

**Opening Remarks of the UNECE Executive Secretary
at the 1st meeting of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries**

29 January 2018: 10-00 am, Room IX, Palais des Nations

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear participants,

We all know that **overfishing, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing** are key destructive fishing practices. In 2016, illicit fishing was reported to be one fourth of the total fish harvested annually. This amounts to 26 million tons valued at 23 billion US Dollars.

This is the value lost each year to legitimate fishers. Besides economic damage, such practices threaten local biodiversity and food security.

To date, the management of fisheries and fish stocks has been largely based on the collection and exchange of large sets of data between fishery management organizations.

However in most cases, data collection is sporadic, different data sets are used, and hardcopy, paper-based documentation is widespread. Data management costs are very high.

SDG14 commits humanity to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources. To achieve this goal, we need to address the growing concerns about overfishing by today's modern fishing fleets. The UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-Business (UN/CEFACT) has come up with a concrete solution: The Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange, also called FLUX. This is a global standard which helps improve fisheries information management, and plays a key role in preventing overfishing and the collapse of global fish stocks.

UN/CEFACT FLUX allows access the electronic data from fishing vessels, such as vessel identification, catch area, species and quantity of fish, date and time.

With this standard, for the first time, Fishery Management Organizations around the world have a communication tool to automate the collection and dissemination of the catch data. Such data is critical for sustainable fishery management and for detecting and combatting illegal, unreported and

unregulated fishing. It also will improve research on science-based fishery management.

FLUX is a UN global standard and was adopted in 2016. While being relatively new, it has already gained a high level of acceptance among fishermen and traders. It is being used in all EU member States and other countries across the globe.

Preserving life below water also requires developing risk-based regulatory systems. The UNECE Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems has started a pilot project that identifies the environmental, cultural, social and economic risks relevant to the achievement of SDG14. It also reviews current regulatory and management approaches and develops recommendations.

This is a strong complement to the work of this UNECE Team of Specialists. I am very happy that today, the Team of Specialists meets for the first time to discuss its programme of work for the next two years, in support of standards for sustainable fisheries and traceability of fish products. This is a new global partnership with experts from governments, private sector, civil society, consumer associations and international organisations.

It is one of the commitments that UNECE, with its UN/CEFACT, has submitted for the Call for Action launched for the Ocean Conference last June in New York.

I would like to thank you all for your participation and contribution. I wish you a very productive meeting and fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.