



**BOOK REVIEW
OF AGADIR
CONFERENCE ON
THE BLUE BELT INITIATIVE**

2019

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PREFACE



“Acting by ourselves and for ourselves is an imperative. Associating our strategic partners is now a necessity.”

*HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMED VI,
Sovereign of the Kingdom of Morocco.*



During the African Summit of Action held on the wings of the COP 22, organized in 2016 in Marrakech, HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI emphasized the need **«that our continent expresses itself with one unified voice, that it demands climate justice and mobilization of necessary means, that it puts forward concerted proposals, in the fight against climate change»**, while stating that **«Acting by ourselves and for ourselves is an imperative. Associating our strategic partners is now a necessity»**.

The Blue Belt initiative was launched by the Kingdom of Morocco in the wake of this Royal Vision.

Its main objectives are to respond simultaneously to the challenges of climate change, ocean conservation and sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture, key elements of food security in Africa and in the world.

The High Level Conference «The Blue Belt, a platform for action for the sustainability of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa», held on February 19th, 2019 in Agadir is a decisive step in the implementation of the Blue Belt initiative.

Bringing together more than **twenty-two States including 17 African States**, the initiative has generated strong political support from participants and a firm desire to strengthen multilateral cooperation as part of the collaborative platform proposed by the Blue Belt.

This Book Review attempts to transcribe as faithfully as possible this High-Level Dialogue in an unprecedented format, dedicated to the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture, and the conservation of the oceans in the context of climate change.

This is a decisive step for the Blue Belt initiative, highlighting strong recommendations, laying down a roadmap for the implementation of the initiative, and brought together in the Agadir Declaration.

MR. AZIZ AKHANNOUCH

THE CONFERENCE



«The Blue Belt, a platform for action for the sustainability of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa» conference was held on February 19th 2019 in Agadir, Morocco, in the format of a round table of 35 participants for a High Level Dialogue, consisting of Ministers and delegates from 17 African States and 5 Northern States, considered as fishing powers (Norway, Spain, Russian Federation, Portugal and France), the European Union and FAO.

The directors of 4 fisheries and oceanographic research institutes in the North and South (Institute of Marine Research-Norway, Instituto Español de Oceanografía-Spain, AtlantNIRO-Russian Federation and Institut National de Recherche Halieutique-Morocco) that are deeply involved in fisheries research in Africa, as well as the president of the Institut Océanographique Paul Ricard and vice-president of the Océan-Climat platform (France) were involved in this dialogue.

Several other personalities from the diplomatic world, elected leaders, the President and Wali from the Souss Massa region, representatives of the fishing sector and african fisheries research also participated in this event.

AGENDA

The Blue Belt, a platform for action for the sustainability of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa.

Agadir (Morocco), February 19th, 2019

- 2:15 pm** - Registration
- Welcome opening
- Welcome Speech by Mr. Brahim Hafidi, President of the Souss Massa Regional Council
- Film Screening "Introduction to the Blue Belt initiative"
- Opening Speech by His Excellency Mr. Aziz Akhannouch – Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco
- Speech by His Excellency Mr. Roy Angelvik – State Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries of the Kingdom of Norway. Country of Honor of the 5th Halieutis Exhibition
- Film Screening "The Blue Belt Underway"

- 3:30 pm** High Level Dialogue
 - Statements of Ministers (5 minutes per Minister)
 - FAO Declaration (5 minutes)
 - Expert Statements (4 minutes per Expert)

- 6:00 pm** Agadir Declaration on the Blue Belt initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



From the high-level conference held on February 19th, 2019, in Agadir - Morocco, under the theme «The Blue Belt, a platform for action for the sustainability of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa», a ministerial dialogue has emerged on the question of the place of fishing in the blue economy and ocean conservation, gathering more than thirty contributions and involving representatives of the FAO and of fisheries research institutions.

It is time to act

The Blue Belt initiative takes place in the context of a long process that led to the awareness of the urgency to act. All parties insistently called out the issues the oceans are facing and its consequences on the populations. The list is long and cannot be exhaustive, but the alarming phenomena are well known to all: they range from the degradation of marine habitats to the acidification of the oceans or the rise in temperature, the erosion of biodiversity to pollution and the flooding of the oceans by plastic waste, not to mention the overexploitation of fish stocks.

The risks to marine ecosystems and fisheries resources are real; they are now visible from day to day and particularly worrying.

As many parties have pointed out, the situation is all the more alarming for Africa, because fishing is a particularly important source of protein, employment and economic activity for all coastal communities.

Fisheries and aquaculture are expected to experience severe disruption if strong, bold and disruptive mitigation and adaptation actions are not initiated immediately.

As recalled by Norway, it is all the more urgent that this is only twelve years away from the 2030 deadline, when all States of the United Nations committed themselves to the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the opinion of all, the need to act with concrete actions and not words presumes adequate mechanisms; as such the Blue Belt initiative stands out for its operational, concrete and pragmatic vision, with an orientation towards networking for ecological investment in sustainable and environmentally friendly projects in the private sector.

There are many challenges, but so are the opportunities

The Blue Belt initiative was launched in the wake of the COP 22 in Marrakech. Upon the conviction that transforming fisheries and aquaculture activities into more sustainable practices and reducing anthropogenic pressure on the oceans was not only possible but also necessary, the initiative was a major response in favor of the sustainability of the oceans, the blue economy, and the fight against climate change.

Many parties have joined and see it as a comprehensive response to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Priorities and challenges for sustainable fisheries growth are expressed in a cross-disciplinary way, addressing the need to strengthen the partnership in all its forms (cross-sector, multi-stakeholder, South-South and North-South and trilaterally).

Many efforts, but still a lot to do in terms of fisheries sustainability

The parties have shown a great deal of effort in assessing fish stocks in Africa in recent years, either at the national level or with the support of the Regional Organizations in Fisheries Management, as well as within the framework of joint scientific cruises with the help of third countries and organizations (FAO, Norway, Spain, etc.). While these efforts have helped improve knowledge and management measures of some stocks, there is still a need to continue these efforts to address fisheries management in an ecosystem-based framework, with a better consideration of oceans conservation issues and the effects of climate change.

A call for the harmonization of fisheries policies for shared stocks has been launched and requires a strengthening of the framework for regional cooperation in fisheries and aquaculture.

IUU fishing, a scourge to be eradicated in priority

All efforts to regulate and sustainably manage fisheries cannot succeed without concerted action in the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU fishing). While many parties called for support and assistance in their respective efforts to combat IUU fishing, FAO reiterated the importance of signing the Agreement on Port State Measures, the only global policy instrument in the fight against IUU fishing, which entered into force in 2016 and has a significant support program for its operational implementation in more than fifty countries.

Marine Protected Areas, a priority for Africa

Marine spatial planning is a stated priority by several parties and has led to the implementation of Marine Protected Areas in many African countries among other measures. The parties shared their willingness to increase cooperation and exchange of experience in this field. The Blue Belt offers a suitable mechanism for this.

Ocean observation and research: the pillars of sustainability and innovation

The oceanographic, environmental and health observation and monitoring mechanisms for the oceans deployed in Africa are well below what is needed in the context of climate change and the current human-induced pressure on the planet, despite efforts made at both national and transnational levels.

More generally, several areas such as oceanographic research, innovation, health monitoring, aquaculture, processing of fishery products, reduction of post-harvest losses, good practices, etc., need to be developed in Africa as a matter of urgency, considering their importance for the emergence of the blue economy. This is a major challenge that needs to be addressed with greater enthusiasm and cooperation between all concerned countries and partners, in order to bring fisheries systems up to the standards of a successful blue economy, in line with the requirements of ecological and socio-economic resilience.

Fisheries development based on innovative blue solutions would bring promising opportunity to transform current constraints and those that will increasingly be imposed by climate change into the possibility to create greater inclusive prosperity, without depreciating the value of resources and natural habitats.

Aquaculture, a possible alternative

The increase in global fish production largely comes from aquaculture. African countries, whose production level is very low, see this field of activity as a possible very high growth potential alternative to fishing at both continental and marine levels. The political will to develop aquaculture in response to the growing demand for animal protein by their population and the stagnation of fish production by catch fishing is clearly demonstrated by a majority of Parties. Aquaculture development programs have emerged in several countries. Their goal is to ensure food security and contribute to the restoration of populations and natural habitats.

Conscious of the many challenges to be overcome for the sustainable development of aquaculture in Africa, countries called for close collaboration on research, innovation and exchange of expertise as part of the cooperation mechanisms of the Blue Belt initiative.

Financing, one of the keys to success

The importance of providing the financing mechanisms as an essential pillar to support the emergence of the blue economy has been stressed repeatedly.

Several proposals for innovative mechanisms have emerged, such as one based on the principle of taking some of the wealth created by the exploitation of the oceans to finance

innovative and sustainable projects, or another based on the polluter pays principle, but also currently undergoing funding mechanisms such as partnerships with donors and international development support institutions.

The Blue Belt, a platform for the blue economy cooperation

Efforts and actions underway to include sustainable development and the fight against climate change effects into fisheries economic and social policies in Africa are certainly visible, but the implementation of mechanisms for cooperation and mobilization of technical and financial support to enable countries to achieve collectively and effectively their transition to a blue fishery economy remains the major challenge.

The adherence to the Blue Belt initiative that proposes the implementation of a collaborative platform is considered as a privileged response to this issue and can be a driving force for South-South, North-South and tripartite cooperation. As such, ATLAFCO and RAFISMER, which are particularly active in the field of fisheries cooperation, are channels that should be favored and strengthened and on which the Blue Belt could rely.

The operationalization of the Blue Belt collaborative platform could be a real opportunity to facilitate and catalyze innovative mechanisms, projects and solutions in the sector of fisheries, fishing and processing technologies, biotechnology and operational oceanography.

By supporting fields of collaboration between decision-makers, researchers, fishing communities and economic operators, the platform could contribute to:

- Make converge local initiatives;
- Create a critical mass of resources and skills to deal with shared issues;
- Structure R&D clusters and ecosystems in the South;
- Provide more visibility to donors;
- Facilitate transfer and sharing of experience.

Ultimately, this would lead to the emergence of a «community partners» around the Blue Belt.

AFRICAN CONTEXT OF THE BLUE BELT



“Fish of maritime or continental origin is an important food product for Africa.”

Fish of maritime or continental origin is an important food product for Africa.

The fisheries sector contributes to food security and provides **jobs** and **trade**. It could be an important lever for economic growth in Africa, knowing that it only accounts now for 1.3% of the continent's GDP, and employs around **6 million workers**.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), fisheries and aquaculture in Africa produced **11.3 million tons in 2016, accounting for 6.6% of world production (170.9 million tonnes)**.



They are represented by:



6.4 million tons from marine fishing, accounting for 8% of the world production ;

2.9 million tons from inland fishing, accounting for 25% of the world production ;

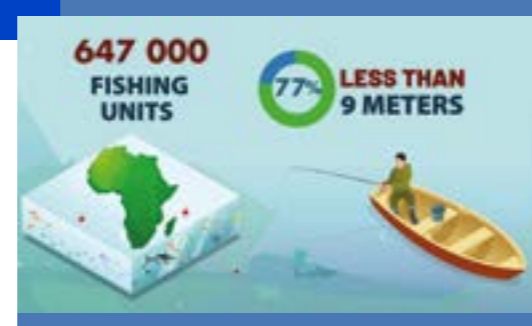


2 MILLION TONS



And 2 million tons of aquaculture production, mainly continental, accounting for 2.5% of the world production.

In Africa, fishing is carried out by **647,000 fishing units** (14% of the world's fishing units), of which **64% are non-motorized** and **77% are less than 9 meters** long.

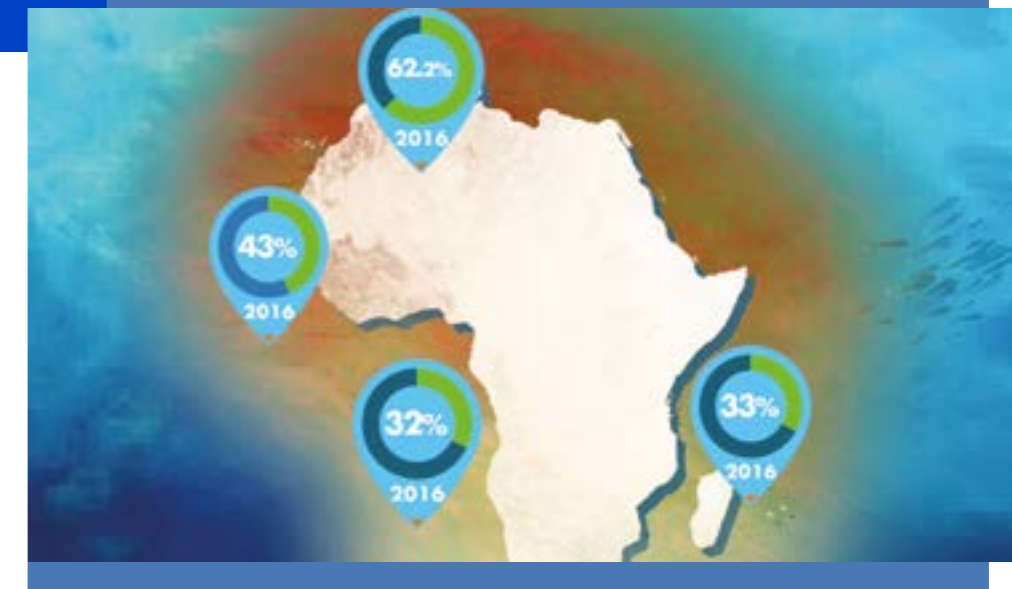


Africa has used for a long time traditional conservation methods such as **salting, smoking and drying**, but the lack of infrastructure in the commercialization and processing sectors is causing significant post-catch losses which are estimated today to represent at **least 25% of the catches**, while **Africa imports 75% of its fish products** to meet its needs.



Huge prospects for the development of fish valorization and processing are to be considered, especially in a context of population growth and increase in average consumption of fish. But Africa will have to face other challenges such as the degradation of fish stocks and marine ecosystems in combination with the effects of climate change.

In 2016, **43% of stocks in the Eastern Central Atlantic** are exploited at biologically unsustainable levels, **62.2% in the Mediterranean**, **33% in the Western Indian Ocean**, and **32% in the Eastern South Atlantic**.



In addition to stock degradation, scientists also observe several other alarming signals, such as **ocean acidification, the occurrence of invasive species, rising seawater temperatures, and change in ocean currents**.

Let's act today **as part of the Blue Belt initiative** to respond to all these challenges.

THE BLUE BELT IN A FEW WORDS



The Blue Belt is a global, integrated and inclusive offer to turn fishing into a growth vector for the blue economy.

It concerns a priority area, coastal zones and Exclusive Economic Zones, which account for 85% of global fish production.

The Blue Belt initiative targets the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations, while proposing an operational vision of the ecosystem approach, linking together three areas of activity all too often discussed separately: fisheries, aquaculture and ocean monitoring.



AQUACULTURE



FISHERIES



OCEAN MONITORING

During the COPs, especially the 21 and 22, the scientific community kept warning on the lack of ocean observations.

