

FAO INPUTS IN RELATION TO RESOLUTION A/RES/79/144 OF 12 DECEMBER 2024

ENTITLED “OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA”

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

SECTION I - 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 to these Nations places emphasis in ensuring that national legislation is consistent with 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 States within waters under national jurisdiction such as ensuring adequate levels of fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), and the effective exercise of jurisdiction and control over 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 of, or Contracting Parties to Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and/or Arrangements (RFMO/As) which are recognized under the Convention as bodies or frameworks through which States may cooperate on fisheries management and conservation.

FAO takes the following agreements related to Oceans and the Law of the Sea, including FAO agreements into account in providing assistance to its Member Nations to ensure consistent application of the Law:

- 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) – 94 Parties,
- the FAO 1993 Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (the “Compliance Agreement”) – 45 Parties, and
- the FAO 2009 Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA) – 82 Parties.

FAO’s assistance for the review and enhancement of the fisheries and aquaculture legislation of Member Nations also takes into account the 1973 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 over the last decade.¹ In 2024, FAO and the CITES Secretariat continued strengthening cooperation in enhancing the CITES-LEX database,² which provides national catalogues and comprehensive search capabilities of legislation and policies relevant to the implementation of CITES. Another important treaty for fisheries that is considered in the development or revision of fisheries and aquaculture legislation, is the 2007 Work in Fishing Convention adopted under the auspices of the International Labour Organizations (ILO) and the 2012 Cape

¹ FAO. 2023. Legal Guide No. 4. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc8051en>.

² FAO. 2025. CITES-LEX. <https://citeslex.fao.org/>

Town Agreement on the Safety of Fishing Vessels (CTA) (not yet in force), adopted under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

In the development or revision of national fisheries and aquaculture legislation, FAO also considers the relevant judgments and advisory opinions of international courts and tribunals including the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), in particular, the Advisory Opinions in the Cases No. 21 and No. 31.

In the future, considerations may be given to the two recently adopted (not yet in force) treaties which interact with fisheries governance: the World Trade Organization (WTO) 2022 Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, and the 2023 Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (the “BBNJ Agreement”).

Additionally, FAO takes into account relevant non-binding instruments in the development or revision of national fisheries and aquaculture legislation. Among these non-binding instruments are the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and its supplementary technical guidelines, international plans of action (IPOAs) and other non-binding instruments, such as the 2008 International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas, the 2014 Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance (VGFSP), the 2014 Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), the 2017 Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS), the 2018 Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG) and the 2022 Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment.

In 2024, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) endorsed the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA), which, together with the relevant provisions of the CCRF and relevant complementary technical guidelines, guide the review of existing, and development of new aquaculture legislation. To support Member Nations in reviewing their national legal frameworks for sustainable aquaculture, FAO published, in 2023, the Aquaculture Legal Assessment and Revision Tool (ALART),³ and its accompanying legal study.⁴

In the above mentioned assistance, FAO takes into account the principles, approaches, and tools that are important guides to the development or revision of fisheries and aquaculture legislation such as the precautionary principle, the principles of stakeholder participation in decision-making, including through co-management, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in deep sea fisheries, the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF), Ecosystem Approach to Aquaculture (EAA) and the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to fisheries. These principles and approaches are vital to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and related international instruments.

Since 2020, FAO provided legal assistance including training for the implementation of the above-mentioned agreements and international fisheries related instruments to a number of Member Nations.⁵ More specifically, in 2024 and 2025, FAO assisted Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, and Senegal in assessing their legal and policy frameworks regulating coastal fisheries based on the SSF Guidelines, the EAF, gender dimensions, and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (“SPS Agreement”) in the fisheries value-chain, leading to the drafting of regulations in Côte d’Ivoire and Cabo Verde. FAO also supported the drafting of a new national fisheries and aquaculture law for Cambodia which was then

³ FAO. 2023. *Aquaculture Legal Assessment and Revision Tool*. Legal Guide No. 6. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5797en>

⁴ FAO. 2023. *Legal frameworks for sustainable aquaculture*. FAO Legislative Study No. 117. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc6018en>

⁵ The first group of countries assisted were: Cambodia, Ghana, Guyana, Kenya, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Somalia and Trinidad and Tobago.

approved in May 2025 and national fisheries acts for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Sri Lanka. FAO supported the finalization of the proposed general fisheries regulations for Sao Tome and Principe, and PSMA-related implementing regulations for Ghana. FAO continues to provide technical assistance to Angola, Brazil, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, and Zimbabwe for the development and/or implementation of their national fisheries' laws and regulations.

Making available legal information, in particular existing national legislation concerning Oceans and the Law of the Sea, contributes to development of relevant and fit for purpose national legislation that implements international fisheries instruments. FAO has continued to expand the available country profiles in the policy and legal database dedicated to small-scale fisheries "SSF-LEX"⁶ subset data base of FAOLEX, which provides 15 profiles (Albania, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Morocco, Namibia, Oman, Senegal, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, and United Republic of Tanzania), as of May 2025.

The support provided by FAO to Member Nations on Oceans and the Law of the Sea matters and the implementation of international fisheries instruments is also organized around FAO's Strategic Framework of Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life (the 4 Betters) and the Priority Programme Areas (PPAs) of the 4 Betters. In 2024 and 2025, FAO provided support to the development of policies and legal instruments under the PPA "Blue Transformation", leading, for instance to support provided to Lesotho in developing its first policy for the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

SECTION II - CAPACITY-BUILDING

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 10 to 51 - *Capacity-building for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources*

Development of technical legal skills at national level for the implementation of the Convention

FAO develops technical skills in support of the implementation of the Convention at the national level through capacity building activities under technical cooperation programmes and projects. Such capacity building activities include increasing awareness of the rights and obligations of States under the Convention, related international fisheries instruments and the implementation of relevant approaches, such as the EAF through national policy and legal instruments. Such assistance has been provided in 2024 and 2025 to Member Nations through the following activities:

- Assistance to Congo and Sao Tome and Principe, in capacity building for the implementation of the EAF through these countries' national fisheries legal framework;
- 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*⁷ (32 reports have been published, as of May 2025);
- Workshop on strengthening policy and legal frameworks for the EAF, delivered in May 2025 to seven Francophone countries in Western and Northern Africa (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mauritania, Morocco, Togo, and Senegal);

⁶ <https://ssflex.fao.org>.

⁷ FAO. 2021. A diagnostic tool for implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries through policy and legal frameworks. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb2945en/cb2945en.pdf>.

- Participation in training of government officials and technical experts of States Members of the Subregional Fisheries Commission (Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, and Sierra Leone) on combatting crimes in the fisheries sector, in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in April 2025;
- 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 Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS), the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the University of Melbourne, and the University of Nantes, delivered for the Asia region in February 2025. Under this partnership, FAO and the World Bank are also co-hosting an in-person Global Ocean Governance Workshop, which will train 50 participants on ocean governance issues in June 2025.

FAO and the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) of the IMO have been delivering a competency-based Fisheries Law Training Course to Member Nations' government officials in English, French, and Spanish. The most recent course, delivered from 1 – 17 April 2025, 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. Similar courses were also held in Busan, Republic of Korea, in collaboration with the Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Center of the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, the latest of which was held between 12 and 30 May 2025.

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, 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* (the “Programme”), the European Union (EU), Germany, Iceland, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States of America (USA) have committed approximately USD 36.9 million for the implementation of the Programme. Developing Coastal States and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), both Parties and non-Parties to the PSMA, are benefiting from the Programme, which 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;
- Address the identified weaknesses of MCS institutions, systems and operations, including through establishing and strengthening mechanisms for regional coordination and cooperation;
- Support to recipient countries in strengthening inter-agency cooperation for effective implementation of the PSMA and complementary instruments;
- Improve flag State performance and implement market-related measures, such as CDS and traceability schemes;
- Develop and implement training and capacity building programmes;
- Develop and implement global information systems in support of the implementation of the PSMA, including the FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels

(the “FAO Global Record”), the PSMA Global Capacity Development Portal, and the Global Information Exchange System (GIES); and

- Support participation in the meetings of the Parties and subsidiary working groups of the PSMA, and relevant meetings on the FAO Global Record.

To date, FAO has supported up to 71 Member Nations to strengthen their capacity for effective implementation of the PSMA and related international instruments and regional mechanisms to combat IUU fishing. Support to countries is demand-driven and tailored to accommodate specific requirements of Member Nations to enhance their legal, policy, institutional, operational, and technical capacities. FAO also provided international training on fisheries law, port inspections, advanced MCS, and enforcement. Furthermore, Member Nations have been supported in using regional and international tools and mechanisms for information-sharing and cooperation for the effective implementation of the PSMA and complementary international instruments, including the FAO Global Record and the GIES.

Under the Programme, FAO published capacity building materials and guidance documents to facilitate States’ legal, policy-level, institutional and operational alignment with the PSMA and related international and regional instruments to combat IUU fishing. The second edition of the *prospectus on FAO fisheries training programme in support of the implementation of international instruments* was published in 2024.⁸

Capacity building in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines

FAO – with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the European Commission, and an FAO multi-donor mechanism supported by Norway – supports capacity building and awareness-raising activities for governments, small-scale fisheries organisations (including regional and global networks and associations) and other stakeholders with a view to advance and promote the participatory implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Partners collaborating on capacity development for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines include: small-scale fisheries movements and organizations, academia, NGOs, the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) Working Group on Fisheries, non-state actor platforms for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa (AFRIFISH-Net), the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET), the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), the Too Big To Ignore Global Partnership for Small-Scale Fisheries (TBTI), WorldFish and Duke University.

