



Interactive dialogue 4: Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

3:00-6:00PM, 29 June 2022

Key points

By H.E Hon. Derek Klazen, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Namibia

The fourth Interactive Dialogue of the 2022 United Nations Oceans Conference on “Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets” was held on 29 June 2022. The Dialogue was co-chaired by H.E. Honorable Mr. Derek Klazen, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Namibia, and H.E. Mr. Lawrence Hanson, Associate Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Oceans, Canada. Ms. Gim Huay Neo, Managing Director, Centre for Nature and Climate, the World Economic Forum, served as Moderator.

Presentations were made by Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Mr. Henry Puna, Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum; Ms. Shakuntala Thilsted, 2021 World Food Prize Laureate, Global Lead of Nutrition and Public Health of WorldFish, Steering Committee Member of the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the United Nations Committee on World Food Security; Mr. Santiago Wills, Ambassador of Colombia to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Chair of the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations. Ms. Elisa Morgera, Director, One Ocean Hub, and Professor of Global Environmental Law, University of Strathclyde Law School, and Ms. Editrudith Lukanga, Co-President, World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers and Vice-Chairperson of the International Steering Committee of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 (IYAFA), were the Lead Discussants for the Dialogue.

Twenty-two participants made interventions during the Interactive Dialogue, including from States, intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders. Additional written statements were received from participants following the session and will be available on the website of the Conference.

Participants emphasized the important role sustainable fisheries play in sustainable development, national economies, trade, livelihoods, nutrition and food security, culture and identity and poverty alleviation. The particular importance of sustainable fisheries to small island developing States was emphasized. It was noted that the predicted global food crisis would render access to sustainable aquatic food systems even more vital as a source of food and nutrition.

Many participants emphasized that healthy fisheries depended on healthy and resilient marine ecosystems. In this regard, several participants expressed concern about the detrimental impact of stressors, such as climate change, ocean acidification, and pollution, including plastic pollution, on the sustainability of fisheries. Reference was also made to how unsustainable fishing practices impacted the marine environment, including through lost and abandoned fishing gear and fish aggregating devices.

Several participants expressed concern regarding overfishing, noting that more than one third of the world's fish stocks were exploited beyond biologically sustainable levels. Some participants also expressed concern regarding illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which undermined conservation and management measures and the sustainability of fish stocks, noting that it was thought to constitute one in five fish caught. A view was expressed that IUU fishing was interconnected with transnational organized crime in some States. It was emphasized that addressing IUU fishing through a multifaceted response, including by strengthening monitoring, control and surveillance measures, was an urgent priority.

Many participants pointed to the importance of sound governance and management of fisheries as a key to ensuring their sustainability. Participants highlighted the role of an ecosystem approach, science and the science-policy interface in fisheries management, as well as international cooperation and capacity-building. Attention was drawn to several

examples of best practices at the regional and national level. Several participants expressed the view that sound social and economic policies could benefit sustainability of fisheries.

Participants welcomed the adoption of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies as a significant accomplishment towards making fisheries more sustainable and help small-scale fisheries. While it was an important step towards meeting the commitment in Sustainable Development Goal 14.6, several participants noted that it did not cover all sorts of fisheries subsidies.

Some participants underscored the important role of small-scale fisheries for food and nutrition security and employment. Several participants highlighted the challenges faced by the artisanal sector, including competition from industrial fishers, limited infrastructure, difficulty in accessing capital and markets and challenging working conditions. Some participants recognized the importance of building momentum from the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022).

Several participants noted that the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, which are based on a human-rights based approach, are a powerful tool to achieve the sustainable development of the sector and increase its contribution to food security.

Several participants emphasized the fundamental role of women in the fisheries sector, particularly in artisanal and small-scale fisheries, and the need to promote gender equality. It was noted that, although women make up over half of the workforce, their contribution and the challenges they face are still under-recognized.

In terms of voluntary commitments, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Peru jointly declared their intention to take a number of steps to eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies, including by accepting, and provisionally applying elements of, the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement pledged to resume one hundred percent observer coverage of fishing vessels.

Overall, the discussion underscored the importance and potential of aquatic food systems, and the urgent need for action to restore and maintain the sustainability of stocks.

