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Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries

## Report on Activities of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries since the 24<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session

### *Summary*

The Chair of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Team of Specialists (ToS) on Sustainable Fisheries will report on the activities relating to the Programme of Work (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2018/22), implemented since the twenty-fourth Plenary of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-Business (UN/CEFACT), in April 2018.

Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/25 is submitted to the twenty-fifth UN/CEFACT Plenary for information.

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## I. Introduction

1. Overfishing, destructive fishing practices, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing are depleting world fish stocks. These activities threaten not only fish stocks but also the coastal communities which rely on fisheries resources for economic survival and as a reliable source of protein. The international community recognizes the importance of protecting fishery resources through Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

2. An essential step to attain effective and sustainable management of fishery resources is timely acquisition and exchange of information on fishing location, gear used, species and quantity caught, etc. Until now, fishing vessels have mainly used paper-based logbooks to record and exchange such information. To improve information acquisition and management, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has developed an open and global standard which allows the electronic exchange of fishery data.

3. The Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange (UN/FLUX) provides a harmonized message standard which allows Fishery Management Organizations (FMOs) to automatically access electronic data from fishing vessels, such as vessel and trip identification, fishing operations (daily catch or haul-by-haul) and fishing data (catch area, species and quantity, date and time, and gear used). With this standard, FMOs around the world have, for the first time a tool which automates the collection and dissemination of operational fishery data needed for sustainable fishery management and for detecting and combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Additionally, the development of a reliable and up-to-date database on fish catch will improve the knowledge base for scientific fisheries management.

4. The UN/FLUX standard was presented at the twenty-seventh UN/CEFACT Forum in Geneva, where experts from government, regional and international organizations, regional FMOs, industry, research, and control and enforcement authorities agreed on its importance as a standardized tool to exchange fisheries information in an effective, transparent and efficient manner. At this forum, it was decided that a community should be established to promote and support the implementation of the UN/FLUX standard.

5. The Agricultural, Agri-Food and Fishery Programme Development Area of UN/CEFACT supported and approved this proposal and decided to create a Group of Experts from this community. The establishment of the Group of Experts, now referred to as the Team of Specialists (ToS) on Sustainable Fisheries, was approved by the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the UNECE in June 2017.

6. The Programme of Work (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2018/22) was discussed and adopted at the first session of the ToS in January 2018, and subsequently endorsed at the 24<sup>th</sup> UN/CEFACT Plenary in May (Decision 18-3). It is organized in the following four work areas: WA1: Policy dialogue and guidance; WA2: Technical monitoring, assessment and guidance; WA3: Communication and outreach; and WA4: Capacity building.

7. As of December 2018, the membership of the ToS consists of sixty-four experts from the following UN member States and organizations: Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, China, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Italy, Luxembourg, Malaysia, The Netherlands, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay, China Certification & Inspection Group (CCIC), CITES, Coletivo Nacional da Pesca e Aquicultura (Conepe), CSEND, the European Commission Directorate General MARE, Fondazione Acquario di Genova ONLUS (FADG), FAO, Global Ghost Gear Initiative, ICTSD, INTERPOL, Marine Stewardship Council, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), South Centre, Ukrainian Fish Industry Workers, UN Environment Programme, UNCTAD, the WTO, and WWF.

6. The present document provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the Team of Specialist to implement the Programme of Work, since the twenty-fourth UN/CEFACT Plenary. It is submitted to the twenty-fifth UN/CEFACT Plenary for information.

## II. Meeting during the 31<sup>st</sup> UN/CEFACT Forum

8. The ToS on Sustainable Fisheries held a meeting at the 31st UN/CEFACT Forum, on 23-24 April 2018. Twenty-one experts from national government agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector attended the meeting, including from Spain, the Netherlands, Brazil, Thailand, Uruguay, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the European Commission, Directorate General MARE, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Genoa Aquarium Foundation (FADG), South Centre, and Conepe.

