FAO INPUTS IN RELATION TO RESOLUTION A/RES/78/69

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FOR THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

14 JUNE 2024

SECTION II: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND RELATED AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 4: Harmonizing national legislation with the Convention

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continues to support its Member Nations in the development of fisheries and aquaculture legislation and to contribute to national efforts towards achieving the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The assistance provided places emphasis on ensuring that national legislation is consistent with international law, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (the Convention) and relevant agreements and instruments. National legislation is developed or revised to ensure effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention, including the provisions relating to the rights and duties of Member Nations within waters under national jurisdiction such as ensuring adequate levels of fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) v š Z ((š] À Æ Œ] • } (^ š š • [i µ flagged (fishing) vessels on the high seas and in waters under the jurisdiction of other States. The development and revision of national fisheries legislation also takes into account binding decisions adopted by Members or Contracting Parties to Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and/or Arrangements (RFMO/As) which are recognized under the Convention as bodies through which States may cooperate on fisheries management and conservation.

The agreements which FAO takes into account in providing assistance to its Member Nations include:

- 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 (UNFSA), 93 parties,
- the FAO 1993 Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (Compliance Agreement), 45 parties, and
- the FAO 2009 Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA), 78 parties.

The provision of assistance for the review and enhancement of the fisheries and aquaculture legislation of Member Nations also takes into account the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), given the growing number of commercially exploited aquatic species such as species of sharks and rays which have been included in the Appendix II of CITES in the last decade. The second edition of a study and guide developed by FAO in collaboration with the CITES Secretariat was

also supported the drafting 4(a4)3(4(tin4(ewte)-[( )] TJ ET Q q 0.00000912 0 612 792 re W* n BT /F4 11.0

- Awareness-raising on the implementation of the EAF, by continuing the publication of legal reports that assess the level of alignment of their respective policy and legal instruments with the EAF, using *A diagnostic tool for implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries through policy and legal frameworks*[5] (27 reports have been published, as of May 2024);
- Participation in training of government officials and technical experts in Anglophone countries in Africa (Ghana, Namibia, Kenya, and South Africa) on the use of the Legislative Guide on Combatting Crimes in the Fisheries Sector,[6] developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with technical inputs from FAO;
- Co-delivery of the Ocean Governance Capacity Building Training Program, in partnership with the World Bank and its ProBlue Project, the UN Division for Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS), the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the University of Melbourne, and the University of Nantes, delivered for the Latin America and Ocean region in both English and Spanish, in May 2024.

FAO and the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) designed and have been delivering a competency-based Fisheries Law Training Course to Member [illegible]. The most recent course, delivered from 23 October to 10 November 2023, trained participants to, *inter alia*: (i) be more engaged in the management of living marine resources; (ii) implement relevant international instruments in national laws and practice; (iii) identify the elements of offences in fisheries legislation for improved enforcement; (iv) develop an understanding of evidentiary requirements for the purposes of prosecutions; and (v) apply best practices in the detection, investigation, and prosecution of fisheries offences and violations.

FAO continues to strengthen its cooperation and collaboration in capacity building with numerous international and regional institutions including the CITES Secretariat, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNODC, IMO, International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA).

Capacity building to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing

Since 2017, when FAO launched the *Global Programme to support the implementation of the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) and complementary international instruments to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing* ~ Z Œ (š Œ š Z Z, the European Union (EU), Germany, Iceland, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and the United States of America (USA) have committed approximately US$ 35 million for the implementation of the Programme. Developing Coastal States and Small Island Developing Sates (SIDS), both Parties and non-Parties to the PSMA, are benefiting from the Programme. The Programme includes activities to:

- Assess the needs for strengthening national legislation, institutional frameworks, and MCS systems and operations with respect to port, flag, coastal, and market State responsibilities, including the drafting of national strategies and action plans for implementation;
- Support the review and development or revision of relevant fisheries policies and laws;

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- Technical Guidelines on Methodologies and Indicators for the Estimation of the Magnitude and Impact of IUU fishing: Volumes 1 (Principles and approaches) and 2 (A practical guide on o] À Œ] v P v, • š] u š _