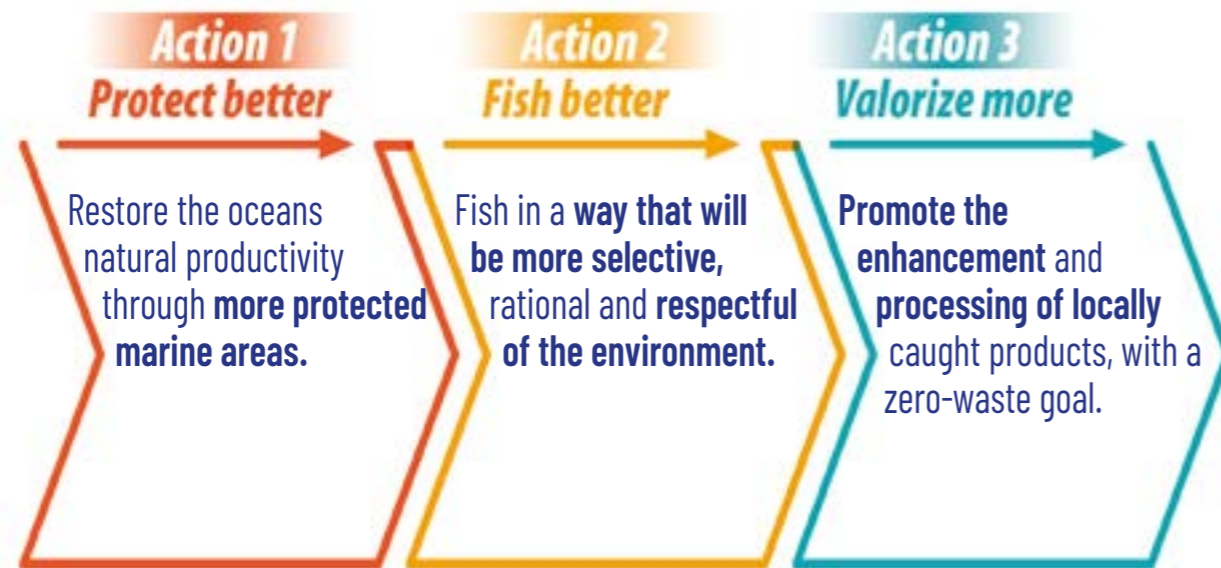
In Africa, this deficit is particularly acute and yet, daily, many fishermen cover a large part of the coastal waters and observe the ocean without capitalizing on. The concept «User - Observer» advocated by the Blue Belt initiative finds here all its relevance.

While many fish stocks are overexploited and global fishery production stagnates, the demand for sea products continues to grow.

And this is happening in a context of increasing deterioration of marine ecosystems.



There is no other alternative but to **«produce more with less fishing while protecting more»**. This is not a utopia:



For several decades, aquaculture has grown remarkably. More than one out of every two fish consumed by humans comes from aquaculture. This has not been without impacting the environment and marine ecosystems.

The challenge is to continue the development of Aquaculture without causing negative impact on the oceans. The Blue Belt aims to promote **the emergence of an aquaculture that will be sustainable and protector of the oceans such as algaculture.**



All these concepts and solutions translate into viable economic projects, which position the **fisherman or fish farmer** as an economic operator **at the heart of the sustainability process.**



Many flagship projects emerge in the wake of the Blue Belt, such as the project of **«scientific correspondent fishermen», «ship of the future», «micro-algae culture»**, and this is only the beginning...



As a **collaborative platform**, the Blue Belt initiative aims to foster the exchange of knowledge, know-how, innovation and **transform local experiences into global solutions.**



Would this approach make it possible to transform environmental constraints into economic opportunities?

The Agadir Declaration



We, Ministers, Representatives of States, International and Regional Organizations, and in the presence of the representative of the European Commission, meeting in Agadir on February 19th, 2019 at the invitation of the Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Waters and forests of the Kingdom of Morocco, Mr Aziz AKHANNOUCH, in the framework of the high-level conference «The Blue Belt, a platform for action for the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in Africa»,

Recalling the universal principles contained in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which establishes the legal framework within which activities must be conducted in oceans and seas.

Reaffirming the commitment to the 2030 Agenda, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 13 (fight against climate change) and SDG 14 (conserving and sustainably exploiting oceans and seas for sustainable development).

Recalling the first Africa Summit of Action, held in Marrakech in November 2016 as aside event of COP 22, dedicated to the discussion of the challenges related to the fight against climate change and practical measures to put in place to deal with it.

Welcoming the commitments made by the participating countries to the «Our Ocean» Conference in Bali in October 2018, including those related to the establishment of marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries management, the promotion of the blue economy and the fight against climate change.

Recalling the high-level conference on the sustainable blue economy, held in Nairobi in November 2018, highlighting the role of national and local governments, the private sector, the civil society and national and international financial institutions in investing in the blue economy and the definition of sustainable means of its exploitation.

Aware of the strategic role of the ocean economy and aquaculture in Africa in terms of food, economic growth, employment and innovations.

Convinced that the ocean is fundamental to the preservation of life and underlining the importance of ocean ecosystems in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Recognizing the challenge posed by climate change, its threats to the balance of coastal and marine ecosystems and its impacts on fisheries and aquaculture, sources of employment and food security for several million people in Africa.

Underlining the need to work for the promotion of the blue economy, including the preservation of marine resources and ecosystems as an integrated approach to the sustainable development of the oceans.

Considering the need to generate new opportunities for economic development in a planned and harmonious way, in an inclusive approach integrating economic and social services from the sea and the oceans.

Stressing out the need to strengthen cooperation and convergence of initiatives for the development of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

Conscious that the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture could be a solution to the future challenges of global food and nutrition security and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals including those to eradicate hunger and poverty.

We support

The «Blue Belt» initiative launched by the Kingdom of Morocco during the COP22 held in Marrakech in November 2016, which proposes the establishment of a collaborative platform for the exchange of knowledge and innovations to promote the emergence of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture projects in the context of climate change.

We call to

1. Establish appropriate institutional and financial mechanisms enabling the completion and the animation of the collaborative platform in the framework of partnerships facilitating technological and social innovation, the exchange of good practices and social entrepreneurship increasing, then, socio-economic and environmental benefits such as job creation, training and youth employment, food security, poverty eradication, preservation of marine ecosystems and adaptation to climate change;
2. Invest in the blue economy, especially sustainable, innovative and protective fisheries and aquaculture, and increase associated funding by including innovative financing mechanisms and facilitating access to international funding, including Climate funds (Adaptation Fund and Green Fund);
3. Promote the development of research and innovation to foster the emergence of a blue economy based on sustainable scientific knowledge;
4. Create a «community partners» allowing the achievement and the animation of the collaborative platform of the Blue Belt initiative.

The participants express their sincere gratitude to HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI, for his kindness and warm welcome to this beautiful city of Agadir, leader of the blue economy, and the means to host this excellent high level event.

THEY SAID...



MR. AZIZ AKHANNOUCH
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, MARITIME
FISHERY, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND WATER
AND FORESTS (KINGDOM OF MOROCCO)

“ With the Blue Belt initiative, the Kingdom states its conviction that fisheries and aquaculture can be a model of sustainability that creates value and jobs faced with climate change challenges.

”



MR. KOBENAN KOUASSI ADJOUMANI
MINISTER OF ANIMAL AND FISHERIES
RESOURCES (IVORY COAST) AND PRESIDENT
IN OFFICE OF THE ATLAFCO

“ Since we share the same stocks of animal and marine resources, especially when it comes to fisheries resources, there is an urgent need to harmonize management measures by sharing our different experiences. This is how the Blue Belt initiative of Morocco is beneficial for our different states.

”



MR. LUIS PLANAS PUCHADES
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERY AND
FOOD (SPAIN)

“ There is no doubt that such a dynamic and innovative sector should be based on sustainability goals. Therefore, this Blue Belt initiative is absolutely necessary and, for this purpose, cooperation is the most effective way to achieve these goals.

”



MR. ILYA VASSILIEVITCH SHESTAKOV
VICE-MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL RUSSIAN
AGENCY FOR FISHERIES (RUSSIA)

“ All these directions are recommended by the Blue Belt initiative and Russia, of course, supports this initiative and adheres to this Declaration.

”

THEY SAID...




 **MR. ROY ANGELVIK**
STATE SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF FISHERIES (NORWAY)

“...this planet is blue, it provides an ocean of opportunity. If we manage to strike the right balance between production and protection, we can and we'll harvest huge resources and provide blue jobs for everyone.

”



 **MR. JOSÉ APOLINARIO**
STATE SECRETARY FOR FISHERY (PORTUGAL)
ON BEHALF OF MRS. ANA PAULA VITORINO,
MINISTER OF FISHERY (PORTUGAL)

“We believe it is very important to bring together business communities and the scientific world in order to create value, to urge innovation, innovation in aquaculture, innovation in the production of micro-algae, with the aim of preparing their limitations in the future.

”



 **MRS. ELIZABETH NAA AFOLEY QUAY**
MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT (GHANA)

“...we reiterate our commitment to collaborate with all partners within the subregion to improve efforts and promote cooperation and technology transfer to provide the needed framework for financing and support for adaptation and mitigation measures to improve fisheries. We believe that fostering more dialogue supported by needed action is the key to sustaining fisheries towards the Blue Belt initiative.

”



 **MRS. MARIA ANTONIETA JOSEFINA SABINA BAPTISTA**
MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND SEA (ANGOLA)

“This great event is of utmost importance to sensitize the international community to the sustainable and responsible use of the seas and oceans. This requires instruments and actions integrated into the concept of the Blue Belt initiative, based on fundamental principles such as prevention, reduction and reuse, recovery and recycling of materials and energies.

”

THEY SAID...



MR. HENRI DJOMBO
MINISTER OF STATE FOR
AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND FISHERY
(REPUBLIC OF CONGO)

“ Our minds must therefore focus on the funding and the completion of these initiatives, in order to support aquaculture, responsible and resilient to the effects of climate change fishing, projects for the preservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and the improvement of living conditions of the populations concerned by the green and blue economies. ”



MRS. PRISCA KOHO NLEND
MINISTER OF FISHERY AND SEA (GABON)

“ ...my country's support for the Blue Belt initiative goes beyond this present contribution. Indeed, the experience of Gabon is available to advance our joint projects. However, it is necessary that the implementation of the Blue Belt relies on innovative mechanisms, such as the taking of some of the wealth created by the exploitation as well as partnerships with donors. ”



MRS. EMMA KOWA JALLOH
MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND MARINE
RESOURCES (SIERRA LEONE)

“ It is a smart strategy for sustainable and inclusive growth. The potential of the ocean to meet sustainable development needs is enormous. But only if we can manage in or restore to a healthy and productive state. ”



MRS. ADORACIÓN SALAS CHONCO
MINISTER OF FISHERY AND WATER
RESOURCES (EQUATORIAL GUINEA)

“ The Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomes the trend towards the promotion the blue economy by seeking new opportunities for economic and innovative development in the protection of the seas and oceans, and the Blue Belt initiative which is a collective action at the regional level. ”

THEY SAID...



 **MR. FRANCISCO MARTINS DOS RAMOS**
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERY
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SAO TOME AND
PRINCIPE)

“ Knowing the major challenges facing Africa, the Blue Belt initiative is a real opportunity for inclusive integration that can facilitate the collaborative approach and propose possible financial mechanisms appropriate in several business areas such as fisheries, aquaculture, security and maritime monitoring, and will create jobs and wealth while contributing to the conservation of the natural heritage of the oceans.

”



 **MR. GASTON COSSI DOSSOUHOUI**
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND
FISHERY (BENIN)

“ ...I invite you for a sincere and fruitful cooperation in order to take up the challenge of developing fisheries and aquaculture through this Blue Belt initiative.

”



 **MRS. EMMA MATIEH-GLASSCO**
GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL
AUTHORITY FOR FISHERY AND
AQUACULTURE (LIBERIA)

“ We agree with the Blue Belt initiative concept and have already adapted it for development strategies. We encourage other countries to support this initiative and to work together to save the future for our continent.

”



 **MR. BAMBA BANJA**
PERMANENT SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF
FISHERY AND WATER RESOURCES (GAMBIA)

“ ...the holding of this high – level conference on the Blue Belt initiative in Agadir- Morocco, is indeed appropriate and very timely. It provides the opportunity for small countries like the Gambia to show cases on the importance of the fisheries sector and socio-economic development of the continent.

”

THEY SAID...



MR. JEAN-FRANÇOIS GIRAULT
AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE TO THE KINGDOM
OF MOROCCO (FRANCE)

“ I hope that the platform you launch will inspire many projects in this direction and facilitate the mobilization of funding of all origins, with the shared concern for a more sustainable development of our coastal activities.

”



MRS. CLAUDIA WIEDEY
AMBASSADOR, HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE KINGDOM OF
MOROCCO (EUROPEAN UNION)

“ We need better global oceans governance and a true international partnership in order to preserve the growth base of our blue economy, and we are very pleased to be associated with this initiative, and I thank Morocco on behalf of the EU for this initiative.

”



MR. KARMENU VELLA
EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR THE
ENVIRONMENT, MARITIME AFFAIRS AND
FISHERIES (EUROPEAN UNION)

“ As you know for the European Union, Morocco is more than just a neighbor, it is a partner. Over the years we have developed valuable partnerships in many areas. The blue maritime economy is no exception.

”



MR. FRÉDÉRIC LOUA
MINISTER OF FISHERIES, AQUACULTURE AND
MARITIME ECONOMY (REPUBLIC OF GUINEA)

“ Climate change and challenges are huge. They go beyond the means and geographical spaces of a country. We also reiterate the recommendations made at the last session of the ATLAFCO Ministers' Conference, held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to strengthen our organization, which is one of the successful examples of fisheries cooperation between our states, for a great involvement in the implementation of the Blue Belt initiative through its network of fisheries research institutes RAFISMER.

”

THEY SAID...



MR. JOHN BABATUNDE
DIRECTOR OF FISHERY ON BEHALF
OF MR. AUDU INNOCENT OGBEH
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT (NIGERIA)

“ In order to address these challenges, it is highly imperative that African coastal states collectively invest towards the sustainable development and management of our ocean resources. Idea for commend the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco Mr. Aziz AKHANNOUCH and the Moroccan Government for this collaborative platform to act together and put this practice innovative solution for the adaptation of the fisheries and aquaculture sector to climate change and for the resilience of our ocean to continue to serve the African population.



MR. SYLVAIN TUSANGA MUKANGA
HEAD OF DIVISION OF PLANNING AND
PROGRAMMING OF FISHERIES OPERATIONS
ON BEHALF OF
MR. DANIEL PALUKU KISAKA YEREYERE
MINISTER OF FISHERY AND LIVESTOCK
(DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO)

“ The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of the Democratic Republic of Congo welcomes the general interest shown in the development and preservation of the resources for a sustainable blue economy, which can increase efforts to reduce poverty and improve nutritional health. To this end, it endorses and recommends the institutionalization of the Blue Belt platform and the implementation of mechanisms for its operation in order to provide African countries with socio-economic and environmental benefits by facilitating access to international and regional funding.



MR. AMADU DJALÓ
PRINCIPAL ADVISER TO THE MINISTER OF
FISHERIES
ON BEHALF OF MRS. THE MINISTER OF
FISHERIES (GUINEA-BISSAU)

“ ...it is imperative to bring to this event a serious debate about the marine science and technology, its biological and technological component and both are indispensable to our prospect of sustainable development... the future does not arise spontaneously, it builds up, it urges profound changes in collective and individual activities, but it will be up to us, world leaders, heads of states and governments, ministers as representatives of nations, officials, all of us here present to demonstrate the ability to lead and act.



MR. KOUDJO ADANOU
BUSINESS MANAGER AT THE EMBASSY OF
TOGO IN THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO (TOGO)

“ 33 out of 54 African states have signed the Lomé Charter, which means that international cooperation and South-South cooperation are proving to be an important pillar for better protecting our oceans and promoting sustainable development. My country Togo, is therefore committed to the blue initiative and hopes that this blue initiative of the African Countries Group will take into account the Lomé Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa.

THEY SAID...



MR. MANUEL BARANGE
 DIRECTOR OF THE FISHERIES AND
 AQUACULTURE
 POLICY AND RESOURCES DIVISION
 AT THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
 ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)
 ON BEHALF OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF
 FAO

“ Let me finish by again congratulating the Kingdom of Morocco for its leadership and vision in this crucial objective of improving food and livelihood security to sustainable blue growth in Africa. Fish is an essential part of the solution but only if sustainably produced and used.

