

Promoting and strengthening sustainable ocean-based economies, in particular for Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries

Co-chairs, excellencies (*notably the ecstatic DG of the World Tourism Organization!*)

Iceland would like to remind this conference of the importance of aquatic and blue food for the development of SIDS and Least developed countries.

The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit identified the so-called aquatic and/or blue foods as a game changing solution in food system transformation and achieving progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This resulted in the launch of the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition charged with raising the profile of blue foods in food system dialogues and mobilizing financial, technical, and organizational resources for aquatic blue food projects.

Iceland advocated for the launch of this Coalition, has been active in its work from inception and accepted a leading role.

The mission of the Coalition is parallel to the newly announced Blue Transformation programme of FAO, which Iceland welcomes and supports. Iceland furthermore would like to emphasize the role of FAO and the importance of its Fisheries and Aquaculture Division and the relatively new SIDS Coordination office.

2022 is the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022), which aims to focus world attention on the role that small-scale artisanal fishers, aquatic farmers and workers play in food security and nutrition, poverty eradication and sustainable natural resource use. *Here, I would especially draw attention to the role of women; in fact, Iceland is organizing a virtual side event on their role in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, at the HLPF in July.*

On a global scale, we must also promote responsible consumption of aquatic food, because fish consumption patterns in developed countries are interrelated with the livelihoods of small-scale producers in developing countries - and the natural resources that support them.

Collaborations such as Blue Food Assessment have contributed greatly to an evidence-based approach in these matters. The scientific community, the private sector and community-based organizations have shown great support of the aquatic blue food

agenda, not least the potential for innovative solutions to be scaled up for vulnerable coastal communities and SIDS.

Iceland has noted through its work in the Aquatic and Blue Food Coalition that OECD figures show disproportionate investment through Overseas Development Aid in the Blue Economy and UNESCO reports similar situation in relation to scientific research.

We urge donors to act on this situation and ease access to multilateral funding sources.

Recently, shocks to the food supply caused by conflict - notably Russian aggression in Ukraine- and the pandemic have disrupted both food production and the supply chain, highlighting the system's overall fragility and the need for us to transform and diversify food systems to make them able to more reliably, equitably and sustainably nourish our growing world population. There, blue food plays a key role.