- Support for the implementation of the NPOA-SSF in Namibia[15] and Tanzania[16] has been provided through capacity support to National Task Teams, comprised of local small-scale fisheries stakeholders such as representatives from small-scale fisheries organizations, relevant government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), academia who are responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of their respective NPOA SSFs, preparation of policy briefs, etc.
- Release of a dedicated support website[17] with manual[18], guide for trainers[19] and e-learning[20] on the NPOA-SSF

x Release of baseline survey[21] focusing on empowering women in small-scale fisheries in Indonesia, Madagascar, Namibia and the Philippines

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Sustainable Development of Coastal Communities in Africa and the Mediterranean with the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM Bari);

- Ongoing support to SSF organizations, in particular women, to become well established and improve their skills and livelihoods through various post-harvest activities by providing small processing equipment and dedicated training courses on good post-harvest practices in Ghana, Madagascar, Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia and Malawi. Related good practice videos[27] have been released that can be used for trainings.
- Release of a *handbook on*

Programme - Tuna and Deep Sea Fisheries projects). Examples of such assistance provided from September 2021 to August 2024 include:

- Training for scaling up the EAF for fishing communities applying also the SSF Guidelines to create synergies in the context of small-scale fisheries;
- Advice on the review of fisheries legislation in accordance with the EAF, and on the development of new fisheries policy and legislation aligned with the EAF;
- Training of Trainers on the EAF and the EAF Implementation Monitoring Tool, at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, Senegal, 2023
- National and regional applied training on the use of the EAF Implementation Monitoring Tool to

support of Norway through component 4 of the GCP/GLO/352/NOR project, developed and delivered the following capacity building activities:

- Organizing and delivering the 2022 World Fisheries Day High Level Event on the role of fishing ports and how ports can contribute to secure the social sustainability and decent working conditions in the fisheries sector in collaboration with the Holy See;

systems, and address common access barriers faced by fishers including legal, administrative, and financial obstacles

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 11.1189 - *Safety of fishers and fishing vessels*

From 2023 through 2024, FAO continued supporting the implementation of safety at sea capacity-building and awareness raising activities. Training of Trainers on safety at sea for small-scale fishers, and training workshops were conducted particularly in the Caribbean, Latin America and South-East Asia. From 8 to 12 January 2024, FAO, the US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (NEC) organized the Sixth edition of the

frequent reporting, stabilized national reference lists of stocks, and improved understanding by countries of the requirements of the indicator.

Absent confidence in the country specific reporting, the regional and global indicator from State of Marine Resources reported in SOFIA, FAO's flagship publication, will continue to be used. According to SOFIA 2024, the sustainability of global fishery resources continues to decline from 90 percent in 1974 to 62.3 percent in 2021 and global marine fish landings have remained relatively stable in 2021 averaging 80 million tonnes since 1995. Fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels contributed 76.9 percent of the global marine fish landings in 2021, a finding based on

exercise was carried out in 2018 followed by the second, third and fourth exercise in 2020, 2022 and 2024 respectively. The indicator measures the degree of implementation by States of six international instruments[43] to combat IUU fishing by scoring their responses to the questionnaire for monitoring the implementation of the CCRF and related instruments using a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

The average score for implementation of the six instruments by States increased from 3 in 2018 to 4 in 2022, then remained at 4 in the 2024 reporting, with the percentage of States achieving a 5 increasing from 48 percent in 2018 to 56 percent in 2022 and 2024. Reporting rates for this indicator increased in 2024 in comparison to 2022, going from 90 to 101 applicable reporting States, hence aggregate figures are expected to be more representative globally and for certain regions. In terms of regional groupings, from 2022 to 2024, all regions either remained the same or improved on average, with Central and Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa going from a 3 to a 4. The average score for this indicator within the least developed countries grouping also increased from a 3 in 2022 to a 4 in 2024. The status of the indicator reflects that while improvements are being made, further efforts are still needed to implement these international instruments and hence maximize their potential to effectively combat IUU fishing.

