



Address by

**Mr Viwanou GNASSOUNOU, Assistant Secretary General in charge of the
Department of Sustainable Economic Development and Trade
at the opening of the Oceans Forum on trade-related aspects of
Sustainable Development Goal 14**

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- Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor for me and for ACP to join you here today for this important forum on **Oceans Forum on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14**. I am sure discussions over the next days will lead to some important steps forward in advancing the implementation of SDG 14.
- For the ACP, fisheries remain an important source of food and livelihoods. This is particularly important for SIDS.
- Fish and fishery products continue to be one of the most-traded food commodities for ACP countries exports. Fish exports trade in some of the ACP countries is worth more than half of its total commodities exports. More than 60 of the ACP States are engaged in the export of fish and fishery products to the international markets representing an important growth pole in their local economies providing employment.
- At a global scale, the state of marine fisheries is however in a crisis, FAO estimates that at least 31% of the assessed fish stocks are overfished mostly due to weak governance and ineffective control of fishing that have compromised the fish stocks' natural regenerative capacity to provide high yields over the long term. The results is a loss of net benefits in terms of food security and employment security.
- For many ACP small scale coastal fisheries, the stock status of their unassessed fisheries remain uncertain (because of inadequate data and capacity), at a time when there is increasing pressure as a result of increasing population pressure and potentially threatening the livelihoods of coastal communities in the developing countries.
- Our fisheries resources are renewable natural capital that should be exploited sustainably in perpetuity. What is needed is to reform the existing governance approaches to effectively transition our marine fisheries to a sustainable path of high productivity, healthy and resilient stocks in order to secure economic and environmental benefits to our society into the future.

- Marine fisheries are mostly shared resources since fish does not respect sovereign states boundaries. Therefore addressing the fisheries management challenges require effective and coherent global actions to prevent and reverse overfishing, IUU fishing and overcapacity.
- Trade policy constitute an essential part in addressing the alarming state of our marine fisheries. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development agreed by the global community sets out target 14.6 to prohibit by 2020 certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies.
- In this regard the ACP Group believes that a multilateral, realistic and pragmatic agreement that prohibits fisheries subsidies granted to operators of fishing vessels targeting stocks in an overfished state and to vessels involved in IUU fishing is achievable in the interest of the sustainability of the fisheries. This should be a first step towards developing a comprehensive discipline of capacity enhancing fisheries subsidies linked to expanding fishing pressure but with appropriate special and differential treatment that preserves the policy space and flexibility for ACP countries to develop their fisheries.
- For the ACP we know how important fisheries resources are for the economic growth for our countries particularly SIDS. This is why we have a strategic plan endorsed by ministers that places the highest priority to effective management to sustain fisheries productivity and on unlocking and enhancing the economic benefits from fisheries. In implementing these priorities we contribute to the achievement of the SDG 14 targets, particularly the following:
 - a. Target 14.4, effective fisheries management for sustained maximum productivity as determined by stocks biological characteristics;
 - b. Target 14.6 prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies;
 - c. Target 14.b Securing access to resources and markets for small scale fisheries; and
 - d. Target 14.7 Maximizing benefits from fisheries for SIDS.

- To deliver on the SDG 14 means that we have to in part transition our fisheries to more sustainable resilient productive fisheries that provide long-term benefits to society. This is no mean task as it will require a shift from the business as usual. Actors need the political commitment (ACP is organizing a ministerial meeting to reinforce this commitment) and the targeted allocation of sufficient financial resources to;
 - i. Build the capacity to develop and implement policy and management frameworks that are underpinned by sound evidence generated analytical scientific work;
 - ii. enhance capacity and collaboration ensure robust monitoring and enforcement to eliminate IUU including the implementation of regional and international obligations; and
 - iii. Increase investments and measures to unlock the economic potential of fisheries value chains and accrue benefits to coastal countries particularly the SIDS.
- Recognizing that for ACP coastal countries particularly SIDS (with large maritime spaces), implementing the SDG 14 commitments presents an onerous challenge given the size of their economies. Therefore, in partly addressing capacity and resource constraints, the key message to pass across is the need to develop partnerships and collaboration with long-term commitments to improving the state of our fisheries. These partnerships must include international organisations, public, private and civil society organisations working in coherent way.
- We at ACP shall remain engaged in working with other partners in advancing the implementation of the SDG 14 and in particular contribute sustainable fisheries and maximize benefits form the marine fisheries.

Thank you