In the reporting period 2024–2025, FAO has contributed to capacity building and awareness raising with respect to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines through the following main activities:

- National Plans of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF)
 - Support to the implementation of NPOA-SSF in Namibia,⁹ Tanzania,¹⁰ Malawi,¹¹ and Uganda¹² through capacity development assistance to ministry-led multistakeholder National Task Teams;
 - Development and launch of the NPOA-SSF in the Philippines¹³ and Madagascar, including support to the plans’ initial implementation;¹⁴

⁸ FAO. 2024. *Prospectus-FAO fisheries training programme in support of the implementation of international instruments*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd2625en>

⁹ <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/in-action/where-we-work/namibia/en>.

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/in-action/where-we-work/tanzania/en>.

¹¹ <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/in-action/where-we-work/malawi/en>.

¹² <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/in-action/where-we-work/uganda/en>.

¹³ <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/in-action/where-we-work/philippines/en>.

¹⁴ <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/in-action/where-we-work/madagascar/en>.

- Capacity development support for NPOA-SSF is drawing on FAO guidance for these processes, including a dedicated support website¹⁵ with a manual¹⁶, a guide for trainers¹⁷ and an e-learning¹⁸.
- Regional training workshops are being planned for 2025 to equip relevant regional fishery bodies (RFBs) and Regional Economic Communities in Asia and southern Africa with the capacity and capabilities to support their member states to embark on NPOA-SSF development processes.
- Publications and activities in support of small-scale fisheries:
 - Based on the global study *Illuminating Hidden Harvests*,¹⁹ co-developed by FAO, Duke University and WorldFish, various publications and activities have been developed,²⁰ including the *Nature* article entitled “*Illuminating the multidimensional contributions of small-scale fisheries*”;²¹ policy briefs on the importance of small-scale fisheries for food security in Madagascar,²² and on the contributions of small-scale fisheries to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods in Tanzania,²³ and the Southern Africa Development Community;²⁴ eLearning course “*Compiling data on the contributions of small-scale fisheries on sustainable development*”;²⁵
 - The 2nd Small-Scale Fisheries Summit, held from 5 to 7 July 2024, prior to the Thirty-Sixth Session of the FAO COFI (COFI36);²⁶ Publication of the book *Implementation of the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines: a Legal and Policy Scan*;²⁷
 - Report on Governing for transformation – towards sustainable small-scale fisheries;²⁸
 - Publication on environmental stewardship by small-scale fisheries,²⁹ which also makes reference to a collection of small-scale fisheries stewardship examples at a Communities, Conservation and Livelihoods webpage;³⁰

¹⁵ <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/news/newsletter/en#>.

¹⁶ FAO. 2024. *Developing and implementing a National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries – A manual in support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*. Rome.

¹⁷ FAO. 2024. *Developing and implementing a National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries – Guide for trainers*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9776en>

¹⁸ <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=1080>.

¹⁹ FAO, Duke University & WorldFish. 2023. *Illuminating Hidden Harvests – The contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4576en>

²⁰ FAO, Duke University & WorldFish. 2024. *Applying the Illuminating Hidden Harvests approach – Compiling data on the contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9005en>.

²¹ Basurto, X., Gutierrez, N.L., Franz, N. et al. Illuminating the multidimensional contributions of small-scale fisheries. *Nature* 637, 875–884 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-08448-z>

²² FAO. 2024. *Importance de la petite pêche en termes de sécurité alimentaire à Madagascar*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0524fr>;

²³ FAO. 2024. *The contribution of small-scale fisheries to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods in the United Republic of Tanzania*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7606en>.

²⁴ FAO. 2024. *The contribution of small-scale fisheries to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods in the Southern African Development Community*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0770en>.

²⁵ <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=1050>.

²⁶ FAO. 2025. Proceedings of the Second Small-Scale Fisheries Summit, Rome, 5–7 July 2024. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Proceedings, No. 70. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3997en>.

²⁷ Nakamura, J. Chuenpagdee, R. and Jentoft, S. (Eds) *Implementation of the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines: A Legal and Policy Scan*, Springer 2024, <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-56716-2>

²⁸ FAO. 2025. *Governing for transformation towards sustainable small-scale fisheries*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd4289en>

²⁹ FAO. 2024. *Environmental stewardship by small-scale fisheries*. FAO, Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9342en>

³⁰ <https://ssf-stewardship.net/>

- Guidelines for the seaworthiness and safety inspection of small fishing vessels,³¹ and Guidelines for insurance value and risk assessment of small fishing vessels.³²
- Workshops and overall support:
 - Organization of a regional workshop in Bangkok in collaboration with the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) to review progress on SSF Guidelines implementation during the last decade and provide recommendations for future action (April 2025).³³
 - Continued engagement of small-scale fisheries actors in policy processes through the IPC Working Group on Fisheries and the Advisory Group of the Global Strategic Framework for SSF Guidelines, including a workshop on the operationalisation of this partnership mechanism (May 2025);
 - 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, Malawi, Namibia, Uganda, and United Republic of Tanzania.

Capacity building in support of the implementation of the EAF (ALSO RELATED TO OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 194 TO 197)

In accordance with the 2021 FAO COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, which reiterates the importance of the EAF as an effective framework for integrating conservation and sustainable utilization objectives in fisheries management, FAO continues to support the development of technical capacity for the EAF, and has developed a range of tools, products and materials including guidance at global, regional and national levels to enhance its implementation considering the various needs for the different steps of a fisheries management cycle. FAO supports countries and regional organizations through specific training activities and applied support for strengthening legal and policy frameworks and for fisheries management plan development. FAO has several large projects running that explicitly include implementation of EAF in their scope of work in Latin America (e.g. Strengthening the EAF for coastal fisheries in Argentina and Chile), the Caribbean (e.g. Promoting National Blue Economy Priorities through Marine Spatial Planning in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Plus (BE-CLME+), EAF for shrimp and groundfish fisheries (EAF4SG)), the Mediterranean (e.g. Mediterranean Fisheries Management Support Projects, Fisheries and ecosystem based management for Blue Economy), Africa (e.g. EAF-Nansen Programme,³⁴ CFI in West Africa, and the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC)-Nairobi Convention Partnership Project), Asia (e.g. EAF-Nansen Programme, Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project (BOBLME)) and Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (Common Oceans Program,³⁵ under which there are the Tuna and Deep-Sea Fisheries projects). Examples of such assistance provided from September 2024 to August 2025 include:

³¹ FAO. 2025. *Guidelines for the seaworthiness and safety inspection of small fishing vessels*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd4894en>

³² FAO. 2025. *Guidelines for insurance value and risk assessment of small fishing vessels*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd5007en>

³³ <https://www.fao.org/asiapacific/news/news-detail/a-decade-of-progress--advancing-small-scale-fisheries-in-asia-and-the-pacific/en>

³⁴ The EAF-Nansen Programme supports partner countries and regional organizations in Africa and the Bay of Bengal improving their capacity for the sustainable management of their fisheries and other uses of marine and coastal resources through the implementation of the EAF. See <https://www.fao.org/in-action/eaf-nansen/en>.

³⁵ The Common Oceans Program promotes the sustainable use of marine resources and biodiversity conservation in the ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Programme aims at improving fisheries management by strengthening regulatory frameworks, reducing their environmental impact and supporting collaboration and capacity building among programme partners. See <https://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/what-we-do/what-we-do/en>

- 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 for national and county government personnel (Kenya, January 2025);
- National and regional applied training on the use of the EAF Implementation Monitoring Tool to set EAF Implementation baselines and monitor progress;
- Ongoing activities to support EAF fisheries management plan development and implementation in various countries (including: Angola, Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guyana, Kenya, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Oman, the Philippines, Tanzania, Togo, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Tunisia);
- Support to national authorities and fishing communities to develop co-management for small-scale fisheries (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, and Tanzania);
- Ongoing knowledge sharing on fisheries co-management between Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Indonesia, Peru, and Senegal;
- E-learning courses related to the EAF are available at FAO e-learning Academy providing a comprehensive overview of the EAF process;³⁶
- Training tools to enhance awareness and understanding of the EAF among fishing communities, in support of management were further developed and tested. Additional training sessions were carried out in Mozambique between February and March 2025, focusing on communities in areas where fisheries management plans were under preparation or revision;
- The Common Oceans Tuna Project is supporting operationalization of the EAF management in tuna RFMOs. Project partner the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) together with FAO organized a workshop from 21–23 January 2025 at FAO headquarters in Rome, building on the outputs from workshops held in 2016 and 2019.

