

## Seminar on Oceans Economy and Trade: Sustainable Fisheries, Transport and Tourism

Commonwealth Secretariat-UNCTAD-International Oceans Institute

10-12 May 2016

Room VIII, Palais de Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Welcoming remarks by Paulo Kautoke, Commonwealth Secretariat's Head of Trade

Excellencies, distinguished members of the panel, ladies and gentlemen: a warm welcome to all of you. I am very honoured to be with you here today to share some Commonwealth perspectives on the theme of this important and timely three-day conference.

As we know, last year, the international community agreed on Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, including the adoption of 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These goals, established for the next 15 years, are rightly ambitious. However, this should not obscure the scale of the challenges ahead. Urgent actions are required to advance this development agenda. Sustainable Development Goal 14 urges the international community to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources".

We explored these aspects last year with UNCTAD at the first international conference, which sought to explore how the recent adoption of SDG14 will translate into a practical implementation agenda. This conference goes further. By including new international partners and focusing on specific sectors and thematic issues, we hope to deepen our analysis of both the problem and required solutions.

Twenty-five out of 53 Commonwealth member states are Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and many other countries within the membership have large maritime zones. Consequently, the oceans and resources are fundamental to the wellbeing of the Commonwealth. This is particularly so for SIDS, which often do not have other significant natural resources.

The data clearly demonstrates the high importance of the oceans to this group of vulnerable countries. For example:

- The Bahamas has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of an estimated 629,292 square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>) compared to a land area of 13,942 km<sup>2</sup>.
- Kiribati comprises 33 islands with a total land area of just 810 km<sup>2</sup> but with about 3.5 million km<sup>2</sup> of marine waters.
- Mauritius has a landmass of 2,040 km<sup>2</sup> and an EEZ of 1.3 million km<sup>2</sup>.

These facts render the ocean economy, including sustainable fisheries management, of fundamental and critical importance to many of our member states.

Globally, it is estimated that around 350 million jobs globally are linked to the oceans through fishing, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism and research activities. Furthermore a staggering billion people depend on fish as their primary source of protein. Conversely, experts have issued a stark warning: if we continue on the current trajectory, only one third of the amount of fish available from capture fisheries in 1970 will still be available by 2050.

For many of our member states, the management of such expansive areas of ocean space and the creation of an ocean economy creates many challenges. Increased reliance on the oceans coupled with mismanagement of ocean resources is placing the oceans under enormous pressure, the implications of which we are only beginning to fully appreciate.

SDG14 builds upon many of the provisions for oceans and fisheries conservation contained in the Rio+20 outcome document, the Samoa Pathway and the Istanbul Programme of Action - an LDC-led initiative that expires in 2020. The focus on creating a coherent strategy for developing countries includes recognition of the need for special and differential treatment and technical cooperation (Goal 14.7) for SIDS and LDCs.

However, because of the level of ambition within the SDGs, some critics have said that implementation is likely to be difficult. The achievement of targets such as the end of overfishing and destructive fishing practices and the implementation of science-based management plans, to restore fish stocks by 2020 (Goal 14.4) will indeed be extremely difficult to achieve without coherent global action.

It is therefore imperative that WTO members' actions are consistent with international efforts to manage global public goods and resources including marine natural resources and fisheries. The challenge that confronts us all is, so far, we know members' efforts have fallen short of these aspirations.

The first joint UNCTAD-Commonwealth meeting on "Sustainable Fisheries Management" held here last year produced solid outcomes to advance the SDG14 implementation agenda. This includes the need for further mapping and the convergence and harmonisation of NTMs, with a view to promoting the mutual recognition of documentation and certification. For instance, in practice although compliance standards may be adhered to by artisanal producers in SIDS and/or LDCs, the need for documentation and proof can be a major challenge without commensurate support.

More needs to be done to support countries' capacity to address unregulated and unreported fishing, including through capacity-building. We think there is a need for more targeted aid for trade (Aft) disbursements to address productive capacity shortfalls amongst SIDS and LDCs in order to promote sustainable fisheries management.

There is a need for effective governance structures to underpin Agenda 2030. Monitoring progress on the implementation of SDG14 should be a priority. In view of the multiplicity of legal instruments that govern the fisheries sector, further coherence among existing legal institutions and instruments should be promoted.

We will continue to work with UNCTAD to design effective implementation strategies of SDG14 in order to achieve a more sustainable trade landscape for our membership and LDCs. In our view multilateral and regional trade policy negotiations can and should contribute to more sustainable fisheries.

We certainly look forward to the outcomes of deliberation over the coming few days, and thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts on this important topic.