

**Meeting of ToS on Sustainable Fisheries**  
**UNECE**

**Speaking Notes**  
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Thank you. Let me brief you on recent work/discussions on sustainable fisheries and the trade-related targets of SDG 14 at the WTO's Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) that could be relevant for this meeting on the UN - FLUX (a standard developed for global fisheries information exchange).

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In terms of background/context, it is important to note that fish remains the most traded food commodity globally, worth close to US\$148 billion in 2014, with developing countries accounting for 54% of exports by value. But there are biological limits in wild capture fisheries, and most of the recent growth in world fish production and trade has come from aquaculture.

There is need to focus on sustainable fisheries especially as we seek to address externalities and the possibility of "market failures" and/or "policy failures". The "tragedy of the commons" is well known. The international legal framework for the oceans and the work of the UN, FAO, RFMOs and national fishery management bodies, among others is important for sustainable fisheries management. The work of the WTO is also relevant. The WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations remain on the radar with the MC11 Decision in Buenos Aires setting out the work to be completed by 2019. In addition, there are also discussions on sustainable fisheries and topics such as catch documentation schemes and traceability requirements in the WTO's CTE and other bodies that may be useful for today's meeting.

The Committee on Trade and Environment or CTE, is the forum for discussions on trade and environment at the WTO. The CTE has a broad 10 point work programme.

It seeks to enhance the mutual supportiveness of trade and environment. Sustainable fisheries as a topic, therefore, fits nicely and has been the focus of both past and more recent discussions at the CTE (an incubator of ideas and proposals).

More specifically, fisheries are discussed under Item 6 of the CTE work programme and para 32(i) of the DMD, as possible "win-win-win" situations wherein the elimination or reduction of trade restrictions and distortions would benefit trade, the environment and development. Over the past few years, there has been increased transparency with WTO members sharing national experiences on steps taken to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing. There has been an exchange of views on policy tools such as fishing permits, subsidies, Port State Measures (PSMs), catch certification schemes, eco-labels and traceability requirements (tracing fisheries across the supply chain from fish to plate or from sea to shop). In developing such tools, some Members have highlighted the importance of keeping in mind principles such as non-discrimination, transparency and the possibility of harmonization where possible. The need for awareness generation, international co-operation, technical assistance and capacity building has also been emphasized. The CTE has benefitted from periodic briefings from MEAs and IGOs such as the FAO, UNCTAD, OECD and UNEP. More such briefings are planned in the future.

The CTE meeting of June last year, illustrates the range of issues covered at the CTE. The CTE covered two main themes at this meeting: fisheries and climate change. Both topics are relevant for sustainable fisheries. Among the items covered on fisheries were briefings on national and global efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Fiji, as co-hosts with Sweden, briefed the Committee on the UN Ocean Conference held in June 2017 to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14. UNCTAD presented its activities related to the UN Ocean Conference and its 2016 Trade and Environment Review publication on Fish Trade, which described the main trends in fish trade and the likely impacts of climate change on fish. The FAO presented its suite of legal instruments and tools to combat IUU fishing, including the Port State Measures Agreement; the global record of fishing and other vessels; and voluntary guidelines for catch documentation schemes. Canada outlined its contribution to tackle IUU

fishing with its legislative and regulatory framework to manage and protect fisheries resources. A wide range of members including the EU, Ecuador, Mexico, and the US, among others, have exchanged views and national experiences to tackle IUU fishing at the CTE. Given the importance of fisheries subsidies disciplines, Members were briefed on the state-of-play of the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations in the Negotiating Group on Rules. The OECD provided an overview of its Fisheries Support Estimate database, covering 31 countries. Canada also provided an update on the plurilateral negotiations on fisheries subsidies involving 15 WTO members.

Another area of focus is tariffs and non-tariff measures. Trade, underpinned by an open and transparent WTO, can be an important tool to facilitate and accelerate the dissemination of best practices and environmental technologies around the world, including those that contribute to ocean health and the conservation of marine resources (such as monitoring and surveillance equipment or fishing nets with devices to exclude bycatch). Apart from tariffs, fisheries are subject to a high incidence of non-tariff measures, such as sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barriers to trade (TBT). Concerns have been expressed on the proliferation of private standards and even government-mandated technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures, particularly when the proposed measures are not risk-based, even-handed in its design or application, or more trade restrictive than necessary. Here, it is worth mentioning, transparency tools (such as ePing) and mechanisms in the WTO SPS and TBT Committees to address specific trade concerns.

It is also important to highlight the development dimension to fisheries implicit in SDG target 14.b. Fisheries is the most traded food commodity and of particular importance to developing countries, SIDS and LDCs where there are a large number of small scale artisanal fishers. Technical assistance and capacity building can be of value. There are ongoing or planned projects focusing on the fisheries sector under WTO partnerships such as the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), Aid for Trade (A4T) and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) for LDCs.

Finally, a few words on the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations in the WTO Negotiating Group on Rules (NGR). The sustainability dimension, with the need for sound fisheries management, has been an important underlying concern since the beginning of the negotiations. Special and differential treatment for developing and LDCs is also an integral element. Eliminating fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and IUU fishing is therefore a potential "win-win-win" outcome. Post MC11, the negotiations are resuming with an informal meeting of the NGR scheduled tomorrow – 30 January.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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