”



MRS. PATRICIA RICARD
 VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE OCÉAN-CLIMAT
 PLATFORM AND PRESIDENT OF THE
 INSTITUT OCÉANOGRAPHIQUE PAUL RICARD

“ I am very happy to attend this event, I would not have thought to see it in my lifetime, to see these topics moving forward so fast, all together... I think it is urgent to see today in the necessary innovations, and when I say innovations, I would like to say breakthrough innovations, the importance of integrating the dual purpose of adaptation and mitigation. Good practices around the world already show that when you address these two topics, you are often onto virtuous circles.

”



MR. REIDAR TORESEN
 DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE FOR
 DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN FISHERIES,
 INSTITUTE FOR MARINE RESEARCH, IMR
 (NORWAY)

“ So let me finish by just saying that I call for you to manage not only fisheries aspects but also to communicate well with your colleagues, managing other sectors as well, because this may affect the fisheries resources and what we can get out of the sea in the future.

”



MR. EDUARDO BALGUERIAS
 DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTO ESPAÑOL DE
 OCEANOGRAFÍA, IEO (SPAIN)

“ I am very pleased with this declaration of unanimous interest for the blue growth in favor of the sustainability of marine resources and ecosystem. And I am happy because it will give a new momentum to these scientific institutions, which have been working in the region for years.

”

THEY SAID...



MR. GRIGORY MASLYANKIN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE ATLANTIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF MARINE FISHERIES AND OCEANOGRAPHY (ATLANTNIRO)(RUSSIA)

“ If we coordinate all the efforts within the framework of the regional organizations and in the framework of the interactions of all the countries, we will probably reach the objectives put forward by the «Blue Belt» initiative. ”



MR. ABDELMALEK FARAJ
DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUT NATIONAL DE RECHERCHE HALIEUTIQUE, INRH (KINGDOM OF MOROCCO)

“ This is where the idea of this platform of the Blue Belt initiative came from, the will to reinforce multidisciplinary and better understand the ecosystem approach. ”



MR. BRAHIM HAFIDI
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF SOUSS MASSA REGION (KINGDOM OF MOROCCO)

“ The fisheries and aquaculture sector is an important pillar for our regional economy, a creator of wealth and employment. ”



MRS. ZAKIA DRIOUICH
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE MARITIME FISHERY DEPARTMENT - MAPMDREF (KINGDOM OF MOROCCO)

“ Reading of the Agadir Declaration. ”

SPEECHES

Some of these speeches have been translated as faithfully as possible from their original language.

Speech by Mr. Brahim HAFIDI,
President of the Council of Souss Massa Region (Kingdom of Morocco)
(Speech translated from French)

Your excellencies Mr. Minister, Mr. the Wali, Ambassadors, Honorable guests,
First of all, I would like to welcome you on behalf of the inhabitants of the Souss Massa region and the city of Agadir. We are much honored to host this high-level conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
The fisheries and aquaculture sector is an important pillar for our regional economy, a creator of wealth and employment, made up of different segments of production, artisanal, coastal and high-sea fisheries we have created around 30,000 jobs in this region. In the sea product processing and upgrading sector, with 87 processing units, we have created 15,000 jobs. This sector is experiencing an economic growth rate of around 9.5%, which is very important for our region.

All this is the result of the implementation of the Halieutis plan that HIS MAJESTY, God help him, launched in this city in 2009. Today, this strategy led by the Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests, with the support of very motivated and engaged ladies and gentlemen who knew how to pilot this project in an intransigent way with fisheries sector professionals, has a strong buy-in,

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Our city is also home every two years to the Halieutis exhibition, which is dedicated to the fishing industry. The first edition of this exhibition was held in 2011, and had the honor of being inaugurated by HIS MAJESTY THE KING here in the city of Agadir. Tomorrow will open the 5th edition and you are invited to honor us to attend the events of this exhibition.

The region of Agadir is also a region very involved in climate change. In 2017, just after the COP 22, during which the government of Morocco presented the Blue Belt initiative, we organized here in this city the second summit of non-state actors involved in climate change with the Climate Change Association.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
When the sea interferes with the earth, the result is often splendid and extraordinary. This is the case of the city of Agadir which belongs to the club of the most beautiful bays in the world. So, I wish you a pleasant stay and I invite you to relax as we are in a city of well-being and all the hotels around you are hotels with spa. Try during your stay to take some time for a massage with argan tree oil and you will forget all your worries, leaving them behind in Souss region.

Our marine ecosystem and our argan tree ecosystem coexist daily and I also invite you to enjoy some seafood dishes and argan products. Look especially for a lobster tajine with argan oil, it's really delicious. I wish you every success for your conference. Once again welcome to Agadir. Thank you for your attention.

Speech by Mr. Aziz AKHANNOUCH,
Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests
(Kingdom of Morocco)
(Speech translated from French)

Honorable Ministers, representatives of international and national organizations, Mr. the representative of the FAO, Mrs. the representative of the European Union, Your excellencies Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen the experts,

Ladies and Gentlemen,
It is a very great pleasure to welcome you in Agadir to this conference dedicated to the Blue Belt initiative. I would like to express my sincere thanks to you for being present at this initiative of the Kingdom of Morocco. I would also like to thank Mr. the Wali present with us today around this table and Mr. the President of the Region for all the support they have given to this conference and the excellent organization of this event.

This high-level meeting comes in the wake of a series of international events dedicated to sustainable development and the blue economy. They all share a common concern about the condition of land and marine ecosystems and point to the urgency of action. And for good reason, the sea economy is facing a degradation of marine environments which strongly threatens its development: acidification of the oceans, modification of the marine currents, rise of the temperature, decrease of the biodiversity, disappearance of the marine habitats and pollution due to land-based activities, the list is unfortunately long. The strengthening of the resilience of marine ecosystems, living marine resources and coastal communities is an important part of the priorities of our countries. Issues related to the sustainability of fisheries and oceans are common to all regions of the world. In Africa, the situation is worrying, particularly because of the lack of research and monitoring and the lack of a synergy of actions. Africa will be responsible for half of the population growth in 30 years from now when the pressure on stocks is more and more sustained. Africa accounts for only 7% of world fish production and only 3% of international trade in fishery products. In Africa, issues related to the ocean economy are very urgent to understand.

At the African summit of the action held in 2016 in the wings of the COP 22 in Marrakech, HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI, God assist him, insisted on the necessity to commit to action in favor of a sustainable blue economy. The sovereign had thus called to look to the future, and I quote: «I propose you to draw an Africa resilient to climate change, an Africa which is resolutely committed to the path of sustainable development, an Africa which uses its resources in an optimal way by respecting the environmental and social balances », end of quote. The African Union has also set the direction for a sustainable blue economy in its vision of the 2063 Agenda. The Africa we want sees it as the new frontier of the African revival.

It is time for this awareness to be widespread and widely shared, as there is still time to act, because while fisheries and aquaculture in Africa are certainly facing major challenges, we should rather choose to consider the potential of opportunities that these fields of activity may create.

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
As you know, Morocco has been pursuing since 2009 a strategy for the development and modernization of maritime fishing, Halieutis, which enshrines the principle of sustainability.

Fisheries research has been strengthened for better knowledge and monitoring of the marine environment. Fisheries management plan and management measures now cover 96% of fisheries, and artificial reefs have been submerged in the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean to help restock the seabed. The control of fishing activities has been greatly reinforced by the equipment of the entire coastal and high-sea fleet in satellite tracking devices, and the traceability of fishery products is ensured by an electronic certification covering all links from the landing to export. Aquaculture development plans have been defined to enable sustainable development of the activity.

The Blue Belt initiative carried by Morocco during the COP 22 in Marrakech and for which we are gathered today aims to complete the projects launched in the framework of our respective national strategies. Only this initiative will guide us towards practices that respect the environment and the marine balance.

With the Blue Belt initiative, the Kingdom states its conviction that fisheries and aquaculture can be a model of sustainability that creates value and jobs faced with climate change challenges.

Let me summarize in a few points this initiative, the Blue Belt is an integrated and inclusive global offer designed to make fishery a vector of the growth of the blue economy and concerns a priority area, consisting of the coastal zones and the exclusive economic zones that account for 85% of global fish production. It targets the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs adopted by the United Nations. It proposes an operational vision of ecosystem fisheries linking fisheries, aquaculture and ocean monitoring.

Finally, it proposes a collaborative platform to boost new generation investment respectful of the environment. The platform will allow the networking of institutional companies, researchers and any other stakeholder to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, know-how and innovation, allow the replication of innovative projects, foster the creation of partnerships and mobilize funds to accompany project leaders.

The Blue Belt intends to effectively fuel the dynamics around the blue economy. It represents a relevant contribution to the sea economy, which is estimated to represent in 2030 over \$ 3 trillion or even more, provided that responses to current challenges are met.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
At the world Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, held in Nairobi last November, Morocco called on countries and organizations committed to sustainability of the oceans to join the Blue Belt initiative. Your presence reinforces the idea that cooperation is a privileged way for providing concrete responses to issues that ignore borders. Today's event is part of this process by inviting States, international and regional fisheries organizations, and donors to support this initiative.
I thank you for your kind attention.

Speech by Mr. Roy ANGELVIK, State Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries (Norway)

Thank you.
Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends of the Sea,
It is a great pleasure to be here today in this beautiful city of Agadir, a vibrant harbor for fisheries which I was able to visit myself this morning with a splendid view over the Atlantic Ocean.

Let me start by thanking his Excellency Minister AKHANNOUCH for initiating this conference on a blue economy and the importance of the sea in the wake of the importance of this fear. This is indeed an area of great interest for my country Norway. There are many similarities between Morocco and Norway. We are both on the outskirts of our countries. Norway in the far north of Europe and Morocco in the far north of Africa but we are connected by the ocean, by the Atlantic. We are both ocean states, both countries have important maritime traditions and a population living from and of fisheries – Morocco and Norway are both shaped by nature but we are also increasingly shaping nature. Twelve years are left until 2030 that is the deadline for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The world has set itself an ambitious task. We have committed ourselves among many other things to end poverty, to end hunger and to achieve true food security, to ensure healthy lives and well-being, to reduce food losses and waste and to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and the marine resources.

To be able to reach these goals, we have to take better care of the oceans. Because we need the oceans. We need the oceans to provide us with more food, more jobs and more energy. At the same time, we must maintain its capacity to regulate the climate and support biodiversity.

Norway is a sea nation. The ocean runs like a true trade throughout Norwegian history. Sustainable use of the ocean has led the foundation for Norway's prosperity and wealth. Today, our ocean industries account for more than 70% of Norwegian export. This is why Norwegian Government has launched an ambitious ocean strategy that includes both national and global elements.

It involves green technology, digitalization, in a way to use all marine resources, international diplomacy and the fight against illegal fishing and plastic pollution. We firmly believe that the oceans are the key to solving many of the most challenging tasks facing the world today.

Eradicating hunger and extreme poverty by 2030, create jobs in both developed and developing countries. Ensure affordable and clean energy for all, and find the recipe for new medicines to fight diseases and epidemics. This is why my prime Minister (Norway's Prime Minister Erna SOLBERG) has invited 11 head leaders to join the high level panel for sustainable ocean economy. The aim of the panel is to build a new shared understanding of the state of the ocean economy and ecology and to generate a set of recommendations for building a global and sustainable ocean economy. The goal is to promote science-based decision making in protecting the oceans and optimizing our use of them. The panel is presenting a roadmap for transition to sustainable ocean economy and will report to the UN Ocean Conference next year.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Only 5% of global food consumption comes from the ocean – this share must be increased to reach our global goal of eradicating hunger and extreme poverty. Food security is not only a question of enough food but the right kind of food, with the right kind of nutrients. From a healthy perspective consuming more fish is highly recommended. Nutrients from fish and other seafood are essential for the general population, but particularly important for poor and vulnerable groups.

Therefore, Norway has initiated a global action network for food from the ocean and inland waters. This informal network will provide a platform for countries to link and learn to generate safe and nutritional aquatic food which meets directly needs and food preference, living no one behind.

We will work with our partners to follow up the UN decade of action and nutrition and sustainable development goals.

We will work towards increasing the harvestness of the rule of sustainable aquatic food for food security and nutrition.

Highlighting the need to increase the production and consumption of such food. As I have mentioned, the ocean can help us. Help us feed a world in a healthy way, eradicating hunger and poverty and create jobs at the same time. However, for this to happen, we must manage our oceans better, we must protect our oceans from the many threats they are facing today. Marine litter and pollution, loss of habitats and biodiversity, illegal unreported and unregulated fishing and transnational organized crime and global fishing industry.

Marine litter is a challenge of very much concern. I believe how much to gain by cooperating closely on this issue. Norway has established a development program for combating marine litter. We have also initiated the establishment of a new multitude fund for this purpose with the World Bank: The Problue Fund.

In March this year, the world will gather in Nairobi for the 4th United Nations Environmental Assembly. Norway will put forward a new resolution with the aim of strengthening international governance and on preventing marine litter.

We need to move from managing the ocean by sector to integrate ocean management based on scientific knowledge and taking account of the full range of opportunities and risks.

Other experience is that following green policies does not lead countries or companies into red figures. Experience shows that you can harvest the sea, the sea resources without reducing their value.

In 1989, the arctic cod stock was historically low level, it was obvious to both Norway and our friend Russia, that something had to be done. Ever since, Norway, Norwegians and Russians scientists have carried out joint research to manage fisheries. Their knowledge, their advice, has been passed on to decision makers, on both sides of the border. The results are striking. Today the cod stock is 10 times than it was and the largest stock in

the world. Its annual economic value is estimated around two billion dollars. We have shown that it is fully possible to combine healthy ocean based industry such as fishery, aquaculture, shipping and energy production with a healthy marine environment. In October, Norway will host our ocean conference. We will emphasize integrated management of sea and coastal areas as the key to balance production and sustainable use of the ocean.

Dear friends, let us recognize that perfect rules on management plans are not enough to stop the rapid loss of biodiversity in the sea.

I am convinced that there is a need for the world's community to recognize the existence of transnational organized crime in global fishing industry, illegal fishing and the other crimes in the fisheries sector is a threat to our common future. Those who are engaged in illegal fishing, do not only steal from nature, they also steal from the communities that are depending on the ocean. They steal food, they steal jobs, and tax revenue, in short they steal all future of all our children.

Another serious concern is the exploitation of humans, as slave labor in the global fishing industry.

That is why Norway and eight other large ocean nations such as Indonesia, Ghana, Namibia, recently adopted a joint declaration against organized crime in a global fishing industry during the 4th international fish crime Symphony held in Copenhagen in 2018. Our hope is that the increased international attention will lift this important matter and that will eventually receive the high level attention it deserves at the UN level. Combating transnational organized fish crime is vital for life underwater. And the declaration is an important step to world for fulfilling the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. I want to take every opportunity to encourage everyone, which not already party to the declaration to support this non-legally binding declaration.

Dear friends of the sea, let me finish where we began, with the big picture. By 2050, we will be 10 billion people on this planet. We will need more food. We will need more jobs; we will need more energy.

Luckily, this planet is blue, it provides an ocean of opportunity. If we manage to strike the right balance between production and protection, we can and we'll harvest huge resources and provide blue jobs for everyone. If we take care of the ocean, the ocean will take care of us.

Thank you.

**Speech by Mr. Luis PLANAS PUCHADES,
Minister of Agriculture, Fishery and Food (Spain)
(Speech translated from Spanish)**

Honorable Ministers, State Secretaries, Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to thank my good friend, Mr. Aziz AKHANNOUCH, for his kind invitation to participate in this important conference on the Blue Belt.

