

2022 UN Ocean Conference

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

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Remarks by Mr. Sagar Mehra, Joint Secretary (Fisheries)

1. Fish is an integral part of India's civilization, culture and tradition. The lives of our fishermen are intertwined with the oceans and seas since times immemorial. Fish being the only source of their livelihood through generations, responsible and sustainable fishing is ingrained in the ethos of our traditional and small-scale fishermen.
2. While many nations developed and allowed their gigantic industrial fleets to exploit the oceanic wealth, India maintained a fleet that largely fished within its EEZ, deploying vessels of modest size largely operating with passive gear and leaving minimum footprints on the seascape. This is how India has been able to sustain its fisheries wealth-providing livelihood to its traditional and artisanal fishing communities, and at the same time also contributing significantly to the global food basket.
3. India would like to state that developing countries should be provided adequate policy space for promoting their small-scale and artisanal fishers and sustainable growth of fisheries sector.
4. The developing countries should be encouraged to promote their small-scale artisanal fishermen for greater access to fish stocks including deep-sea and high sea resources, get better returns for meeting their genuine needs and enabling their market access to sustain their livelihoods. The small-scale and artisanal fishers should be supported for spreading their fishing operations deeper in the EEZ in order to reduce the fishing pressure in the 12 nautical mile zone for resource sustainability, equity and food security.
5. India is also extremely concerned with Illegal Unreported and Unregulated IUU fishing which needs to be prevented to meet the objectives of the achieving sustainability under the SDG 14. India has played an active role in the long and arduous journey of fisheries subsidies negotiations in the WTO. Collective efforts of nations have culminated in an historic Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies in WTO on 17/6/22 aimed at eliminating subsidies for IUU fishing and prohibition of subsidies for overfished stocks. India is confident that the Agreement would benefit the small-scale and artisanal fishers.
6. India strongly feels that the outcome of UN Ocean conference, while celebrating 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, should provide a level-playing field to the developing nations to ensure that their small-scale artisanal fishing fleets are sustained, the livelihoods of the low-income resource-poor fisher people are not threatened, food security issues are adequately addressed, policy space for all maritime zones including the high seas is provided and the aspirations of the fisher communities are realized.