SECTION VIII - MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY AND FLAG STATE IMPLEMENTATION

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 105 to 184 – *Interagency coordination, decent work and employment, safety, and women empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture*

Promoting interagency coordination to address IUU fishing and related matters

Following the recommendations under the FAO/ILO/IMO ad hoc Joint Working Group on IUU Fishing and related Matters (JWG-IUU), FAO, in collaboration with IMO and ILO facilitated an interagency workshop in Kenya for the coordinated implementation of the PSMA, the IMO CTA, and the ILO C188 (November 2024). The workshop provided an opportunity for the officials from Kenya Fisheries Service (KeFS) and Kenya Maritime Authority (KMA) to examine and gain an appreciation for (i) the PSMA, the ILO C188, and the IMO CTA, and their implementation requirements, (ii) the status of their implementation in Kenya, and (iii) how the KeFS and KMA interact with each other. The workshop allowed the officials to identify commonalities, potential synergies, and elements for enhanced cooperation in the implementation of the three instruments, and agreed on the way forward with concrete actions for enhancing inter-agency cooperation for tackling IUU fishing, labour issues on board fishing vessels, and safety standards for fishing

³⁶ Six e-learning modules are available at <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=953>; <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=933>; <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=872>; <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=753>; <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=1088>; <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=953>; <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=933>; <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=872>; <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=784>;

vessels. Such cooperation will be formalized and operationalized by an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be supported by standard operating procedures (SoPs) and related training.

Furthermore, Interagency coordination constitutes a fundamental requirement under the PSMA. As part of in-country technical assistance activities, such coordination is promoted through the organization of interagency workshops. Such workshops convene all relevant national authorities to jointly develop a formal cooperation mechanism — such as a MoU — to guide interagency coordination and information exchange. Particular emphasis is placed on enhancing communication related to advance requests for port entry by foreign-flagged vessels and port inspections. In The Gambia, for example, an interagency MoU, supported by SoPs, has been developed through stakeholder consultation process since 2024 to facilitate coordination and exchange of information among 11 national agencies involved in the implementation of the PSMA.

Advancing the social protection agenda in the fisheries sector

FAO, in adherence to the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, the SSF Guidelines and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in addition to supporting the ILO C188 and the ILO 2012 Social Protection Floors Recommendation (C202), is working towards advancing the social protection agenda in the fisheries sector, including the promotion of decent work. To achieve this, in addition to the FAO regular funds, FAO, with the financial support of Norway through component 4 of the GCP/GLO/352/NOR project, and the FVC/GLO/224/MUL developed and delivered the following capacity building activities:

- Expanded the understanding of the barriers and opportunities for expanding the coverage and adequacy of social protection programmes to fishers and fish-farmers in Colombia, Paraguay and Tunisia under the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)-funded “*Social Protection for Fisheries and Aquaculture (SocPro4Fish)*” project as well as in Cabo Verde and Dominican Republic under the FVC/GLO/224/MUL “Creating enabling environment in support of small-scale producers to increase their access to resources and improve their livelihoods and ecosystem service provision in the context of climate change and other shocks”. Lessons from this and other initiatives can be found at COFI/2024/INF/14/Rev.1 on Social Protection for Blue Transformation which describes the multiple knowledge products achieved.³⁷
- A Global database on social protection was established to assess the availability of social protection schemes to the fisheries and aquaculture sector, with a special focus on the most vulnerable persons within the sector. The database focuses on social protection legislation and policies at national and sub-national level that target and/or reach fishers and fish workers, including universal and sectoral schemes. Gender disaggregated data has been collected where possible, and to date, data collection has covered a total of 43 countries, including SIDS in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea, Caribbean and Pacific regions, as well as the SocPro4Fish countries and several countries members of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). For each country, there is an analysis of coverage to fishers for various risks, the identification of gaps and barriers to access, and an overview that characterizes the fisheries sector and social protection frameworks. Included are key indicators such as economic, demographic, labour market, and social metrics, which provide a holistic understanding of the context.
- E-learning courses and technical tools to support fishers – including a manual for fishers in Colombia on accessing social protection programmes; guidelines for formalizing and strengthening small-scale fishing associations in Paraguay and brochures and flyers to support fishers in Tunisia understand

³⁷ Detailed information can be also found at the FAO Social Protection for Fisheries and Aquaculture Website, see <https://www.fao.org/in-action/social-protection-for-fisheries-and-aquaculture/en>

procedures to access social protection programmes; and an e-learning course on addressing the climate and poverty nexus through integrated approaches including social protection for fishers, with tutored and self-paced versions available and oriented to a broad audience including public policymakers, researchers, fishers, and fisher organizations. Various materials were prepared and distributed in-country and online, including flyers and a booklet developed through participatory engagement on shock-responsive social protection and adaptation in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in Colombia.

- Continued work with RFBs and RFMOs to integrate decent work and social protection, including the elimination of forced labour and child labour, into their agendas. In 2024, FAO and ILO supported the discussion on decent work conditions and the protection of crew working on fishing vessels at the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO).
- Publication of an Action Plan for Safety, Social Protection and Decent Work in Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) Region.³⁸
- In Cabo Verde an Inter-Institutional Working Group on Social Protection for the Fisheries Sector was established, including a broad range of stakeholders, among them FAO, Ministry of the Sea, Ministry of Family, Inclusion and Social Development, Cabo Verde Institute for Gender Equality, and sectoral and non-governmental organizations. Policy dialogue on strengthening linkages between food security initiatives and national policies was initiated in 2025 with discussions focused on integrating small-scale fishers into existing national social protection schemes, creation of an interoperable fisheries registry, assessing the feasibility of unemployment benefits, and on improving the visibility and empowerment of women in the fisheries sector. Studies on coverage and barriers to accessing social protection for fishers, on financing mechanisms, and on feasibility of an unemployment benefit for fishers were initiated in 2025. These efforts align with Cabo Verde's national priorities to eradicate extreme poverty by 2026, ensuring greater economic security and resilience for vulnerable coastal communities.
- In the Dominican Republic partnerships with small-scale farmers' associations, for the national school feeding program and to the tourism sector with the National Association of Hotels and Tourism (ASONAHORES), promoting the inclusion of small-scale producers as well as fisher organizations, and in particular women. In 2024 women producers' organizations gained experience with marketing, sales and partnership development through participation in the national ASONAHORES fair. In 2025, developing a small-scale producers' registry focused on family farming and small-scale fishers, including specific criteria to identify family farmers and small-scale fishers to be included in government procurement selection. The results of a public procurement mapping study were included as part of the Presidential Flagship Goals 2024–2028: Connecting family farmers to the school feeding program. Data sharing and collaboration agreements were put in place to support inclusion of cooperatives and associations, and partnership development was underway with the national social protection program, SUPERATE, the EU, and several private sector companies.
- Development of the *“Technical Study on Decent Work in Fisheries: Exploring Challenges and Evolving Legal and Policy Avenues for Strengthened Decent Work Standards”*, which identifies and examines the progress and developments in decent work within marine fisheries over the last seven years.³⁹ A summary of this Technical Study was provided to the Fifth session of the JWG-IUU, held in Geneva between 8-12 January 2024.⁴⁰ Following the recommendation of the JWG-IUU,⁴¹ this Technical Study

³⁸ FAO. 2024. *Action Plan for Safety, Social Protection and Decent Work in Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) Region*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3641en>

³⁹ FAO. 2016. *Scoping Study on Decent Work and Employment in Fisheries and Aquaculture: Issues and Actions for Discussion and Programming*. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5980e.pdf>.

⁴⁰ The official website of the JWG-IUU 5, <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/meeting/41432>.

⁴¹ The official website of the JWG-IUU 5, <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/meeting/41432>.

is expected to serve as one of the corner stones for the development of guidance for national fisheries agencies to contribute to implementing relevant ILO and IMO instruments governing fishers and workers in the seafood industry throughout the supply chain. A multidisciplinary experts workshop was organized by FAO to validate this technical study (September 2024).

- Organizing, in collaboration with ILO, a workshop at FAO headquarters to support the review and validation of an updated Guidance document on Addressing Child labour in fisheries and aquaculture (September 2024).
- Delivering one course module on social protection for the fisheries sector, as part of the Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) Bari's Advanced Specialized Course in Sustainable Development of Coastal Communities on Social Security in fisheries (May 2024);
- Hosting, in collaboration with the GFCM the workshop “*Extending social protection coverage to the fisheries and aquaculture sector: where we are at and how to move forward*” (February 2024). The workshop, part of the GFCM Forum on Fisheries Science in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Fish Forum), aimed to evaluate the breadth and depth of existing social protection systems, and address common access barriers faced by fishers including legal, administrative, and financial obstacles.
- Delivering the advanced course on Promoting Decent Working Conditions in Fisheries in collaboration with the CIHEAM, through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza in Isla Cristina, Huelva, Spain (9–23 May 2025).

Progress is also being made in other global and regional fisheries bodies, for example in December 2024, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) adopted the first-ever binding Conservation and Management Measure for crew labour standards.

Safety of fishers and fishing vessels

From 2024 through 2025, FAO continued supporting the implementation of safety at sea capacity-building and awareness raising activities. A Train-the trainer course and training workshops for safety targeting small-scale fishers in inland fisheries were implemented in the Republic of Zambia, with the support from FISH4ACP.⁴² The training was the first of its kind on the Zambian shore of Lake Tanganyika. The Train the trainer course is available in Spanish to deliver the course in the Caribbean (Dominican Republic).

Occupational safety and health (OSH) measures in fisheries and aquaculture are lagging behind other sectors. As aquatic production is projected to increase exponentially, the likelihood of occupational safety and health challenges will increase and threaten the sustainability of the industry.