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Morocco is a country to which I feel very connected, I feel at home here, I must say. And also, between Spain and Morocco, there are excellent bilateral relations, and the state visit of HIS MAJESTY THE KING last week in this beautiful country has highlighted these relations.

Of course, the fishery industry is a sector in which we work together, in the interest of responsible fishery and in the interest of our fishermen. The theme of this conference cannot be better than the one chosen: build a more resilient and sustainable fisheries sector in Africa.

We are all concerned with the future of our seas and oceans, a source of wealth and biodiversity and a source of livelihood, for a large number of coastal populations.

The Blue Belt initiative led by Morocco, adopted at the COP 22 in Marrakech, is an excellent platform for collaboration for the exchange of knowledge and innovations that supports fisheries and aquaculture policy in the context of climate change.

For Spain, the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture is particularly important because of the importance of the fisheries sector in our country; a place that we intend to maintain in the future. In Spain, as in Morocco, we want a blue, smart, sustainable and inclusive economy, as defined by the European Commission.

Our sustainability mission is based on clean and healthy oceans, with vast biodiversity reserves and fishing fleets that are environmentally friendly and in balance with the resources to achieve the maximum sustainable yield of all species caught.

The focus is on caught trade species that we must strive to diversify. Because they are a source of high biological value protein, we cannot and must not waste it. The only way to advance this goal of competitiveness, sustainability and resilience is innovation, diversification and knowledge exchange.

And in the Spanish fisheries sector, we are trying, through technological development and innovation, to adapt to new environmental conditions, especially climate change.

We have initiatives, in collaboration with Morocco, which are part of the field of action of the Blue Belt. I am particularly thinking of the systematic installation of oceanographic meteorological buoys, the project called METOcean, in which the Institut National de Recherche Halieutique of Morocco participates. In addition to this, there are also a number of other particularly important innovation projects that I am briefly listing:

1. the project on the selectivity of fishing gear in the Canaries aimed at reducing the number of species rejected by fisheries
2. the disposal of solid waste and mainly plastics in near-shore waters. In this regard, the oceans clean-up project, in which fisheries stakeholders work together, is a good example.
3. significant action must also be taken to replace current fishing vessels with CO₂-friendly, eco-friendly ships of the future, equipped with observation systems to monitor their activity on a continuous basis
4. like Morocco, Spain participates in other initiatives such as WestMed or Mistral, in cooperation and innovation matters

5. the marketing and market release of fishery products are also elements on which we must work from the point of view of sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

There is no doubt that such a dynamic and innovative sector should be based on sustainability goals. Therefore, this Blue Belt initiative is absolutely necessary and, for this purpose, cooperation is the most effective way to achieve these goals. Rest assured that Spain will continue, as always, to cooperate with all of you, exchanging knowledge and experience with neighboring and friendly countries.

I wish to thank once again the Minister and the State Secretary for their kind invitation and I hope that the Agadir Declaration that we will adopt as the forum of this conference will be a step forward in our commitment to the Blue Belt initiative.

Thank you so much.

**Speech by Mr. Ilya VASSILIEVITCH SHESTAKOV,
Vice-Minister of Agriculture and President of the Federal
Russian Agency for Fisheries (Russia)
(Speech translated from Russian)**

Mr AKHANNOUCH, Ladies and gentlemen,
Responsible fishery is the basis for effective management of fisheries resources, that is the maintenance of a stable supply of raw materials and biological resources conducive to sustainable industrial exploitation.

How could this be achieved in a changing climate especially with the increasing anthropogenic pressure on biological resources and aquatic ecosystems?

It must be remembered that there are natural factors independent of Mankind and factors over which Man can not sufficiently influence. If we are talking about nature, it is of course climate change. All attempts of the international community in order to mitigate the situation related to greenhouse effect and global warming have not given for the moment significant results.

The impact of warming is mainly felt not only in the Arctic and Antarctic, where ice cover is decreasing each year, but also in other parts of the world ocean. This causes serious changes in the productivity and status of fish and invertebrate populations, as well as in the redistribution of their stocks over time and space. For example, in recent years, Russian scientists have conducted research in the Atlantic and found significant fluctuation of pelagic fish in space, as well as significant fluctuations in water productivity. This indicates that a serious restructuring of aquatic ecosystems in the Atlantic Ocean is occurring, which should be taken into account in the exploitation of aquatic biological resources.

Considering climate change, the main strategic mission of global fisheries management is to ensure a rational and sustainable exploitation of available biological resources. In addition, anthropogenic pressure plays an important role in the functioning of aquatic ecosystems and biological resources.

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Regarding this, regulation is based on the scientific-based determination of allowed catches, taking into account precautionary measures and ecosystem approaches, by seeking a balance between the volume taken from biological resources and their rebuilding capabilities. At present, these principles have been introduced into the legislation of Russia and the legislations of the majority of industrial fishing countries, and are also implemented by international and regional fisheries organizations. To this end, it would be appropriate to apply these measures in order to:

1. ensure the exploitation of fish stocks at a level that would guarantee their sustainability without affecting the capacity of their stocks to rebuild;
2. to carry out fishing activities on certain stocks that are not fully exploited;
3. however, in the context of ecosystem-based approaches, measures must be implemented in order to prevent the deterioration of the status of the concerned ecosystem.

Effective fishing activities are possible only through close international cooperation. The Russian Federation is an active member of most international organizations of regional fisheries and a signatory of several bilateral Agreements, particularly with African countries. A particularly fruitful cooperation in the fisheries sector exists between the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Morocco. Every year, joint Russian-Moroccan scientific cruises are carried out by Russian research vessels, which helps improve the knowledge needed to manage the stock of small pelagic species.

The main objective of the maritime fisheries sector is to provide the population with high quality marine food products. At present, in the global fisheries sector, as a strategic direction, it is possible to take into account the trend of processing professionals, both for products for export and for products for domestic consumers. This action is promoted at the government level in many countries, including through various incentive mechanisms.

Total global catches of fish and other sea products have stabilized at around 90 million tons, but are we using all existing reserves in the world oceans? Of course not. We do not use deep-sea stocks. Some experts estimate that they represent about 200 million tons and that the exploitable volume is about 20 million tons. However, we must of course take a precautionary approach and remain very cautious in this regard.

Recently, the Russian Federation has started to actively conduct surveys on deep-sea resources. I can tell you that the first results are impressive.

Aquaculture is one of the most dynamic sectors of the world's fisheries, including in Russia. The increase in the production of fishery products comes largely from aquaculture. But aquaculture can play another role, not only to ensure food security, but also to help restore natural populations. Many countries are engaged in this area. In Russia, we also work in this sector not only for freshwater species, but also for ocean stocks such as salmon and sturgeon. In most developing countries, a program has been launched to finance research in the field of aquaculture and the introduction of modern farming methods for aquaculture species.

All of the above contributes to the development and stability of the fisheries sector.

All coastal countries, including African countries, have set themselves the ambitious task

of not only increasing the volume of fish production, but also of providing the domestic market with higher quality products.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the FAO and many countries have recently put a lot of effort into fighting IUU fishing (illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing), and indeed the results they achieved as well as the measures they took are impressive. I am talking about the different mechanisms to control and fight against IUU fishing.

Of course, other challenges require a serious response from us. This is undoubtedly the case with the fight against stocks overexploitation and the main solution could be to improve their management and to determine the possibility of joint management of the stocks.

Other very important directions are to be noted, such as the fight against oceans pollution, issues related to the presentation of quality products to the consumer, the fight against losses and the increase in the efficiency of fishing through the modernization of the fleet. All these directions are recommended by the Blue Belt initiative and Russia, of course, supports this initiative and adheres to this Declaration. Thank you.

**Speech by Mr. Kobenan KOUASSI ADJOURMANI,
Minister of Animal and Fisheries Resources (Republic of Ivory Coast) and President
in office of the ATLAFCO
(Speech translated from French)**

Mr. Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of Morocco, Honorable Ministers and Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants,

I am speaking in my dual capacity as Minister in charge of Animal Resources and Fisheries in my country and as President of the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation of African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean ATLAFCO.

I would like to thank the Moroccan Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests for inviting us to this important event dedicated to the oceans. I salute his leadership and his spirit of openness and inclusiveness that make him an accomplished Minister.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Our conference today is about the Blue Belt, a platform for action in favor of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in Africa. What is highlighted here particularly, is the ocean at the heart of the development of our countries in general, and in particular the African countries. Indeed, 38 of the 54 states in Africa have a sea coast. For these countries, oceans constitute a development alternative through fisheries resources for fisheries and aquaculture, though also the development of tourism and transport and through the exploitation of mines, energy and telecommunications. Oceans are also a reservoir of marine biodiversity. Despite all these assets, oceans are threatened from all sides; for instance, African fisheries are characterized by the intervention of many stakeholders with poorly defined and uncoordinated roles. Added to this are the adverse effects of climate change, various pollution caused by oil spills, the dumping of industrial waste and

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illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Ladies and Gentlemen, what are the measures and initiatives we must take in the face of this danger? Concerning illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, we believe that good cooperation through information exchange will allow to unmask all these criminal fishermen networks. It will also allow to set up regional programs for on-board observations and port inspections as validated by the ATLAFCO Ministers in Abidjan.

Since we share the same stocks of animal and marine resources, especially when it comes to fisheries resources, there is an urgent need to harmonize management measures by sharing our different experiences. This is how the Blue Belt initiative of Morocco is beneficial for our different states.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Regarding the above, we regret that oceans do not seem to receive the same attention as agriculture, although they suffer the impacts of climate change like lands do. We believe that funding remains an indispensable pillar for supporting the blue economy and finding sustainable solutions to the effects of climate change. We thank all development partners who have agreed to support these initiatives and we invite more donors and agencies to follow them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants,
It is the place to pay tribute to HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI of Morocco, God assist him, for his legendary anticipatory vision whose purpose is to support African countries in the framework of South-South cooperation. Among the many acts of generosity that he lays in the framework of this cooperation and also in all sectors of activity, we remember the modern landing sites of fishing fish especially in Guinea, Senegal and my country Ivory Coast. Today two fishery landing sites are already operational and a third one is planned in the seaside town of Grand Bassam.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
We recalled at the beginning of our remarks that 38 out of 54 African countries share seacoast. What we have not added is that African countries that do not have a coastline also receive benefits from the oceans. Indeed, most goods from these countries transit through ports before being transported to their final destination. As a result, oceans benefit all countries of the planet, hence their importance for all of humanity. When we saw the institutional film earlier, we were greatly impressed by the undeniable assets of oceans. If the numerous human beings, the numerous animals and plants manage to find the means of subsistence for their daily needs with 30% of the earth compared to the whole planet, what will it be with oceans that occupy 70% of this planet? What is recommended today for our food security and our health are the fisheries products which do not benefit from any health assistance as it is the case with humans, animals and land plants. Our oceans, ladies and gentlemen, deserve to be explored and exploited to serve the cause of humankind that greatly needs it for its survival.

While thanking in advance the Kingdom of Morocco for the perfect organization of the Halieutis exhibition, and I am doing it in advance, I am wishing you all a good show. Thank you for your kind attention.

**Speech by Mr. José APOLINARIO,
State Secretary for Fishery on behalf of Mrs. Ana Paula VITORINO, Minister of Fishery
(Portugal)
(Speech translated from French)**

Ladies and Gentlemen Ministers and State Secretaries, honorable assistance,

It is with great pleasure that I here represent the Government of Portugal and the Minister of Fisheries, responding to the invitation to participate in this very important and strategic event on the sea and the blue economy. This topic could not be more current and priority. Sustainable sea economy is a key economy for the future of the planet. With this in mind, Portugal has made it a priority to realize the potential of a sustainable maritime economy in the areas of ports, oceanic renewable energies, agriculture, biotechnology, as well of course on the reduction of marine litter.

All of this is a challenge for the sea community and beyond, a challenge for all because of the challenges of the energy transition, the circular economy and the globalization of markets. This is a challenge that requires a lot from us, including our ability to identify global trends and create value in the context in which we are together here, of course, within the broader framework of the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development. In this regard, Portugal has proposed in the United Nations at the diplomatic level, to organize in Portugal in Lisbon in 2020, the second United Nations Conference on Oceans. An initiative between Portugal and Kenya to discuss and debate oceans current and future challenges. But also because we are engaged in natural resource management to ensure that fisheries and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long run, in coherence with the goals of economic, social and employment performance in this sector.

Portugal is also actively involved in the implementation of the European Union's integrated maritime policy, such as the Atlantic strategy of the West Med group and the BLUE INVEST group with the aim of attracting more investment in the national blue economies. Portugal will also organize in cooperation with the European Commission the European Maritime Day, on May 16th and 17th, a ministerial conference "Ocean's meeting" on ocean governance, dialogue and search for solutions.

Portugal is always available for closer collaboration with sea activity poles, with the objective of creating an internationalized, smart and inclusive sustainable sea economy.

We believe it is very important to bring together business communities and the scientific world in order to create value, to urge innovation, innovation in aquaculture, innovation in the production of micro-algae, with the aim of preparing their limitations in the future. All this will only be possible with cooperation, and strong international cooperation.

Mr. Minister,
I salute the vision of HIS MAJESTY THE KING of Morocco and the willingness of the Government of Morocco to implement this initiative. It's a very strong signal for us. The Portuguese Prime Minister has announced that the next Portuguese Presidency of the European Union in 2021 will pay a fundamental attention to the relationship between the European Union and Africa that Portugal considers strategic for the future. Morocco

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is a strategic partner in all sectors of the blue economy, and we want to leverage this partnership, in the field of science and innovation for sustainable exploitation of marine resources, knowing that there is only one ocean and the future of the ocean depends on the common will.

Thank you, Choukran.

**Speech by Mrs. Elizabeth NAA AFOLEY QUAYE,
Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (Ghana)**

Thank you, I send my regard to the KING of Morocco, Mr Brahim HAFIDI, President of the regional council of Souss Massa, your Excellency Mr. Aziz AKHANOUCH, the Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco. Your excellencies, distinguished ladies and Gentlemen, I am particularly excited and humbled to address to the guesthouse on the need to sustain fisheries and aquaculture in Africa within the concept of the Blue Belt initiative, which was adopted at the COP22 in Marrakesh.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, fisheries as we all know provide a vital social food and employment along the value chain, and also the economic well-being of people throughout all coastal states and therefore should be managed responsibly. Developing countries like Ghana has had its fisheries difficulties and managing her marine capture fisheries due to the myriad challenges. These challenges must be met with more enthusiasm and cooperation with international organizations and all concerned nations and request to develop and manage our fisheries. That is with some laws, regulations, and sustainably. The potential of aquaculture is still developing in Africa and is mostly concentrating in few countries like my country Ghana with sustainable benefit of fish food sustained which if we all full ahead to mitigate threats and challenges including adverse climatic regimes which unpin, upon the rapid growth of the sector.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, the chart fall in fish protein requirement they are unstable economic regions hampering of our fisheries must be tackled head on with more pragmatic actions which go beyond words. There are some terms addressing in part of climate change to ecosystems, fishing communities interactions and economies in Africa have led to seek the partnerships with international organizations such as the United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) leading to the submission of the Blue Belt initiative which was adopted at COP22 in Marrakech. This initiative based on the circular economy and blue economy models, as you are aware aims to strengthening the resilience of the ecosystem. Marine living resources and coastal communities and to make fisheries and aquaculture major contributors to the blue economy growth and to an inclusive and resilient development. In line with the sustainable development goal 14, Ghana is resolved to contribute to the strategic implementation through the Blue Belt initiative to ensure that, the objectives are attained. In this regard, we are resolved to count on the best scientific research innovation, exchange of expertise and feedback to transform fisheries activities into sustainable and exclusive world generating activities. Taking into account, the close interactions between natural and social economic component of fisheries systems, we reiterate our commitment to collaborate with all partners within the subregion to improve efforts and promote cooperation and technology transfer to provide the needed framework for financing and support for adaptation and mitigation measures to improve fisheries. We believe that fostering more dialogue supported by needed action

is the key to sustaining fisheries towards the Blue Belt initiative. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the task ahead is huge but not insurmountable. We cannot achieve it if we all commit to work patiently together all of us must put ahead forward to promote the development of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture to address the current challenges of climatic effects by promoting the aquaculture sectors. We can do it by improving ongoing initiatives by:

1. Harmonizing and enforcing fisheries laws and regulations within the sub region
2. Strengthening research and developing schemes, which would assist national authorities and private sector entities with knowledge data and advice about sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.
3. Improving fisheries infrastructure and supply of fisheries input, by promoting aquatic animal health and introducing new technologies to reduce postharvest losses and also
4. strengthening institutional capacity to implement government policy initiatives in the fisheries sector.