9. The expert from the European Commission's Directorate General MARE provided an overview of UN/FLUX Implementation Documents; these documents are multilateral or bilateral documents that detail how the UN/FLUX standard is to be used between the participating parties. He further explained how Implementation Documents integrate within the UN/CEFACT standards ecosystem, which includes the Core Components Library, the UN/FLUX Standard P-1000, and many other standards. Additionally, the UN/CEFACT Core Component Library was mentioned as a dictionary that contains the definition of the message elements and all the other definitions used within the standard. The presentation was followed by a discussion on the level of detail that an Implementation Document should contain. It is up to the Fisheries Management Organisations (FMOs) to determine the level of detail required, such as which domains and elements are optional, and which are mandatory.

10. The experts from the Netherlands presented how UN/FLUX can contribute to combatting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and prevent fishery subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing and overfishing. It was emphasized that political will to exchange information is a prerequisite for effective implementation. The experts explained what IUU was, as well as its relationship with the International Plan of Action (IPOA-IUU), which requires such exchange of information between authorities.

11. Possible partnerships with FOCUS and the FAO's Global Record were discussed, as well as how UN/FLUX is integrated into their open-source software and global fleet record efforts, respectively. Further discussion ensued on the work within the WTO on fishing subsidies, and how UN/FLUX could support that work.

12. The expert from Uruguay discussed the challenges that developing economies face when implementing information-technology-based trade facilitation policies and tools. Additionally, he discussed the opportunities that IT interoperability with trading partners could provide to support their economic development. As an example of one such IT-based tool, he presented the activities of Uruguay's DINARA – the national directorate for marine revenue, as well as their National Single Window (VUCE). He further explained how VUCE could interface with UN/FLUX s to integrate further trade facilitation systems, in the fishery sector for instance. He also proposed the development of a team of technical trainers with associated capacity-building resources, including an e-learning platform, software enhancements, workshops, and related activities. Additionally, he emphasized the critical importance of access to training and documentation in end users' mother tongues and exhorted the ToS to explore localization options and funding.

13. The ToS Programme of Work detailing the scope, objectives, activities, work areas, guiding principles, governance, and funding for the ToS was discussed, and specific activities

were planned. It was concluded that efforts must be made to develop promotional material describing UN/FLUX, adapted to both technical and policy-level stakeholders. The Team further discussed the specific upcoming activities to execute, the proposed timing of these activities, and the Specialists who would lead each activity

### **III. 2<sup>nd</sup> Oceans Forum: Trade-related aspects of SDG 14**

14. In connection with policy dialogue and guidance activities under WA1, and communication and outreach activities under WA3 of the Programme of Work, the Team contributed to the organization of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ocean Forum on the trade-related aspects of SDG 14.

15. The 2nd Oceans Forum, held on 16-17 July at the Palais des Nations in Geneva was jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); United Nations Environment (UNEP); the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); the Commonwealth Secretariat; the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP); the International Ocean Institute (IOI) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)<sup>1</sup>.

15. This 2nd Forum aimed to identify opportunities and challenges that sustainability and further integration of the seafood value chain and related services may present within the framework of the ocean-based blue economy. It also aimed to review achievements, major actions undertaken, and challenges of the voluntary joint commitment made at the UN Oceans Conference on July 2017, share and disseminate successful experiences encountered by the co-organizers and other relevant stakeholders.

16. The global relevance of SDG 14 was ratified by participants, including the nutritional and socio-economic importance of fisheries and aquaculture and the extreme and urgent need to revert the current trend in oceans' health decline. The focus was placed on the link between fish and seafood trade, bringing attention to the seafood value-chain, its related logistical services and the ocean-based blue economy aimed at meeting SDG 14 trade-related targets. The Forum participants agreed on the opportunity to build on the substantial existing momentum to implement actions towards the achievement of SDG 14 targets.

17. Key SDG 14 targets for trade-related aspects of seafood and living marine resources, value chains, and related services, targets 14.4 and 14.6, were highlighted and participants were reminded of its upcoming 2020 deadline. This focus on restoring fish stocks to sustainable levels in the shortest time possible and prohibiting certain forms of harmful fisheries subsidies as well as refraining from introducing new ones that could contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The further targets to be achieved by 2030 were also discussed.