With support from the Lloyd’s Register Foundation, an FAO project worked on Guidelines for inspection and valuation of small-scale fishing vessels to facilitate insurance (MTF/GLO/1161/LRF). The guidelines preparatory process involved expert and validation workshops in September 2024 and January 2025⁴³. Two guidelines were published by FAO in March 2025: Guidelines for the seaworthiness and safety inspection of small fishing vessels,⁴⁴ and Guidelines for insurance value and risk assessment of small fishing vessels.⁴⁵ FAO has submitted the first guidelines to IMO for potential endorsement by IMO and

⁴² FISH4ACP initiative aims at improving the sustainability of 12 selected fisheries and aquaculture value chains, with one of the main components being improving the inclusiveness and social sustainability of selected value chains. See <https://www.fao.org/fish4acp>.

⁴³ FAO. 2025. Report of the FAO Expert workshop on developing guidelines for inspection and valuation of small-scale fishing vessels. Rome, 24–26 September 2024. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report, No. 1465. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3863en>

⁴⁴ FAO. 2025. *Guidelines for the seaworthiness and safety inspection of small fishing vessels*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd4894en>

⁴⁵ FAO. 2025. *Guidelines for insurance value and risk assessment of small fishing vessels*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd5007en>

joint dissemination. The guidelines aim to facilitate the supply of insurance services for small fishing vessels worldwide, with an emphasis on small-scale fishers in developing countries; and provide practical guidance for conducting seaworthiness and safety inspections of decked fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length and undecked fishing vessels.

FAO has been providing technical assistance to Member Nations with the introduction and promotion of insurance services for small-scale fishers. In Asia, such assistance is based on the Guidelines for increasing access of small-scale fishers to insurance services in Asia,⁴⁶ endorsed by the Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) in 2019. Moreover, FAO coordinates a global network for capacity,⁴⁷ supported by rural finance stakeholders from Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Caribbean and Latin America. From 2021 to 2024, this network has organized more than 16 webinars, including various well-attended webinars on insurance service provisions to small-scale fishers and aquaculture producers, and its members actively provide technical assistance in the establishment and improvement of micro-finance, credit and insurance programmes for small-scale fishers.

Building on the FAO global study on integrating port State measures into the broader framework of port State control, developed in collaboration with IMO and ILO, in 2023, and other related initiatives, the three Organizations will jointly deliver a training course on coordinated implementation of international instruments on fisheries, labour and safety, including the PSMA, the IMO CTA, and the ILO C188.

Gender Equality and women's empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture

FAO's effort to support gender equality and women's empowerment in the fisheries and aquaculture sector works in line with the provisions of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020-2030, as well as with the framework set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the goals identified for SDG 5 and the over 30 gender-related targets across the other SDGs.⁴⁸ FAO's approach to gender equality and women's empowerment aligns with global human rights frameworks set by the UN and is fully focused on addressing socio-economic inequalities as well as achieving development outcomes. The FAO Blue Transformation Roadmap 2020-2030 is grounded on, inter alia, "Equality and justice" as well as "Gender equality and equity", recognizing the vital role of women in aquatic food systems, whilst promoting gender-responsive and transformative interventions.⁴⁹ These principles are also enshrined in, inter alia, the CCRF, the SSF Guidelines,⁵⁰ and the GSA,⁵¹ endorsed by FAO COFI36 in 2024.⁵² The GSA recommend, inter alia: removing barriers in policy and legislation hampering the participation of women to aquaculture, increasing availability and production sex-disaggregated data, mainstream gender in

⁴⁶ FAO. 2019. *Guidelines for increasing access of small-scale fishers to insurance services in Asia*, by Uwe Tietze and Raymon van Anrooy. Rome. Italy.

⁴⁷ FAO. 2022. *The CAFI SSF Network brochure*. <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/publication/299057>.

⁴⁸ FAO. 2020. FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030. Rome. p. 1

⁴⁹ FAO. 2022. Blue Transformation - Roadmap 2022–2030: A vision for FAO's work on aquatic food systems. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0459en>. p. 5

⁵⁰ The SSF Guidelines have a dedicated chapter for Gender Equality (Chapter 8), with direct provisions for ensuring that policies and legislation to achieve gender equality are put in place, as well as making sure that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of small-scale fisheries development strategies. See FAO. 2015. *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*. Rome. p. 12.

⁵¹ The GSA have integrated a dedicated section on gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture, whilst including "Equity and Equality" among the guiding principles of the Guidelines. The GSA, under section 6.3 "Gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture". See FAO. 2025. *Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture*. Rome. p.23.

⁵² COFI36 stressed the importance of gender equality for the development of a sustainable aquaculture sector, therefore acknowledging the critical role of women in aquaculture value chains, promoting women's equal access to, control over and benefit from natural resources, assets, markets, infrastructures, information, financial services, training and entrepreneurship. See FAO. 2024. Committee on Fisheries. Thirty-sixth Session, 8-12 July 2024. *Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture*. Rome. p. 20

development strategies to ensure that women's decision-making power and participation are supported, supporting transformative action to unroot gender inequalities and tackle the current gendered division of labour in the aquaculture sector.⁵³ Specifically, FAO COFI36 called for:

- more prominent actions toward the improvement of gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture; encouraging and assisting Members in compiling and disseminating disaggregated data; the need to promote gender equity and reduce inequalities in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.⁵⁴
- the importance of gender equity in fisheries management, requesting the Sub-committee on Fisheries Management to continue including this approach in the upcoming work⁵⁵.

FAO's work on the cross-cutting theme of gender mainly focuses on building organizational, technical and human capacities of women, enhancing women's participation in decision-making processes, improve women's access to markets and resources and reduce women's work burden with the provision of tailored tools and technologies that match their specific needs and take into account the constraints they face. A specific team in FAO has been working on mainstreaming gender in FAO's work relating to fisheries and aquaculture.⁵⁶ Current initiatives in this regard are linked to the following programmes and projects:

- Norway-funded EAF-Nansen Programme's work on gender equality and women's empowerment includes capacity development activities, gender mainstreaming in monitoring and evaluation and development of gender needs assessments at country level. The Programme has recently updated its Gender Strategy and related Action Plan. In line with the mandate to strengthen the capacities of fisheries institutions, the EAF-Nansen Programme is currently working to strengthen (United Republic of Tanzania and The Gambia) and establish (Ivory Coast and other interested countries) Gender Desks across the Fisheries Ministries of different countries. The Gender Desks are recognized teams of officers from national fisheries institutions, nominated from the various units within the institutions, receiving training for mainstreaming gender in all activities of the institution's work in the national fisheries sector.
- GEF-funded Common Oceans Program's current work on gender equality and women's empowerment include implementing their Gender Action Plan, whilst a coordinated workplan for gender mainstreaming is being implemented with specific activities related to institutional capacity strengthening and awareness raising of partners with regards to gender equality and women's empowerment both at organizational and programmatic levels.
- FVC-funded Small-Scale Fisheries Project⁵⁷ includes activities focusing on the post-harvest sector improvements and gender equality. An example of output under this effort is the strengthening of global, regional, national and sub-national small-scale fisheries organizations, with a particular focus on women's participation and representation.
- SIDA-funded Small-Scale Fisheries project⁵⁸ activities relevant to gender equality and women empowerment include increasing capacity of women in SSF for participating in decision-making processes.⁵⁹ One of the main outputs of the project is linked to boosting the implementation of the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 2-3

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 5

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 21

⁵⁷ This project aims at enhancing the resilience and sustainability of livelihoods within small-scale fisheries communities by implementing the SSF Guidelines. See <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/in-action/implementation/implementing-the-small-scale-fisheries-guidelines-for-gender-equitable-and-climate-resilient-food-systems-and-livelihoods---phase-2/en>

⁵⁸ This project aims at strengthening the resilience of livelihoods and supporting small-scale fishing communities in their role as resource stewards. See <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/news/41478>

⁵⁹ [FAO partners with Sweden to boost sustainable small-scale fisheries - What's new](#)

SSF Guidelines through efforts to develop and operationalize Regional Plans of Actions for SSF Guidelines Implementation (RPOA-SSF) and NPOA-SSF, which are a powerful participatory tool that include strong considerations about gender equality and women's empowerment, therefore making the current development process of such Plans across different project countries a key opportunity for enhancing women's empowerment at country/regional level.

- EU-funded FISH4ACP project is currently carrying out several interventions focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment, including strengthening the capacities of the Tanzanian Women Fish Workers Association (TAWFA), supporting fishing communities on Lake Tanganyika in Zambia and United Republic of Tanzania to serve as catalysts for transformative action towards gender equality and women's empowerment, supporting the training of female fish farmers in Zimbabwe with a focus on leadership and inclusiveness.