Thank you, your Excellencies, and my best regards for a wonderful stay in Agadir, Thank you.

**Speech by Mrs. Maria Antonieta Josefina SABINA BAPTISTA,
Minister of Fisheries and Sea (Republic of Angola)
(Speech translated from French)**

Thank you so much.

His Excellency Dr. Aziz AKHANOUCH, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco, His Excellency Dr. Roy ANGELVIK State Secretary to the Ministry of Fisheries of Norway, dear fellow Ministers of Fisheries, dear Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Angolan Executive, of the delegation that came with me, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Aziz AKHANOUCH, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Development Rural and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco for the invitation to participate in this great event, and allow me also to send my cordial greetings to all the invited delegations present at this event. I take this opportunity to thank the Kingdom of Morocco for the hospitality that my delegation has witnessed every day since we arrived in this Kingdom.

Today we are here together to talk about the Blue Belt initiative. Allow me to offer you the sincere compliments of His Excellency Dr. João LOURENCO, President of the Republic of Angola, who is auguring the success of this event, making recommendations that will be for us a guarantee for the future.

We bring from Angola a message of hope that we can work together for a future focused on marine protected areas with sustainable management of fisheries, the promotion of the blue economy included in the 2063 Agenda and the fight against the adverse effects of climate change in which issues can be turned into an opportunity to create solutions for human health, the environment and the economy.

Excellencies,

The sustainability of the seas and oceans depends on a comprehensive inclusive integrated

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and global approach in which the various stakeholders have to create synergies and demonstrate territorial competitiveness, in order to strike a balance between exploration and conservation of the seas and oceans.

This high-level conference allows to share experiences of best practices in fisheries and management of the sea and rivers, thereby generating responsible sharing of maritime and river areas, as it is based on international treaties governing the use of the sea and the protection of biodiversity.

This great event is of utmost importance to sensitize the international community to the sustainable and responsible use of the seas and oceans. This requires instruments and actions integrated into the concept of the Blue Belt initiative, based on fundamental principles such as prevention, reduction and reuse, recovery and recycling of materials and energies.

Areas such as aquaculture, ship building and naval maintenance, tourism and water sports, development of renewable energies, exploitation of mineral and biological resources of the seabed, and the development of marine science and technology should be encouraged in order to ensure the participation of the private sector and the emergence of sustainable enterprises. The development of the economy requires the establishment of a monitoring and security system at sea to mitigate or eliminate illegal acts committed in our seas such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal unreported and unregulated fishing and piracy, among others. In this area, the international community can and should intensify its efforts to find effective and efficient global solutions.

Let's commit in this conference to a natural resource that reaffirms the African principle «UBUNTU» which defends the theory that says «I am because we are», a way of living and conceiving human relations, that considers the community in its most complete meaning as a large family in a community spirit in which the principle of sharing, mutual care and solidarity are experienced.

Finally, I wish to reiterate my thanks to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and reaffirm our commitment to the Blue Belt initiative as an instrument for the socio-economic and cultural development of our countries and the creation of a unified world. Thank you so much.

Speech by Mr. Henri DJOMBO,
Minister of State for Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery (Republic of Congo)
(Speech translated from French)

Mr. Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco, Dear Brother, Ministers, Distinguished Ambassadors, Distinguished Delegates of the invited countries, Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,
First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests for inviting me to this high-level conference on the Blue Belt and congratulate him for the perfect organization of this conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen, faced with the effects of climate change on ecosystems, the

practice of IUU fishing, the reduction of fishing areas and marine pollution due to offshore oil platform installations, aquaculture is becoming today an unavoidable alternative to fishing to ensure the feeding of populations with cheap animal protein. It deserves to be seen in its full dimension, in particular by exploiting the various production systems with breeding infrastructures other than the earthen ponds or aquaculture species other than fish.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is an opportunity to welcome the Blue Belt initiative of Morocco, a platform for action and cooperation between our States in order to promote the implementation of the sustainable project in the context of climate change. This project fortunately joins up with the "Fonds Bleu" for the Congo Basin, launched by the Congolese Head of State in Marrakech in the wake of the COP 22 on climate change, as if HIS MAJESTY and the President had agreed. Our minds must therefore focus on the funding and the completion of these initiatives, in order to support aquaculture, responsible and resilient to the effects of climate change fishing, projects for the preservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and the improvement of living conditions of the populations concerned by the green and blue economies.

To this end, the Republic of Congo proposes to the conference:

1. the application of the "pollutant pays" principle with an environmental taxation for activities with a high potential for greenhouse gas emissions or reducing marine areas to the detriment of fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders, which would recreate significant financial resources to support these two sectors;
2. second, the establishment of artificial reefs in breeding and nursery areas to prevent IUU fishing;
3. the periodic inventory of fisheries resources to control their potential;
4. the proliferation of marine protected areas;
5. the conduct of awareness, observation, monitoring and repression campaigns by sworn volunteers and unpaid helpers from other States in support of the national fisheries administrations, in agreement with them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Republic of Congo welcomes the good relations of friendship and cooperation existing between its country and the Kingdom of Morocco. The donation made to the country by HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI for the construction in Brazzaville of the modern fishing landing sites of Yoro, perfectly illustrates this reality. I am confident that this cooperation will continue, including with other partners, in the framework of agriculture and aquaculture cities planned in areas with high agricultural, pastoral and fisheries potential where private-sector funds can effectively contribute to the development of the concerned sectors. To this end, the incentives in favor of agriculture and aquaculture currently in place, and others under study, will undoubtedly guarantee this welcome initiative.
Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

Speech by Mrs. Prisca KOHO NLEND,
Minister of Fishery and Sea (Republic of Gabon)
(Speech translated from French)

Thank you Minister, I am speaking today with great emotion, you can understand it because a few kilometers from here is the President of the Republic of Gabon, precisely

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in Rabat, and it is really with honor and real pleasure.

Also, I should like at the outset of my remarks, to thank on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Gabon the Kingdom of Morocco and its illustrious sovereign HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI, God assist him, to have allowed the holding of this conference in this land of hospitality with distinguished history related to port and maritime fishery. The reality of this legendary hospitality, I was able to experience it myself yesterday afternoon visiting an equipped landing point, and the facilities of the Office National des Pêches in the port of Agadir. It was a real pleasure, I could share with the fishermen some grilled sardines, it was very good.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have learnt from our continent singular history that the main sources of wealth that attracted exploratory powers to Africa in search of new economies were fish stocks and more widely marine resources. When these powers began to explore and use the land, the exploitation of the marine sector was already long years behind. Thus, we note, among others, the development of fisheries including the beginning of sardine and tuna canning industry, as well as the whale oil industry, which has led to the spectacular development of the public lighting in the nascent major cities of the beginning of the industrial era. That is to say that this continent of ours, recognized to possess the world reserves of most of the natural resources of the soil, also has an important maritime territory today devoted to the economic and exclusive zones, themselves rich in important marine resources.

It should be pointed out that Africa is entirely surrounded by seas with, as a bonus, a land area abounding with many of the world's largest river basins such as Congo, Nile, Chad, Niger, Zambezi and Orange, to list but a few. The prosperity of our economies must rely more on blue growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen, The President of the Republic of Gabon, Head of State, His Excellency Hadj Ali BONGO ONDIMBA, in his vision of Blue Gabon, has decided in 2018, to protect 26% of the 213 000 km² that make Gabon's exclusive economic zone, creating nine marine parks and eleven aquatic reserves. This network of marine protected areas, which complements the 13 national parks established in 2001, aims to contribute to regional and global efforts to conserve coastal and marine ecosystems. The government, led by Prime Minister Julien NKOGHE BEKALÉ, builds on this vision and operational mechanisms to improve the contribution of the fisheries sector to the national economy. The ambition is to implement targeted public policies concerning the new appropriation of biological richness by the population, with a view to rational use of the economic potential represented by aquatic environments.

Gabon's accession to the Blue Belt initiative, launched at COP 22 in Marrakech, is in line with the Blue Gabon vision, which advocates for more effective intra-African cooperation. This communion in reflection and action must be based on a permanent dialogue allowing the implementation of cross-border programs for the management of coastal and marine areas and resources.

In this sense, the major problem that we will have to face is that blue gold can only be perceived to its real potential and be exploited rationally if its deposit and its income are monetarily defined at the national, regional and African scales. It is imperative that we characterize and value it.

Also, I would humbly propose to this eminent assembly that our initiative of the Blue Belt is organized around five themes:

1. the first one would consist in harmonizing the minimum conditions of access to our resources and jointly negotiating the fishing agreements to ensure optimal exploitation and better income;
2. the second would be to continue to establish national networks of marine protected areas and to interconnect them all along the Blue Belt;
3. To further intensify the synergy of our capabilities and skills to fight more effectively against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, given the high costs of protecting and monitoring our coasts;
4. to adopt common positions, especially on the major issues of the day and for which the continent has had very little influence so far, for example, the exploitation of the deep-sea fisheries, the extension of continental shelf beyond national jurisdictions, exploitation of deep marine resources, etc.
5. and finally, decompartmentalize our knowledge and experiences in the context of the new African vision on the blue economy. It is a question of setting up as soon as possible an institutional device which relies on research and innovation to generate the necessary information for a sustainable and profitable management of our resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to conclude, my country's support for the Blue Belt initiative goes beyond this present contribution. Indeed, the experience of Gabon is available to advance our joint projects. However, it is necessary that the implementation of the Blue Belt relies on innovative mechanisms, such as the taking of some of the wealth created by exploitation as well as partnerships with donors. Thank you for your kind attention.

Speech by Mrs. Emma KOWA JALLOH Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources (Sierra Leone)

Thank you very much

Mr Chairman, very honorable Minister of Agriculture Maritime Fishery of the Kingdom of Morocco, Secretary of State to the Ministry of Fisheries, Norway, colleague ministers from COMHAFAT and Ministers here present, all development partners, Ladies and Gentlemen, The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources of the Republic of Sierra Leone welcomes and supports the initiative of the government of the Kingdom of Morocco through the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Economy to have this high-level conference on the theme "Building resilient and sustainable fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa". Away forward to a sustainable Blue Belt economy, I want to use this opportunity on behalf of his Excellency, Mr Juilius MAADA BIO the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, to thank HIS MAJESTY THE KING and the government of Morocco, for hosting this very important Blue Belt initiative.

Since it is in line with other fisheries management and development mechanism of the Blue Belt Economy, the Ecosystem approach of Fisheries management and the impact of climate change to fisheries management.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the theme of the conference, it is about adapting to climate change through the sustainability of the fishing industry along the fish value chain from the fisherman to the consumer. Because the vision of the ecosystem to the ecosystem approach to fisheries

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management, it also includes research and observations and monitoring of the ocean.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want, I am sure with all this high - level platform we will come up with how to develop future opportunities priorities for the implementation and support through an effective partnership for a better funding mechanism.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change impact increase every year causing loss to society, economies an increase pressure on livelihoods and food supply. In Sierra Leone, continuous vulnerability of coastal community to climate, induce risk and related hazards and add them key problem with no immediate solutions decided yet.

However on the part of Ministry of Fisheries of Sierra Leone, we are currently implementing the following to help in managing our fisheries resources:

1. We have added fees per every industrial vessel for protection and research in the fisheries sector.
2. We do a several line survey system at sub regional level which helps AIU fishing
3. We are going to be introducing a closed season in April this year. These measures are will help manage our fisheries.

In the area of aquaculture, Sierra Leone is relying in looking forward to the diversification of this sector. We have a suitable swell for marine culture and aquaculture.

Therefore, we are looking forward to partnering and welcoming commercial investors that are investing this area.

As a Ministry, we have 2 key sites for aquaculture, one in Macaly and one in Boo.

But we have only started to focus really on aquaculture as a priority only since last year.

We still have challenges in areas of lab testing kits, fingerlings feed machines...etc

But the willingness and of course land are there to help promote new technologies and land in order to improve aquaculture which will eventually slow the pressure from the industrial fishing. The Blue growth and long time strategy to support sustainable growth in the maritime and marine sector as a whole, is a key priority.

The sea and the ocean are drivers for the African economy and have great potential for innovation and growth. It is the maritime contribution to achieve the sustainable development goal 14, which is life on the water.

It is a smart strategy for sustainable and inclusive growth. The potential of the ocean to meet sustainable development needs is enormous. But only if we can manage in or restore to a healthy and productive state.

Blue production includes implementation of the ecosystem based approach to responsible fisheries and Aquaculture management.

In order to enhance sustainable and productive blue tree supporting the economy development of countries which are in Africa improving their products to be able to access international markets.

Ladies and Gentlemen

My Ministry has already years being collaborating with partners and institutions like the

environmental protection Agency, Fishery Research Institute, for us to be able to address most of the issues that engies on the sustainable management and development of fisheries sector in Sierra Leone.

Since there are now new emerging issues like climate change, blue economy and the implementation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, I'd like to use this opportunity to tell my colleagues ministers of fisheries from the Kingdom of Morocco, my colleague ministers here present today to welcome the Blue Belt initiative and look forward to better partnership and collaboration with our developing partners to be able to address the issues for a sustainable fisheries management that require research institutions to partner with us to have the required data to guide the policy directive. I also, on the other hand want to look forward to other hope that will support the partnership in area of FAO, EU, the World Bank, UNDP, another partner, partner institution will be able to adapt to address climate change issues and to work together towards the Blue Economy that is sustainable in different countries.

And thank you all.

**Speech by Mrs. Adoración SALAS CHONCO,
Minister of Fishery and Water Resources (Equatorial Guinea)
(Speech translated from Spanish)**

Your Excellencies Ministers, Your Excellencies Diplomats present, Representatives of international organizations and distinguished General Directors,

Ladies and Gentlemen, It is a great honor and a great satisfaction to speak at this very important conference, first of all, to thank HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI, and the Moroccan authorities for the invitation addressed to our delegation. In the same spirit, I would like to thank them for their hospitality during our stay in Morocco.

Equatorial Guinea has an exclusive economic zone of 314 000 km², with 644 km of coastline. Given the territorial distribution of Equatorial Guinea, the maritime zone and the fluvial zone representing eleven times the land area, this is already in itself a reason for a potential development of the fishery sector.

The importance of the fishery sector lies in fishing and fish farming. Like other countries, the fisheries sector contributes to food security by providing food, in addition to jobs for the population. The fishery sector is considered as the second pillar of the diversification of the national economy. Thus, in addition to supplying the local market with fishery products, commercially valuable species would be sold on international markets, making them an important source of foreign exchange, thereby contributing to GDP growth and reducing economic dependency of the country regarding oil sector.

Climate change is impacting all the world's seas and oceans, global warming is a threat that makes many species, which are sensitive to changes in water temperature, moving, while carbon dioxide acidifies seas and oceans. The long-term viability of marine organisms is threatened, which will have negative effects on fishery and fish farming.

