

Statement by the Regular Process for Ocean Action Panel 5: Fostering sustainable fisheries management including supporting small-scale fishers

Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to be among you, all of us hoping to make our oceans better for future generations.

On behalf of the Group of Experts of the UN Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects – I would like to contribute a few points related to this discussion.

We are well into the final stages of the third cycle of the Regular Process for producing the World Ocean Assessment – which provides a comprehensive view of the state of global marine environment.

Not surprisingly, we are finding that all components – from the deepest to the shallowest parts - of the ocean are affected by climate change and human activities. Since the last World Ocean Assessment, we are finding that changes are occurring more rapidly than we thought. Many of the benefits that humans derive from the ocean are at risk. Good ocean related policy and especially action are needed urgently.

This very much applies to this discussion on sustainability in fisheries. Globally, fish stocks are changing in many ways such as growth, migration patterns, reproduction and range – including, for example, entirely new fisheries developing in the Arctic, the sea may be soon ice free for parts of the year.

Stock assessments are becoming increasingly uncertain as we learn that the basis for the modelling and stock biomass no longer apply, and that far more research is required to understand these changes.

Pressure on these stocks is also increasing from fishing. There are increasing numbers of overfished stocks and large amounts of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing is still taking place.

All of these apply from the largest fisheries to the smallest subsistence fisheries. We know that local communities and subsistence fishers are disproportionately impacted by these changes.

There is plenty of hope though. Our technology and scientific understanding of fish stocks is improving rapidly, for example through remote sensing and genetic technologies and through leveraging artificial intelligence tools.

Governance is also improving both on the high seas and locally. Adaptation by fisheries management will likely be the key going forward.

The results of the third World Ocean Assessment will be finalised in the coming months with more details available for you on fisheries. If a chapter of the World Ocean Assessment turns up in your email, please provide constructive comments to help us improve it.

We trust that the results from World Ocean Assessments will assist policy makers globally. We plan to commence the 4th cycle of the Regular Process soon.

I am happy to talk about the Regular Process with anyone with questions in between sessions of this Conference.

Thank you.