SECTION IX – MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE RESOURCES

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 186 to 189 – *FAO Custodianship of SDG indicators*

SDG Indicator 14.4.1 – Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels

FAO is the custodian agency of SDG Indicator 14.4.1 which, at a global and regional level, is based on FAO's indicator on the status of fish stocks that is updated and disseminated every two years through FAO's flagship publication, the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA). The latest SOFIA report *Blue Transformation in Action* was published in June 2024.⁶⁰ Within the SDG framework, reporting on the status of countries' national stocks creates both an opportunity for countries to develop strategies for sustainable fisheries and a challenge in terms of data and technical capacity for many developing countries to estimate the indicator and report in globally comparable ways. FAO updated the methodology to assess the status of fishery stocks in marine fisheries in 2025,⁶¹ that feeds into FAO's biannual flagship publication SOFIA. It is a transparent, participatory, evolving yet consistent methodology to assess the status of regional and global marine fishery resources, which are significantly different now in comparison to the 1970s when the first assessment for SOFIA was carried out. First, the dominant stocks and modes of exploitation have changed. Second, the tools and requirements for calculating and presenting global sustainability information are constantly evolving, including the need for increasing transparency and the use of local knowledge. Finally, the emergence of the national-level SDG Indicator 14.4.1, which is based exclusively on the stock status reported by countries using a multiplicity of methods to classify the stock status, including model-based estimates, empirical indicators and documented expert opinion, have generated parallel monitoring processes that are worth connecting. Thus, FAO considers that the time was right to conduct a methodological update to compute and report on the state of world fish stocks that is better aligned with national SDG reporting initiatives, and includes broader national and regional participation and transparency, while maintaining the crucial integrity of the time series.

SDG Indicator 14.6.1 – Progress by countries in the degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

Reporting by States on SDG Indicator 14.6.1 is facilitated through the FAO Questionnaire for monitoring the implementation of the CCRF and related instruments. The first SDG Indicator 14.6.1 score collection

⁶⁰ FAO. 2024. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024. Blue Transformation in action*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0683en>.

⁶¹ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/globefish/news-events/news/news-detail/from-data-to-decision--unveiling-fao's-updated-methodology-for-fish-stock-status/en>

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 instruments⁶² 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.

Under the FAO Programme to implement the PSMA, various activities have been carried out to enhance the degree of countries' implementation of international instruments aiming at combating IUU fishing, including:

- the FAO Global Record, which 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 international 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 April 2025, the FAO Global Record contains 12,229 vessel records of all sizes and types, provided by 69 FAO Member States from all regions. The most represented regions are Europe, Asia and North America, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the Pacific. To render the FAO Global Record more operational and boost participation, a new version of the Global Record Information System was developed and released in August of 2022, to which FAO is continually working on improving following guidance from FAO Member States as received through the Global Record Working Group;⁶³
- the PSMA GIES, which became operational in December 2023 and is actively being used by Parties to exchange compliance information on relevant vessels. The GIES is currently mainly used by Parties to exchange inspection reports and denials of entry or use of ports through the compilation of an online form. The compilation of such forms is facilitated through the connection to the Global Record, with auto-compilation vessel data when available. The system then uses national contact point information provided by States, to send automatic notifications of reports being submitted onto the system. In 2024 two major milestones were achieved, namely the release of the ARPE functionality and the connection with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission's (IOTC) electronic port State measures information system (e-PSM). Accessible through the GIES and available in all six FAO official languages, foreign vessels requesting port access now could complete the ARPE form, in alignment with Annex A of the PSMA. Port States can then assess vessel risk within the GIES and approve or deny entry, with decisions automatically communicated to the vessel. ARPE data can also be integrated into Denial of Entry (DEN) or Port Inspection Report (PIR) forms, streamlining reporting. Notably, this function supports Parties lacking national or regional electronic ARPE systems, facilitating workflows, data

⁶² <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-14-06-01.pdf>.

⁶³ <https://www.fao.org/global-record/meetings/en/>.

entry, and notification processes. Operational since 2016, IOTC's e-PSM is the first regional system to be connected to the GIES, allowing the sharing of ARPEs, port entry or use denials, and inspection reports on foreign vessels accessing designated ports. With 76% of IOTC Contracting Parties also being Parties to the PSMA, its connection streamlines information exchange, reduces duplication efforts, and ensures compliance for PSMA Parties. The PSMA Secretariat is collaborating with other regional fishery bodies to enhance data sharing, including through the further development of API documentation to facilitate automated data exchange. The Secretariat is also actively working to improve and expand the features contained within the GIES, following guidance received from Parties, especially technical feedback provided through the PSMA Technical Working Group on Information Exchange.

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

FAO is also custodian of SDG Indicator 14.b.1 towards achieving SDG target 14.b on providing access of small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets. Reporting to FAO by States on the indicator is facilitated through the FAO questionnaire for monitoring the implementation of the CCRF and related instruments, in particular - the SSF Guidelines, which is most relevant towards the achievement of the indicator. States' responses to 3 specific questions in the questionnaire from which an indicator score is generated and validated by the reporting State, concern: (i) the existence of laws, regulations, policies or strategies that target the SSF sector, (ii) existence of ongoing initiatives that implement the SSF Guidelines, (iii) existence of mechanisms or processes that enable small-scale fisheries actors to contribute to decision-making processes. This questionnaire is circulated every two years, hence data is available for 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024. In 2024, the global average score generated from 112 States reporting was 4, which is a slight decline from 5 in the previous reporting year (2022) however an overall gradual increase since 2018.

FAO has continued to support efforts towards achieving the indicator as part of ongoing support towards the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and related instruments, which recognize and protect access rights for small-scale fisheries. Examples of key activities delivered or tools developed for support at local, national, regional and global levels include (see also *Capacity building in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines* under section II above):

- FAO has provided guidance on the development and implementation of NPOA-SSF in several countries (Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Philippines, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania) since 2017, which include priorities for addressing key challenges hindering access of small-scale fishing communities to fisheries resources and their sustainable management, as well as improving market access for small-scale fishers, processors and traders. Capacity development activities for SSF organizations, in particular women, to improve their fisheries livelihoods post-harvest activities such as fish handling and processing to improve food safety and access to local or international markets. Examples of targeted women groups who have received post-harvest trainings and support are national chapters of the Africa Women's Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET). Various post-harvest training materials have been published to support delivery of the trainings. FAO in partnership with Shanghai Ocean University and UNCTAD convened a multistakeholder workshop for the Asia region to foster discussions around improving market access for small-scale fisheries in November 2024.

To further assist countries in strengthening legal and policy frameworks that support small-scale fisheries and promote achievement of SDG Indicator 14.b.1, FAO continues to develop country profiles for SSF-LEX

– a legal and policy repository dedicated to the small-scale fisheries sector, as highlighted under section I above. SSF-LEX provides user-friendly access to national legal and policy instruments relevant to small-scale fisheries, including those that recognize and protect tenure rights, governance participation, and sustainable resource use. By consolidating laws, regulations, and policies related to SSF across different countries. SSF is a useful resource for States to respond to the FAO questionnaire for monitoring the implementation of the CCRF and related instruments.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 195 to 212 – *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.⁶⁴ 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. Climate change is also accelerating the spread of aquatic non-indigenous or invasive species, impacting aquatic ecosystems and fisheries systems. Prevention is the first line of defense; nevertheless, eradication is often impractical once the non-indigenous species establish, therefore requiring adaptive management.

To address climate change in agrifood systems, including aquatic food systems, the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 was endorsed by the FAO Council in 2022, as requested by the FAO Conference.⁶⁵ In support of the implementation of this Strategy and its Action Plan,⁶⁶ COFI36 encouraged FAO to continue supporting Members in conducting climate change vulnerability assessments, accessing climate finance, developing climate policies and strategies, and implementing suitable climate solutions.⁶⁷ Accordingly, FAO has engaged in the following activities:

- Adaptation policy frameworks for resilient fisheries, including the FAO Adaptation Toolbox for fisheries and aquaculture,⁶⁸ and guidance on good practice criteria and a compilation of good practices to climate proof the fisheries management cycle.⁶⁹
- Promoting the adoption of participatory, adaptive, and precautionary fisheries management systems across the world through dedicated capacity development programs.⁷⁰
- 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).

⁶⁴ IPCC. 2019. IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/3/2022/03/SROCC_FullReport_FINAL.pdf.

⁶⁵ FAO. 2022. FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022–2031. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2274en/cc2274en.pdf>

⁶⁶ FAO. 2023. FAO Action Plan 2022–2025 for the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7014en>.

⁶⁷ FAO. 2024. Report of the Thirty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, 8–12 July 2024. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report, No. 1459. Rome. Paragraph 17(c). <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd2423en>

⁶⁸ Poulain, F., Himes-Cornell, A., and Shelton, C. 2018. Chapter 25 – Methods and tools for climate change adaptation in fisheries and aquaculture. In: Barange, M., Bahri, T., Beveridge, M.C.M., Cochrane, K.L., Funge-Smith, S. & Poulain, F. eds. 2018. Impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture: synthesis of current knowledge, adaptation and mitigation options. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 627. Rome, FAO. 628 pp. <https://www.fao.org/3/i9705en/i9705en.pdf>.

⁶⁹ FAO. 2021. Adaptive management of fisheries in response to climate change. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 667. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3095en>.

⁷⁰ Examples include the EAF-Nansen programme (<https://www.fao.org/in-action/eaf-nansen/en/>), the CLME+ project, relevant Mediterranean projects, and activities in the Philippines under the Norad project. For more information on these projects, see: <https://www.fao.org/fi/static-media/MeetingDocuments/WECAFC/NBSLME2018/prospectus.pdf>; <https://www.fao.org/3/cb6509en/cb6509en.pdf>; FAO. 2021. The risks and vulnerability of the sardine fisheries sector in the Republic of the Philippines to climate and other non-climate processes. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7506en>.

