



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**Twelfth round of informal consultations of States Parties to the
United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (ICSP-12)**

Opening statement

by

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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before we start, I wish to ask you to stand with me for a minute of silence in honour of the victims of this morning's terrorist attack in Brussels.

[the meeting observes a minute of silence]

Thank you, please be seated.

It is my pleasure to declare open - on behalf of the Secretary-General - the twelfth round of informal consultations of States Parties to 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 - the "United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement".

This year's Informal Consultations are of particular importance as they serve as the last preparatory meeting for the Review Conference, which will resume in New York from 23 to 27 May 2016.

Distinguished delegates,



Let me start by recalling that the Review Conference was convened in 2006, and resumed in 2010, with a view to reviewing and assessing the adequacy of the provisions of the Agreement, and, if necessary, proposing means of strengthening the substance and methods of implementation of those provisions.

During this round of informal consultations, delegations will be expected to take a number of key steps in relation to the resumption of the Review Conference in May.

In particular, at last year's Informal Consultations, delegations indicated that this year's meeting could provide an opportunity to consider possible priorities and identify areas of focus for the resumed Review Conference.

The advance and unedited reporting material for the updated report to the resumed Review Conference, prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), can assist delegates in that regard.

This material highlights the actions that are being undertaken by States and regional fisheries management organizations to improve the status of the fish stocks, in line with the recommendations of the Review Conference.

It provides examples of where the full implementation of the Agreement has contributed to the conservation and sustainable use of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks, and even helped turn the tide for some stocks that were overexploited in the past.

The materials note that the overall level of implementation of the recommendations has improved, albeit in an uneven manner. Implementation of some recommendations has progressed faster than others; some States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements have proceeded more expeditiously than others.

However, in spite of such progress, FAO's Overview of the state and trends of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks indicates that the status of most fish stocks has not improved. It also demonstrates that the situation of some of these stocks remains dire, and that little is still known about the status of some other stocks.



Therefore, clearly more needs to be done to achieve the aims of the Agreement. Your efforts over the next two days and the upcoming week in May will be crucial in improving this situation through better implementation of the Agreement and the recommendations of the Review Conference.

Distinguished delegates,

These Informal Consultations, as well as the period between now and the resumption of the Review Conference in May, can provide delegations with good opportunities to exchange views and undertake consultations on possible ways and means of strengthening implementation of the Agreement, in preparation for the Review Conference.

In this regard, the advance and unedited reporting material which will be before the resumed Review Conference as a report of the Secretary-General, can assist delegates in identifying the areas where more work is needed.

Clearly, participation in the resumed Review Conference by as many States as possible will be crucial.

The General Assembly, in resolution 70/75, once again encouraged wide participation in the resumed Review Conference, in accordance with article 36 of the Agreement.

In that regard, I would like to underscore the critical importance of the Assistance Fund established under Part VII of the Agreement.

The Assistance Fund is a key tool to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement by developing States Parties to it, including by covering the costs of the participation of representatives of those States in important meetings, such as those of regional fisheries management organizations to which they belong.

Indeed, I can report on its continued use by developing States for those purposes. Contributing to the Assistance Fund is – therefore - one way in which States Parties to the Agreement can give effect to the duty to cooperate with developing States in the implementation of the Agreement, as set out in Part VII, as well as promote increased participation in the Agreement.



I would therefore take this opportunity to thank Norway for its recent contribution to the Assistance Fund, and, echoing the call by the General Assembly, invite States to make contributions so that the Fund can continue to play its important role in assisting the wider participation of developing States in important meetings.

The upcoming resumed Review Conference as well as the Workshop on Bottom Fishing in August are, of course, among these.

Distinguished delegates,

It is also important to continue to encourage broader participation in the Agreement, in line with the call of the General Assembly in its resolutions on sustainable fisheries.

In that regard, I am pleased to note that since the last round of Informal Consultations one year ago, Chile has become party to the Agreement. Twenty years after its opening for signature, the total number of Parties to the Agreement is now 83, including the European Union.

To conclude my opening remarks, let me take this opportunity to wish you, on behalf of the Secretary-General, successful discussions over the next two days.