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Sixteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the 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

(New York, 13-14 March 2023)

SUMMARY

The present document contains the report of the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the 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 Agreement), which was held in New York, on 13 March 2023.

As provided in paragraph 69 of General Assembly resolution 77/118 of 9 December 2022, the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations served primarily as a preparatory meeting for the resumed Review Conference on the Agreement.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to paragraph 69 of General Assembly resolution 77/118 of 9 December 2022, on *Sustainable fisheries, including through 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, and related instruments*, the Secretary-General convened the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the 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 "Agreement"), at United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 13 March 2023.

2. In accordance with the request by the General Assembly in that resolution, the meeting served primarily as a preparatory meeting for the resumed Review Conference on the Agreement.

II. Organization of work

A. Opening of the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations

3. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, opened the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement (ICSP-16).

4. In his opening remarks, Mr. Serpa Soares noted that Togo had become a party to the Agreement since the last round of Informal Consultations in 2022, bringing the number of Parties to the Agreement to 92 including the European Union, and stressed the importance of continuing to encourage broader participation in the Agreement in line with the call of the General Assembly in its resolutions on sustainable fisheries. He also noted that the full and effective implementation of the Agreement is essential for the conservation and sustainable use of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

5. Mr. Serpa Soares noted that, at ICSP-16, delegations would be expected to take key steps in relation to the resumption of the Review Conference. He recalled that the sixteenth round would provide a forum for initial discussions on the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Review Conference in 2016, as well as the identification of possible priorities and areas of focus for the Conference. He also noted that the advance and unedited reporting material for the updated report of the Secretary-General to the resumed Review Conference, prepared in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), could assist delegates in this regard.[1] Mr. Serpa Soares stressed that the reporting material highlighted actions undertaken by States and regional fisheries

[1] www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/ICSP16/AdvanceuneditedreportingmaterialRRC2023.pdf.

management organizations and arrangements (RFMO/As) to improve the status of the fish stocks, pursuant to the recommendations of the Review Conference. He noted the considerable progress made by States and RFMO/As in implementing the recommendations, but that further steps were needed.

6. In conclusion, Mr. Serpa Soares noted that FAO's overview of the state and trends of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks indicated the overall status of most fish stocks had not improved since 2016. He called for further efforts in improving the situation through better implementation of the Agreement and the recommendations of the Review Conference.

B. Election of the Chairperson

7. The meeting elected Mr. Joji Morishita, Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, Professor, Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology, Japan, as Chairperson.

C. Attendance

8. Representatives of the following Parties attended the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations: Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, European Union, Germany, Greece, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America and Viet Nam.

9. Observers from the following States, United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and bodies, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations attended the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations:

a. States non-Parties: Bolivia, Malawi, and Singapore;

b. Specialized agencies, related organizations and offices of the United Nations: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

c. Non-governmental organizations: Pew Charitable Trusts.

D. Opening statement of the Chairperson

10. In his opening statement, the Chairperson expressed his appreciation for the trust accorded to him by delegations and paid tribute to the late Professor Fabio Hazin of Brazil, who had served as Chair of ICSP from 2014 to 2021, as well as President of the Review Conference in 2016.

11. The Chairperson recalled that while the Review Conference in 2016 had decided that the ICSP would normally be dedicated, on an annual basis, to the consideration of specific issues arising from the implementation of the Agreement, ICSP-16 would serve primarily as a preparatory meeting for the resumption of the Review Conference. This focus demonstrated the importance that States Parties to the Agreement ascribed to the Review Conference and its recommendations. In that regard, he noted that the sixteenth round provided an important opportunity for delegations to commence their consideration of the issues before the Conference and prepare for a successful outcome.

12. The Chairperson recalled that, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, fifteenth round of Informal Consultations (ICSP-15) was postponed from 2020 to 2022, with some preparatory work for the Review Conference undertaken through written consultations and virtual exchanges of views in the interim period. In this context, he recalled that some important preparatory work for the Review Conference had already been concluded in the context of the online consultations held in 2020 and 2021, as well as during ICSP-15. He noted, in particular, that the provisional agenda and provisional organization of work for the Review Conference had been agreed during ICSP-15.

