

African Ministerial Conference on Ocean Economies and Climate Change

Summary of Dialogue 3. Fisheries and aquaculture

The twenty-five participants reiterated the importance of fisheries for Africa in terms of incomes, food security exports and contributions to the region's economies. Marine fisheries were seen as underperforming assets. With effective management it was noted that fisheries could contribute an additional \$80 billion per year at the global level and global harvests could be up to 40% higher.

Governance and climate change. Broad agreement emerged that good governance of fisheries and aquaculture was the overarching condition required to address climate change in fisheries. Good governance in turn required a solid knowledge platform supported by effective human resources and political commitment. There was also a broad consensus that many of the key instruments and codes of best practice already exist. The problem is in the implementation, in securing the financial resources, in accessing the knowledge and the skills to interpret and apply best practices for specific fisheries and at the national and regional levels.

Food security, aquaculture. It was considered that capture fisheries is unlikely to be able to ensure future fish food supplies for Africa and that aquaculture would have an increasingly important role. However, aquaculture was seen primarily as a market driven business rather than a social investment in livelihoods or food security. It was emphasised that private investment in aquaculture required a robust enabling environment, including secure tenure, access to land for mariculture shore bases and a pro-active supporting role by the public sector, for example in relation to supplies of seeds, quality feeds and control of disease. Specific attention also needs to be directed to financing modalities for aquaculture enterprises and start-ups and to modalities to reduce risks.

International cooperation. A wide range of recurring issues were mentioned. Enhanced regional collaboration was seen as essential in relation to cost-effective MCS and to ensuring market access for fisheries products, for management of shared regional fisheries. This cooperation could target, for example, certification for tuna fisheries, cost effective surveillance and enforcement.

Small-scale fisheries. It was stressed that SSF account for some 80% to Africa's catches. However, it was considered that it was necessary to formalise or register these fleets and activities which are increasingly mechanised and exert growing pressures on the fisheries resources. Inclusive approaches and co-management were stressed as key approaches to address the threats to the livelihoods of SSF fishers in an inclusive manner.

There was call for increased investment in basic infrastructure. Improved use of existing catches, including bycatch was recognised as an important short-term opportunity. Concerns were expressed at the continued prevalence of foreign distant water fleets and the continued 'leakage' of revenues or raw materials.

Climate change was seen as an **additional overarching stressor** on the suite of existing challenges to sustainable fisheries. Climate change raises the challenge from being not only one of securing sustainable fisheries, but securing sustainable and healthy ocean ecosystems. While on one hand this could be seen as an added problem, the COP22 offers an opportunity to address Africa's chronic fisheries challenges in the context of climate change – particularly through the adaptation agenda.

African fisheries and climate change platform. In direct response to the Conference statement, the group supported the proposal that a specific African fisheries and climate change platform be created through or in association with the COP22 process. The platform would facilitate knowledge driven sustainable fisheries initiatives and support the capacity development required. It would identify and tune best practice to the specific requirements of the region and African countries. Most importantly, the platform would be backed by a funding mechanism to co-finance the implementation of these best practises at national and regional levels and generate the knowledge and capacity.

It was noted that the previously existing funding mechanism, the Strategic Partnership for Sustainable Fisheries offered lessons for establishment of such a platform. Such a funding model could be complemented with an enhanced knowledge exchange and capacity building component and a facility to support 'climate-smart' private investments through access to concessional and impact finance. In order to benefit from such a platform, ideally countries will need to ensure that fisheries and ocean health is reflected in their national climate change strategies and plans and in the various policies and plans of the Regional Economic Commissions.