- Co-development of NDC-Fish guideline⁷¹ and NAP-Fish guidelines⁷² providing frameworks for including aquatic foods related measures in NDCs, NAPs, and broader national climate strategies, considering that around 60 percent of NDCs submitted by countries as of 1 January 2024 included such adaptation actions for fisheries and aquaculture.⁷³
- 2024 report – subsequent to the Comprehensive review on disaggregated impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture, based on model projections, data analyses, and expert assessments⁷⁴ - which provides updated projections of exploitable fish biomass under different climate change and socioeconomic scenarios for all countries and territories.⁷⁵
- 2024 report presents a set of adaptive management practices learnt from case studies across the globe, which include developing commercial fisheries, encouraging recreational harvesting, exploring market opportunities, implementing outreach programs, engaging stakeholders, applying spatial and biological controls, and restoring ecosystems.⁷⁶
- 2024 policy brief providing a systemic analysis of El Niño's impacts on fisheries and aquaculture, along with policy options to address such impacts.⁷⁷ El Niño is a natural climate event during which surface waters of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean become warmer than usual, affecting weather patterns across the globe and driving extreme weather events including drought, flooding, and storms.

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 disasters. Linking early warning systems with shock-responsive social protection programs not 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 IFISH6 from 8 to 12 January 2024 in Rome, Italy.⁷⁸

Climate finance is indispensable for the implementation of adaptation and mitigation solutions. With financial support from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), GEF and 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-led GCF projects are aiming at supporting the increased resilience of ocean and riparian livelihoods and ecosystems, both through readiness and preparatory support (e.g. projects in Belize, Cabo Verde, Saint

⁷¹ Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions, WorldFish, FAO, Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, CARE, and Environmental Defense Fund. 2024. Integrating blue foods into national climate strategies: Enhancing nationally determined contributions and strengthening climate action. Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd2482en>

⁷² FAO. 2020. *Addressing fisheries and aquaculture in National Adaptation Plans. Supplement to the UNFCCC NAP Technical Guidelines*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca2215en>.

⁷³ FAO. 2024. *Agrifood systems in nationally determined contributions: Global analysis – Key findings*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3210en>

⁷⁴ FAO. 2018. *Impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture: synthesis of current knowledge, adaptation and mitigation options*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 627. Rome, FAO. 628 pp. <https://www.fao.org/3/i9705en/i9705en.pdf>.

⁷⁵ FAO. 2024. *Climate change risks to marine ecosystems and fisheries – Projections to 2100 from the Fisheries and Marine Ecosystem Model Intercomparison Project*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper, No. 707. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1379en>

⁷⁶ FAO. 2024. *Fisheries responses to invasive species in a changing climate – Lessons learned from case studies*. FAO Fisheries Technical Paper, No. 704. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1400en>

⁷⁷ FAO. 2024. *El Niño impacts and policies for the fisheries sector*. FAO Innovation for Blue Transformation. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3812en>

⁷⁸ <https://ifishconference.ca/>.

Lucia, and Sri Lanka) and larger support (e.g. one ongoing project in The Gambia). GEF-funded projects are underway in several countries including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kiribati, and Timor-Leste. Work is also ongoing with projects implemented by FAO with bilateral funds from Norway and the EU, supporting countries to build the resilience of aquatic food systems to climate change and natural disasters to attain sustainability. However, according to FAO's analysis, the costs of adaptation for fisheries and aquaculture for all developing countries are estimated to be USD 4.8 billion per year by 2030.⁷⁹ The 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, FAO is supporting RFBs in climate-resilient fisheries management, including the convening of two regional FAO workshops, and developing a global review of RFB responses to climate change. 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 Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN).⁸⁰

At the global level, the nexus between climate change, aquatic ecosystems, and aquatic food production is receiving increasing attention.⁸¹ During the UNFCCC COP29, in 2024, as in past years, FAO collaborated with countries and partner organizations in organizing and participating in a series of official and pavilion-led side events, to ensure progressive consideration of aquatic foods related solutions in international climate policymaking.⁸² 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 has developed a guide to empower aquatic food stakeholders with insights into climate negotiations and identify practical entry points.⁸³

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 213 to 224 – *Marine debris*

FAO has a permanent seat at the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML),⁸⁴ contributing to the development of the GPML Digital Platform,⁸⁵ with inputs particularly around sea-based sources of marine plastic litter (SBMPL), including abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). FAO also contributes technical expertise to the GPML's Community of Practice (CoP) on Harmonization of Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Pollution,

⁷⁹ FAO. 2024. The fisheries and aquaculture adaptation finance gap. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd1588en>

⁸⁰ FAO. 2024. Changes from changing climate – Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network Magazine, No. 22. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cc9471en>

⁸¹ The 2023 UNFCCC annual Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue selected “fisheries and food security” as one of the two topics for deep-dive discussions. The Dialogue emphasized the need to integrate aquatic food climate solutions into both national and multilateral climate policies and actions.⁸¹ The Dialogue outcomes were subsequently welcomed in the COP28 decision on the Global Stock-take (Decision 1/CMA.5). See https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_16a01E.pdf

⁸² <https://aquaticbluefood.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Brief-on-aquatic-foods-at-COP2935.pdf>

⁸³ FAO. 2024. *Navigating the waters of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – A guide for the aquatic food sector*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper, No. 718. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1401en>

⁸⁴ <https://www.gpmarinelitter.org/>.

⁸⁵ 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. See <https://digital.gpmarinelitter.org/>

specifically in the identification of key performance indicators (KPIs) across the plastic lifecycle for comprehensive progress measurement toward addressing plastic pollution from source to sea; identification of key terminologies and definitions to inform a glossary for greater comparability of data of the identified KPIs; and exploration of options for data integration and expansion of the Digital Platform Data Hub for global and national monitoring and assessment.

Under the framework of the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) Working Group on SBMPL, including fishing gear and other shipping related litter (GESAMP Working Group 43),⁸⁶ sponsored by FAO and IMO and in partnership with UNEP, Workstream 2 members have made good progress in assembling data and information to address TORs 4-6, 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 April 2025 and intends to submit a final report to GESAMP in September 2025.

The Common Oceans Tuna Project will carry out three surveys to estimate ALDFG in priority fisheries in the Indian Ocean, building on surveys in Pakistan and the Seychelles. This work will contribute to the FAO Global ALDFG Survey and address data gaps identified by GESAMP Working Group 43, providing estimations of the quantity and causes of ALDFG. The first survey was administered and covered 45% of Chinese longline fishing vessels operating in the Indian Ocean. Two additional surveys will be conducted and a detailed report describing the methodology, analysis undertaken and conclusions will be published and presented.

FAO has also been part of the Plastic Waste Partnership (PWP), led by the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, aimed at fostering 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.

The IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) Sub-Committee on Prevention of Pollution (PPR) has been instructed to develop draft amendments and associated guidelines for the mandatory marking of fishing gear under MARPOL. Reporting by FAO on ALDFG to IMO progressed at the IMO PPR in February 2025 where agreement was reached on an outline of the data to be reported. PPR invited Member States and international organizations to submit written proposals to a future session of the Sub-Committee to further develop, inter alia, the specifics of the agreed data to be reported to IMO. Following FAO's inputs, including submission of a paper to FAO COFI36,⁸⁷ lost gear reporting obligations already adopted by RFMOs were considered within the discussions. FAO has recommended to the IMO PPR Sub-Committee to evaluate current reporting requirements and mechanisms for ALDFG agreed within RFMOs and consider how to avoid duplication of reporting requirements.

The EAF-Nansen Programme has a comprehensive Science Programme comprising 11 themes. Theme-6 covers the occurrence and impacts of marine litter and microplastics on marine ecosystems, and theme-8 includes the potential impact of microplastics on seafood safety. From the analysis conducted so far, there is no evidence that microplastics pose a threat to seafood safety. The following research studies have been carried out to, inter alia, identify and quantify the proportion of litter generated by the fishing

⁸⁶ <https://www.fao.org/responsible-fishing/resources/detail/en/c/1448067/>

⁸⁷ COFI/2024/SBD/3 Global overview of lost fishing gear reporting obligations implemented under regional fisheries management organizations and progress in the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear to reduce ALDFG and its impacts, available at <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/3085869d-049d-4b12-93a7-84aafdef8387/content>

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:

- 2024 Guidance for the sampling, identification and recording of marine litter, providing guidance on the sampling and identification of marine litter in trawl surveys and in shoreline litter surveys⁸⁸
- Report “The impact of marine litter on the beach seine fishery of four countries in the Gulf of Guinea: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. A preliminary investigation of the social and economic impacts of marine litter on fishing communities” is under finalization.⁸⁹

SECTION X – MARINE BIODIVERSITY

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 255 – Technical support to the preparatory work for the entry into force of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction

Since 2022, FAO has been attending and contributing to the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) Sessions (through which the BBNJ Agreement was developed) and the Preparatory Commissions, providing fisheries and other pertinent technical information on issues related to FAO's mandate. FAO participated in the first session of the Preparatory Commission (14–25 April 2025) and will be participating in the second session (18 to 29 August 2025). FAO welcomed the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement in 2023, which contributes to the governance of oceans, conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity. The sustainable utilization of fisheries resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) cannot be achieved without marine biological diversity conservation including through the BBNJ Agreement.