13. The Chairperson drew attention to important developments related to the implementation of the Agreement which had occurred since the last Review Conference in 2016, including the finalization of the draft text of the international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ draft agreement) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

14. The Chairperson further recalled that the Review Conference, in 2016, had undertaken substantive discussions to review the implementation of the Agreement and adopted important recommendations for further strengthening implementation of the Agreement. He encouraged delegations to take advantage of the informal nature of the Informal Consultations to have free discussion and exchange information and views on issues of mutual concern, which would be developed further during the Review Conference in May.

E. Adoption of the meeting documents

15. The Informal Consultations considered and adopted the provisional agenda of the meeting (see annex) and draft organization of work for the meeting as proposed.

III. General statements, including with regard to the advance and unedited reporting material for the updated report prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

16. Delegations reiterated their continued strong support for the Agreement as a legal framework through which States can ensure the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. Many delegations welcomed the new States Parties to the Agreement since the last resumption of the Review Conference in 2016 and called for the upcoming resumed Review Conference to continue to promote greater participation in the Agreement. The view was expressed that the resumed Review Conference could help improve the implementation of the Agreement and to understand the concerns of States, including non-Parties, to promote participation and full implementation. Some delegations highlighted measures they had taken at the national and international levels to implement the Agreement, including through RFMO/As. The important linkage between fisheries and food security and nutrition was also recalled.

17. Several delegations highlighted the importance of the work undertaken by RFMO/As in ensuring sustainable fisheries management, stock assessment and addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing). It was also noted that RFMO/As would play an essential role in the implementation of the GBF.

18. Delegations welcomed the advance and unedited reporting material for the report of the Secretary-General to the resumed Review Conference, as well as the overview of the status of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks prepared by FAO. Concerns over the status of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks, as reflected in the reporting material, were expressed by several delegations. It was noted that despite the progress reported in some areas, the status of fish stocks had not generally improved since the 2016 Review Conference. A group of delegations recalled the commitment to maintain or restore fish stocks at levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield, which had been integrated into its fisheries policy, and suggested that it was necessary to reduce bycatch and discards to the greatest extent possible. Another delegation noted that legally binding policies for protecting and recovering fish stocks, reducing the effects of fishing on the marine environment and supporting a modern, resilient and environmentally responsible fishing industry, had been introduced and would be delivered through several fisheries management plans.

19. Several delegations expressed concern over the continued lack of fisheries and biological data regarding the status of some stocks, requiring the application of a precautionary approach, as well as greater use of area-based management tools. The relevance of the recently finalized BBNJ draft agreement and the GBF were noted in this regard.

20. Several delegations noted that considerable progress had been made in implementing the recommendations agreed by the Review Conference in 2016. While the holding of performance reviews was highlighted in this regard, several delegations expressed the view that there was still scope to further improve both the quality of these reviews and the

implementation of their recommendations, including by ensuring full transparency of decision-making and of their outcomes. It was also noted that coordination and cooperation amongst RFMO/As could be further improved, and suggested that RFMO/As should be open to participation from all States with a real interest in the fisheries covered.

21. Many delegations emphasized the importance of addressing IUU fishing, which undermined sustainable fisheries management, and highlighted the progress that had been made to address this issue. Several delegations highlighted the importance of effective control over fishing vessels, and flag State responsibility to prevent and deter IUU fishing, including through the application of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance and the FAO Port State Measures Agreement.

22. Several delegations noted the challenges caused by overcapacity in the fishing sector. Several delegations noted their commitment to eliminate harmful subsidies to operators and vessels engaged in IUU fishing activities, including through the implementation of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Several delegations further expressed determination to conclude negotiations on fisheries subsidies and called on World Trade Organization members to support greater transparency on forced labour issues.

23. Several delegations highlighted the implications of the finalization of the text of the BBNJ draft agreement and the adoption of the GBF on sustainable fisheries management. It was noted that the BBNJ draft agreement would contribute to the protection of at least 30% of the ocean by 2030. A view was expressed that the BBNJ draft agreement could contribute to effective and sustainable fisheries management, while it was emphasized that the new instrument should be implemented in a consistent and cooperative way with existing RFMO/As. Some delegations noted that the GBF encompassed a set of goals and targets to be achieved by 2030, including to ensure that fisheries are managed sustainably.