Among the measures or initiatives taken for the conservation of fishery resources, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has promulgated laws and decrees concerning the conservation of resources and the fight against all threats to the seas

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and oceans, for example:

1. enforcement of the law governing fishery and aquaculture activities in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea with international standards;
2. the law regulating the management of fauna and flora of Equatorial Guinea;
3. the implementation of the fisheries resource assessment project in order to know the potential of the resources of the exclusive economic zone of Equatorial Guinea;
4. the preparation of the first draft and a plan to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the advancement in the project of the creation of a marine protected area.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomes the trend towards promotion of the blue economy by seeking new opportunities for economic and innovative development in the protection of the seas and oceans, and the Blue Belt initiative which is a collective action at the regional level. We are convinced that the RAFISMER and ATLAFCO networks can play a key role in spreading good practices that can combat the negative impacts of climate change. Thank you very much to all.

Speech by Mr. Francisco MARTINS DOS RAMOS,
Minister of Agriculture, Fishery and Rural Development (Sao Tome and Principe)
(Speech translated from French)

Mr. Aziz AKHANNOUCH, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of Morocco, Mrs. Mbarka BOUAIDA, State Secretary of Maritime Fishery,

Excellencies, In my name and on behalf of the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, we thank you for the invitation and we warmly congratulate you on the organization of the event and your welcome. I would like to take this opportunity to greet my colleagues from friend and brother countries, FAO, research institutes, the European Union, experts, Ambassadors and dear participants. Ladies and Gentlemen, Sao Tome and Principe is an island nation in the central Atlantic with a surface area of 1,000 square kilometers and an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 160,000 square kilometers and a population of about 180,000. Its economy is essentially agriculture. Fishing ranks second in national GDP at around 7%. It provides about 80% of animal protein to the population and contributes directly and indirectly to the incomes of more than 30,000 families throughout the coastal zone.

The blue economy initiative has started since the first African summit supported by FAO in 2014. It was launched by tripartite cooperation composed of FAO, AfDB and the World Bank, in Marrakech during COP 22 in November 2016. This project is aimed at strengthening the resilience of African countries to climate change and takes into account the importance of marine and coastal ecosystems in the economic development and well-being of today's society and future generations.

Sao Tome and Principe committed in 2015 to the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 13 (fight against climate change) and SDG 14 (conserve and sustainably exploit oceans and seas). The national marine ecosystem that is part of the exclusive economic zone is 160 times larger than the land area.

There has been a decline in fisheries resources in recent years. The Government, with its policy of fight against poverty, food and nutrition security and job creation, is part of

the development of aquaculture as an alternative to meet the demand for animal protein, while contributing to the conservation of natural heritage and oceans.

Considering the importance of the concept and its enforcement, the government is seeking technical assistance from FAO to develop plans for its national strategy to enable the country to make the transition to the blue economy, and mobilize financial sources for the implementation of investment programs in the fields of fisheries, aquaculture, maritime transport, eco-responsible tourism, the energy sector, etc. Knowing the major challenges facing Africa, the Blue Belt initiative is a real opportunity for inclusive integration that can facilitate the collaborative approach and propose possible financial type mechanisms appropriate in several business area, such as fishing, aquaculture, security and maritime monitoring, and will create jobs and wealth while contributing to the conservation of the natural heritage of the oceans. Thank you for your attention.

Speech by Mr. Gaston COSSI DOSSOUHOU,
Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery (Republic of Benin)
(Speech translated from French)

Your Excellency, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Waters and Forests, Ministers and fellow Ministers, State Secretary of to the Minister of Fisheries of the Kingdom of Norway, Excellencies Ladies and the representatives of the diplomatic missions and international organizations, the General Commissioner of the 2019 edition Halieutis exhibition, ladies and gentlemen representatives of the private sector, distinguished guests any protocol observed,

Allow me to send my best regards to HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI, to the Moroccan people who welcome us for the present Blue Belt initiative, supported by the Kingdom of Morocco, for the adaptation of fisheries and aquaculture to climate changes. I take this opportunity to congratulate and warmly thank the organizers of this event for their commitment to make this sharing event, an opportunity to foster the emergence of innovative ideas, specific recommendations to turn this initiative into a sustainable and attractive program for all actors in order to mobilize the necessary financial sources for its implementation.

As a result, the Agadir Conference marks a milestone in transforming our agriculture, on the basis of fisheries and aquaculture, linked with the Sustainable Development Goals. My country Benin is honored to take part in this 5th edition of the international fishery Exhibition Halieutis. The international scope, the diversity of a clear and synchronized offer, the possibility of concluding commercial contracts, the opening on the African market in terms of investment, active and fruitful partnership, mark the beginning of a declared willingness of our leaders to lead a collaborative platform and pave the way for an operational vision linking fisheries, aquaculture and ocean monitoring. This platform, I hope, connects production companies, institutions, researchers and other actors to generate and scale up technological innovations able to address the issue of food and nutritional security, the fight against climate change challenges, the sustainable and intelligent exploitation of oceans and seas.

Dear guests, the fishery sector in my country Benin, occupies 15% of the active population and 25% of the active population of the agriculture sector and contributes 3.2% to the

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Gross Domestic Product. Domestic production provides only 35% of the animal protein requirement with a volume of 55 000 tons, compared with an annual requirement of 160 000 tons, resulting in a structural shortfall of 100 to 110 000 tons per year, as commercial imports which quality raises serious safety problems.

To reduce this shortfall, the Government of Benin has included in its program of action «Benin Révélé» aquaculture as being one of the key sectors to be developed especially in the inland waters. Failing to initiate actions for marine aquaculture, because of the material constraints related to the geography of our coasts and the difficulties related to monitoring facilities, the control and monitoring of fishing on our coasts remains a major concern and calls for a synergy of interventions at the level of countries sharing the same coastline. For this purpose, the exhaustive inventory of our artisanal fishing boats, their registration, the tracking and the control of the used gears, is one of the first actions that is leading by this government.

The industrial marine fishery is poorly controlled due to lack of monitoring equipment for rapid intervention. This forum should lay the groundwork for concrete action to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing practices. My country is in favor of opening a VMS and AIS observation system in a regional alert and rapid intervention system on our coasts.

Our strong desire is to benefit from a partnership to ensure periodic monitoring of stocks and monitoring of our activities at sea along our coast, and also collect or have reliable statistics. By doing so, this approach would allow us to be able to increase the availability of fisheries products, in which the marine fisheries accounts for a significant proportion. For that I invite you for a sincere and fruitful cooperation in order to take up the challenge of developing fisheries and aquaculture through this Blue Belt initiative.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, I would like to greet and congratulate the Moroccan government for its commitment to the Blue Belt initiative, a strategy to protect marine ecosystems from pollution and over-exploitation, through a sustainable resource management approach.

Was Minister Aziz AKHANNOUCH not right to declare at COP22, «it is with a view to protecting maritime and marine resources that this Moroccan initiative was launched to build the coastal and marine ecosystem in a space where all stakeholders promotes and encourages the development of a sustainable economy. « Congratulations! On behalf of my Government and on my own, my country is joining this initiative called the Blue Belt. Finally, I would like to express my great satisfaction and gratitude to the delegation accompanying me for hosting the Benin delegation here in Morocco. Long live international cooperation, long live regional cooperation on fisheries and aquaculture. Long live the Benin-Moroccan. Long live the King of Morocco. Thank you.

Speech by Mrs. Emma Matieh-GLASSCO
General Director of the National Authority for Fishery and Aquaculture (Liberia)

Your Excellency, we first express our sincere appreciations to the organizers of the meeting, the Kingdom of Morocco, and the beautiful people of Agadir for the warm reception since we arrived here.

We bring you greetings from his Excellency the President of the Republic of Liberia Dr George WEAH. The Blue Belt initiative has worked by the Kingdom of Morocco since as an intervention to combat climate change to reduce poverty among the fishermen to consumers by sustainably managing the ocean and keeping with the SDG 14, and advanced the development of African middle class, Today under high-level panel under the theme of Building a resilient and sustainable in fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, the way forward through a sustainable Blue Belt initiative, provide us an opportunity to share experiences and consolidate efforts to achieve SDG 14. It is an opportunity to develop strategies for strengthening south-south cooperation in ocean economy directed in supported needs for sustained ocean observation and promoting the development of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture that impact on the climate change.

As a country, over the past years, Liberia has developed and adapted sustainable fisheries management approach with many efforts in conservation of stocks in combating illegal and unreported and unregulated fishing.

There have been rebots improvements in our efforts in our ocean, to sustain by developing fisheries sustainable management and regulations as part of our initiative. We have reserved up to 6 nautical miles for artisanal and semi industrial fisheries with the help of partners such the European Union and World Bank, we have introduced modern vessel, modern technologies in our fisheries monitoring centre to help monitoring our waters. However, Liberia come to this meeting when opening the envelop to adapt new strategies and shared our experiences in achieving this initiative.

As a coastal state, the fisheries sector consists of capture fisheries and aquaculture thus generating benefit from the sector, to include livelihood foreign currency and nutrition and food security. Our push to sustain our ocean resources involves collaborative efforts of our coastal communities. We have developed the collaborative management framework to get the fishing communities and government partner in managing their resources. Currently, we are concluding modalities to have our second collaborative management association inducted to comment operations in Liberia largest fishing community situated in Monrovia, The capital of Liberia, which constitutes more than 35% of our fishermen population nationally.

All of these positive attributes are on the hills of constantly sustained and adoptive approaches. Therefore to achieve sustainability of this enterprising fishing industry, our fishermen to the consumer must come to terms in meeting as the regulators researchers and policy makers, have away by adapting sustainable mechanism that will at least guarantees us the sustainable use of our cherished resources without a compromised to our environment.

Protecting Liberia's Exclusive Economic Zone remains a challenge for much effort have been invented in management of fishing and activities in the zone.

We instituted measures to have limited licenses that are operating in that zone, in keeping our national fisheries regulation. The goal is to manage the resources and prohibit overexploitation of our fisheries stocks, with these interventions in managing our fisheries sector, Liberia is still experiencing challenges in combating climate change and have been funding gaps in financing projects that was mitigating these climate changes.

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As stated in the BBI concept note for this meeting, a regional approach to mobilize will be an effective approach; this will include experience sharing capacity building and monitoring any evaluation of projects implementation. It will advance more of sustainable approach to bridging these gaps. Finally, Liberia has designed a new business approach for managing our fisheries sector combating IUU, and tracking potential fisheries investments, African can only congratulate Blue Economy benefits if we prioritize regional investment collaboration. We agree with the Blue Belt initiative concept and have already adapted it for development strategies. We encourage other countries to support this initiative and to work together to save the future for our continent. Thanks for the opportunity for inviting us. We are grateful for this initiative. The last but not the least, I would like to call for more support across Africa to women in particular. Today, we women account for 59% of the processing work performed in Africa's fish sector. We do deserve support to imparter. Thank you.

Speech by Mr. Bamba BANJA
Permanent Secretary to the Minister of Fishery and Water Resources (Gambia)

Thank you Mr Chairman
 Your Excellency, Mr Aziz AKHANNOUCH, Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, Ambassadors, Distinguished experts, Ladies and Gentlemen, The press,
 Mr Chairman, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Gambia and my extension the Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources, I want to express his initial gratitude to HIS MAJESTY, and the government and the people of the Kingdom of Morocco for the kind invitation extended to the Minister of Fisheries and Water resources, to participate in this high level conference. On the Blue Belt initiative, a platform for action in favour for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in Africa. On behalf of the honorable Minister of Fisheries and Water Resources of the Gambia, I wish to take this opportunity to deliver statement on the sustainability of fishing industry from fishermen, to consumers. Mr Chairman, the fisheries sector of the Gambia is divided into 3 subsectors, these are: Industrial, artisanal and aquaculture subsectors.

The industrial fisheries subsector can better be described as capital intensive and involve the use of fishing trollers and the establishment of land based fish processing plants.

Artisanal fisheries activities involve fishermen fish processors and fish distribution and marketing of cooperatives. Their activities are relatively low capital intensive and the operators are scattered along the coast and inland communities. That still in embryonic stage, aquaculture is deemed to have huge growth potential in the Gambia, giving the nutritional and economy potential of this subsector. The development of subsistence more scale and commercial aquaculture, is stated in the fishing and Aquaculture policy 2017. Indeed, Aquaculture represents an additional source of animal protein, contributing to food security, while reducing pressure on wild stocks, particularly the demersals and crustaceans; it can also create new jobs, and generate incomes. The country is particularly well positioned for fresh, brackish and marine fish farms.

Mr Chairman, the fisheries sector in the country in the Gambia is split with numerous constraints which limit the contribution of the sector to food security, poverty eradication, and overall economy development. These constraints are ecological, biological, technical, managerial and institutional and include among others, the inadequate knowledge about

sustainable fisheries resources. A responsible fishing method, an adequate knowledge, and skills on fish-handling processing and preservation methods. Concerns have also been expressed.

Mr Chairman, about the excessive exploitation of marine species, it is also limited surveys and assessment over the recent years, indicate that major marine fish stocks are overfished, or fully exploited, in particular the most commercially important demersal species appear to be on the threat from high levels of exploitation.

Other frequently cited problems in the fisheries sector,, include low implementation of policies and weak enforcement of existing laws.

Mr Chairman, another area of focus is the protection of aquaculture establishments and fisheries resources against floods and other climatic related hazards. Climate change has the potential to cause migration of certain species in search of new feeding and protection, which will consequently lead to low productivity of both marine and inland water bodies. Coastal erosion also leads to relocation of some of the fishing communities due inaccessibility and the continuous sea level rise present at the coastal wetlands will be gradually inundated resulting in the loss of mangroves and salt mass vegetation.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished guests,
 To assure sustainability of fishing industry from fishermen to consumers, the legislative policy and regulative framework this sustainable management and development of fisheries must be strengthened. It is important that there is alignment and strong coordination and implementation of fisheries policies and programs at national and regional and international levels. There is absolute need for concerted effort to deter and fight against the ever increasing manners of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in our respective EEZs. Also, the value chains of fisheries and aquaculture transformation must be improved. There is also the need to have adequate infrastructure and facilities for improved handling; it must be complemented with capacity building in the area of the sanitary and financial of sanitary measures.

Last but not the least, the holding of this high – level conference on the Blue Belt initiative in Agadir- Morocco, is indeed appropriate and very timely. It provides the opportunity for small countries like the Gambia to show cases on the importance of the fisheries sector and socio-economic development of the continent. It also allows us to highlight our constraints and challenges and hence the need for support a bilateral and multilateral level. Finally, Mr Chairman, on behalf of the government and the people of the Republic of Gambia, I wish to thank HIS MAJESTY, the government and the people of the Kingdom of Morocco, for hosting this important conference. I wish to also thank the government and Kingdom of Morocco for the kind hospitality accorded to us. Finally, I thank you all.

Speech by Mr. Jean-François GIRAULT,
Ambassador of France to the Kingdom of Morocco (France)
(Speech translated from French)

Minister, Ministers, Mr. Wali, Mr. President of the Regional Council Souss Massa, Distinguished Ambassadors,Ladies and Gentlemen,

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Allow me first to join in the warm thanks to our host, His Excellency Mr. Aziz AKHANNOUCH, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco.

France is pleased to take part in this high-level conference and the launch, here in Agadir, of the African working group for the Blue Belt initiative.

I associate myself to all the glowing remarks that have been made on the presentations this afternoon. The lines of work that you have assigned, Minister, under the high directives of HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI, seem to me to be completely and remarkably in the best standards of the blue economy: oceans observation and knowledge, sustainable fisheries through the renewal of the fleet, the production lines labelling but also the ecosystems production and sustainable aquaculture.

It is these same structuring objectives that the European States and the European Union, within the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy and the Mediterranean Action Plan, continue, year after year, with patience and perseverance, to ensure the safety and the quality of the food while controlling the impacts on the environment.

There is no magic formula, Minister, in these areas, as you know, where progress is made step by step, through concerted action, collective decisions, and the support of change on the ground.

