



Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism

Ministerial Meeting on Food Security and Climate Change Adaptation in Small Island Developing States

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PRESENTATION

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My brief presentation this afternoon will focus on the subject of the blue economy and more specifically the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to improving nutrition and food security.

The specific questions I will be addressing are:

- (1) How can we balance food security and sustainable livelihoods with the need to protect and preserve the oceans and seas and their biodiversity?*
- (2) How will sustainable fisheries contribute to the "blue economy" as provided for in the SAMOA Pathway?*
- (3) What policies and action can better promote a blue growth approach in SIDS, supporting food security and poverty alleviation, the sustainable management of aquatic resources, while building resilience of coastal and riparian communities?*

1. Globally, fisheries provide over three billion people with up to 15 percent of the animal protein they consume, and provide employment to at least 140 million.
2. Fish is the single most highly traded commodity in the world. Trade in fish has increased dramatically in recent decades and is now valued at over US130 billion per year. Trade is to some extent a driver of global production of fish.
3. Today, Small Island Developing States continue to struggle with food and nutrition insecurity, poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, and other social ills.
4. For SIDS, ocean and sea serve as a primary food source and economic driver. They are either surrounded by, or have vast expanses of water adjacent to their coastlines. The living resources of the oceans and in some cases the river systems under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of SIDS are indeed important sources of food and livelihood. These resources are particularly important for some of the poorest and most vulnerable members of our countries. There is no dispute that SIDS, are much more dependent upon the oceans and seas for food and nutrition, and economic and social development, when compared to other States.

5. SIDS are also highly dependent on international trade for economic growth, including the export of fish to generate foreign exchange inflows. Today, most SIDs import relatively large quantities of food, including fish, to satisfy domestic needs. The food import bill in the CARICOM States is between US\$4-5 billion each year. This is much too high. And to make matters worse, a lot of the food we are importing and eating is actually inferior to domestic alternatives in nutritional content and bad for our people.
6. Continued enjoyment of the many benefits we obtain from the seas and oceans are threatened by numerous problems such as habitat degradation, biodiversity reduction, irresponsible fishing practices, illegal unreported and unregulated fishing, growing demand and limited supply of fish, conflict arising from multiple uses of the coastal and marine environment, and the multiple threats arising from climate change, such as sea level rise, ocean acidification, warming waters and consequent negative impacts such as coral bleaching, - - according to recent release from NOAA, the third global coral bleaching event ever on record is now underway. The jury is still out on how severe it will be and how much damage it will cause to the sensitive coral reefs and food security and livelihoods of coastal communities that rely on healthy reef systems.
7. It is clear that climate change is already affecting the distribution and population dynamics of fish stocks, and thus having an impact on the coastal communities that depend on them.
8. The capacity of oceans and seas to continue to provide food and other services depends on the extent to which the ecosystems and natural productivity of the fish stocks are maintained in a healthy state. Long-term sustainable benefits depend on the extent to which States and other stakeholders can rise to the challenge of implementing the reforms necessary to conserve and protect marine ecosystems and biodiversity and ensure long-term sustainability.
9. The single most important challenge for blue economic growth is implementing the reforms necessary to ensure long-term sustainability of the resource systems by balancing current and future use of fisheries and marine living resources.
10. Initiatives by the global community to achieve sustainable fisheries by improving governance and resource management have not, by and large, successfully delivered the desired results.
11. The presumption in favour of addressing urgent or immediate needs and short-term gains, over long-term sustainable use; the inadequate governance and management systems, including lack of precautionary and ecosystem-based management; and the weakness of national administrative and enforcement capacities often lead to stocks being poorly managed and overfished.
12. The nature of fisheries means that going forward there is a need for a more coherent, integrated policy approach to achieve optimum sustainable benefits. Coherent use of policy instruments and tools for food and nutrition security, trade, fisheries conservation and management, marine environmental protection, biodiversity management, climate change and science and technology are needed.
13. In recent years CARICOM States have collectively adopted a number of policy instruments aimed at promoting and balancing food security and sustainable livelihoods with the need to protect and preserve the oceans and seas and their biodiversity, while promoting blue economic growth by development and sustainable use of these resources.

14. These policy instruments include the: (i) CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy of 5 October 2010; (ii) CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan of 15 October 2011; (iii) Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy; (iv) CARICOM Regional Framework for Achieving Development Resilient to Climate Change and its Implementation Plan; (v) Regional Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector; (vi) CRFM Second Strategic Plan (2013 – 2021); and the (vii) OECS Eastern Caribbean Regional Oceans Policy and the Three Year Strategic Plan. The challenge going forward is to garner the resources required from governments and donor partners to implement these instruments.
15. Going forward, there are a number of other areas where special attention is needed.
16. Given the importance of trade in fish and seafood globally, a variety of trade policy tools, including tariffs and subsidies, and public and private trade measures, such as food safety, traceability and sustainability standards, should be better integrated with fisheries policies and used to shape fisheries production and trade in moving towards long-term sustainability of oceans and seas and food security.
17. Urgent action is needed to climate proof and protect vulnerable coastal fishing communities and their livelihoods, including development of risk reduction programmes such as insurance for fishers and small and medium size enterprises in fisheries and aquaculture, and building ecosystem resilience into fisheries management and development policies. Each country should develop and implement a national action plan to address climate change and disaster risk management for the fisheries and aquaculture, as part of their broader national climate change and disaster risk management strategy.
18. Aquaculture is the fastest growing production section globally and offers significant potential for further development, but remains fairly underdeveloped in most SIDS. Special attention should be given to the further development of appropriate aquaculture including mariculture in SIDS, by research, application of technology, capacity building, and the development of policy frameworks to overcome current impediments and realize the potential of the sector.
19. Another area where action must be focused is on adding value to our ocean resources by diversifying our product base, eliminating waste and discards, and transformation of existing harvest /raw material in new products based on market requirements; as well as developing new industries such as cosmetics and pharmaceuticals from fish and other marine species, in order to improve competitiveness, income and profitability, through the application of scientific, technology and innovation. Here we can learn from the successes of a country like Iceland. The possibilities for value addition and significantly increased earnings through agro-processing and smart marketing are enormous.
20. Special attention and tangible support should be given to human and institutional capacity building of SIDs to support the transition to this knowledge, technology and innovation centered approach to sustainable development and utilization of the fisheries and aquaculture potential, the generation of wealth and food security of our people.

21. Going forward, it follows that policies and actions along the entire value chain, from pre harvesting preparations to consumption by end users, must be based more firmly on improved data and scientific knowledge through research and development. This should include knowledge of the complex physical, environmental and ecological processes which determine the abundance, distribution and dynamics of the fish stocks and ecosystems health, the processing phase, as well as improved understanding the complex social, marketing, trading and economic factors.
22. Finally, we have to give special attention to the need for public education and awareness building so that our people, our women, children, our men better understand the issues, challenges, options, opportunities and choices that are available to them, including the increased income from investment in value addition, and the health benefits of eating locally harvested fish and how they can contribute to sustainable production, as well as the dangers and negative impacts of bad choices and actions, such as consuming some of the imported processed and energy dense foods.
23. Moving forward, it is clear that success is dependent on improving governance arrangements including the level of participation and involvement of local communities and ordinary people, the private sector and community based organizations etc., in achieving the vision for a food secure future as agreed upon in the SAMOA pathway.
24. Madam Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, in closing the objective in respect of oceans and seas, is not merely to maintain fish stocks and marine biodiversity in healthy states, but to ensure that these natural systems make significantly enhanced contribution to food and nutrition security, wealth creation and economic and social development of Small Island Developing States.
25. Thank you very much.