

## **Concept Papers for Partnership Dialogues of The Ocean Conference**

### **Partner Dialogue Theme: Making Fisheries Sustainable**

#### **Sub-theme: Committing to Social Responsibility and Ethical Sourcing in the Seafood Sector**

Fisheries and aquaculture employ millions and are the primary source of animal protein for three out of every seven people globally. Recent media revelations about slavery and labor rights abuses in the seafood sector have sparked public outrage, placing social issues at the forefront of a sector that has spent decades working to improve environmental sustainability. In response, businesses are seeking guidance on their supply chains to reduce unethical practices and associated reputational risks. Governments are formulating policy responses, and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations are deploying resources and expertise to address social issues.

The global conversation about social issues in fisheries presents an opportunity for the global seafood sector to recognize and embrace that the wellbeing of people and the health of oceans are interdependent. This is a highly relevant theme for UN SDG 14, as two SDG 14 targets (14.4 and 14.6) focus specifically on the sustainability of fisheries and the seafood sector, including ending illegal practices that lead to overfishing and other deleterious conditions. Additionally, these issues link SDG14 to other SDGs related to poverty, food security, inequality and gender equality, and human health and wellbeing. Further, a 2-year sustained effort has resulted in momentum around a shared definition of social responsibility and ethical sourcing in the seafood sector (described below), with a nascent partnership that is developing into a global initiative that links social and environmental sustainability in the oceans.

#### **a) Status and trends**

Recent media revelations about slavery and labor rights abuses in fisheries have sparked public outrage and shifted the conversation about the global seafood industry, and the violation of these rights in the seafood industry is accompanied by other major social issues including issues of equity and equality, as well as food and livelihood security. While there are no current global estimates for slavery and labor abuse victims in the seafood sector, media reports have begun to compile a wide range of examples of violations in this space, in both developing and developed economies, with varying levels of severity – pointing the global scale of these human rights issues. Additionally, a range of sources have documented the food and livelihood security functions of fisheries and ocean ecosystems, as well as rampant issues associated with equity and equality in these resource and market systems.

#### **b) Challenges and opportunities**

Over the past several decades, significant effort has been invested in determining the key elements for environmental sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture, informing the creation of

globally recognized standards. A similar effort is now needed for social responsibility, however, comparatively little research effort has been invested in the social dimensions of seafood sustainability.

To remedy this issue, in 2014, Conservation International (CI) initiated a year-long effort, coordinating a global research group from academic institutions, industry and nonprofit organizations (33 individuals from 21 institutions) to identify the major social issues associated with the global seafood industry. This working group drew first from the UN FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, incorporating principles from these guidelines together with a substantive body of social science research from the fields of human rights, natural resource management, and international development. Additionally, the framework was informed by practical experience from organizations and experts that work in the seafood sector. Finally, the working group conducted a global review of international law, policy, and guidance relevant to these social issues, providing a substantial legal basis for adherence to these social standards.

### c) Existing partnerships

Following this effort, CI and the Monterey Bay Aquarium hosted a workshop focusing on social responsibility in March 2017, attended by more than two dozen individuals representing 20+ organizations, including environmental and social nonprofit organizations, academic researchers, consultants, and other key experts. The purpose of the workshop was to get alignment among organizations that work with businesses, governments, and civil society groups involved in the seafood sector. The primary outcome was agreement on a framework and definition developed by the working group. This definition includes three essential components, which are linked inextricably to issues of environmental sustainability (Figure 1).