18. It was noted that achieving the trade-related targets of SDG 14 requires the appropriate use of policies, investment and innovations to restore the productive capacity of the oceans and to increase economic benefits through sustainable marine-based value chains, particularly for coastal developing countries including SIDS and LDCs. These innovations may include traceability and electronic messaging systems such as the UN/CEFACT FLUX standard, which can help prevent illegally caught fish from entering the marketplace, reduce overfishing, and promote sustainable fisheries management, and were encouraged for adoption.

19. The need for a change in the unsustainable way in which fisheries and aquaculture are managed currently has reached the market in the form of concerns towards the restoration of the health and sustainability of living aquatic resources. These concerns have translated into

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<sup>1</sup> For more about the 2<sup>nd</sup> Oceans Forum on Trade-related Aspects of SDG 14, see: <https://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=1831>

the request for certification with sustainability standards and traceability criteria in the international fish trade. It was noted that higher levels of cooperation, knowledge sharing, harmonization initiatives and the involvement of major industry players are necessary to promote common sustainable solutions.

20. The participants were presented with multiple initiatives and tools addressing these concerns such as the UN/CEFACT standard—the UN Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange (UN/FLUX), which constitutes the first communication tool to digitally collect and disseminate fishery catch data for sustainable fishery management and detecting and combatting IUU.

21. At the Forum, the Director of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division and the Chair of the Team featured the contribution of the UN/FLUX standard to the achievement of the SDG target 14.6 on combatting Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and achieving sustainable management of fisheries. And in the conclusion of the Forum, the United Nations Secretary General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean encouraged the adoption of the UN/FLUX standard to help prevent illegally caught fish from entering the marketplace, reduce overfishing, and promote sustainable fisheries management.

22. The UNECE Secretariat, in collaboration with the ToS, led the drafting of the Forum’s report, and coordinated the contribution of the UNECE Chef de Cabinet and Secretary of the Commission—UNECE, the Director of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, the Chair of the ToS, the Secretary of the ToS, and the EU DG MARE Head of Unit for Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, to the policy discussions.

#### **IV. Meeting at the Hangzhou Forum of UN/CEFACT**

23. The ToS held a meeting at the Hangzhou Forum of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-Business, on 16 October 2018. The meeting was attended by experts from national government agencies and international organizations, including from China, Indonesia, The Netherlands, Thailand, the European Commission’s Directorate General MARE, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

24. The Team reviewed progress on the planned activities for implementation of its Programme of Work since the 31<sup>st</sup> UN/CEFACT Forum. The Chair of the Team presented the outline of the briefing note on the contribution of UN/FLUX to the negotiation of fisheries subsidies at the WTO, which will discuss how to avoid granting fishery subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU).

25. The experts from The Netherlands briefed the team on the status of FOCUS, which is an open source community that aims to oversee and maintain free software dedicated to the management and preservation of the fishery resource, such as UN/FLUX. This collaboration contributes to WA2: Technical monitoring, assessment and advice, and WA4: Capacity building.

26. Experts from Thailand presented the implementation process on UN/FLUX and agreed to draft a case story on experiences and lessons learned with the implementation of the standard and to provide documentation on implementation, for the next session of the ToS, in January 2019, based on a template to be provided by the Secretariat. This work contributes to WA2: Technical monitoring, assessment and advice, and WA4: Capacity building.

27. The expert from the EU’s DG MARE presented the promotional activities undertaken so far, with funding of the EU’s DG MARE. The Team discussed the visual identity for UN/FLUX and graphic design for promotional materials. This work is part WA3: Communication and outreach.

28. At the meeting, it was agreed that the Secretariat would inquire with the UN/ECOSOC on any necessary procedures to formally name FLUX as UN/FLUX and to prepare a list of promotional opportunities for the standard and the work of the Team, including key conferences and meetings at FAO and other relevant Fora. This work contributes to WA3: Communication and outreach, and the UNECE Secretariat's support of the team's governance.

29. The Secretariat reported that a CUE space has been created to allow the sharing of documents for Team members and that a demo on the use of the CUE space will be given at the January session for members of the Team. This work is part of WA3: Communication and outreach. And it was finally decided that a teleconference of the team of Specialist would be held on 5<sup>th</sup> December, to make the necessary preparations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the ToS at the Palais de Nations in Geneva, on 31<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019. The session would allow time for a technical workshop to advance work on specific activities, including an update of selected UN/FLUX elements.