24. It was noted that the resumed Review Conference provides a unique global opportunity to consider the implementation of the Agreement's core principles as well as new ways being developed to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of international fishery resources. A delegation highlighted the importance of the resumed Review Conference in providing a further opportunity to identify the priority areas for achieving the objectives of the Agreement.

25. Several delegations highlighted possible priority topics for the resumed Review Conference to address, including IUU fishing, the status of fish stocks, fisheries management, area-based management tools, improving the cooperation and coordination of regional fisheries management through RFMO/As, climate change mitigation and resilience, and the implication of new developments around the GBF and the BBNJ draft agreement on the implementation of sustainable fisheries management. Some delegations stressed the need for the upcoming Review Conference to address the drivers impacting the ocean and global fisheries and achieve the objectives of the Agreement of ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks

through its full and effective implementation. Additional potential priority areas were highlighted under agenda item 6(b), below.

26. The special requirements of developing States Parties in developing their fisheries were noted. A delegation stressed the need for collective efforts to assist developing States Parties, particularly small island developing States (SIDS) such as those in the Pacific, in dealing with the challenges they face regarding fisheries management. The importance of artisanal and small-scale fisheries in developing States was also highlighted. A delegation noted that the social dimension of fishing would need to be addressed by States to take into account the interests of artisanal and subsistence fishers.

IV. Initial preparatory work for the resumed Review Conference

A. Consideration of the advance and unedited reporting material for the updated report prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

27. Delegations expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for preparing the advance and unedited reporting material for the report of the Secretary-General to the resumed Review Conference. Some delegations expressed their disappointment at the limited number of responses to the questionnaire on which the reporting material was based. In that regard, a delegation noted the importance of data for the work of the resumed Review Conference. Delegations questioned whether an extension could be granted so additional delegations would have an opportunity to provide their inputs. While the Secretariat confirmed that such an extension was not possible due to the deadline for submitting the report for editing, it added that there was a possibility for additional submissions to be posted on its website, should such a request be made to the Secretariat. Delegations supported that approach and the Chairperson's subsequent proposal for the Secretariat to send out a communication inviting additional responses to be posted on the website, with a deadline sometime in April. A delegation that had been unable to meet the original deadline for submissions indicated its intention to provide input ahead of the new deadline.

28. A delegation expressed concern about the continued decline in the status of fish stocks noted in the report but highlighted the recovery of jack mackerel in the South Pacific as a result of the work of RFMO/As in that region. In that regard, several delegations expressed concern that the report appeared too focussed on overfished stocks and did not sufficiently highlight positive examples of sustainably managed stocks. A delegation added that this could lead to a misunderstanding of the overall status of global stocks, while a group of States indicated that highlighting positive cases could provide examples of best practices to be followed elsewhere.

B. Discussion of priorities and identification of areas of focus for the resumed Review Conference

29. Delegations identified specific issues or areas which they considered could be addressed by the resumed Review Conference during their general statements (see paras. 24-25) and during the consideration of agenda item 6(b).

30. Several delegations called for prioritizing consideration of IUU fishing at the resumed Review Conference. It was noted that the continued pervasiveness of the practice, which was particularly harmful to developing States, could be one reason for the lack of general improvement in the status of stocks governed by the Agreement. Monitoring, control, and surveillance methods were highlighted as especially important tools in the fight against IUU fishing. While significant progress had been made in this respect, it was noted that further implementation, strengthening, coordination, information-sharing and capacity-building were needed. In this regard, some delegations referred to the IUU Fishing Action Alliance launched at the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference, with one delegation calling upon States to join the initiative. A delegation suggested that it would be beneficial to exchange information on pertinent best practices, progress achieved and remaining challenges in relation to IUU fishing. Another emphasized the desirability of new ideas to confront these challenges, especially proposals from States most affected. A third delegation noted the potential of strengthening compliance frameworks to allow for the effective combatting of IUU fishing by RFMOs.