As part of the FAO Programme to implement the PSMA, a number of activities have been carried out to v Z v š Z P Œ } (} µ v š Œ] • [ ] u ‰ o u v š š] } v } ( ] v š Œ v š] } v o] v • š Œ fishing. These activities include developing and maintaining the following global information-sharing systems, which require the harmonization and standardization of data formats, procedures and mechanisms for data exchange:

- The FAO Global Record aims at increasing transparency and traceability by gathering and disseminating certified and comprehensive information, provided by official sources, on vessels and vessel activities. It is ideally suited to become the backbone of any internal fisheries management to which all other information will have to be invariably connected, supporting the implementation of the GIES, other complementary instruments and tools. As of 26 June 2024, the FAO Global Record contains 6 120 vessel records of all sizes and types, provided by 69 FAO

especially technical feedback provided through the PSMA Technical Working Group on Information Exchange, of which the 4th meeting took place from 18 to 22 March 2024, Panama City, Panama.[45]

- The in-country work under the PSMA Global Programme continues expanding and making significant progress. New countries supported under the Programme since August 2023 include Comoros,

contributing to the capacity development of States for its effective implementation. This forward-looking and proactive approach reflects the evolving dynamics of the PSMA in the ongoing fight against IUU fishing and the promotion of sustainable fisheries

SDG Indicator 14.b.1 Degree of application of legal/regulatory/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries

As part of the SSF Umbrella Programme, FAO has been working to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and related instruments that recognize and protect access rights for small-scale fisheries which supports and contributes to fulfilling SDG 14.b and its associated indicator 14.b.1.

d} (µŒšZ Œ •µ‰‰}Œš Z] À]vP ^ ' íðX U & K Z • Œ Scale fisheries µ] v]v governance. A handbook in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines[46] supports creating an enabling environment that promotes good governance for SSF. A related learning course[47] is also available. Both have been prepared with the International Ocean Institute and are grounded in related trainings delivered virtually and in person in the past, as also available.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 200 to 215 *Climate change and aquatic food systems*

The impact of climate change on aquatic ecosystems and the services they provide, as well as the livelihoods that depend on them, is today profound and pervasive and is expected to exacerbate in the future.[48] Climate-driven shifts in the geographical distribution and changes in the productivity of fish stocks challenge fisheries worldwide. Failing to adapt current fisheries management frameworks will lead to social risks and vulnerabilities in terms of loss of livelihood and food and nutrition insecurity, thus threatening the achievement of SDGs that address poverty, hunger, and life below water, among others.

To address climate change in agrifood systems, including aquatic food systems, an FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 was endorsed by the FAO Council in 2022.[49] In support of the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change and its Action Plan,[50] The COFI35 recommended the development of a set of FAO actions focused on climate-resilient fisheries and aquaculture.[51] Furthermore, COFI35 highlighted the need for guidance on climate-resilient fisheries management, including by convening a workshop with RFMO/As.[52] FAO has initiated a range of activities in response to COFI requests; they are summarized in the following paragraphs into broad categories of adaptation, mitigation, finance, and regional and global processes in support of implementation.

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Adaptation policy frameworks for resilient fisheries exist, including the FAO Adaptation Toolbox for fisheries and aquaculture,[53] as well as guidance on good practice criteria and a compilation of good practices to climate proof the fisheries management cycle.[54] An effective fisheries management system is often the best adaptation and the first foundation of climate-resilient fisheries. FAO has been actively promoting the adoption of participatory, adaptive, and precautionary fisheries management systems across the world through dedicated capacity development programs.[55] Another crucial aspect is the integration of fisheries into local and national climate change adaptation planning and implementation, which can be accomplished through mechanisms such as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). Of the NDCs submitted by countries as of 31 December 2023 referred to adaptation in fisheries and aquaculture, including ocean and coastal zone conservation, management or restoration.[56] To support these efforts, FAO has developed NAP-Fish guidelines to provide practical steps and entry points for integrating fisheries and aquaculture into the formulation and implementation of NAPs.[57]

To support evidence-based adaptation, FAO has also conducted a comprehensive review on disaggregated impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture, based on model projections, data analyses, and expert assessments.[58] There is also an upcoming report on projections of exploitable fish biomass under different climate change and socioeconomic scenarios. Furthermore, enhancing the adaptive capacity and resilience of fishers and fisheries can be achieved through the development of climate-proofed fisheries infrastructure, such as ports, jetties, slipways, fish buying stations and fish markets. Various international development banks and FAO are supporting their members with the design and construction of climate-proofed fisheries infrastructure and to build back better after natural

only increases the access of fishers to assistance, insurance, and financial services but also plays a key role in ensuring a climate-resilient development. To disseminate fishing safety innovations in support of sectoral adaptation to climate change, FAO, together with partners, organized the FISH-Safe 2024 from 8 to 12 January 2024 in Rome, Italy.[59]

