

Groupe des Etats d'Afrique  
des Caraïbes et du Pacifique  
(Groupe ACP)



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(ACP Group)

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**ACP/84/097/17 [PW/mjb]**  
*Sustainable Economic Development and Trade Department*

## NOTE VERBALE

The Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States presents its compliments to the ACP Embassies and Missions, has the honour to forward to them the final outcome of the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ACP Ministers in Charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture held in Nassau, The Bahamas, from 18 - 21 September 2017.

- Declaration of the ACP Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture [ACP/84/096/17 Final]; and
- Report of the meeting of ACP Senior of Officials in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture [ACP/84/095/17 Rev.1]

The Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States avails itself of this opportunity to renew to ACP Embassies and Missions, the assurance of its highest consideration. *lc*



**Brussels, 16 October 2017**

**To ACP Embassies and Missions**

Groupe des Etats d'Afrique  
des Caraïbes et du Pacifique  
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African, Caribbean and  
Pacific Group of States  
(ACP Group)

REFERENCE

**ACP/84/096/17 FINAL**

*Sustainable Economic Development  
& Trade Department*

**Nassau, 21 September 2017**

**5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF ACP MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF FISHERIES  
AND AQUACULTURE**

**NASSAU, BAHAMAS, 20 – 21 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**DECLARATION**

**5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF ACP MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF FISHERIES  
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**DECLARATION**

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*Towards sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development in the 2030 development context*

**Preamble**

**We, the ACP Ministers in Charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture meeting in Nassau, Bahamas from 20 - 21 September 2017;**

**Reiterating** the important role of fisheries and aquaculture for job creation as well as in ensuring food and nutrition security, livelihoods, and revenues for ACP States;

**Convinced** of the great potential to increase the overall contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the social and economic development of our countries, and also recognizing that fish and fishery products continue to be among the most traded food commodities for ACP countries;

**Acknowledging** the commitments made by the Heads of State and Government, as expressed in the adopted United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development;

**Considering** the various national and regional initiatives that advance, to a varying degree, the implementation of the priorities of the ACP strategic plan of action for fisheries and aquaculture;

**Recognizing** the increasing complexity of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing where illegal operators are systematically linked with other serious criminal activities including forgery, corruption, fraud, money laundering, drug smuggling and other contraband activities;

**Concerned about** the adverse social economic impacts of IUU fishing to ACP states in particular noting, that annual revenue losses due to IUU fishing alone exceeds \$1 billion for west African states and \$140 million for Pacific Island countries. IUU fishing also undermines the fisheries management efforts, cause overfishing and damages fisheries habitats and ecosystems with the consequential impacts to the livelihood options, income and the food and nutrition security of dependent communities;



**Concerned** about the current and projected adverse effects of climate change, ocean acidification, warming waters as well as the effects of drainage or frequent water level fluctuations in lakes and rivers on the sustainability of fisheries stocks and ecosystems, and also on the food and nutrition security, livelihood, and welfare of fishing and aquaculture communities;

**Recognizing** that anthropogenic activities have contributed to the degradation of the oceans, inland water bodies and related ecosystems through, inter alia, overfishing, pollution, and climate change;

**Especially noting** the considerable experience and capacity gained by some ACP States in relation to the development of the blue economy;

**Being cognizant** of the important role that small-scale fisheries play in the socio-economic development, and food and nutrition security of our countries, and further noting that small-scale fisheries employ more than 90 percent of the world's capture fishers and fish workers, about half of whom are women;

**Recognizing** the significant challenges that continue to constrain the sustainable production of fisheries and aquaculture and the trade in fisheries-related products; especially high cost of inputs such as feed, energy and financing which are a significant impediment to the development of sustainable aquaculture;

**Considering** the evolving policy landscape that has a direct influence on the sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development, such as the historic agreement reached to combat climate change at the COP 21 and the FAO Port State Measures Agreement;

**Noting** the information on the current state of play of the ongoing negotiations on fisheries subsidies rules at the WTO;

**Pledge** our commitment to increase the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the social and economic development of our countries by taking measures, and in particular:

#### **On the progress of implementation of the ACP strategic plan of action for fisheries and aquaculture**

**Reaffirm** the importance of the ACP strategic plan of action for fisheries and aquaculture in promoting the implementation of coherent actions for the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture. **Further stress** the need for strengthened partnerships and new funding opportunities;

**Commit** to reinforce South-South and Triangular Cooperation to catalyse the implementation of actions that support the sharing of successful experiences and lessons learnt, in view of the demonstrable progress made by some Member States in advancing the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture development and call upon the ACP Secretariat to take action in this regard;

