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## **I. Introduction**

1. Pursuant to paragraph 72 of General Assembly resolution 78/68 of 5 December 2023, on *Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments*, the Secretary

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6. Mr. Mathias recalled that it was the first round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement to be held since the resumption of the Review Conference on the Agreement in May 2023, and noted that the General Assembly decided that the Informal Consultations would focus, during the seventeenth round, on the topic “Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change”. Given the current triple global crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, Mr. Mathias highlighted the cumulative effects of this crisis on the health and resilience of ecosystems, including fisheries, as well as the impacts that climate change is having on the distribution and abundance of fish species. Mr. Mathias recalled that the current state of highly migratory fish stocks and straddling fish stocks remains a significant concern due to overfishing and a lack of information on the status of a significant number of stocks.

7. Mr. Mathias noted that the Agreement, as a basis for international cooperation, including through regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements (RFMO/As), can constitute an important tool for reducing the impacts of climate change on fisheries. He mentioned that the discussions during the Informal Consultations would provide an opportunity to learn more about the current impacts of climate change on fisheries from scientific experts and to exchange information on experiences and best practices for improving sustainable fisheries management at the global, regional, and national levels. Additionally, they would be crucial for informing discussions at the next resumption of the Review Conference, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, RFMO/As, and other institutions and fora.

#### **B. Election of the Chairperson**

8. The meeting elected Mr. Joji Morishita,

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from States and organizations<sup>1</sup> touched upon important issues of data collection and science

knowledge on supporting scientific action . It was also noted that discussions would be beneficial for









31. Mr. Colm Lordan, Advisory Committee Chair, International Council for the  
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since past experience could no longer be relied upon, it was crucial to gain a better systemic understanding, including on the role of environmental factors. As an additional approach, Ms. Glaser suggested to view fisheries as part of the global food system and highlighted the importance of reducing spoilage and waste in fisheries, often caused by inadequate





UNFCCC, emphasized that effective fisheries management involved fish conservation, but also safeguarding human livelihoods and preserving cultures reliant on fish protein, which sustained over 3.1 billion people worldwide. She underscored the challenges posed by the migration of fish stocks from historic areas in Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) to the high seas and vice versa due to warming oceans, and proposed a new mechanism, drawing from the experience of the Warsaw Implementation Mechanism, to assist States, particularly developing countries, with regard to adaptation and loss and damage due to extreme climate events. The proposal entailed establishing globally tradable instruments for harvest rights for fish stocks that historically occurred in one State or in the regulatory area of an RFMO/A and were migrating to other areas, and a mechanism that could provide funding as a form of offset for lost fishing allocations. Ms. Telesetsky highlighted the importance of adaptive management and suggested that improved scientific models and increased data collection could help manage changes in proposed fishing entitlements. She concluded by emphasizing the need for actionable climate justice to support vulnerable communities that lacked alternatives.

46. In the ensuing discussions, the Chairperson noted the rapid changes fisheries faced due to the impacts of climate change.

sectoral coordination, in particular at local and national levels, including in some developed countries. The Chairperson emphasized in this context that basic fisheries governance, including conservation and management measures, was a prerequisite for countries to take action to address the impacts of climate change on fisheries, while also noting the need to adapt existing approaches to new challenges.

49. Another delegation also stressed the importance of synergies between fisheries and climate change bodies and frameworks and noted that addressing the impacts of climate change on fisheries, including climate change adaptation depended on the local conditions of coastal communities and the means of implementation of individual coastal States. This delegation welcomed information presented by Ms. Bahri on the projected needs for climate finance in fisheries and emphasized the importance of integrating oceans and fisheries in the preparation of national adaptation plans in order to mobilize sectoral action.

50. Ms. Randhawa noted in this context that the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue would be held in Bonn on 11 and 12 June 2024 during the meetings of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice

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53. Another delegation noted the need to improve cooperation between existing RFMO/As through new or existing mechanisms and instruments in order to address the migration of fish stocks due to climate change. Ms. Telesetsky noted that the Warsaw Implementation

57. Ms. Bahri and the Chairperson stressed the need for further efforts to improve the accuracy of models with multiple drivers, in particular, increased data to help validate predictions. The EAF-Nansen Programme was mentioned in this context as a model for data collection that also includes climate change considerations in order to support climate analysis in developing countries. Ms. Germani also recalled in this context the capacity-building and capacity-development activities of DOALOS to promote participation and implementation of UNCLOS and UNFSA in developing countries.

58. Another delegation noted the upcoming twenty-fourth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (18 to 21 June 2024) and discussions on the topic of “The ocean as a source of sustainable food”. The delegation emphasized in this context the importance of “blue food” and in particular the need for financing in order to develop fisheries governance and management systems. She noted that Sustainable Development Goal 14 on oceans was the most underfunded goal in the 2030 Agenda and stressed the need to integrate financing into efforts to address the impacts of climate change on fisheries.

