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## **CONTRIBUTION FROM THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC STATES (OACPS) TO THE REPORT OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ON OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA**

*This is the first contribution made by the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) to the UNSG Report on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.*

### **Background**

The Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) is an international organisation comprising seventy-nine (79) Member States. Forty-eight (48) are from sub-Saharan Africa, sixteen (16) are from the Caribbean, and fifteen (15) are from the Pacific. All OACPS Members are developing countries, with at least thirty-nine (39) classified as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), fifteen (15) as Land-locked Developing Countries, and thirty-eight (38) classified as Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Also of note is that sixty-four (64) OACPS Members are coastal States.

The OACPS is guided by the Georgetown Agreement, as revised in 2019. It supports its Member States' efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, and to fully benefit from the advantages of trade. The Ocean and its resources are central to the livelihoods, economy, health, and wellbeing of OACPS Members.

The "OACPS Ministerial Fisheries Mechanism" is the primary framework for fostering sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture, as well as improving ocean governance and the blue economy, through strengthened partnerships with development actors as well as cooperation among its Member States and Regions.

### **Highlights of Activities undertaken of Relevance to Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

The main highlights of the OACPS' contribution for the review period relate to the key outcomes of the *7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of OACPS Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture*, held on 7 and 8 April 2022 in Accra, Ghana. The said meeting adopted an OACPS Ministerial Declaration, which provides strategic policy direction and guidance of relevance on oceans and fisheries governance, and other closely related issues, as outlined hereafter, OACPS Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture on:

#### ***I. Improving Sustainable Fisheries Governance through Transparency***

**Emphasised** the importance of transparency as an underpinning principle and imperative of good fisheries governance and critical for sustainable fisheries management = to build resilience and sustainability at local, national, and regional levels. Underscored the urgency of sharing the lessons learned and experiences from and between the OACPS Member States while they implement transparency initiatives.

**Called** for increased transparency in fisheries management and all blue economy-related activities as a vital component of strengthening fisheries governance and securing long-term sustainable benefits, and urged Development Partners to support national and local actions to strengthen and facilitate increased transparency in fisheries.



## **II. Combating Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in Member States of the OACPS**

**Stressed** grave concerns about the devastating consequences of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and highlighted the increasing connection between IUU fishing and transnational organised criminal activities such as drug, human, and small arms trafficking, illicit oil bunkering, trade-in contraband goods, document fraud, money laundering, which use fishing as a cover and strongly called for action at regional and multilateral levels to address the issue.

Adopted the following four policy recommendations for enhancing the fight against IUU fishing, being to: (i) Align national legal frameworks with international and regional requirements and establishing and enforcing a system of deterrent sanctions for IUU fishing offenses; (ii) Harmonise regional frameworks, share best practices, and build synergies to combat IUU fishing, including by establishing Regional Vessels Register, Regional Vessel Monitoring Control Surveillance Centre, Regional Observer Programmes, Regional Surveillance Programmes, and Regional Catch Documentation Schemes; (iii) Take measures either as flag states or coastal states to update and implement national legislation requiring reporting of ultimate beneficial owners of fishing vessels and companies whenever flagging or granting authorisation to fish and maintaining a register of beneficial owners of fishing vessels at the national levels; and (iv) Urge Development Partners to support the monitoring, control, and surveillance and provide legal and technical, technological, and capacity-building support to effectively combat IUU fishing and related organized criminal activities along the value chains.

### **III. Small Scale Fisheries**

**Underscored** the importance of small-scale fisheries in providing employment, livelihoods, food security, and nutrition for the health and well-being of OACPS populations, and its potential to significantly contribute to poverty alleviation.

**Welcomed** 2022 as the United Nations “International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture” (IYAFA 2022), and agreed to seize the opportunity to raise ambition for accelerated actions on small-scale fisheries in Member States of the OACPS. The specific policy recommendations adopted by Ministers emphasise the importance of providing an enabling policy space for developing a thriving, resilient, and sustainable small-scale fisheries sector, which must include creating a policy and regulatory environment that supports small-scale fisheries and fishers, and their unique characteristics at the local, national and regional levels. Ministers also emphasised the importance of modernising the small-scale fisheries sector in order to enhance working conditions and local ownership of the fishing fleets.

**Recognised** Women’s crucial role in the small-scale fisheries value chain and **emphasised** the need to remove barriers to engagement and involvement of women by enhancing their working conditions and providing opportunities to improve their working conditions and active participation in production activities.

### **IV. Strengthening Ocean-based Actions for Building Resilience and Sustainability, and the Effects of Climate Change on Fisheries**

**Expressed** grave concern about the increasing exogenous pressures placed on the Ocean and marine, coastal and inland resources as a result of overfishing, pollution, biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, and climate change, which are foreseen to increase as the Ocean becomes the new frontier for economic development and growth. In this context, OACPS Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture committed to: (i) Strengthen synergies



between the ocean-climate-biodiversity agendas, processes, and policies at national, regional and international fora; (ii) Support integrated, holistic, and climate-smart solutions for sustainably managing, using and conserving the ocean and marine resources to build resilience and address societal needs and challenges; (iii) Develop and implement sustainable blue economy policies and strategies as holistic frameworks for the long-term health and resilience of the Ocean; and, (iv) Address the menace of invasive weeds such as *sargassum spp* and *typha spp* weeds that affect national and regional economies of the Caribbean and the West African States.

**V. Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise;**

**Expressed** concern about the impacts of climate change-related sea-level rise on maritime boundaries and maritime zones.

**Emphasised** the importance of acting in solidarity and bringing the influence of 79 OACPS members speaking with one voice, and collaborating with like-minded States and actors to advocate at all platforms and forums for a global solution to addressing the issue of sea-level rise, which will impact the lives, health, and well-being, livelihoods, ecosystems. In this context, OACPS Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture supported the 2021 *Pacific Islands Forum Leaders (PIF) Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise*.

**VI. The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework at the UNCBD COP15 and the CITES COP19;**

**Addressed** pertinent issues under consideration by the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the 19th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the outcomes of which have a significant bearing on the management and conservation of commercially exploited aquatic species.

Under both Multilateral processes, **encouraged** Member States of the OACPS to: (i) **Implement** the ecosystem-based approach and precautionary principle to fisheries to ensure the balance of sustainable management, use, and conservation of the fisheries resources for a sustained flow of benefits (ii) **Support** 100% management approaches, locally-led governance, and management systems and recognition and use of traditional knowledge to address the underlying drivers of resource degradation and biodiversity loss in the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework; (iii) **Ensure** CITES listings and delisting to be based on the best available science, including traditional knowledge through an inclusive consultative dialogue between the national environment and fisheries management sectors.

**VII. OACPS Strategic Plan of Action for Fisheries & Aquaculture 2030**

**Adopted** a forward-looking “OACPS Strategic Plan of Action for Fisheries and Aquaculture - 2030” to be read in concert with the actions of the OACPS on fisheries, aquaculture, ocean governance, and blue economy up to 2030. The Strategic Plan of Action identifies ten strategic priorities that will accelerate the development of a sustainable, productive, and resilient fisheries and aquaculture sector and strengthen ocean governance in the Member States and Regions of the OACPS, through strengthened partnerships, coordination, advocacy, and political support.