Notably, climate change is exacerbating disaster risks to fisheries. Adaptation to these risks requires: the incorporation of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into fisheries legislation; the alignment of the national legislation, policies and practices with global frameworks for DRR and sustainable development; and the development of appropriate institutional arrangements. The institutional structure should strengthen the horizontal and vertical integration of DRR between different levels of government, between various line agencies, and between other stakeholders (fishing communities, private sector, academia, etc.). This may require building the capacities of the local government units to develop, implement and monitor DRR, as done by FAO in the Philippines.[60] DRR also includes developing risk assessment, developing Preparedness, Response and Recovery Plans, carrying out trainings (e.g. simulation exercises) and awareness activities. Mainstreaming DRR could bring about several positive results: improved safety of fishers and fishing communities, reduced impacts on critical fisheries infrastructure, more efficient and capable institutions with strengthened capacity to manage disasters and more efficient response and rehabilitation of the fisheries and aquaculture sector after a disaster.

As to mitigation, despite being a minor contributor to global carbon emissions, fisheries can adopt decarbonization measures along the value chain to contribute to the 1.5 degrees climate goal. These include the use of renewable energy, enhancing vessel energy efficiency through practices such as reducing trawling speed, fishing gear and hull modifications, timely cleaning of the hull bottom from fouling and timely servicing the engine. FAO, in close collaboration with the BOBP-IGO, has been promoting in 2022-2023 simple fuel-saving measures in Sri Lanka and India using a technical manual.[61] Several hybrid solutions are also being tested, such as vessels equipped with battery packs and a diesel engine that power the vessel together for a full day of operation.[62] Furthermore, post-harvest activities can optimize their operations by using renewable energy and climate-smart technologies, like solar dryers or biodigesters. These practices are supported by field projects targeting women and fostering access to more efficient ovens for fish smoking.[63] A recent FAO publication has identified opportunities for renewable energy interventions along the small-scale fish value chains and discussed challenges associated with cost and financing, policy environment and local capacity and awareness.[64] There are also opportunities for

Climate finance is indispensable for the implementation of adaptation and mitigation solutions. With financial support from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and GEF bilateral funds, FAO is currently implementing a field programme on adaptation that puts climate solutions for aquatic food into practice in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Pacific SIDS. An increasing number of FAO GCF projects are aiming at supporting the increased resilience of ocean and riparian livelihoods and ecosystems, both through readiness and preparatory support (ongoing projects in Belize, Cabo Verde, Saint Lucia, and Sri Lanka) and larger support (one ongoing project in The Gambia, and projects in Cabo Verde, Saint Lucia, and Sri Lanka currently being designed). GEF projects are underway in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kiribati, Malawi, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste. Work is also ongoing with projects implemented by FAO with bilateral funds from Canada, Norway, and the EU, supporting countries to build the resilience of aquatic food systems to climate change and natural disasters to attain sustainability. However, a sectoral review of NDCs and NAPs conducted by FAO has indicated that the costs of adaptation for fisheries and aquaculture for all developing countries could be USD 4.8 billion per year by 2030. The 2023 public international adaptation finance flows to the aquatic food sector have averaged only USD 0.22 billion per year (2017–2021), underscoring a significant adaptation finance gap. To improve access to climate finance, FAO is committed to continue supporting resource mobilization efforts and providing capacity building to support Members in accessing climate finance.

At the regional level, RFMOs and RFABs, collectively referred to as RFBs, are increasingly aware of the climate challenges. However, many organizations have difficulty in engaging in the topic of climate change despite the existence of good science. In this context, in line with the COFI/35 request, FAO is supporting RFBs in climate-resilient fisheries management, including the convening of two regional FAO workshops. A global review of RFB responses to climate change is also under development. Additionally, cooperation is essential for adapting fisheries to climate change and is at the heart of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement. FAO is actively fostering regional cooperation and coordination among RFBs, including through the Z P] } v o &] • Z Œ Ç } Ç network (RFBN). Œ] š • [E

At the global level, the nexus between climate change, aquatic ecosystems, and aquatic food production is receiving increasing attention. The 2023 UNFCCC annual Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue selected ^ ( ] • Z Œ] • v (} } • µ Œ] š Ç _ • } v } (five discussion sessions. The Dialogue emphasized the need to integrate aquatic food climate solutions into both national and multilateral climate policies and actions.[64] The Dialogue outcomes were subsequently welcomed in the COP28 decision on the Global Stocktake (Decision 1/CMA.5).[65] Moreover, the COP28 UAE presidency launched a political Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action that refers explicitly to sustainable aquatic food and has so far received endorsements from 159 countries.[66] FAO is committed to strengthening linkages with countries, other UN organizations and non-State actors, to foster inclusion of aquatic food climate solutions within UNFCCC. As part of this effort, FAO is developing a guide to empower aquatic food stakeholders with insights into climate negotiations and identify practical entry points.

