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Oceans Forum on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14

UNECE contribution at UNCTAD on 21 March 2017

Mister Chair, Distinguished Guests,

On behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), I would like to thank the organizers for the opportunity to contribute to the rich exchanges related to Trade-related Aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14 at the Ocean Forum, co-organized by UNCTAD, FAO, UNEP, Commonwealth Secretariat, ACP Group and IOI.

In particular, I would like to draw delegates and participants' attention on the UNECE Trade Sub-programme activities in the fishery sector, which can be summarized as follows:

The conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources is an essential element in promoting sustainable development. Best practice developed by UNECE to address this challenge is increasingly implemented beyond our region.

As one example, in 2016, UNECE sought support from the EU-ACP Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Programme for the implementation of two national projects in Uganda and Namibia. The projects were executed by the African Regional Standards Organization (ARSO). The projects reviewed the two countries' national fisheries regulatory systems against the UNECE recommendations and best practice on managing risks through regulatory action, including for man-made and natural hazards that confront citizens, consumers and workers. The key preliminary finding from the projects was that the national authorities relied on rigid and prescriptive regulations that did not allow handling the increasing uncertainty inherent to the sector of fisheries. The countries have now adopted a Fishery Risk Management Action Plan and, additionally, key stakeholders have received training on the UNECE Risk Management framework and on the UNECE FLUX standard. Resources are sought to replicate this action at the regional level especially for the countries of the African Great Lakes Region.

Key partners for the further development of these activities are the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Institute of Coastal Research of the Helmholtz-Zentrum Geestacht, which co-organized a workshop on how to apply the UNECE Methodology to the specific challenges of SDG 14 on "Life below water". Participants in the workshop concluded that risk management best practice should be integrated in national strategies for the achievement of Goal 14, in particular as regards Target 14.4. In particular, best practice should be developed to enable regulators

to effectively identify and achieve a “maximum sustainable yield” for all species, to be determined in relation to the biological characteristics of the targeted and by-catch species and the risks that confront the habitat and the community. Additionally, regulatory authorities could be supported in the development of surveillance and enforcement strategies based on an analysis of the reasons of why overfishing is happening, with a continuous engagement of the industry and the research community, as well as relevant international organizations, including the FAO.

Amid growing concerns about the grave problem of overfishing by today’s modern fishing fleets, addressed by SDG 14, UNECE with its UN/CEFACT has developed the FLUX Standard (Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange) which helps improve fisheries information management, and plays a key role in preventing overfishing and the collapse of global fish stocks. FLUX allows Fishery Management Organizations (FMOs) to automatically access the electronic data from fishing vessels, such as vessel identification and fishing data (catch area, species and quantity, date and time). With this standard, FMOs around the world have for the first time a communication tool to automate the collection and dissemination of the fishery catch data needed for sustainable fishery management and for detecting and combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. FLUX has been adopted by the European Union and is increasingly used in other regions of the world. In addition, the development of a reliable and up-to-date database on fish catch will improve research on science-based fishery management. UNECE is also working towards the establishment of a Team of Specialists for the promotion of sustainable fishery standards on a global scale, and on a project for the electronic exchange of fisheries data.

Thank you and we look forward to contribute to the outcome of this important Forum.

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