Opening remarks for UNECE Executive Secretary Olga Algayerova

2ⁿᵈ Session of the UNECE team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries
Palais des Nations, Room IX, 9:00 am

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear participants,

We all know the importance of fish. Indeed, 3.1 billion people depend on fish for almost 20% of their animal protein intake. It is therefore important to ensure that healthy fish stocks are sustainably managed, through conscientious consumption.

Of course, this is a challenge, because destructive practices are widespread. Annually, illicit fishing was reported to account for up to 25 million tons, with a value of 20 billion USD. This is the value legitimate fishers lose each year. In addition to economic damage, such practices also threaten local biodiversity and food security in many countries.

To date, the management of fisheries and fish stocks has largely been based on the collection and exchange of large data sets between fishery management organizations (FMOs). However, in most cases, data is sporadic. Different data sets are used. Paper documentation is still widespread. All of this leads to high data management costs. To help address these concerns, reflected in SDG 14.4 of the UN 2030 Agenda, UN/CEFACT has come up with a concrete solution: An open global standard, to support the sustainable management of fisheries.

The UN Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange, UN/FLUX for short, allows FMOs to automatically exchange the electronic data from fishing vessels. This can include vessel identification, catch area, species and quantity of fish, date and time.

Thanks to UN/FLUX, FMOs around the world have, for the first time, a communication tool to automate the collection and dissemination of the fishery catch data needed for sustainable fishery management. UN/FLUX will also help detect and combat overfishing and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

Furthermore, the development of a reliable and up-to-date database on fish catches will improve research on scientific risk-based fishery management.

UN/FLUX was adopted in 2016 and is being used in all EU Member States involved in fishing. This helps monitor 85,000 fishing vessels belonging to 23 EU Member States involved in fishery worldwide. It helps manage 470 fish stocks and quotas sustainably, and concerns 5 million tons of fish landed annually. Other countries across the globe are working towards its implementation, including Thailand, Brasil, and Uruguay. Also in 2016, the FAO adopted UN/FLUX as the automated transmission mechanism for its Global Record.

In 2017, UNECE formed the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries: a new global partnership with experts from governments, private sector, civil society, consumer associations and international organisations. This was the commitment that UN/CEFACT took for the Call for Action launched at the Ocean Conference in New York in 2017.

The focus of the Team of Specialists is now on promotion and capacity-building of UN/FLUX use worldwide. In this regard, I wish to thank the European Commission for supporting promotional work on UN/FLUX with funding of 100,000 Euros.

At the session today, the team will to discuss important issues to advance its programme of work and extend its mandate, including how UN/FLUX can contribute to address the issues of subsidies to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated and overfishing.

I would like to thank you for your contribution to the important work of this Team, which helps us progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

I wish you a productive session, and fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.