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OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 216 to 227 t *Marine debris*

Following the recommendations contained in the Manila Declaration, the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML)[67] was launched in June 2012 at Rio+20 in Brazil and seeks to protect human health and the global environment by the reduction and management of marine litter. The GPML is a global partnership gathering international agencies, governments, NGOs, academia, private sector, civil society and individuals. FAO has a permanent seat at the Steering Committee of the GPML through which it contributes to the development of the GPML Digital Platform, with inputs particularly around sea-based sources of marine plastic litter (SBMPL) including abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG).[68] The Digital Platform is an open-source, multi-stakeholder platform that compiles different resources, connects stakeholders and integrates data to guide action. The resources have been collected through research based on publicly available information, interviews with experts, and inputs received through submissions. They cover all stages in the plastics life cycle, with respect to prevention of litter and waste, design and production, use and consumption, waste management and marine litter monitoring and capturing.

The 45th Session of the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) (17 to 20 September 2018, Rome, Italy) supported the establishment of a working group on SBMPL including fishing gear and other shipping related litter (GESAMP Working Group 43), sponsored by FAO and IMO and in partnership with UNEP. The Working Group 43 (WG43) was established in April 2019 and held its first virtual meeting to develop a work plan and timeline of deliverables as set forth in its Terms of Reference.

In 2022, at the 49th annual session of GESAMP (London, United Kingdom), new Terms of Reference in two concurrent work streams were approved:

1. Work-stream 1 will support information requests of the Scientific Groups of the London Convention/Protocol (LC/LP) Parties that will help identify priorities for addressing LC/LP waste streams, ship coatings and abandoned vessels as sources of plastic to the ocean.
   - TOR1. Review methodologies and technologies to measure and reduce the presence, type, origin and quantity of plastic litter and microplastics in LC/LP waste streams.
   - TOR 2. Further elucidate the amount and types of microplastics in anti-fouling paint and hull coatings, and the major geographic locations where these materials are applied and removed from ships.
   - TOR 3. Conduct a global review on the scrapping and abandonment of fibre-reinforced plastic/polymer vessels, including their types, numbers, and spatial and temporal distribution.
2. Work-stream 2 will support information requests of FAO to further understand ALDFG as a source of ocean plastic pollution, with a particular focus on methodologies for remediation, monitoring and reporting.
   - TOR 4. Analyse trade-offs between ecological and economic costs of ALDFG recovery and benefits derived from such recovery efforts, including drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs).

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- TOR 5. Identify elements that should be included in a monitoring programme for ALDFG, including an update on the availability of remote, or vessel based, sensing technologies/tools for monitoring ALDFG.
- TOR 6. Identify and analyze potential causal links between IUU fishing and ALDFG.

WG 43 held its first meeting (virtual) on 28 February 2023, and convened its first in-person workshop, sponsored by IMO and hosted by UNEP in Geneva, Switzerland, from 15 to 17 May 2023. Workstream 2 members have made good progress in assembling data and information to address ToRs 4, 5, and 6, and convened an in-person working meeting concurrent with the World Fisheries Congress in Seattle, Washington, USA, from 8 to 9 March 2024. The working group will complete a first draft of its next report by July 2024 and intends to submit a final report to GESAMP in December 2024.

At the 78th session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 78) held from 6 to 10 June 2022, the Committee agreed to develop a goal-based requirement under MARPOL Annex V for the mandatory marking of fishing gear. The Sub-Committee on Prevention of Pollution (PPR) has been instructed to develop the draft amendments and associated guidelines accordingly. However, PPR has not yet initiated work in this area owing to an absence of proposals being submitted for amending MARPOL. The earliest estimated timeline for gear marking coming into force would be April 2028. This estimate assumes a proposal is submitted to PPR 12 (2025), finalized at PPR 13 (2026), adopted at MEPC in the same year, and then allowing for the required 16 months from date of adoption before coming into force.

