



United Nations

Resumed Review Conference on the Agreement Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks

Press Release

New York, 24 – 28 May 2010

Countries to Focus on Limiting Further Decline of Fish Species in International Waters during Review of Key Legal Agreement

New York, 21 May – Declining numbers of fish stocks and the continuing deterioration of marine ecosystems in the world’s oceans will be the focus of concern at a Conference to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 24 to 28 May.

The role of the Conference is to review the implementation of the landmark 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement that established a legal regime for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. It will provide an opportunity for countries to consider new measures to tighten implementation of the legal regime.

Currently, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that three quarters of the world’s fish stocks are in distress and nearing depletion and that the majority of straddling fish stocks, highly migratory species and other high seas fish stocks are either fully exploited or overexploited.

The Fish Stocks Agreement, which took effect in 2001, covers highly migratory species that regularly travel long distances, such as tuna, swordfish and oceanic sharks, as well as straddling stocks that occur both within the exclusive economic zone of coastal States – up to 200 nautical miles offshore—and areas beyond and adjacent to that zone, including cod, halibut, pollock, jack mackerel and squid.

Conference Chair David Balton, United States Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries in the Bureau of Oceans, said the Conference would “take a hard look at what is being done to give effect to the Fish Stocks Agreement.”

Balton said that while countries had taken many steps to implement the Agreement, there were still a number of issues that governments needed to address, including overfishing, overcapacity, the effect of fishing on the marine environment, and the need for further assistance to developing countries. The state of fish stocks had not changed dramatically and the Conference would consider what additional steps countries could take.

The Conference, a resumption of the last review that was held in 2006, will also take stock of progress made in the implementation of recommendations since then, many of which led to concerted action to improve fisheries. It will be open to countries that are parties to the Fish Stocks Agreement as well as those that are not parties. Non-governmental organizations, including many that raised concerns about Atlantic bluefin tuna and two species of sharks at the recent meeting of

the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), will also participate.

“The goal of achieving sustainable fisheries and healthy fish populations will never be met until the international system that manages fish on the high seas is fixed,” said Dr. Susan Lieberman, director of international policy at the Pew Environment Group. “The global community should look to the United Nations, and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, to put in place measures that help ensure healthy oceans for the future.”

At a preparatory meeting for the Conference, there was general consensus by countries to keep the Agreement under continual review in order to respond to changes in fisheries, in particular the status of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

About the Fish Stocks Agreement

The Agreement is considered to be the most important legally binding global instrument to be adopted for the conservation and management of fishery resources since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982. Twenty more States have become parties to the Agreement since the Review Conference was convened in 2006.

As of May 2010, there are 77 parties to the Agreement: the European Union, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Monaco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Niue, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Senegal, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

For further information, please visit www.un.org/Depts/los, or contact the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs at tel: +1 212 963-3946, email: doalos@un.org.

For media inquiries, please contact Dan Shepard of the United Nations Department of Public Information at tel: +1 212 963-9495, email: shepard@un.org or Liz Scaffidi, tel: +1 212 963-5834, email: scaffidi@un.org.