

WTO 9th Ministerial Conference: Fisheries Subsidies Ministerial statement on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, United States

Recognising that effectively addressing fisheries subsidies will deliver trade, economic, development and environmental benefits and that subsidies contribute to economic losses in the fisheries sector and create serious distortions in global fish markets leading to less revenue for fishers and serious impacts on food security and livelihoods, particularly in developing countries;

Emphasising that eliminating harmful subsidies that contribute to the depletion of global fish stocks could also ensure the fisheries sector continues to thrive and provide employment for all countries, including in artisanal fisheries of developing countries;

Regretting that twelve years have passed since the WTO Ministers 2001 Doha Declaration, subsequently elaborated in the 2005 Hong Kong Declaration to include the prohibition of certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, with appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least-developed Members being integral to the negotiations;

Concerned that the world's fisheries resources are overstressed, continuing to decline and in certain cases at risk of collapse, and that the situation has deteriorated since the launch of the Doha Round, with 30% of global stocks reported as overfished by the FAO in 2012, yet the billions of dollars a year spent by governments on harmful fisheries subsidies have increased and continue to be a major contributing factor to this situation; and that there is also diminishing room for growth in catches through increased fishing effort, with 57% of stocks reported as fully exploited;

Welcoming the reaffirmation by world leaders in 2012 at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development of their commitment to eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and overcapacity, and their continued commitment to concluding multilateral disciplines on fisheries subsidies that will give effect to the WTO Doha Agenda and the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration;

Noting the additional encouragement of world leaders to further improve the transparency and reporting of existing fisheries subsidies programmes through the WTO and, without necessarily waiting for the WTO negotiations to conclude, to eliminate subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing and to refrain from introducing new such subsidies or from extending or enhancing existing ones;

Recognising the need to urgently give effect to these calls for action, Members must take action at all levels, including national, regional and multilateral, to reform and strengthen disciplines on fisheries subsidies;

We reiterate our commitment to agreeing to ambitious and effective disciplines on fisheries subsidies. We will continue in the WTO to press for the prohibition of harmful subsidies to the fishing sector that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity while recognising the importance of appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing countries as part of such disciplines. To this end, work on fisheries subsidies must feature in the WTO's on-going work programme. We will continue exploring ideas to support this objective, such as organising further events in the WTO on fisheries subsidies like those held in 2012 and 2013.

We pledge to refrain from introducing new fisheries subsidies that contribute to overfishing or overcapacity or extend or enhance existing such subsidies, and to work within the WTO and other fora to improve fisheries subsidies reform and transparency and we invite other members to join us in these efforts.

Bali, December 2013