Consistent with the requirement of the BBNJ Agreement as an implementing Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, for ensuring coherence and coordination with relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant sectoral bodies (IFBs), FAO has been proactive in discussing among FAO experts and relevant bodies and agreements the relationship between the BBNJ Agreement and FAO governing and statutory bodies and FAO agreements. In this connection, FAO has been informing Members through FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on the implications of the BBNJ Agreement as part of its effort to provide guidance on the implications for fisheries and aquaculture of global biodiversity frameworks and agreements in general.⁹⁰ FAO has also facilitated information exchange with RFMO and RFB Secretariats to discuss elements of common interest, establishing network and coordination around fisheries-related issues vis a vis the BBNJ Agreement. FAO is currently developing further resources for delegations, national fisheries administrations and regional bodies on the implications and opportunities of the BBNJ Agreement for the fisheries sector. FAO and RFB Secretariats view the BBNJ Agreement as an opportunity to build on existing policy instruments, processes and works of sectoral bodies and improve the coordination and cooperation efforts among them without undermining their mandates.

⁸⁸ FAO. 2024. Marine litter – Assessing the distribution and impact of marine litter in Africa and the Bay of Bengal: An initiative of the EAF-Nansen Programme. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cc9739en>

⁸⁹ This study was initiated in 2021, including surveying litter on the beaches where beach seine fisheries were carried 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 these.

⁹⁰ FAO. 2024. COFI Thirty-sixth Session, Working Document COFI/2024/9: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/10c0454f-37c5-483c-b71b-293a7bac1efd/content>

FAO is supporting countries to access GEF funding for national enabling activities for ratification support, and is working with UNEP and UNDP to secure GEF funding to co-implement a program of global and regional activities to foster international cooperation towards entry into force and implementation readiness. FAO is well-placed to help Members implement the BBNJ Agreement. With its wealth of experience and expertise in ocean governance at the global and regional level, FAO is fully equipped to support Members directly on their ratification and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement and through its existing network of RFBs involved in the management of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, the GEF funded Common Oceans Program, and the FAO-supported RSN.

Through COFI and its sub-committees, FAO provides a regular and ongoing global forum for Members to engage in discussions on crucial fishery matters, including those pertaining to the high seas. FAO, within its mandate and as guided by the COFI and other FAO governing and statutory bodies, stands ready to assist and work with Members to provide technical advice and support the global effort to increase parties to the BBNJ Agreement to bring the agreement into force and in ensuring the effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement once it enters into force.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 267 TO 285 – *Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures and vulnerable marine ecosystems*

Area-based measures have long been utilised in fisheries management and conservation frameworks, and are implemented by national and regional fisheries management bodies, including regional bodies established under FAO Article VI and Article XIV. FAO has produced advice and guidance on effective time and area-based management tools (ABMTs) including MPAs and OECMs for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and for achieving SDGs and global biodiversity targets⁹¹ In support of the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Aichi Biodiversity Target 11. In 2024 and 2025, FAO published guidance on the potential for identifying OECMs in inland fisheries⁹² and RFMOs,⁹³ and how to identify biodiversity outcomes stemming from area-based fisheries management⁹⁴. FAO has also held several capacity-building workshops, including in Chile, Argentina, Jamaica, and Mozambique, to help countries better understand the OECM identification process and consider potential fisheries OECMs within their borders using case studies to illustrate the operationalization of the OECM criteria. Moreover, FAO held a workshop with RFBs in 2024 to bring OECMs to their attention and to discuss the applicability of OECM recognition in the deep-sea areas under their jurisdiction. These workshops had the following objectives:

- To support countries, fisheries-related agencies and stakeholders to understand, discuss and apply the CBD's criteria for identifying fisheries-related OECMs;
- To synthesize lessons learned from countries' experience in applying the CBD criteria in support of the development of the practical guidance called for by COFI³⁴. The workshops aim to build the capacity of States and experts in the region by:
 - increasing their understanding of OECMs and the benefits associated with identifying/creating OECMs;

⁹¹ See for instance FAO. 2022. A handbook for identifying, evaluating and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures in marine fisheries. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3307en>

⁹² FAO. 2025. Exploring the role of inland fisheries area-based management in conserving freshwater biodiversity. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper, No. 733. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd4881en>

⁹³ FAO. 2024. Report of the workshop on fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures in areas under the jurisdiction of regional fisheries bodies, 22-24 January 2024. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report, No. 1439. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3102en>

⁹⁴ FAO. 2025. Documenting biodiversity outcomes in marine fisheries management: A supplemental guide to the FAO handbook on identifying, evaluating, and reporting Fisheries OECMs. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper, No. 709. Rome, FAO

- increasing their understanding of the criteria to identify and report OECMs, and their ability to apply these criteria in the context of marine fisheries measures; and
- applying the OECM criteria on a test basis on selected illustrative case studies in the region.

FAO will continue to help build the capacity of its members to report on how fisheries managers and the fisheries sector are contributing to current and future area-based biodiversity conservation goals. To assist its Members and RFBs assess and identify fisheries OECMs, FAO is undertaking the following activities:

- Continue to host and participate in shared learning events in additional regions. The goals of these events are: a) to bring stakeholders, experts and governments together and help guide countries in the identification, establishment, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of Area Based Fisheries Management (ABFMs) that can contribute to marine biodiversity conservation; and b) to learn from countries' experience in using area-based management tools in the marine context, which will support Activity 3 below. Such workshops are envisioned to include staff from fishery-related national agencies as well as staff from RFBs. The CBD Secretariat has proposed joining FAO in planning and facilitating these events.
- Build general awareness on the use of spatial management tools and their benefits to fisheries and biodiversity, both at global and regional levels through advisory processes and communications materials.
- Continue to solicit input and finalize practical guidance for the establishment and management of OECMs in fisheries and aquaculture. The next set of guidance that FAO will be working on is related to how the aquaculture sector can contribute to Target 3 of the KMGBF. In addition, FAO is finalizing a technical document summarizing the role of sustainable aquaculture in meeting the collective goals and targets of the GBF.⁹⁵
- Provide on the ground assistance to states at regional/national level to share experience on the implementation of ABFM that delivers biodiversity co-benefits with the aim of increasing OECM coverage.
- Support FAO Member Nations in applying the guidance to ABFM in their national waters with the intent of assisting countries meet global area-based management targets while increasing food security and nutrition.
- Assist FAO Member Nations in developing social, economic and environmental indicators that can be used to monitor MPA and other ABFM (including OECMs) performance so that they effectively contribute to fishery and biodiversity conservation, food security and meeting the SDGs.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 268 to 270 – *Deep-sea fisheries*

FAO is committed to supporting responsible fisheries, including in the ABNJ and in accordance with international law, through the implementation of the FAO CCRF and its associated international plans of action and guidelines. The most relevant to deep-sea fisheries (DSF) is FAO's International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas ("the DSF Guidelines") adopted in 2008. These support States and RFMOs to implement paragraphs 76-95 of UNGA Resolution 61/105 (2006). FAO contributes to the sustainable management of deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity through the Common Oceans Program and EAF-Nansen Programme.

Since 2022, the Common Oceans Program has been working towards DSF in the ABNJ being managed under an ecosystem approach that maintains demersal fish stocks at levels capable of maximizing their

⁹⁵ FAO. 2025 (*in publication*). The role of aquaculture in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper, No. 726. Rome, FAO.

sustainable yields and minimizing impacts on biodiversity, with a focus on data-limited stocks, deepwater sharks and vulnerable marine ecosystem. In the 2024-2025 period, relevant activities and successes have included:

- A virtual workshop held with 87 participants on the application of the precautionary approach to the management of target deep-sea stocks in the ABNJ. The workshop took stock of current approaches by RFMOs, including the use of precautionary approach frameworks, long-term management plans, management strategy evaluations and harvest strategies, and discussed how implementation could be expedited in future years.
- An observer training workshop held in Port Louis, Mauritius for Contracting Parties of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) a non FAO Article XIV Agreement. The Workshop was attended by 20 participants from China, Cook Islands, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Thailand. The aim of the training workshop was to support SIOFA contracting parties with implementing structural and operational processes to improve the efficiency of their scientific observer programmes.
- A first workshop held with the global deep-sea fisheries industry - trawlers and longliners from the Mediterranean, Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans. The aim of the workshop was to create a forum for knowledge sharing and information exchange for addressing technical challenges in the sustainable management of deep-sea fisheries, and to explore mechanisms through which such information could be better incorporated into RFMO discussions and conservation and management measures.
- Establishment of a technical forum in the DGroups online platform on the management of sustainable deep-sea fisheries, with 113 members and successful discussions held on the topic of new technologies for data collection and reporting.
- Reports with key recommendations completed for three RFMOs to support the implementation of their new climate change resolutions.
- Draft deepwater shark ID guides developed for two RFMOs.
- A Symposium on Applying the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in ABNJ, organised by the FAO implemented Deep-sea Fisheries Project, NAFO and ICES, which brought together scientists, managers and the industry over three days to expedite the implementation of EAFM by RFMOs that manage deep-sea fisheries.
- Ongoing update of the FAO Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) Database,⁹⁶ which contains all VMEs related management measures adopted by RFMOs from 2006. This is the only global source that shows the management of bottom fisheries in a map and shows that most of the oceans are actively and adaptively managed.