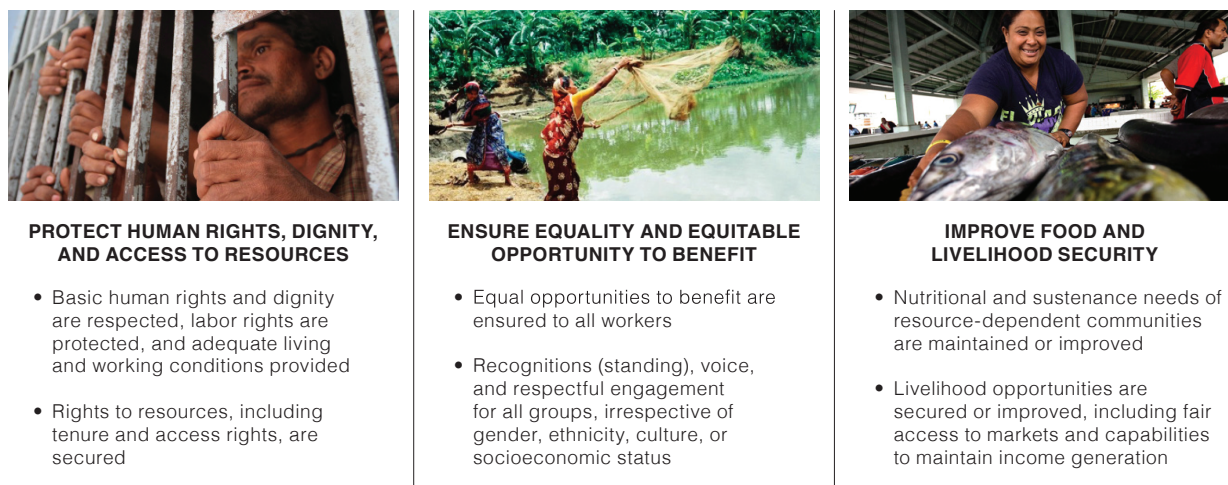


Figure 1: The “Monterey framework” for social responsibility, developed by an expert working group and endorsed by 20+ organizations in the Coalition for Socially Responsible Seafood, including environmental and social nonprofit organizations, academic researchers, consultants, and other key experts.

The agreed-upon definition (Figure 1) is referred to as the “Monterey framework” for social responsibility, and is supported by the diverse set of organizations in attendance, which is

called the *Coalition for Socially Responsible Seafood*. This coalition currently includes the following organizations:

- Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions, and select member and collaborator non-profit organizations, including Conservation International, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Environmental Defense Fund, FairTrade USA, Fishwise, Ocean Outcomes, and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, Global Aquaculture Alliance
- Social non-governmental organizations, including Verte, Seafish
- Academic Research and Bridging Organizations, including Stanford University's Center for Ocean Solutions, Nereus Program, University of British Columbia, University of Washington, School of Marine and Environmental Affairs, GIZ
- Business partners and consultants, including SmartFish and the Sustainability Incubator

#### **d) Possible areas for new partnerships**

Reaching global consensus on how social responsibility is defined is a necessary first step, but transforming the sector to be more inclusive of social issues also requires a fundamental shift in the way we produce, distribute and consume seafood. Notably, this shift is supported by a strong legal and policy basis for implementation, as indicated by comprehensive review of international law, policy, and guidance.

New partnerships need to be formed with other additional partners including other environmental and social NGOs, businesses and trade associations, governments, ratings and certifying bodies, and intergovernmental agencies and organizations. This includes key governmental actors – including major seafood producing and importing countries, key businesses including major seafood industry partners, a wider range of social and environmental NGOs and foundations, and inter-governmental and multi-lateral institutions.

Collectively this partnership needs to establish commitments to improve social performance in the sector, on all three essential components of the Monterey Framework (Figure 1), through tangible commitments made by a wider range of actors and partnerships.

#### **e) Guiding questions for the dialogue**

Key questions for the dialogue could include:

- (1) How can this partnership secure commitments from businesses, governments, intergovernmental organizations, and NGO partners to collectively drive improvements in social responsibility in the sector?
- (2) How can the research and scientific community work together with business, government and NGO actors to develop an assessment protocol and performance standard for social responsibility and embed monitoring and impact assessment into fisheries and aquaculture management and improvement initiatives?
- (3) How can ratings and certification groups incorporate these social elements into their standards and performance ratings approaches?
- (4) What practices can businesses establish to incorporate social responsibility in sourcing policy, commitments and business practices?

By 2030, the oceans will need to supply between 152-188 million metric tonnes of seafood to nourish a growing population. Fulfilling this demand in a socially and environmentally sustainable way will improve the lives of millions and secure the benefits of a healthy and

diverse ocean. This dialogue could be transformative in helping to establish a global standard for social responsibility and ethical sourcing for the global seafood industry, and driving uptake and endorsement by a wide range of decision-makers and actors, resulting in a *sea change* in this major ocean sector.

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