## **V. Promotion and Capacity-Building for the UN/FLUX Sustainable Fisheries Standard project**

31. The Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries, in cooperation with the European Union's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE), is producing promotional materials to enhance the capacity of national regulatory bodies for data collection, monitoring, and evidence-based policy formulation to support sustainable fishery management. DG MARE is contributing 100,000 euros to developing such promotional materials. This work is a key contributor to WA3: Communication and outreach, and additionally includes deliverables from WA2: Technical monitoring, assessment and advice.

32. The visual identity for UN/FLUX, the first step in developing iconic communications materials, is planned to be finalized in December 2018 and has undergone multiple rounds of review—at the meeting at the Hangzhou UN/CEFACT forum, asynchronously among all experts, and at the UNECE Secretariat. The roll-up stand, poster, and leaflet—with content developed by ToS members in collaboration with the UNECE Secretariat—are planned to be finalized shortly after the visual identity.

33. The brochure's content is under development by the ToS members and UNECE Secretariat, in coordination with the communications contractor. As of December 2018, the ToS is developing the draft content for a policy brief, a brief addressing frequently asked questions, and a template for Implementation Documents, along with a presentation for ToS experts to promote the standard in international fora.

34. The final deliverable planned is a short promotional video, using a narrative married with graphics. Its purpose is to explain UN/FLUX and its advantages to a lay audience, and able to be shared on social media, and used during conferences and fora to raise awareness of UN/FLUX and its benefits.

## **VI. Preparations for the Second Session**

35. The second session of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries is planned for 31 January and 1 February 2019. Representatives from other United Nations organizations and regional, national and international bodies will be invited to highlight areas for potential cooperation with the Team of Specialists (ToS), along with current and future activities of

relevance to the work of the ToS. These include the ongoing work under the UN Oceans initiative and negotiations on the fisheries subsidies at the WTO.

36. The Chair will present progress on the implementation of the ToS programme of work for 2018-2019. The overall objective of the ToS is to contribute to integrated maritime governance by promoting, facilitating and supporting the implementation of fishery data standards on a global scale, including UN/FLUX. The Chair will provide an overview of activities undertaken under the various WAs..

37. Representatives from UN member States (e.g., Thailand) will report on their experiences on the application of UN/FLUX, including implementation phases and timeframe, relevant legal/regulatory framework, challenges and opportunities, and link to relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Secretariat will present a template for the collection of case stories on the implementation of UN/FLUX in UN member States.

38. Experts from the ToS will be invited to present and discuss current and future activities of the ToS, along with proposals to widen membership in the ToS and collaborations with other bodies. Currently, for instance, collaborations are established with UNCTAD, FAO (Global Record on Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels), the Fisheries Open Source Community Software (FOCUS), the World Animal Protection's Global Ghost Gear Initiative.

39. The representative of the European Commission DG MARE will present communication materials to promote the implementation of UN/FLUX, developed by the ToS, with the support of EU-funding (INF./ToS/2019/6).

40. Reports from experts are planned to include:

- a briefing note on the use of UN/FLUX in combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (INF./ToS/2019/4);
- a briefing note on the relationship between UN/FLUX and fisheries subsidies (INF./ToS/2019/5);
- a draft template for a UN/FLUX implementation document (INF./ToS/2019/6);
- an overview of the interaction between UN/FLUX and FOCUS (INF./ToS/2019/7);
- and a report on the development of communication materials (INF./ToS/2019/8).

41. The ToS on Sustainable Fisheries has a mandate until June 2019; therefore future work requires an extension of its mandate. The Chair will present proposals for activities for the Team in the coming years, and a discussion will take place on future areas of work the ToS (INF./ToS/2019/9).

42. A workshop will be conducted for ToS experts to review the programme of work, to advance ongoing work (e.g., proposals for XSD changes to the UN/FLUX) and plan future activities. During the workshop, the Secretariat will provide a demonstration of document management under the UN/CEFACT CUE workspace dedicated to the Team of Specialists.

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