisheries and aquaculture sector is key to more effective management and responsible social practices while improving trade opportunities, livelihoods, and food security in support of the SDGs. Increased awareness of the sector's challenges has stimulated stakeholders' participation in initiatives that address and seek remedies for these challenges through increased monitoring, transparency and availability of public information.

10 a.m.–12 p.m., 8 April 2022

SESSION 4, DAY 3

## **Sustainable and resilient maritime supply chains**

Our livelihoods – food, jobs, energy – depend on functioning and resilient maritime supply chains. This is not a new concept but 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. Small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries are affected the most. The supply chain storm triggered by the pandemic and its fallout provide a glimpse of what a climate crisis would look like if left unchecked. We need more resilient maritime supply chains not only to face future disruptions, but also to be ready to transition to a low-carbon shipping. This means that appropriate decisions and plans need to be made today.

3–4.30 p.m., 8 April 2022

SESSION 5, DAY 3

## **Addressing trade-related aspects of marine litter and plastic pollution**

Backed by a growing body of scientific evidence, the large-scale usage of plastics, especially single-use plastics, has grown into a global pollution problem with significant negative consequences for the marine environment, biodiversity, and dependent communities. This has prompted multilateral discussions and actions in various international fora, such as at the WTO, UNEP, and UNCTAD, the Basel Convention and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Tackling the issue of plastic litter and other wastes in the ocean requires concerted action at multiple levels, from product and process innovation to coordinated domestic and international policies.

Currently, there are discussions regarding a potential United Nations treaty to address plastic pollution. It is envisaged to cover overarching goals, measurable targets for reduction, regulation of bans and other types of State action, and increased use of sustainable materials and reuse of existing materials and recycling under a circular economy approach. Looking towards the future, national and multilateral trade policies need to positively incentivize systemic change and the gradual adoption of environmentally preferable plastic substitutes as well as enable investment in waste management and recycling, particularly in developing countries.

4.30–5 p.m., 8 April 2022

PRESENTATION BY THE CHAIR, DAY 3

## **Presentation of preliminary list of recommendations and action points for the United Nations Oceans Conference**

Closing