59. One delegation raised a number of wide-ranging questions, including whether model laws existed on addressing climate change issues in the context of fisheries management and how small-scale fisheries could be incorporated in legal and economic considerations of fisheries conservation and management in the face of climate change. She also questioned whether commercial and insurance considerations, such as anti

effectiveness of adaptation measures declined. Ms. Holsman underscored this finding with an example from the Eastern Bering Sea, where projected declines in pollock populations correlated linearly with the degree of warming. Second, she stressed that adaptation planning was needed to support equitable climate responses and resilience, and discussed management challenges and potential solutions. In this context, she explained how management strategy evaluations were being used to understand how climate-informed reference points might perform under future scenarios of climate change. Integrated modelling projects, for example, projected climate impacts on growth, abundance, condition and distribution of species, which formed the basis for advice on changes in total allowable catch, allocation, value, as well as on implications for ecosystems and human well-being. As a third take-home message, Ms. Holsman noted that ecosystem-based management supported the inclusive, dynamic and equitable climate planning that needed to take place. She closed her presentation by emphasizing the need for sustained support for coordinated climate change adaptation planning, climate-integrated tools and advice for fisheries management.

61. Responding to a question by the Chairperson on how information was shared with stakeholders, Ms. Holsman explained that it was important to collaborate with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that the output could be considered in existing management processes.

62. Mr. Darius Campbell, Secretary of the North

levels. She noted that the tuna catch in the western and central Pacific Ocean was substantial, accounting for the majority of the global tuna catch. In an IPCC scenario where GHG emissions doubled by 2050, impacts on the tropical tuna stocks of skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye could be expected to result in an average annual loss of \$90 million and a 20 percent loss of biomass in equatorial Pacific Island Countries and Territories. The speaker observed that WCPFC had adopted a resolution on climate change in 2019 and the subject was a standing agenda item at the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Pertinent assessments and an adaptive management approach were being considered, and awareness-raising was ongoing. At the same time, as Ms. Garvilles noted, resources were limited and commitment from members, and collaboration with other tuna RFMOs, were needed. Challenges also arose in relation to research and data needs, as well as from the fact that decisions were taken at the national level in relation to a regional problem. Concluding her remarks, Ms. Garvilles noted that these challenges called for a multifaceted approach that also recognized the specific requirements of SIDS.

included in RFMO budgets. He identified five measures to help RFMOs fulfil their climate-related commitments. First, mainstreaming ecosystem-based fisheries management, for example by implementing dynamic fisheries closures or temperature-based management measures. Second, adopting climate-adaptive harvest strategies, using management strategy evaluations. Third, enacting governance reforms to address IUU fishing, for example, by requiring more transparency in vessel ownership and access agreements. Fourth, addressing harmful subsidies that promote overinvestment in fishing, and fifth, promoting coordination across



Similarly, the RSN Magazine, composed of contributions from RFBs, could fulfill a similar function — the latest issue had been devoted to the subject of climate change. Mr. Campbell noted that RFB Secretariats could add value to exchanges of this kind, for example, by reporting back after attending meetings such as those of ICSP or the Bay of Bengal Programme.

72. A delegation raised a question pertaining to the quality of data and information received from States, for example, when it came to attributing a decrease in fish size to climate change as opposed to overfishing. Mr. Campbell responded that, based upon discussions with senior ICES advisors, it could be challenging to determine which factors were determinative and that climate change, plankton distribution and fishing pressures could play a role. Mr. Lordan noted that ICES had developed a quality assurance system for its data, explaining that it went through a rigorous screening process, checked by independent experts in ICES working groups. In this respect, the Chairperson noted that scientists had developed methods to verify data, for example, by comparing data sets obtained from different sources, or correcting biases, for example, by accounting for closures in certain areas. It was challenging to obtain high-quality fishery data in relation to climate change, but scientists were dedicated to improving standardization and accuracy.

73. Noting that further efforts were needed in relation to climate change data, a delegation inquired whether OSPAR and NEAFC, given their overlapping convention areas, used the same data or type of data. Observing that climate change was modifying fish stocks, another delegation inquired about RFMO coverage gaps and the challenges and opportunities for high seas fisheries management through the Agreement, the BBNJ Agreement, or other means.

74. In response, Mr. Campbell highlighted that NEAFC only accepted advice from ICES in relation to fisheries management activities. While OSPAR equally obtained advice from ICES, it also maintained its own scientific committees and a pool of scientists. Though the mandate of NEAFC was narrower than that of OSPAR, there were opportunities to cooperate on common issues. Mr. Lordan emphasized that the ICES data center worked closely with OSPAR, and that cooperation extended into scientific and advisory aspects. ICES held bilateral meetings with both NEAFC and OSPAR, which could contribute to harmonization.