31. A number of delegations highlighted the importance of the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA), which had entered into force shortly after the 2016 resumed Review Conference. The PSMA constituted an effective instrument to counter IUU fishing, but required further implementation. In that regard, one delegation encouraged non-Parties to join as soon as possible. Others noted that, together with RFMO/As, FAO, flag States, coastal States and port States, the PSMA played an important role in addressing IUU fishing. Some delegations identified the recent adoption of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment as a high-interest topic. One delegation noted that it had recently introduced domestic market-related measures to address IUU fishing and though further introduction of such measures was desirable, time was needed for their appropriate design and implementation.

32. Several delegations emphasized the role and importance of RFMO/As, as well as challenges and opportunities for improving their effectiveness. The Chairperson noted that while the existence of RFMO/As predated the Agreement, their significance had been enhanced by it. In this context, a number of delegations supported increasing cooperation, as well as data and information sharing among RFMO/As.

33. It was noted that RFMOs were at the forefront of diverse, but at times also uneven, conservation efforts at all levels and called for promoting broader participation in RFMOs, strengthening their cooperation with FAO and the sharing of best practices across RFMOs, as well as reinforcing information-sharing and cooperation mechanisms, especially with respect

to overlapping or neighbouring areas RFMO/As. A view was expressed regarding the need for a discussion on best practices in objection processes to newly proposed conservation measures across RFMOs, citing concerns over transparency and accountability.

34. In terms of data collection, a delegation suggested that greater efficiency was desirable, noting that since complete data might not be obtainable for all species, in particular those targeted by small scale fishers and artisanal fisheries, States and RFMO/As should distinguish between species that needed to be fully assessed and those to that could be estimated. It was noted that the promotion, collection and provision of data, more generally, was a priority for conservation and management of stocks. Several delegations highlighted the importance of utilizing best available science for fisheries management, and decision-making. One delegation noted corresponding concerns linked to a lack of data and transparency.

35. A delegation highlighted the need for effective international fisheries governance on the high seas, including with respect to strengthening cooperation and data sharing, in particular in situations where a competent RFMO did not exist and there was no mechanism for fulfilling data and information sharing obligations under the Agreement.

36. In terms of emerging areas for cooperation, a number of delegations expressed an interest in considering RFMO/A integration with new instruments, in particular the CBD GBF and the recently finalized BBNJ Agreement. One delegation noted that close collaboration and cooperation between RFMOs and the BBNJ Conference of Parties would be vital to achieving the objectives of the BBNJ and CBD targets alike. In this respect, that delegation also proposed that it could be useful to discuss the biodiversity benefits of RFMO area-based management measures and whether these could be recognized as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures under CBD.

37. Several delegations also emphasized the broader significance of considering these new instruments. In this respect, some delegations highlighted the need to achieve the “30x30” commitment under the CBD. A number of delegations proposed prioritizing the utilization of area-based management tools (ABMTs) at the resumed Review Conference, with one delegation stressing the special importance of enhancing marine protected areas. Some delegations noted that prioritizing ABMTs would be especially useful in light of new instruments, with one delegation proposing that the Review Conference examine existing types of ABMTs and their implementation by RFMO/As in the context of the BBNJ and CBD.

38. Summarizing the statements of delegations on the evolution of cooperation with and among RFMO/As, the Chairperson proposed that the pertinent developments could perhaps be categorized into three stages. An initial stage consisted of mechanisms for cooperation amongst members of RFMO/As. Moving to a second stage, recent developments had expanded the functions of RFMO/As and individual initiatives were underway to enhance effective cooperation among RFMO/As, such as the Kobe process in the context of tuna-management and conservation. A third stage would entail cooperation with new initiatives, such as the BBNJ, CBD framework and the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. With the expanding

role of RFMO/As, performance review would become even more important and perhaps require updating criteria or checklists to account for such new initiatives.