Also, the Blue Belt initiative is rightly focusing on climate change.

You are of course aware of my country's commitment to this. The role of coastal communities is major in climate change mitigation and adaptation, disrupting our environment. Support for initiatives in this area is an important element of France's development aid policy, whose resources will be increased by 0.55% of our Gross National Income by 2020. France therefore wishes to continue through its development policy, a family-based aquaculture and fishery, producing wealth and jobs, supporting food production and respectful of ecosystems and biodiversity.

I hope that the platform you launch will inspire many projects in this direction and facilitate the mobilization of funding of all origins, with the shared concern for a more sustainable development of our coastal activities.

Finally, France is pleased with you, Minister, for the adoption after a long journey, of the new Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco. France is proud to be able to continue this economic and technical cooperation in sustainable fisheries management. Thank you.

**Speech by Mrs. Claudia WIEDEY,
Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Morocco
(European Union)
(Speech translated from French)**

Minister Aziz AKHANNOUCH, Ministers and State Secretaries, President of the Council, Mr. Wali, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, The European Commissioner expresses his regrets for not being able to be with us today. He wished, however, to emphasize the importance he attaches to this Blue Belt initiative in a video message. Thank you for the opportunity to show it here.

**Video of Mr. Karmenu VELLA,
European Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (European Union)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today at the fifth edition of the Salon Halieutis.

As you know for the European Union, Morocco is more than just a neighbor, it is a partner. Over the years we have developed valuable partnerships in many areas. The blue maritime economy is no exception.

Together with our Moroccan and other Mediterranean partners we are boosting young people's maritime skills and qualifications. We are supporting bright business ideas.

We are protecting the marine environment from harm. And our ties with Morocco are particularly strong in the area of fisheries and fisheries management. This should come as no surprise, Morocco is the European Union's fifth largest fisheries partner.

In 2017, it exported more than 1.2 billion Euros worth of fishery products to the European Union. Together we can look back on a decades long history of fisheries agreements. We have also made remarkable headway by implementing the MedFish4Ever Declaration.

A solid foundation on which we can build our shared future. And that future starts now.

Very recently, Morocco and the European Union signed a new sustainable fisheries partnership agreement. This agreement confirms our strong relations. And it confirms the willingness from both sides to further strengthen our cooperation.

I have no doubt that our partnership will have a strong positive impact for both sides. It will ensure that Morocco's rich fisheries resources are exploited sustainably and fairly between both partners.

Fishermen, processing companies, coastal communities will reap the benefits. So will the marine environment in the Mediterranean which is our shared Sea.

I would like to warmly thank my colleague and friend, Minister Aziz AKHANNOUCH, for the important role he has played in renewing this agreement. He has clearly shown that Morocco attaches great importance to its positive relations with the European Union. His personal engagement in this and other matters is very much appreciated. And I am very much looking forward to continuing our close cooperation. I wish you a successful event.

**Continuation of the Speech by Mrs. Claudia WIEDEY,
Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Morocco
(European Union)
(Speech translated from French)**

Thank you very much for allowing me to add a few words. The Commissioner has already highlighted that: exactly one week ago a great event, namely the new Fisheries Partnership

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Agreement was voted in the European Parliament. And it is a very happy moment for all of us. Thank you for all the work we did together.

I thank the Kingdom of Morocco and especially the Minister and his team for having always warmly welcomed us around the Blue Belt initiative, this initiative for the development in Africa of a sustainable fishery and the preservation of its natural environment. The European Union supports the idea of the Blue Belt.

The ocean covers 70% of our planet and more than 2 billion people rely on fish as the main source of protein. More than 350 million jobs are related to the ocean through fishery, aquaculture, and coastal and marine tourism.

However, overfishing, climate change and increased pollution are depleting this common and essential global resource.

The African continent must bet on the blue economy because the seas and oceans around it are a source of food, jobs, and prosperity. They are a source if they are healthy, safe, and sustainably managed.

The European Union is a major actor in the development of blue growth that links economic growth and sustainable ecosystem, and to do this, it has adopted very strict legal rules that apply to the European Union. The European Union is also already supporting the blue economy in Africa through several initiatives; Africa is the main beneficiary of EU development cooperation funds for fisheries and aquaculture.

At the pan-African level, the EU has supported strengthening governance and interregional trade in fisheries. The EU supports regional organizations in their efforts to better manage shared marine resources and to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, including the artisanal fisheries that we support in southern Africa, Somalia and Ghana for example.

Moreover, the partnership agreements in sustainable fisheries, like the one mentioned and which we have with Morocco, but also with other countries in Africa, constitute the governance framework for fishery activities of EU fishing vessels in third countries waters, and contribute to the conservation of resources and the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sector. It is also about attracting private investment into a sustainable blue economy.

The European Investment Bank and the Althelia Bank have raised funds for the «Sustainable Oceans Fund», a new fund that intervenes for better fisheries management. And, moreover, the EU's external investment plan, proposed by the President of the European Commission, Mr JUNKER, intends to mobilize some of this 44 billion Euros of investment planned for the blue economy.

There are also the EastMed, WestMed and BlueMed initiatives that I shall not go back to because I think they have already been presented, especially the BlueMed initiative in the Mediterranean, with its research that could help us increase the value of products to test new types of floating wind turbines, or design station that use solar energy to remove salt from seawater.

There are initiatives, there are new ideas, creative ideas that are to follow and to be considered in the future.

We need better global oceans governance and a true international partnership in order to preserve the growth base of our blue economy, and we are very pleased to be associated with this initiative, and I thank Morocco on behalf of the EU for this initiative. And I thank Morocco on behalf of the EU for this initiative. Thank you so much.

Speech by Mr. Frédéric LOUA,
Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Maritime Economy (Republic of Guinea)
(Speech translated from French)

Excellency, Mr. Aziz AKHANNOUCH, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of Morocco, Excellencies Honorable Ministers present here, Your Excellency Mr. Roy ANGELVIK, State Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries of the Kingdom of Norway, the representative of the EU, the representative of FAO, the experts, the guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Before starting, allow me to carry out my mission which is to convey the cordial greetings of his Excellency the President of the Republic of Guinea, Professor Alpha CONDE to HIS MAJESTY MOHAMMED VI, King of Morocco .

I would also like to thank Minister Aziz AKHANNOUCH for inviting me to take part in this important meeting and at the opening ceremony of the 5th session of Halieutis Exhibition. My thanks also go to the Moroccan authorities for all the attention to my delegation.

Ladies and gentlemen, the African Union has included the blue economy as one of the seven priorities. Building a blue economy cannot be possible without the fisheries sector, which contributes to the food security of our people, employment, and resources for our economies. This meeting in Agadir, on the Blue Belt initiative comes just in time and finds all its importance for our governments, which encourages me to extend my warmest congratulations to the initiators.

Ladies and gentlemen, the fisheries and aquaculture sector plays a very important economic and social role in Guinea, particularly because of the number of jobs and its significant contribution to food security, among others. Today, the sector provides more than 250,000 tons of fish directly dumped on the various markets of Guinea, employs nearly 30,000 fishermen, 22,000 smokers fish women, wholesalers, distributed between 230 landing points along of the coast.

The fisheries sector provides about 200,000 direct and indirect jobs. All this shows that fishery is one of the most important sectors to fight against poverty and malnutrition in our country. It is because of this unequaled input, that it constitutes one of the priorities of the government, and benefits from the support of the technical and financial partners.

One of the objectives of our government, under the National Economic and Social Development Plan «PNDES 2016 -2020», is to promote the fisheries sector to the accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth of the country.

To this end, substantial efforts have been made in support of the development of the

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artisanal fishery subsector, and the promotion of fish farming, thus marking the implementation of the President of the Republic's policy for a full commitment in favor of a sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, in spite of these objectives and this enthusiasm, the fisheries sector is being stricken by the consequences of climate change due mainly to Mankind. Today, if urgent measures are not taken, we will face, among other things, difficulties to find the right water for fish farming, without forgetting the current difficulties of our little fishermen who are forced to move away from the coast, with all the risks to make profit. That is why the Guinean government attaches great importance to this Blue Belt initiative for our coastal countries in order to guarantee the sustainability of African fisheries and aquaculture.

We advocate for any initiative that can reverse this trend and respect the basic needs of our communities.

We welcome this initiative, which is fully integrated into the promotion of the blue economy, as promoted by FAO and AU, through the search for new and innovative economic development opportunities, resilient to the negative effects of climate change on our seas and oceans.

Climate change and challenges are huge. They go beyond the means and geographical spaces of a country. Also, to achieve tangible results, we favor the regional approach by strengthening existing regional instruments.

We also reiterate the recommendations made at the last session of the ATLAFCO Ministers' Conference, held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to strengthen our organization, which is one of the successful examples of fisheries cooperation between our states, for a great involvement in the implementation of the Blue Belt initiative through its network of fisheries research institutes RAFISMER.

It is with these words that I would like to wish every success to our discussions. Thank you.

Speech by Mr. John BABATUNDE
Director of Fishery on behalf of Mr. Audu Innocent OGBEH, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Nigeria)

The Chairman and Ministers, Representative of European Union, FAO, Press and Development Partners and Others,

I want to sincerely bring the apology of my Minister not to be able to come. We are all aware that Nigeria is at the crucial time now. The election is starting on Saturday. I solicit the prayer of everybody that is here for a successful completion of the election.

I want to read the speech and the declaration of the Honorable Minister :
 It is my great pleasure and delight to be part of this inauguration of this noble initiative meant to save the future of African ocean its economy resources: the Blue Belt initiative.

Aside from providing jobs for millions of people, the blue economy has provided yields to

serve the continent in providing the much needed proteins, essential minerals that the fish offers to tackle extreme hunger and malnutrition among the African population. It is an established fact that the coastal areas comprise 20 percent of the Earth surface yet contain over 50 percent of the entire Human population. This incidentally has created multiple anthropogenic pressures on the ocean resources and has called for increased collaboration in the sustainable management of the oceans.

In addition to this global decline in catches from the wild and the impact of climate change, the African countries have been grieved by dismissal of pollution, overfishing as well as incidences of Illegal Unreported Unregulated IUU fishing. Global losses attributable to IUU fishing have been estimated to be between ten billion to 23 billion dollars annually, undermining the ability to sustainably manage fishery as well as economic opportunities. The prevalence of IUU fishing in Africa water has been attributed to poor monitoring control and surveillance and weak governance regimes. In order to address these challenges, it is highly imperative that African coastal states collectively invest towards the sustainable development and management of our ocean resources. Idea for commend the Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco, Mr Aziz AKHANNOUCH, and the Moroccan Government for this collaborative platform to act together and put this practice innovative solution for the adaptation of the fisheries and aquaculture sector to climate change and for the resilience of our ocean to continue to serve the African population. I also want to appreciate the good gesture for the warmest hospitality accorded to the Nigerian delegates and other delegates also. In conclusion I wish to add that Nigeria is glad to be part of this and I wish us all a fruitful deliberation as we seem to establish appropriate institutional and financial mechanisms to drive this initiative.

Thank you. God bless you.

Speech by Mr. Sylvain TUSANGA MUKANGA,
Head of Division of Planning and Programming of Fisheries Operations on behalf of Mr. Daniel PALUKU KISAKA YEREYERE, Minister of Fishery and Livestock (Democratic Republic of Congo)
(Speech translated from French)

Excellencies, Ministers, Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions, Representatives of International and Regional Organizations,

Allow me to express on behalf of the Minister of Fisheries and Livestock and the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Congo, our sincere thanks to the Kingdom of Morocco for the invitation and for the warm welcome which was reserved for our participation to this high-level conference.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of the Democratic Republic of Congo congratulates the Kingdom of Morocco and particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests, to have brilliantly initiated the Blue Belt: a platform for action for the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in Africa, so that these two complementary components become a vector for the growth of the blue economy.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of the Democratic Republic of Congo reaffirms its support and adhesion to this commendable initiative that is based fundamentally on the

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basic pillars of the development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in our country.

Because, in addition to the traditional financial, economic and social contributions to the economy, the fisheries and aquaculture sector, by the simple fact of the existence of these resources, has considerable effects on the population of the Democratic Republic of Congo and leads to the valorization of the country's water resources and aquatic biodiversity. Thus, this Blue Belt initiative for the sustainable development of the sector, in the light of new challenges at the national level in terms of increased production, job creation, increased incomes and food and nutritional security, is a great opportunity for our country.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of the Democratic Republic of Congo recognizes that in our country, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals 13 and 14, the lakes, rivers, and our exclusive economic zone in the Atlantic Ocean, hold abundant water resources that can stimulate economic growth, social prosperity and environmental protection in the context of resilience to climate change, and meet the demand for goods and services of the increasing population because of demographic pressure.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of the Democratic Republic of Congo welcomes the general interest shown in the development and preservation of the resources for a sustainable blue economy, which can increase efforts to reduce poverty and improve nutritional health. To this end, it endorses and recommends the institutionalization of the Blue Belt platform and the implementation of mechanisms for its operation in order to provide African countries with socio-economic and environmental benefits by facilitating access to international and regional funding. Thank you.

Speech by Mr. Amadu DJALÓ,

Principal Adviser to the Minister of Fisheries on behalf of Mrs. The Minister of Fisheries (Guinea-Bissau)

(Speech translated from Portuguese)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Heads of the Delegations of the present countries, Representatives of the international institutions,

On behalf of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, which I represent here, I express deep gratitude for the invitation that we received to take part in this important forum.

We have shared experiences on the present and future of the oceans and also of humanity. What unites us is greater than what separates us because we share the same fate. Hence we need collective consciousness about the use of the oceans, especially the insular coastal states, and the valorization of its potential in view of the rationalization to support survival and sustainable development with the consequent improvement of the living conditions of the human race.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, Guinea Bissau is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and its exclusive economic zone is characterized by incommensurate biological diversity and potentially rich fishery resources. The confluence of multiple interests in the exploitation of these resources under the bilateral and multilateral agreements is naturally confronted with national interests, namely economic growth, for the well-being of our populations. Guinea Bissau is the first country in the world with the largest mangrove area in relative terms, the world's twelfth in absolute terms and second in Africa after Nigeria. It has protected marine areas that represent 26% of the national territory, consisting of five national parks, two natural parks of protected marine community area,

a biosphere reserve and four important wetland sites of world importance.

West Africa, particularly Guinea-Bissau, is fragile due to a lack of control of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities that threaten the conservation of the ecosystem and the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources.

We also need more data on marine resources, their location and biophysical identification, for a better planning and rational management of these resources. This is why it is imperative to bring to this event a serious debate about the marine science and technology, its biological and technological component and both are indispensable to our prospect of sustainable development.

Sustainable development implies growth of the economy for wealth distribution based on equity. The solution is to train qualified technicians and introduce new production technologies, to generate employment and qualitatively improve the living conditions of the citizen. It can be achieved with guaranteed education and health assistance, public safety and political stability, both parliamentary and social. Knowing what exists and its potential and monitoring new technologies will allow us to better control and protect the marine environment. New technologies can simultaneously create new business and new companies or reconvert existing ones, namely ship building and underwater exploration, energy prospecting and production. Our responsibilities are enormous, and the possibilities are limited, but the awareness of interdependence of life on Earth and the joint effort are fundamental to overcome the challenges of life preservation on the planet.

The point is to reach the broadest consensus in making concrete decisions, replicating and binding them in all continent, states and organization independently of the political guide of strategic and tactical economic interests. Distinguished guests, since the Rio + 20 Summit, the small coastal states have called for a more careful attention, the so-called blue economy, because it better captures the nature of their challenges and is therefore the most adequate for solving their problems.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the future does not arise spontaneously, it builds up, it urges profound changes in collective and individual activities, but it will be up to us, world leaders, heads of states and governments, ministers as representatives of nations, officials, all of us here present to demonstrate the ability to lead and act. I am fully convinced that with this conference it is time to decide on our future. Certainly, a new vision of the joint future will be considered as a strategy to jointly set priorities for action. In this sense, we rewrite and fully subscribe the terms of the project for the political designation of this meeting in Agadir because it is in conformity with the strategic plan for the development of fisheries 2015-2020. Thank you very much.

