

ACP Remarks

RNG HODs

6 March 2020

Mr. Chairman,

We thank you for your note and questions for this session of the RNG at HOD level. We felt that this cluster has been very constructive and we are advancing on our mandate. We remain committed to build convergence and complementarity as far as possible to further shape our work ahead.

Regarding your first question. The ACP Group is of the view that on overfishing overcapacity, we must first focus on developing and refining the prohibition based on a list approach. We feel that the list approach is consistent with the mandate before us. We are prepared to discuss each element of our list of prohibited subsidies in this regard. We drew this list from work done from studies and in these negotiations, carried forward in our text tabled in 2017.

We are not convinced that capping achieves the mandate to prohibit harmful subsidies to overfishing and overcapacity. We appreciate the efforts of various proponents of capping to clarify their proposals. We wonder if the different proposals are proving more complex. The ACP Group has since 2017 targeted in our texts large-scale and distant water fishing. Studies have shown that subsidies to fishing in waters beyond national jurisdiction, reaching the waters of other members and the high seas has contributed to overcapacity and overfishing.

In our room document text engagement we have continued to pursue this approach. However, as stated in SDG 14.6, and the WTO mandate in these negotiations we are to come up with disciplines to prohibit certain forms of subsidies and to include appropriate special and differential treatment. We feel that first and foremost subsidies of the small fishers and those that do not subsidize large scale distant water fishing, in particular developing countries must not be imposed obligations in the same manner as the big and rich subsidisers. We have said in terms of appropriate special and differential treatment, we have insisted on policy space to sustainably grow our fisheries and not to lock in the little or no subsidization we currently provide. In addition, we strongly maintain that artisanal and small-scale fishing in our waters should not be overly disciplined. As such we share the purpose found and complementarity of other proposals targeting large-scale industrial and distant water fishing

nations. If capping is considered, capping must apply only to the big subsidizers of large-scale industrial fishing.

Large subsidisers should not use these negotiations to make our small fishing nations pay the price or share their burden.

Mr. Chairman, we would stress again that any prohibition must not frustrate the rules and rights existing in fisheries regimes for coastal Members to determine the status of their own fisheries and that WTO shall not enter the role of fish management or replace the role of the Members. The WTO role is exclusively with respect to prohibiting and eliminating subsidies.

On process, the ACP Group will welcome a discussion of a consolidated text after thorough discussions on the facilitator texts, which was launched properly yesterday with the text on IUU. We think that to arrive at a text that will be fit for purpose, suitable for presentation to Ministers, we must not prematurely involve Ambassadors. We feel that the right timing for Ambassadorial engagement should be predicated on adequate deliberation at technical level.