39. With a view to addressing further emerging challenges for RFMO/As, several delegations proposed that the resumed Review Conference focus on climate change-related impacts on fisheries, including impacts on shared stocks and non-target species, and pertinent effects on fishing rights. Support for the promotion of conservation and management measures that took climate change into account was also expressed. A delegation further highlighted the need for guidance on climate-resilient fisheries management and drew attention to an upcoming FAO workshop with pertinent organizations and bodies designated to increase knowledge and awareness on climate change impacts on fisheries and aquaculture.

40. A number of delegations also proposed that the Conference consider the effects of climate change on fisheries beyond the context of RFMO/As. One delegation noted that these effects were only beginning to be understood and that mainstreaming climate change and ecosystem approaches into fisheries management would be necessary to adapt to current and future developments. Several delegations highlighted the importance of food sustainability and security in the context of fisheries and one delegation suggested emphasized that fish was both a source of nutrition and economic wellbeing in times of climate change. Some delegations further proposed that it would be useful to identify challenges and best practice examples in sustainable fisheries management. Delegations also noted that other effects, such as the impact of pollution on fish populations, biodiversity loss and ocean acidification equally also needed to be taken into account.

41. Some delegations proposed that a discussion on wider participation in the Agreement was desirable, with one delegation noting that identifying barriers for developing States was especially relevant in this context. Other delegations also proposed that efforts should be enhanced to increase compliance with recommendations adopted both within the framework of the Agreement and new agreements.

42. Several delegations shared suggestions pertaining to procedural aspects of the upcoming resumed Review Conference, in particular the adoption of recommendations. One delegation proposed that the relevant programme of work should strike a balance between an open plenary and closed informals, to allow for a transparent and accessible outcome. That delegation also noted that it would welcome a discussion on recommendations of the previous resumed Review Conference in 2016, to assess progress made and any gaps that remained. Some delegations proposed that a more streamlined approach be adopted for future recommendations. Support was expressed for taking a considered and strategic approach to developing the recommendations of the resumed Review Conference, and considering streamlining the recommendations. A second delegation proposed that a refined procedural and substantive approach be adopted, focusing on priority opportunities and challenges. Conversely, a third delegation observed that while some matters were more important than others, a holistic approach to the Conference was preferable, to allow for wide coverage of the implementation of the Agreement and associated management at the regional and national

levels. That delegation also cautioned that the Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement should not supplant the role of FAO, which was the right forum for strengthening management, as well as substantive global cooperation and coordination on sustainable fisheries.

43. Some delegations further emphasized that the Conference should equally consider positive developments in sustainable fisheries management. There was an opportunity to review effective efforts, with a view to developing and sharing best practices. In this respect, some delegations noted that the reporting material from RFMO/As suggested that these had made considerable progress in implementing the recommendations adopted by the previous Conference in 2016.

44. In light of the statements delivered, the Chairperson considered that the upcoming Conference could group earlier recommendations, as it had in the past. At the previous Conference in 2016, recommendations from 2010 had been divided into four categories. In terms of the focus areas, the Chairperson proposed that time should be reserved for specific topics, while also allowing for a broad scope of discussions.

C. Officers for the resumed Review Conference

45. The Chairperson noted that while the election and appointment of officers could not be finalized at the present meeting, the issue of vacancies and necessary appointments should be considered, to ensure that the Conference would be prepared to take the necessary decisions in May.

46. Recalling rule 10(1) of the provisional rules of procedure of the Review Conference, the Chairperson noted that the designation of officers would entail the election of a President and five Vice-Presidents elected from among States Parties, giving due consideration to equitable geographic representation, as well as two additional Vice-Presidents elected from non-Parties, from any region.

47. The Chairperson further recalled that the members of the Bureau were elected in their personal capacity and would continue to serve on the Bureau unless they were no longer in a position to do so. There was therefore no need to re-elect officers that were prepared to continue exercising their functions. At the 2010 Conference, an election had been held as a number of individual officers elected at the previous Conference in 2006, were unable to continue serving on the Bureau. In 2016, none of the previously elected officers were in a position to continue their functions and thus elections were held to fill all vacancies.