Speech by Mr. Koudjo ADANOU,

Business Manager at the Embassy of Togo in the Kingdom of Morocco (Togo)

(Speech translated from French)

Thank you Minister,
Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fishery, Rural Development and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco, Honorable Ministers, Mr. Wali, Distinguished Ambassadors, Ladies

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and Gentlemen, Experts,

Allow me to pay tribute to HIS MAJESTY THE KING MOHAMMED VI for his many African and global initiatives. The Blue Belt initiative is an innovative initiative that we highly applaud.

Mr. Minister, remind that Togo, my country, under the enlightened leadership of the President of the Republic, Mr. Faure ESSOZIMNA GNASSINGBÉ, organized, from 10 to 15 October 2016 in Lomé, the extraordinary summit of the Heads of State and Heads of Government from the African Union on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa. This summit, which saw the effective presence of 17 Heads of State, led to the adoption of the charter called the Lomé Charter which aims to fight, protect and secure the maritime area against maritime piracy, illegal fishing, illicit trafficking of all kinds, coastal erosion and other damages to the marine environment. 33 out of 54 African states have signed the Lomé Charter, which means that international cooperation and South-South cooperation are proving to be an important pillar for better protecting our oceans and promoting sustainable development.

My country, Togo, is therefore committed to the blue initiative and hopes that this blue initiative of the African Countries Group will take into account the Lomé Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa. Thank you for your kind attention.

Speech by Mr. Manuel BARANGE,
Director of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on behalf of the Managing Director of FAO

Your Excellency Mr. Aziz AKHANNOUCH, Your Excellency, Secretary of State Mr. Roy ANGELVIK, Excellencies, Ministers, Government representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocols observed.

As the Director of fisheries and Aquaculture Division of FAO, and on behalf of the Director General, it is my great pleasure to address you on the occasion of this Blue Belt high level conference.

As you know the number of hungry and undernourished in the world reached a global record of 821 million people in 2017. Africa remains the continent with the highest prevalence of undernourishment affecting more than 250 million people mostly in the sub-Saharan in Africa.

You also know that fish is crucial in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Over the top 30 fish consuming nations, 22 are classified as low income food deficit countries. Fish is food and a crucial food for the poor. But the capita fish consumption in Africa is less than half of the global average.

And warningly it is expected to decline in the next decades. I don't think I need to repeat this, but I will. It is expected to decline in the next decades. This is due to first unsustainable fishing capture practices, particularly in the Mediterranean and the central West African waters, as showed in the beautiful movie we saw early today. And second the fact that Africa's aquaculture accounts for only 2.5% of the global aquaculture production. And it

is failing to take off.

If we are to feed a 9 billion climate change dominated world, we need urgent sustainable growth, without it, the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved. It is for this reason that FAO implements with partners like the World Bank, and the African Development Bank, a Blue Growth Initiative and efforts to develop the Blue Economy in an environmentally and socially and economically sustainable manner at sea, on land and along the fish value chain.

Recent successes of the FAO DGI's implementation in Africa, include Blue Economy investments in Capo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, and ongoing efforts in Sao Tome and Principe, and a new blue hope, blue economy investment plans currently under development in Algeria and Tunisia among others.

The FAO sees the Blue Belt initiative as emerging from the blue Growth vision, and in this manner we salute and congratulate Morocco for this leadership. We are on the same boat. Now we just need to bring it safely to port.

But growth is not only achieved by expanding activities but also by making existing efforts more sustainable and efficient.

Let me give you just 2 examples of how FAO is ready to assist countries to turn the sustainability challenge into a success. The movie we saw earlier today, introduce you to the EAF Nansen Program, a 40 year old collaboration between the Kingdom of Norway and the FAO, sampling of the least observed waters in the planet, and providing management and capacity building support to in particular countries in Africa and developing world. The program is underpin by the research vessel DrFritjof Nansen, the only research vessel that flies a UN flag. In the years 2017-2018, starting in Casablanca(Morocco) the vessel has covered 424 surveys a day, trained 410 scientists from 35 countries, and sampled waters on 25 countries, many of them around this table, assessing fish stocks and marine environment and supporting the development of management plan for shared stocks. It will return to this region later in 2019.

I would like to once again express my gratitude on behalf of the world, to Norway for this crucial investment. The FAO also continues to provide the best available evidence of the state of fisheries globally and regionally to a statistic data analysis, a field program in over 100 countries, a lead in implementation of SDG 14, a climate change and adaptation program and more than 100 publications produced every year for you and with your needs in mind.

I would not like to pass the opportunity to mention the Port States Nations Agreement, the only global policy tool in the fight against IUU fishing which has been mentioned by many of you today. It is the newest policy instrument emerging from the FAO. We encourage Port States to sign this agreement which came into force in June 2016 and to benefit from our implementation program and to support up to 40 or 45 countries in the next 5 years, thanks to gracious donation of several countries including Norway. Let me finish by again congratulating the Kingdom of Morocco for its leadership and vision in this crucial objective of improving food and livelihood security to sustainable blue growth in Africa. Fish is an essential part of the solution but only if sustainably produced and used. I will

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finish by reiterating on behalf of the FAO, our desire and readiness to assist and support you, during your debates. We work for you, we get a mandate from you. Thank you for your attention.

Contribution by Mrs. Patricia RICARD,
Vice-President of the Océan-Climat Platform and President of the Institut Océanographique Paul Ricard
(Contribution translated from French)

Thank you, Minister, Ministers, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable assistance, I am very happy to attend this event, I would not have thought to see it in my lifetime, to see these topics moving forward so fast, all together. «The Blue Belt» initiative is one of the first initiatives to join the Ocean Climate platform, of which I am fortunate to be vice-president. This platform was spontaneously organized at COP 21 in Paris to bring the voice of the ocean to the heart of the climate agenda.

The ocean is the heart of the climate machine, and it took 21 climate party meetings to finally see this clear link between ocean and climate. However, we do not have a lot of time to find the right solutions, and I am a little worried about a word that was not much pronounced this afternoon and that is the word mitigation. While it is important to adapt to climate change, if we do not continue, if we do not reverse the trend, these efforts will be in vain.

I think it is urgent to see today in the necessary innovations, and when I say innovations, I would like to say breakthrough innovations, the importance of integrating the dual purpose of adaptation and mitigation. Good practices around the world, already show that when you address these two topics, you are often onto virtuous circles.

Do not forget also the importance of solutions based on nature. We thought so much that Mankind was very strong with his technologies, but it's to forget the knowledge, the wealth, the fertility and somehow, if you allow me this expression, the wisdom of the living. We must go back to the study, the study of science, we must give space to science in strategies, support decision makers who may not have the necessary scientific training, and this is why I really think the Blue Belt initiative is a safety belt for the future of humanity. You need to feed this initiative with all your good practices.

Within the Ocean Climate platform, we exchange our scientific skills. In fact, our mission is to bring the science from laboratories and universities down to the offices of decision-makers and economic actors and to raise good practices, practices from the field, from fishermen, so as to make a blue-line where actually a future is possible.

We must not forget that we are going through difficult times, we are still talking about the acidity of the oceans, the lack of oxygen, but we are not talking about the swell that will increase, this ocean that expands because of the surface temperature warming, currents that turn away. There are going to be harder times when Mankind and the sea are going to have, perhaps, another type of relationship. These times will come when walls will probably have to be erected, probably to make defense works. When you do this, do not forget to leave room for the living.

The acceleration of exceptional climatic events should not accelerate the loss of biodiversity. Also consider that when unfortunately some coasts and some parts of the world, and I am thinking particularly of the Waka coast, very stricken for some time. When there is destruction on land, imagine that underwater destruction, I mean fish habitat, is also violent. We often think of rebuilding the human habitats, we sometimes ignore the need to recreate fish habitats. Biology is not in our reflexes, we continue to see the fishery resource as a base for a globally shared economic activity, it is necessary to understand today that this base relies on living and that understanding and taking into account the need to maintain life in survival conditions is fundamental.

Finally, I would like to finish with education. We have suffered over the past 200 years of innocence, lack of awareness and knowledge of the real impact of human activities on the biosphere, we are paying the bill today. This bill, it is up to us to make it less heavy for our children, but we can have some concerns. So, as of today, register the knowledge of life, and more particularly of the ocean, climate and biodiversity in all your educational programs. Accompany policymakers in your countries with these common sense science messages so that, as there is still time, you can win the race against chaos. Thank you so much.

Contribution by Mr. Reidar TORESEN,
Director of the Centre for Development Cooperation in Fisheries, Institute for Marine Research, IMR (Norway)

Thank you.
Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,
I am not representing Norway, I am representing the Institute of Marine Research, right. So in a way I am representing knowledge, I would say. I want to address some concerns regarding knowledge in relation to what you're dealing with managers, managing fisheries, managing the oceans. And the oceans are under high pressure, it's not only fisheries, it's many sectors out there, sectors that can affect the fisheries negatively, and that should be in your concern, should be in all our concern of course, but there are sectors out there that can be negative for example litter, oil petroleum industry, shipping, aquaculture and so on. So to manage, we need knowledge, not only on fisheries resources, we need knowledge on the footprints of the human being activities on the other sectors as well. As mentioned from FAO side, we have the Dr Fritjof Nansen vessel doing research and based on a developed science plan. The development of this plan was led by FAO, and together with the partner countries. It is a very good plan not only to survey the fisheries resources but also to survey contaminants, climate change and all this sort of things and that can definitely affect the well being of the fishery resources. The Dr Fritjof Nansen is only one vessel, and the oceans are large, and I know that many of you have research vessels and are doing good activities at sea, to do science, and also I would like to say that on the Dr Fritjof Nansen, it's not Norway and FAO that do the work, Norway and FAO do the work together with local scientists onboard of this vessel. And this work is done very well, and it's very good competence, in many countries to do this work.

But what I like to call for it's that it will be very nice if that could be more active participation in ocean research in different countries. You don't need a very excellent research vessel to do that you can set up simple programs or projects to follow the quality of contaminants, climate change, or other factors that may influence these resources, or may be important

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for these resources development, or well beings in the future. But I would also like to call for some more science in the study of contaminants in fish and products. Because fish products that is the food for us and it is very important as we follow the quality and how contaminants affect the quality of these products. So let me finish by just saying that I call for you to manage not only fisheries aspects but also to communicate well with your colleagues, managing other sectors as well, because this may affect the fisheries resources and what we can get out of the sea in the future. Thank you.

Contribution by Mr. Edouardo BALGUEIRAS,
Director of the Instituto Español de Oceanografía, IEO (Spain)
 (Contribution translated from Spanish)

Dear Minister, thank you very much for inviting my institute to participate in this high-level conference and for giving me the floor so that I could speak to such an honorable audience.

Like my Norwegian colleague, I will not speak either on behalf of Spain, but on behalf of my Instituto Español de Oceanografía.

The IEO was created more than 100 years ago, and since its inception, it was very aware of the importance of the fisheries wealth on the North African coasts. This interest led in 1927 to the creation of an Oceanographic Center in the Canary Islands, which is still established there. It is the center from which all the collaboration and marine research on the African coast is conducted. I have had the pleasure and honor of working in this center for 35 years and I had the pleasure and honor of working and sharing many hours of work and cruises with many colleagues, some of whom are present in this room. From this collaboration is also born a long friendship.

During these 100 years of marine research on the African coast, during which we conducted more than 100 research cruises of all types supported by the Spanish fisheries administration, specifically the General Secretary of Fisheries, who financially supported us by the means made available throughout this trajectory. Thanks to this we have been able to observe the evolution of Africa on several levels.

We have seen how fisheries evolved from sustainable fisheries in the 1920s-1930s to over-exploited fisheries, leading to other resources (such as octopus) that are now economically very important on the Mauritanian coast just as an example. We also saw how different organizations have committed to sustainable resource management. I would like to remind you, in this respect, that we have regional institutions and organizations, such as CECAF, the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, which have been working for many years in the interest of sustainable management of these resources. This sometimes-difficult work was made possible by the willingness, commitment and enthusiasm of researchers in the region.

I want to say this here because we have to admit it, and today we are confronted with many issues that have already been mentioned throughout this afternoon's contributions and whose resolution cannot be achieved without science.

Concerning climate change, illegal fishing, overexploitation of resources, etc., we are

undeniably confronted with these problems and I think that the region has enough knowledge and experience to solve many of these issues, and that we also have many instruments that allow us to connect with each other.

I am very pleased with this declaration of unanimous interest for the blue growth in favor of the sustainability of marine resources and ecosystem. And I am happy because it will give a new momentum to these scientific institutions, which have been working in the region for years. I think the FAO representative mentioned it: we have to act locally. It is an effort that I am calling on states in order to support their research institutes and help them maintain permanent observation systems that provide us with not only quantity data but also reliable data to perform our analyzes. We will then strengthen these subregional and regional institutions with which and in which we collaborate. I think we have the capacity, we have the knowledge, we have the means, and the only thing we need is the commitment of everyone we serve and the society you represent. Thank you.

Contribution by Mr. Grigory MASLYANKIN,
Deputy Director of the Atlantic Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography,
AtlantNIRO (Russia)
 (Contribution translated from Russian)

Dear Ministers,
 Mr. AKHANNOUCH,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,

I represent the Scientific Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography which conducts complex scientific research on the biological system of the global ocean, which allows us to engage in fishing activities and to exploit its resources with a precautionary approach. Our Russian institute makes an important contribution to the study of natural biological resources stocks so that their exploitation is carried out at an optimal level of precaution.

Of course, any exploitation of fisheries resources must be based on upstream research. Science is the basis of all human activity, especially when it concerns the global ocean. The ocean is the cradle of life, it is the source of biodiversity for all living organisms on the planet, it is 70% of the planet Earth, and in order to protect the ocean, we must study it. Therefore, the study of the ecosystem should be carried out first of all, of course. This would ensure the rational exploitation of resources if necessary.

It is important to point out that there are numerous regional organizations in the world that conduct scientific research and with which there is a need for close cooperation, including those operating in Africa.

In addition, there should be close interaction within the framework of the concluded Fisheries Agreements. If we coordinate all the efforts within the framework of the regional organizations and in the framework of the interactions of all the countries, we will probably reach the objectives put forward by the «Blue Belt» initiative. Of course, this initiative is very important.

Probably, the time has come for this initiative to work and bear fruit for the benefit of the global ocean and the whole of humanity, so that we can look forward to the future

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without problems knowing that in the future, partly thanks to the Blue Belt initiative, a better world awaits us.
Thank you.

Contribution by Mr. Abdelmalek FARAJ,
Director of the Institut National de Recherche Halieutique, INRH (Kingdom of Morocco)
(Contribution translated from French)

Mr. Minister, Your Excellencies, Ministers and Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to speak.

As a research institute, our mission is to provide scientific advice to support decision making to ensure the sustainability of fish stocks. Today, it is urgent to act and it made us as scientists question our working methods. It is not only about the excellence of scientific knowledge, but also about opening up to operators and managers to better understand their needs.

This is where the idea of this platform of the Blue Belt initiative came from, the will to reinforce multidisciplinary and better understand the ecosystem approach. We must unite to better understand each other and this is where we insist to be the starting point to implement our objectives: to unite around this platform for its implementation.
Thank you.

Contribution by Mrs. Zakia DRIOUICH,
General Secretary of the Maritime Fishery Department - MAPMDREF (Kingdom of Morocco)

Mr. President, Honorable Ministers, Mr. Wali, Mr. President of the Region, Honorable guests,

Reading of the Agadir Declaration

