

Thank you very much,

According to statistics of the United Nations, weighted within the framework of the SDG 14 on "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources", more than three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods. Globally, the market value of marine and coastal resources and their industry represents 5 percent of global GDP, and marine fisheries directly or indirectly employ more than 200 million people.

Fishing is the livelihood of millions of families around the world, but it is the artisanal or family fishermen, as well as coastal populations, who face the most alarming figures in terms of poverty, lack of opportunities and exclusion in countless countries.

Many coastal areas in Latin America and the Caribbean, due to the lack of opportunities and incentives for fishing populations, are easy prey for drug trafficking and organized crime.

Faced with this reality, Costa Rica joined the rest of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and we proposed within the United Nations, the celebration of this year 2022, as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture; with a twofold mission:

1. To direct the world's attention to the role of small-scale fishers and fisher folks in food security and nutrition,
2. To promote poverty eradication and the sustainable use of marine natural resources.

As political decision makers and aware of the enormous benefits that marine biodiversity provides to human beings, we must promote the interrelation between science and public policy, favoring the sustainable use of fishery resources, protecting the areas with the highest concentration of biodiversity species and marine ecosystems, fighting against overexploitation of species, combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, but at the same time, generating opportunities for artisanal fishermen, access to markets, access to public services and decent living conditions.

It is in this sense that our countries are called upon to support inclusive value chains for artisanal fisheries, guaranteeing the effective participation of the fishing sector in the construction of public regulations that are truly adapted to their realities.

The great challenges we face as a human society in terms of marine protection and sustainable use of fishery resources include responsible governance of fisheries, social development, employment and decent work, strengthening of value chains in the fisheries sector, access to markets for small-scale fishery producers, gender equality, a human rights-based approach, with respect for indigenous peoples and, of course, placing the strengthening of sustainable and resilient food systems at the center of the discussion.

The sustainability of marine species is only achievable through effective environmental protection initiatives. Costa Rica, together with France and the United Kingdom, co-leads the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, a conglomerate of almost 100 countries that advocate for the protection of 30% of the seas and land by 2030 in the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as the scientifically based measure required to halt biodiversity loss and help address climate change from a mitigation and adaptation perspective.

In order to show you a concise example of traceability programs about small-scale fisheries in Costa Rica, the government in alliance with the NGO Forever Costa Rica Association and a fisherfolk associations of the Nicoya Peninsula, a private small-scale fishing technology company and one of the largest companies marketing marine products in the country, is developing a traceability system for artisanal fisheries. They use a custom made traceability system, smart scales, training for fishermen and collection centers, and consumer awareness, to certify the artisanal fishing practices of snapper, aiming for a fair marketing and export line, which will contribute to promoting sustainable artisanal fishing, the increase in the prices of products and therefore an increase in the quality of life of coastal areas.

As in other parts of the world, in Costa Rica small-scale fisheries involve the largest number of fishers in the country. Small-scale fishing is a transcendental element for job creation and food security nationally and globally. According to FAO, in the world, small-scale fisheries employ around 90% of the fishing sector and contribute almost 50% of the total catches. In that sense, effective fisheries management is a critical tool for ocean conservation.

In that way, we are coordinating and looking at fisheries through an integrated perspective, developing fisheries management measures and activities closely and effectively between communities, academia and institutions to promote positive change and long-term sustainability of the fishing activities in balance with a productive and healthy ocean. As a national example, initiatives such as the community-based fishery improvement projects (C-FIP), or triple impact FIPs, work with local groups of small scale fishers and foster business relationships to promote environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Finally, in this city of Lisbon, rich in fishery resources, this kind of dialogue allows us to engage on the sustainable use of the seas, the protection of the oceans and I look forward to continue engaging with you on this very crucial issue.

Thank you very much.