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REFERENCE: LOS/FISHERIES/STATES/2012

With regard to United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/68 concerning 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:

We would like to inform you that the Kingdom of Bahrain, a Member State of the United Nations and of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) welcomes any and all international efforts to promote sustainable fisheries because of their value as a food source and their economic and social value to all nations. The Kingdom of Bahrain has been closely monitoring the noticeable decline in fish stocks

in general and stocks of commercial fish in particular. The Kingdom complies with

the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and works to promote sustainable

fisheries. It has taken measures to suspend the fishing season for shrimp, one of the

most important commercial varieties of fish, from the middle of March to the middle

of July each year, which has helped to enhance the sustainability of that vital

resource. The Kingdom of Bahrain has also prohibited the use of bottom trawl nets

for fishing and has introduced increases in mesh size to prevent the harvesting of

young fish.

In implementation of the 1995 agreement on conserving fish stocks, the

Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) has taken part in research

on highly migratory fish, notably the kingfish, and cooperated with GCC Member

States on subregional research on bottom fish. We note that the Kingdom of Bahrain

took part, along with other GCC Member States, in a three-year survey on straddling

bottom fish stocks, the final report of which is scheduled for release.

There have also been efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated

fishing in compliance with the 2001 International Plan of Action of the FAO. The

Kingdom of Bahrain affirms the need for international, regional, subregional and

national cooperation to combat unsustainable practices that will inevitably have an

impact on existing and future fish stocks.

With regard to monitoring, supervision, compliance and implementation, there

are programmes and plans that continue to uncover illegal activities. These include a

monitoring team that operates in cooperation with other surveillance agencies in the

Kingdom, notably the Border Patrol and Coast Guard. The effort continues to be in

need of more human and financial resources to properly carry out its role of

maximizing benefits from straddling fisheries. We would also like to focus on efforts

by the Kingdom of Bahrain to reduce overfishing. A number of recommendations

have been put forward to reduce the number of fishing licences and the amount of

illegal and unreported fishing, along with a number of other potential solutions to

overfishing the results of which will soon be available for consideration and

appropriate action by the authorities.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is extremely concerned about pelagic drift-net

fishing. It has banned drift nets—known locally as “hayali” nets—whose use has

been restricted to one particular area at a certain time of year due to pressure from

local fishermen. The Kingdom also values efforts to limit by-catch and discards,

which in Bahrain get caught in bottom shrimping trawl nets. Many nets have been redesigned with more selective mesh to reduce by-catch.

The Kingdom of Bahrain believes in subregional cooperation. It is a member of the GCC, the Regional Commission for Fisheries, the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the United Nations Environment Programme. It participates with all its regional neighbours in joint studies of highly migratory fish and straddling fish stocks, and in international and regional conferences and workshops on strategies to ensure the sustainability of shared fisheries.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is also constantly striving to maintain the ecological system on which sustainable fisheries depend. It has created registered marine

protected areas, which have a significant impact on the continued survival of fish as a vital, healthy, protein-rich food resource and an economic, industrial and social commodity.

With regard to legislation, we draw attention to Decree-Law No. 20 of 2002 on the regulation of fishing and the exploitation and protection of marine resources, and related decisions that have a bearing on efforts to regulate good fishing practices and exploitation of fish.

With regard to capacity building, the State has provided local fishermen with various facilities, including new fish docks built to international standards. National efforts to reduce pressure on fisheries have also included encouraging the private

sector become involved in fish farming, and a project to create artificial coral reefs to

limit loss of fisheries due to urban development going on in the Kingdom of Bahrain.