Work on the reporting of lost or discharged fishing under MARPOL Annex V, was progressed at PPR11 held in February 2024, and will continue within the intersessional period by correspondence. Recommendations will inform ongoing discussions on this topic at PPR 12 to be held in early 2025. In order

It is certain that marine litter has a significant social and economic impact on a number of fisheries, being most clearly demonstrated by the artisanal beach seine fishery in the Gulf of Guinea. In 2021 the EAF-Nansen Programme initiated a study to identify and quantify marine litter associated with the Z •]v ( ]•Z Œ] •]v v]vU €š [/À}]ŒU 'Z vU v d}P}U v •• ecological impacts. This included surveying litter on the beaches where beach seine fisheries were carri out, examining and recording the contents of the seine nets and interviewing representatives of the fishing community to assess the impact. The findings are aimed to inform the identification of potential measures in the context of the revisions of the beach seine fisheries management plans to reduce the impact of the litter on the fishing communities, working with local and regional partners to implement šZ • X dZ Œ ‰}Œš }(šZ •šµ Ç ^dZ]u‰ š }(u Œ]v o]šš Œ }v šZ the Gulf of Guinea: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. A preliminary investigation of the social and economic impacts of marine litter Œ }v ( ]•Z]vP }uuµv]š]lization]• µv Œ

One aspect of these studies is to identify and quantify the proportion of litter generated by the fishing sector, particularly in regions that are generally data-poor, thus contributing to wider aspects of FAO's interests in and its commitment to reducing ALDFG. A specific guidance document on the sampling and] vš](] š]}v }(u Œ]v o]šš Œ]v šŒ Áo •µŒ À Ç• v]v •Z}Œ o]v o]šš] vš](] š]}v v Œ }Œ]vP }(u Œ]v o]šš Œ published in 2024 v ‰ Œ v summarising the work of the EAF-E v• v W Œ}P Œ uu Œ o š š}u Œ- Assessing Œ ^D Œ the distribution and impact of marine litter in Africa and the Bay of Bengal has been published.[69]

FAO was invited to join the Plastic Waste Partnership (PWP) launched in November 2019 and led by the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. The goal of the Partnership is to foster sound management of plastic waste at the global, regional and national levels, and prevent and minimize their generation, including in the marine environment. FAO will contribute with relevant information and provision of technical advice, as well as the sharing of lessons learned from its ongoing activities within the EAF-Nansen programme (data collection and processing) and the GloLitter Partnerships project (see operative paragraph 221 t *Discarded fishing gear)*.

SECTION X MARINE BIODIVERSITY

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 257 TO 287 t *Technical support to*

established a preparatory committee. In its Resolution 72/249 of 24 December 2017,[71] UNGA decided to convene an Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), with a view to developing the instrument as soon as possible.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 266 TO 284 t *Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures and vulnerable marine ecosystems*

on deep-sea ecosystems and to provide scientific inputs into the discussions on management and conservation measures related to VMEs and Deep-sea fisheries resources.[77]

SECTION XII: MARINE SCIENCE

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 209 bis: *Discarded fishing gear*

There are five FAO fisheries management instruments, which address the issue of ALDFG:

- CCRF, which makes reference to the fact that fishing gear should be marked;
- PSMA, which can be linked to intentional discarding of gear at sea;
- International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards, (2011) makes reference to reducing the impact of lost fishing gear;
- VGMFG, which provides a comprehensive framework for the marking, reporting and retrieval of abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear covering all fishing gears with a separate section on FADs; and
- Technical Guidelines for the Reduction of Marine Mammal Bycatch in Capture Fisheries makes reference to the entanglement of marine mammals in ALDFG and ghost fishing.