48. The Chairperson noted that at the 2016 Conference, the following persons had served as officers of the Bureau: The President, Fábio Hazin, and Vice-Presidents Luke Daunivalu (Fiji), Cristián Laborda (Chile), María del Mar Fernández Merlo (Spain) and James Waweru (Kenya). The Vice-President among non-Parties had been Li Yongsheng (China). The two remaining Vice-President positions had remained vacant in 2016. At the ICSP meeting in 2022,

it had been agreed to retain these officers at the upcoming Conference, unless they were unavailable.

49. As to the position of President, due to the untimely passing of Fábio Hazin, a new President would need to be elected when the meeting was resumed in May. In this respect, as reflected in paragraph 83 of the ICSP-15 report,[2] it was recalled that the delegation of Japan had already indicated its intention to nominate the Chairperson of the current round of Informal Consultations (ICSP-16), Mr. Joji Morishita, as the President of the upcoming resumed Review Conference. This would, of course, not prevent other nominations. Spain recalled that it had nominated an officer to serve as Vice-President in 2010 and 2016, and indicated its willingness to do so again.

50. The Secretariat advised that it would send letters to the Chairs of the regional groups requesting them to indicate the availability of the previously elected Vice-Presidents from their groups. Insofar as these officers were no longer available to serve in this capacity, nomination of candidates from among States Parties would be requested. In a similar manner, one or two Vice-Presidents representing non-States Parties would need to be elected in May. The Chairperson highlighted the importance of nominations being received in advance of the Conference to ensure that it ran smoothly.

51. The Chairperson further noted that the Credentials Committee at the Conference would be composed of nine members, to be appointed by the Conference. At the previous Conference, the following States had been represented on the Credentials Committee: Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Saint Lucia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ukraine and Uruguay, with one seat remaining vacant. The Chairperson requested that these delegations confirm the availability of the relevant members.

V. Consideration of the next round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement.

52. The Chairperson recalled that in 2016 the Review Conference had recommended that the Informal Consultations of States Parties be dedicated, on an annual basis, to the consideration of specific issues arising from the implementation of the Agreement. The rationale of such decision was to improve understanding of specific issues, as well as to share experiences and identify best practices. Therefore, the Chairperson invited delegations to discuss the possible topic of focus for ICSP-17 and the dates for its convening. The Chair also indicated that such preliminary reflections would be recorded in the informal report without prejudice to final decision-at the Review Conference in May 2023.

53. Regarding the dates for the convening of ICSP-17, there appeared to be no strong opposition to holding the next round of ICSP in 2024, pending the decision of the Review Conference, and some delegations indicated their overall flexibility on this issue. A delegation

[2] ICSP15/UNFSA/ INF.3.

also pointed out that due to recent international legal developments such as the finalization of the text of a BBNJ agreement and the GBF, maintaining the Consultations an annual basis could be an opportunity to continue to raise the visibility of the Agreement.

54. As for the topic of focus, several delegations noted the difficulty of taking a decision before the upcoming Review Conference, as it would provide a clearer idea of the topics that may warrant particular attention. Nevertheless, some topics were proposed for initial consideration, such as coordination and cooperation among new agreements (e.g. the BBNJ Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework) and RFMOs or climate change and its impact on fisheries.

VI. Other matters.

55. The Secretariat provided some information regarding the recent launch of the United Nations Fish Stock Agreement Project of Assistance, which is funded by the European Union through the Part VII Assistance Fund Administered by FAO, in cooperation with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.[3]

VII. Closing of the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the Agreement

56. The Chairperson closed the meeting and expressed his appreciation to all delegations for their efficient work and cooperation.

[3] www.un.org/oceancapacity/UNFSAProject.

Annex

Sixteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the 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 Agreement)

Agenda

13-14 March 2023
United Nations, New York

1. Opening of the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations by a representative of the Secretary-General.

2. Election of the Chairperson.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Organization of work.

5. General statements.

6. Initial preparatory work for the resumed Review Conference:

   (a) Consideration of the advance and unedited reporting material for the updated report prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;

   (b) Discussion of priorities and identification of areas of focus for the resumed Review Conference;

   (c) Officers for the resumed Review Conference.

7. Consideration of the next round of Informal Consultations of the States Parties to the Agreement.

8. Other matters.