### **On combating and eradicating Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing**

**Commit to enhance** actions to discourage and halt illegal fishing activities that undermine and violate established national, regional, and international fisheries conservation and management measures. **Also call** on development partners to support capacity building initiatives and the transfer of technology to reinforce the effectiveness of the monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement arrangements that deliver on the local needs of ACP States;

**Emphasize** the urgent need to update the national legal frameworks to address all aspects required to prevent, deter, and eliminate IUU fishing, including the alignment of the national legislative frameworks with obligations stemming from relevant international and regional agreements, allowing for sufficient flexibility to enhance compliance with binding conservation and management measures;

**Encourage** actions to strengthen and support the regional cooperation mechanisms of ACP States to fight IUU fishing, in particular, to enhance the exchange of information and good practices, joint surveillance programmes, and the implementation of harmonised regional observer and inspection schemes;

**Continue to** implement trade measures against IUU fishing, as may be prescribed at multilateral levels by various Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and unilaterally by market States;

**Further seek** to improve the effectiveness of market-based measures against IUU fishing, by the adoption and implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes;

**Therefore commit** to establishing a simple, efficient, verifiable traceability system, to counter the trade in IUU fishery products across the targeted fishery value chains;



**On Effective Fisheries Management: Ensuring long-term sustainable use of fisheries resources**

**Call** on development partners to support our efforts to provide the necessary institutional capacity building actions to enhance the timely availability of fisheries data, including through reinforced national data information systems and regional cooperation;

**Also call on States** to intensify efforts to manage the fishing capacity of the national fleets, in keeping with the available fishing opportunities, as informed by the available scientific advice;

**Encourage** States to shift from open access policies and progressively adopt improved governance of tenure, as called for by the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests. In this context, the registration of small-scale vessels is a necessary first step, underpinning the implementation of fishing authorisation mechanisms;

**Encourage** the design and implementation of long-term management plans for the key fisheries resources with the aim of, inter alia, maintaining high productivity of the stocks and for overexploited stocks, taking actions that lead to the restocking of fisheries in the shortest time possible. For transboundary straddling and migratory stocks shared between States, management plans should be developed through cooperation between the concerned States. Furthermore, measures contained in management plans should be implemented as foreseen, and management plans implemented, subject to regular interim evaluations to verify their relevance and effectiveness;

**Call upon** States and development partners to intensify efforts to assess climate change impacts on fisheries and aquaculture, and develop and implement measures to improve the resilience and sustainability of inland and marine fish stocks and ecosystems;

**Further call** upon Member States, to incorporate disaster risk management approaches in fisheries management plans to avoid loss of life and minimise damage to fishing communities arising from climate-related hazards, such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts;

**Request** the ACP Secretariat to be actively involved in relevant forums to contribute to the solution of the problem of shifting baselines, due to sea level rise, which was not contemplated in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), particularly noting the effects of sea level rise to ACP States' maritime boundaries and the potential negative consequences to the size of the fishing zones under national jurisdiction;

**Encourage** and support initiatives to strengthen governance through stakeholder participation, accountability, and transparency, to enhance the quality and credibility of decision-making;

### **On the Blue Economy: Optimising benefits from fisheries and aquaculture**

**Reiterate** that ocean-based economic activities hold the key to sustainable inclusive growth in many ACP States, and are an integral part of people's livelihoods, social and cultural wellbeing, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and low lying coastal states;

**Welcome** the blue economy approach **and stress** that the approach must be anchored in both the enhancement of economic benefits and minimising adverse ecosystem impacts, to ensure that all economic development activities are environmentally sustainable;

**Note** the success of Pacific ACP States in asserting the rights of coastal States in shared fisheries through the Vessel Day Scheme and commend this approach to securing equitable and sustainable benefits;

**Call** for a coordinated approach to the development of the blue economy by, inter alia, encouraging dialogue and coordination through the establishment of relevant cross-sectoral platforms for dialogue between government agencies, the private sector, civil society, and local communities;

**Encourage** the enhancement of technical cooperation initiatives to share experiences and lessons learnt;

**Underscore** the urgent need for capacity building and exchanges of experiences among ACP States and for international development partners to contribute to the transformation of the ocean economy of ACP States;

**Welcome** the ACP Blue Growth Initiative for fisheries and aquaculture and shall actively pursue innovative financing mechanisms that can be mobilised to support the development of the Blue Economy, which reinforces sustainable development;