The Thirty-third Session of COFI (COFI/33) mandated FAO to develop a comprehensive global strategy to tackle issues relating to ALDFG and to support implementation of the VGMFG involving relevant international bodies and other stakeholders. COFI/34 also reiterated the necessity to continue promoting the VGMFG and its provision on capacity building at regional and national levels.[78] In response, FAO, aiming to facilitate the implementation of the VGMFG, published, in 2023, *A framework for conducting a risk assessment for a system on the marking of fishing gear;*[79] *Manual for the making of fishing gear;*[80] and *Operationalization of the VGMFG in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) area of competence.*[81]

In 2020, FAO signed a UN-UN Agreement with IMO to assist developing countries in addressing the issue of marine plastic litter from sea-based sources: the GloLitter Partnerships project.[82] The overarching goal of the project is to assist developing countries to prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from the maritime transport and fisheries sectors. GloLitter will achieve its objectives by focusing on a number of areas identified in the IMO Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, including supporting the provisions of the FAO VGMFG. The project is funded by the Government of Norway, with contributions from Australia and Saudi Arabia and will run until 2025. The IMO is the lead implementing and reporting agency, while the FAO, as a technical agency within the United Nations framework, serves as the executing

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partner for the fisheries sector. With the support from the project, by February 2024, ten Lead Partnering Countries had developed National Action Plans (NAPs) to address marine plastic litter from the shipping and fishing sectors. All NAPs are publicly available on the project webpage.[83]

Following successful collaboration and lessons learned from the GloLitter Partnerships project, FAO is also collaborating with IMO to address sea-based marine plastic litter through two other recent projects. The Regional Litter project (RegLitter) is a ten-year initiative funded by the Republic of Korea and held its inception meeting in Viet Nam in March 2024. The RegLitter project builds and expands upon the initial SBMPL activities developed under GloLitter with an initial project focus on addressing SBMPL in Asia. FAO and IMO are also in the final stages of the project preparation grant (PPG) phase for the development of the Global Environment Facility funded Plastic Reduction in the Oceans: Sustaining and Enhancing Actions on Sea-based Sources (PREMOCEAS) project which is also a three-year initiative and is anticipated to begin in early 2025.

The report of GESAMP Working Group 43 provides an overview of the current state of knowledge in terms of the sources, relative contribution, impacts, prevention, reduction and management measures and data gaps when it comes to sea-based sources of marine litter. Based on the recommendations from the Working Group that identified global ALDFG data gaps, FAO has developed a series of standardized questionnaires and a methodology to implement a global survey on ALDFG in order to provide evidence based global quantitative estimates of ALDFG and further inform understanding around ALDFG. Data is being collected through surveys of fishers, and/or their representatives and stored in a database for further analysis and synthesis estimates of gea2 Tf 1 0 0 1 310.73 680.5 Tm 0 g 0 G [(t)9(h)3(e)] TJ ET

areas. RFABs provide fora for collaboration and coordination and promote sustainable utilization of fishery resources by recommending specific actions and by providing advice to members on fisheries conservation and management. Some RFBs also have aquaculture included in their mandates.

RFMOs and RFABs continue to evolve in response to calls for sustainability, improved management and governance, and as a result of lessons learned and stronger commitment by their members. FAO supports and provides an } À Œ À] Á } (š Z • ‰ Œ } • • • v À o } ‰ u v š • š Z Œ } µ P Z š Z K C
on fisheries and aquaculture, providing } À Œ À] Á v • Ç v } ‰ •] • } (Z & • [À o } ‰ u v š • X

Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME). In the Southwest Indian Ocean, the SWIOFC and the Nairobi Convention have established a cooperation agreement, and in the Western Central Atlantic, the FAO Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) strengthened its collaboration with a number of agencies among which UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, UNESCO/IOCARIBE through the Interim Coordination Mechanism for the Sustainable Management, Use and Protection of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems, signed in 2017. Further, in the Mediterranean, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) continues to closely cooperate with UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) in the context of a Memorandum of Understanding adopted to contribute to the implementation of an EAF and spatial-based management. This cooperation has resulted, among others, in the definition of common indicators for fisheries and ecosystems, increased complementarity in the use of area-based management tools and the improved monitoring of non-indigenous species.

ecosystems. For example, the implementation of conservation and management measures for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity were discussed in the overall context of EAF, and the deterioration of environmental conditions were identified as major challenges for fisheries management and a threat to food security in both regions.

The Common Oceans Program is a global partnership funded by the GEF, promoting sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in ABNJ with a particular focus on tuna and deep-sea fisheries, the Sargasso Sea and cross-sectoral cooperation. Led by FAO, the Program brings together the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNEP, RFMOs, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia. At the centre of the Program is the promotion of regional, and inter-regional cooperation through common initiatives and knowledge sharing. The second phase of the Program began in mid-2022 and will run until mid-2027.