



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT BY

**MS. SHORNA-KAY RICHARDS
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
AND CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES, A.I.
PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT THE

**FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS
OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS
ON OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA**

ON

AGENDA ITEM 3: *THE ROLE OF SEAFOOD IN GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY*

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
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Co-Chairs,

My delegation is pleased to associate itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

This 15th Meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP), with its focus on the *role of seafood in global food security*, takes place against the backdrop of a number of important developments in the field of sustainable development. These include the upcoming Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States and ongoing efforts to craft a set of sustainable development goals and elaborate a post-2015 development agenda in which food security and nutrition, as well as the conservation of marine resources are key components. It is therefore our good fortune, Co-Chairs, that you will guide our deliberations at this time and my delegation warmly congratulates you on your appointment.

In addition, we thank the Division for Oceans Affairs and the Law of the Sea for producing the Secretary-General's excellent report on the topic.

Co-Chairs,

This year's ICP topic is particularly timely and relevant for Jamaica and fellow CARICOM states, bearing in mind the growing concerns over the future of the Caribbean's seafood reserves and the challenges we face in enhancing the role of seafood in our region's food security. We, therefore, welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue at the global level and we anticipate that the outcome of this 15th ICP will provide a substantial basis on which we can advance the work started at the regional fisheries workshop held last October in Guyana, which included discussions on the *Role of Fish and Seafood Nutrition Security in the Caribbean*.

Co-Chairs,

As an Archipelagic State, the marine environment is integral to the social and economic well-being of Jamaica. Our marine ecosystem and associated resources are essential for food security and nutrition and a major source of livelihood for most coastal communities, and in some instances the only source, particularly where very few alternative economic opportunities exist. The Jamaican fishery industry is dominated by small-scale, artisanal fishers that target reef and reef associated species. There are some 20,000 artisanal fishers operating 6,000 open fishing vessels from some 186 landing sites in Jamaica.

The fisheries sector represents approximately 0.4% of our GDP. However, despite the seemingly low contribution of the fisheries sector to the economy when measured in terms of GDP, it is widely recognized that the Jamaican fisheries sector is an important foreign exchange earner and provides employment for many in our rural communities, in addition to enhancing overall food security and nutrition. In fact, without fishing many coastal communities would suffer severe hardships.

Seafood is an important component of the diet of the Jamaican population. Although local production satisfies only 30% of total demand, anecdotal information suggests higher levels of fish consumption as subsistence fishing is not captured in the official production data. Most of the high value, traditional commercially important fish species are considered to be over-exploited. A major exception is the Jamaican Queen Conch fishery which is considered to be sustainably managed. In fact, the Jamaican Queen Conch Fishery is considered to be one of the best managed in the world. Despite efforts to increase production of fish and seafood, Jamaica is still a net importer of fish and seafood.

Co-Chairs, the Secretary-General's report has addressed the nutritional value of seafood and the governments of Jamaica and fellow CARICOM States are seeking to harness this nutritional benefit to combat obesity and curtail the increasing incidences of non-communicable diseases in the Caribbean. For this shift to occur, increased availability and accessibility to fish and seafood and public education with respect to fish and seafood as a healthy choice of diet is *sine qua non*.

The Secretary-General's report also points to several threats and challenges impacting the availability of fish and seafood. These include: pollution; climate change, ocean acidification, alien invasive species; overexploitation and unsustainable practices. In addition, we have the challenges of population growth and limited productivity of coastal fisheries. The G77 and China's statement has amply addressed some of the challenges. However, my delegation wishes to highlight two critical threats to Jamaica's food security and nutrition. These are Climate Change and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Climate change and climate variability will have far reaching effects on our aquatic resources. Sea level rise will significantly impact support infrastructure on the coastline and other critical areas for fisheries, as well as human settlements in the coastal areas which are exposed to more frequent and intense storms and hurricanes. Additionally, warming and acidification may expect to result in a radical shift in the fisheries resources available to Jamaica and indeed the Caribbean. The industry's current makeup of fisheries resources, fishing gears used and fishing methods may change significantly.

We must therefore begin to build the capacity and resilience of our fishers and fish workers to enable them to cope with the changes. It will be critical to establish monitoring mechanisms to measure the changes in an effort to better predict the impacts and manage risks from storms and other threats. Increased monitoring and relevant research must be a priority in order to inform the strategies and direction necessary to retool and enhance the capacity of coastal communities, fishers and fish workers to cope with the impacts of climate change.

Building the awareness of coastal fishing communities, fishers and fish workers of the potential impacts of climate change must be given priority attention. Increased protection of existing critical habitats must be also promoted to buttress the resilience of the marine ecosystem.

Co-Chairs,

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, particularly that perpetrated by foreign poachers severely undermine Jamaica's efforts to sustainably manage our fisheries. The total extent of losses due to foreign poaching is poorly understood. A very conservative estimate of losses due to poaching of spiny lobsters by foreigners as a result of actual sightings of poachers in 2013 was approximately US\$10 million.

Stating the obvious, IUU fishing by foreigners negatively impacts the fisheries resources and the marine ecosystem because of the unsustainable practices employed by the poachers. This, among other things, impacts local employment, foreign exchange earnings and fish and seafood available for local consumption.

International and regional initiatives to combat IUU fishing should be given very high priority. The lack of resources and capacity of SIDS to address the scourge of IUU fishing must also be given priority attention. An important consideration is the link between IUU fishing and organized crime such as narcotics and arms smugglings and more recently, human trafficking and should therefore be regarded as a debilitating transboundary crime.

Co-Chairs,

Jamaica's Food and Nutrition Security policy takes as its point of departure the recognition that food security constitutes a fundamental right of all citizens regardless of their socio-economic status. The stated objectives of the policy are therefore "to ensure that all people have continued access to sufficient supplies of safe foods for a nutritionally adequate diet and, in doing so achieve and maintain health and nutritional well-being". These are clearly very ambitious objectives; ones which will require significant financing, capacity building and the increased use of sustainable technologies, as well as a great deal of coordination and sustained efforts on several fronts over the long-term if they are to be achieved.

As the Secretary-General's reports notes "communities living below the poverty level, in particular developing countries, including small island developing states, face critical challenges in their efforts to ensure the availability of, access to and sustainability of seafood for food security". We therefore share the report's assessment that "international cooperation and coordination is needed to assist States in addressing these challenges including through capacity-building and transfer of technology".

These challenges have been recognised at the CARICOM level and in particular by the CARICOM-associated regional fisheries body -the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM). Indeed, efforts are being made to strengthen the role of seafood in food security within the framework of the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy and the CRFM-generated Common Fisheries Policy as well as the Castries Declaration on IUU Fishing and the formulation of a CRFM Strategy, Action Plan and Programme Proposal on Disaster Risk Management and Climate Adaptation in Fisheries and Aquaculture.

We are, therefore, particularly pleased that the Deputy Executive Director of the CRFM, Dr. Susan Singh-Renton, will participate in this ICP meeting as a panellist and will provide the region's perspective on the opportunities and challenges for the future role of seafood in global food security.

We look forward to hearing from all the panellists this week and to participating in open and informative discussions with all delegations.

Thank you.