75. Mr. Mannini observed that while this was less of an issue for tuna, other stocks lacked RFMO coverage in certain areas, which was inconsistent with the Convention and the Agreement, and emphasized flag State responsibility. He noted that upon entry into force, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies could apply to fishing vessels operating on the high seas beyond the scope of any RFMO. It was therefore an opportune moment to consider establishing RFMOs for areas that currently lacked coverage.

#### **D. Segment 4: Challenges and opportunities for strengthening sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change**

76. In the first presentation of this segment, Ms. Shana Miller, Director of the International Fisheries Project, The Ocean Foundation, highlighted the use of harvest strategies as a tool for

climate-ready fisheries management. She began by defining harvest strategies, explaining their





83. Noting the challenges with introducing climate-resilient factors into the MSE process raised in Mr. Manel’s presentation, one delegation queried the specific challenges faced and sought advice on potential solutions. Mr. Manel highlighted how global engagement is being facilitated to address common challenges. Regarding data collection, Mr. Manel acknowledged the importance of gathering detailed and consistent data to support stakeholders on issues such as MSE, bycatch, and stock assessment. He noted that some data types are not consistently collected, leading to weaknesses in the models. Ms. Miller further noted that many RFMOs, including ICCAT, have committed to developing harvest strategies, emphasizing the importance of work plans, funding, and stakeholder engagement. Ms. Miller also emphasized that additional climate vulnerability assessments may be needed to understand species-specific impacts and incorporate them into MSEs, ensuring robustness against climate change.

84. Ms. Kristin Kleisner, Lead Senior Scientist for Ocean Science, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), delivered a virtual intervention entitled “From exploring theory to providing operation help: Development of the Climate Resilient Fisheries Planning Tool”, presenting the framework and toolkit to support integrated assessment and planning for climate-resilient fisheries. t6-0.01-9

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104. The Chairperson announced that, as in the past, the outcome of the seventeenth round of Informal Consultations would consist of an informal report to be prepared by the Chair, with the assistance of the Secretariat, summarizing the discussions and, in an annex, key points raised during the meeting, and that it would be posted on the website of DOALOS in English only. Delegations would then have an opportunity to review the document over a period of approximately two weeks before it was finalized. The Chairperson closed the meeting by expressing appreciation to delegations and panelists that had contributed to the meeting, as well as to conference services and the Secretariat for the assistance in the preparation and conduct of the meeting.

## Annex 1

### **Key points relating to sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change raised during the seventeenth round of Informal Consultations, summarized by the Chair**

On the basis of the presentations and discussions at the seventeenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement, the Chairperson would like to draw attention to the following key points that, in his view, emerged from the Consultations. It is noted that since these key points were not discussed at the Consultations, they remain under the sole responsibility of the Chair.

- Climate change is already impacting marine ecosystems in a variety of ways which affect the health, resilience and sustainability of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks, as well as their ranges and distribution. These impacts include changes to distribution, growth/maturity and productivity of stocks. Many stocks appear to be moving towards higher latitudes and into deeper waters as ocean warming occurs. The increase in extreme weather events would impact both fish and fishers.
- The actual and potential future impacts of climate change on specific fisheries are dependent on a number of factors, and different regions, fisheries or fish stocks may be impacted differently. These changes may also impact different stakeholders in a fishery differently, with some net winners and net losers. It is also important to distinguish between short-term and long-term impacts, particularly as the global effects of climate change are expected to become more acute over time.
- Fisheries in coastal States, and in particular small-scale and artisanal fisheries, will be particularly impacted because of the limited scope for adaptation, as well as limited capacity. It is necessary to take into account the socio-economic, gender-related and cultural impacts on fishers and coastal communities, as well as those on fish stocks and the marine environment. Small island developing States and low-lying coastal communities may also experience specific direct impacts as a result of particular vulnerabilities to climate change and sea-level rise.
- It is vitally important to address the underlying causes of anthropogenic climate change in line with global commitments on greenhouse gas emissions, including in the fishing industry. At the same time, measures must be taken to mitigate the



- International fisheries instruments, in particular the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, contain various obligations relevant to sustainable fisheries management

importance of fisheries to food security, nutrition and sustainable development was underscored in this regard. It was noted however that the ongoing relevance of discussions on the effects of climate change in the context of UNFSA and by RFMO/As should be viewed as complementary and non-duplicative of discussions at the UNFCCC and on the Paris Agreement.

## **Annex 2**

### **Seventeenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (the Agreement)**

#### **Agenda**

**15-17 May 2024**

**United Nations, New York**

1. Opening of the seventeenth round of Informal Consultations by a representative of the Secretary-General.
2. Election of the Chairperson.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Organization of work.
5. General statements.
6. Discussion panel on “Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change”
  - (a) Segment 1: Understanding the impacts of climate change on fisheries;
  - (b) Segment 2: Overview of the legal framework for sustainable fisheries;

9. Consideration of the next round of Informal Consultations of the States Parties to the Agreement.

10. Other matters.