

**Statement delivered by Ambassador & PR at the HOD level
meeting held on 20 November 2020**

Thank you Chair.

1. We thank you for convening this meeting and welcome your report on the activities you have undertaken this week, along with your ideas on how to take this work forward in the weeks ahead.

2. Chair, even during the pandemic we are negotiating at an intense pace and dedication on overall objective to have an instrument on **Sustainable fishing** and to curb IUU fishing by essentially incorporating appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries.

3. Chair, keeping in mind the sustainability objective of these negotiations, India believes that the concept of **polluters must pay principle** should be made applicable for taking forward these negotiations. Those members who are responsible for providing huge subsidies for unsustainable fishing leading to Overcapacity and Overfishing should first take the responsibility in substantially reducing the huge harmful subsidies. In the name of sustainable fishing, the unnecessary burden should not be imposed on developing countries and LDCs who provide minuscule or do not provide any subsidies for fishing. There is no merit in comparing millions of

subsidies given in the past or being given presently for industrial fishing with minuscule subsidies of few dollars given for sustenance of livelihood and food security to our small fishermen and women. We should also learn from our experience of implementing WTO agreements, incidentally, we are commemorating 25th anniversary of the WTO this week. It is high time that asymmetries in earlier agreements such as those meted out to developing countries in the Agreement on Agriculture should not be repeated in this Agreement on Fisheries subsidies.

4. Chair, we would like to remind the Membership that Special and Differential Treatment for Developing Countries and LDCs is an integral and very important part of the Instrument / Agreement being negotiated. This S&DT is required to have a policy space for the future and to develop our fisheries sector. We have been discussing with Ambassador Chambovey, the friend of the Chair on the S&DT provisions. We are concerned at the lack of convergence on the Chair's text in Article 5.7 (c). It is being conveyed to us that Members' positions are far apart on S&DT. If the Members are aiming to conclude these negotiations, I will wish to convey that India may not have much flexibility left on our S&DT proposal reflected in the Chair's text in Article 5.7 (c). In addition, we need specific text on the transition period in the placeholder in Unreported and Uregulated pillar of Article 3.9 (b). I will urge Members to show flexibility if we have to move ahead in these negotiations. We are of the firm view that the S&DT in any final outcome has to be effective and appropriate having

regard to the development needs, livelihood and food security concerns of developing countries and LDCs as well as having regard to their capacity to put in place effective mechanism to deal with IUU and appropriate conservation and management measures.

5. Chair, we have been consistently highlighting the continued challenges in many countries on account of an increasing number of COVID-19 cases because of the second wave of the COVID -19 pandemic. We must be aware of the new restrictions/lockdowns being imposed in various parts of the world, which makes it very difficult to have co-ordination with the capital-based experts and also even in the capital, amongst various departments, and with various provincial governments involved in these negotiations. We would also like to inform you that some of our key negotiating team members have been diagnosed with COVID -19 and finding it difficult to participate in the day to day basis meetings. Further, we yet to have a full discussion on your revised text of 2nd November. In addition, we have to cover a lot of ground on Dispute settlement, Institutional Mechanism, Notification and Transparency parts of the text. We can not rush into these negotiations. The holding of continuous meetings in inter-sessional period has impacted the quality of participation from the Capital. Ministry officials cannot devote their time on a daily basis to these negotiations as they have to attend to their regular work. The process going forward has to remain fair, inclusive and transparent. In this situation when only about four weeks are left before the winter break,

I am unsure that these negotiations can be concluded by December 2020.

6. Chair, I would like to conclude by saying that India has been actively participating in these negotiations, but we will have to be pragmatic while negotiating. We are in unprecedented times, faced with a global health crisis, economies have taken bad hit world over. Any hasty decisions that will imperil the issues of livelihood of poor fishermen will not go down well in the history of decision making in the WTO.

7. Thank you, Chair.