## **On Small Scale Fisheries: Securing Access to Resources and Markets**

**Undertake** to deepen our efforts to develop policies, taking into consideration good practices promoted by the FAO SSF Guidelines. Interventions may include legal and policy actions to enhance access by small-scale fisheries to resources, implementation of co-management initiatives, and the implementation of coastal zone and inland water management plans to prevent habitat destruction of fishing areas;

**Encourage** the implementation of co-management mechanisms of fisheries resources, in partnership with fishing communities, which may involve the transfer of some State management responsibilities and duties. Further, call for support to the fishing communities engaged in co-management with the necessary human and financial resources, in accordance with our particular conditions and capabilities;

**Encourage** partnerships to support investment, including for infrastructure development, to facilitate the growth of the small-scale fisheries sub-sector, while improving working conditions by, inter alia, enhancing value addition and reducing post-harvest loss;

**Call** for enhanced capacity building actions for the value chain actors and infrastructure development to ensure compliance of small-scale fishery products with the food safety standards of the major world markets;

## **On Fisheries Subsidies**

**Reiterate** our great concern for the current state of capture fisheries, recognising that at least one third of the assessed fish stocks are deemed to be in an overfished condition as indicated by the FAO 2016 State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture report;

**Acknowledge** that weak governance, including misdirected subsidies to the fishing sector, are among the factors that have contributed to the build-up of excessive fishing capacity, which have compromised the fish stocks' natural regenerative capacity to provide high yields over the long term, with the consequent risk to food security and the livelihoods of many dependent countries;



**Support** the efforts of the ACP Group toward constructive engagement in discussions to advance and secure ACP interests and concerns in any outcome on fisheries subsidies rules at the WTO. In this regard, we stress that any acceptable outcome must preserve the policy space and flexibility for ACP States to develop their fledgling and growing fishing sectors, and respond to the concerns expressed for their small scale, artisanal and subsistence fisher folk;

### **On aquaculture development**

**Highlight** that aquaculture, being one of the fastest growing food production sectors globally, could fill the supply deficit resulting from the decline in capture fisheries production and population increase. While global aquaculture production reached 106 million tonnes - 76.6 million tonnes of aquatic animals and 29.4 million tonnes of aquatic plants - growing at an average annual rate of 6.6 percent since 1995, we note with concern that the contribution of ACP countries to global production remains very low;

**Reinforce** our commitment to working together among ourselves and with international partners to reduce the cost of key inputs to improve the competitiveness and profitability of aquaculture in ACP States;

**Reiterate** our commitment towards strengthening aquaculture production in our countries, including large and small-scale operations by, inter alia, providing an enabling policy environment, and strengthening aquaculture production systems, including improved feed, seed, and advisory delivery systems, and providing support to private sector investments in aquaculture businesses;

**Emphasise** that mutually beneficial South-South and Triangular Cooperation must be strengthened to catalyse aquaculture and fisheries development, and therefore call for enhanced partnerships, especially towards implementing initiatives that promote technology transfer and other successful aquaculture practices for the benefit of our countries;

**Encourage** particularly research and development initiatives to develop cost effective quality feeds made from affordable local ingredients, in view of the high cost of imported feeds for aquaculture;

**Encourage also** the design and implementation of long-term management plans for sustainable aquaculture development based on the precautionary and ecosystem approaches to aquaculture;

**Invite** ACP States, in collaboration with regional entities and international partners, to support the development of sustainable disaster risk management solutions, in view of the impacts of the frequent climate change-related weather events on aquaculture enterprises;

**Invite** the ACP Secretariat to develop a mechanism to assist States in sourcing and transferring high quality disease-free brood stock to improve aquaculture seeds in ACP States.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

**Continue** to fulfil our past commitments to ensure the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture through the implementation of the ACP Strategic Plan of Action for Fisheries and Aquaculture, noting its relevance in furthering the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Goal 14;

**Emphasise** the urgent need to intensify efforts to mobilise financial resources, accelerate technology transfer, and build human and institutional capacity for the sustainable development of aquaculture, the conservation, management and sustainable development of fisheries, combatting IUU fishing, securing sustainable small-scale fisheries and realising the blue growth of ACP States, and call on development partners and the ACP Secretariat to give priority attention to this matter;

**Endorse** the ACP Blue Growth Initiative, which can significantly catalyse the development of the blue economy for the benefit of ACP Member States, and therefore request the ACP Secretary-General to engage with other development partners to ensure the implementation of tangible actions in our countries;

**Also endorse** the offer by the Government of Samoa to host the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of ACP Ministers in charge of fisheries and aquaculture scheduled to be held in 2019.