During the reporting period, FAO conducted a bottom habitat survey in Namibia through the EAF-Nansen Programme, which focused on documenting VMEs and associated habitats. This survey aims to support the upcoming MSC audit of the Namibian hake fisheries and to provide baseline information regarding VMEs in the phosphate mining license area of industrial minerals. Additionally, collaboration with CECAF and SEAFO continued to report on the findings to the partners and to develop scientific manuscripts under the Programme's science plan on the surveys conducted in the ABNJ of the Atlantic Ocean in 2022, and earlier. These surveys have the aim of improving knowledge 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.⁹⁷

SECTION XI – MARINE SCIENCE

⁹⁶ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/>

⁹⁷ Example news: <https://www.fao.org/in-action/eaf-nansen/news-events/detail-events/en/c/1476447/>.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 286, 289, 312 to 313 – *Discarded fishing gear*

There are five FAO fisheries management instruments addressing the issue of ALDFG:

- CCRF, which makes reference to management measures including addressing and minimizing pollution, waste, discards, and catch by lost or abandoned gear; the fact that fishing gear should be marked; and the cooperation by States to develop and apply technologies, materials and operational methods that minimize the loss of fishing gear and its ghost fishing effects;
- PSMA, which recommends the inclusion of fishing gear (marking) checks during port inspections;
- International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards (2011), which makes reference to reducing the impact of lost fishing gear;
- VGMFG, which provides a comprehensive framework for the implementation of gear marking systems, including marking, reporting and retrieval of abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear covering all fishing gears with a separate section on FADs;
- 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.

In 2024, FAO COFI36 encouraged FAO to strengthen its activities to better understand the impacts of plastic pollution from fisheries and aquaculture sources, and provide technical guidance on its prevention and reduction; appreciated FAO's collaboration with IMO in global and regional projects that prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from shipping operations, including ALDFG; emphasized the need for interdisciplinary research, policy and legislative framework development, and the need for testing and dissemination of fishing gear innovations that prevent and reduce plastic pollution from fishing and aquaculture operations in inland and marine environments. It also noted multiple parallel processes and discussions relevant to issues of plastics in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and requested coordination by FAO and Members to participate and contribute technical expertise within these processes to prevent contradictory outcomes.

FAO collaborates closely with IMO, notably through three dedicated projects under the IMO's OceanLitter Programme,⁹⁸ as follows:

- GloLitter Partnerships project,⁹⁹ aimed at assisting developing countries to prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from the maritime and fisheries sectors. GloLitter achieves its objectives by focusing on 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 through 2025. 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.¹⁰⁰
- Regional Litter project (RegLitter) is a three-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.
- Plastic Reduction in the Oceans: Sustaining and Enhancing Actions on Sea-based Sources (PRO-SEAS) project, which is also a three-year initiative, and began 2025, with similar focus as the GloLitter and

⁹⁸ <https://glolitter.imo.org/project/the-oceanlitter-programme>

⁹⁹ See <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/PartnershipsProjects/Pages/GloLitter-Partnerships-Project-.aspx>.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/PartnershipsProjects/Pages/GloLitter-Partnerships-Project-.aspx>.

RegLitter projects on addressing SBMPL from the maritime and fisheries sectors, and direct project support to four countries (Costa Rica, Jamaica, Kenya and Vanuatu), with project efforts scaled-up and applied to the Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) surrounding these countries.

FAO and IMO are also collaborating in the framework of the OceanLitter Global Industry Alliance (GIA),¹⁰¹ which brings together maritime and fisheries industry leaders to address marine plastic litter from sea-based sources.

Since 2021, FAO has been working on the FAO Global ALDFG Survey has been carried out by FAO,¹⁰² which includes 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 on 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 gear loss as well as for mapping spatial and temporal distribution of gear loss. The survey data also includes causes of gear loss, good practices to avoid gear loss, end-of-life fishing gear and marine plastic waste management and fishers' views on ALDFG.

In 2023, FAO additionally created a dedicated Topic Group on ALDFG, under the ICES FAO Working Group on Fishing Technology and Fish Behaviour (WGFTB), which will run for three years, through the end of 2025. This Topic Group¹⁰³ convenes international researchers and academics including fishing gear technologists to address five dedicated Terms of Reference on the ALDFG issue, including around gear designs and modifications that reduce ghost fishing; fishing gear circularity, repurposing and recycling; gear marking technologies; safety requirements to prevent gear losses; and the development of indicators that can inform fisheries management policies and interventions designed to prevent and reduce ALDFG. Outputs from the Topic Group include the creation of reports and publications arising from the ToRs (under development), as well as summarized discussions and knowledge sharing from the annual convening of the Topic Group at the ICES FAO WGFTB Annual Meeting reports.¹⁰⁴

SECTION XIII – COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 348 to 372 – Global achievements are built upon regional efforts - Regional fishery bodies are key actors for regional cooperation towards sustainable development

RFBs, which include RFMOs and RFABs, have an important role in contributing to fisheries management and scientific research of many important fisheries at the regional level towards achieving the SDG targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that aim at maintaining the health of the ecosystems, including the oceans so that they can increase their ability to contribute to food security and poverty reduction. RFMOs have the mandate to adopt legally binding fisheries conservation and management measures within their respective convention areas. RFABs provide fora for collaboration and coordination and promote sustainable utilization of fishery resources by recommending specific actions and by

¹⁰¹ <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/Pages/WhatsNew-2111.aspx#:~:text=Marine%20Plastic%20Litter%20GIA.%20The%20Marine>

¹⁰² <https://www.fao.org/responsible-fishing/marking-of-fishing-gear/fao-global-aldfg-survey/en/>

¹⁰³ See b) TOPIC Group: Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG): [Meeting information - ICES-FAO wgftfb](#)

¹⁰⁴ [ICES/FAO WGFTFB Reports - ICES-FAO wgftfb](#): 2023: [ICES-FAO Working group on fishing technology and fish behaviour \(WGFTFB\)](#) and 2024: [ICES-FAO Working Group on Fishing Technology and Fish Behaviour \(WGFTFB; outputs from 2024 meeting\)](#)

providing advice to members on fisheries conservation and management. Some RFBs also include aquaculture 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 overview of these processes and developments through the Organization's technical work on fisheries and aquaculture, providing an overview and synopsis of RFBs' developments.¹⁰⁵

FAO is committed to bolstering regional cooperation through the RSN.¹⁰⁶ RSN provides a forum for promoting consultation and regional dialogue by addressing priority issues of common concern and facilitating the coordination, exchange of experiences and lessons learned by RFBs. RSN has maintained regular contact with its members (more than 50 RFBs and other fisheries related institutions and networks)¹⁰⁷ including through the production of a popular magazine¹⁰⁸ and making available relevant data and information related to RFBs,¹⁰⁹ also in international technical venues and global fora such as the UNGA.¹¹⁰ The latest RSN Global Meeting was organized by FAO in July 2024 and members of the RSN also met informally alongside the Honiara Summit on SDG14.4, held in the Solomon Islands in February 2025. The RSN Secretariat and members also collaborate and coordinate intersessionally on matters of mutual interest, including for example in preparation for, and participation in, the BBNJ Agreement Preparatory Commissions and the 2025 United Nations Oceans Conference.

Regional organizations that work toward enhancing the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity can make such cooperation effective through formal mechanisms and joint activities, especially by creating linkages between existing fisheries management and biodiversity conservation initiatives, as the achievement of food security will require fisheries and environmental management agencies to work together. FAO COFI welcomed and is supportive of the joint efforts of the CBD Secretariat, FAO, and UNEP within the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and RFBs to strengthen collaboration on issues of common interest, taking into account their different mandates and roles.

FAO and UNEP continue to support cooperation agreements in several areas of the world such as in the Gulf and Sea of Oman between the FAO Regional Commission on Fisheries (RECOFI) and the Regional 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 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, GFCM continues to cooperate with UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan in the context of an MoU adopted to contribute to implementing the 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 ABMTs and the improved monitoring of non-indigenous species.

¹⁰⁵ FAO. 2020. *Regional fisheries management organizations and advisory bodies. Activities and developments, 2000–2017*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 651. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca7843en>.

¹⁰⁶ www.fao.org/fishery/en/rsn.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/en/rfb/>.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/rsn/magazine>.

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA0183EN>.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/static/news/FAOsideEvent-ICSP-14UNHQ-2May.pdf>.

Enhanced cooperation and coordination among RFBs have been on the international fisheries governance agenda for many years through UNGA resolutions on sustainable fisheries. Since 2022, the UNGA has been calling on States to strengthen cooperation, communication and coordination of measures among existing RFBs by holding joint consultations. Further, the UNGA also calls on States to strengthen integration, coordination and cooperation between RFBs and other relevant regional and international organizations (A/RES/77/118, paragraph 177). In 2024, the FAO COFI36 continued to emphasize the critical role of RFBs in achieving effective fisheries management, and reiterated the call for FAO to continue supporting their work

The second phase of the Common Oceans Program began in mid-2022 and will run until mid-2027, strengthening the partnership between FAO, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNEP, RFMOs, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia in the promotion of regional, and inter-regional cooperation through common initiatives and knowledge sharing.