COMM 12 - Report ANNEX 10f

Statement of the ILO to the 12th Commission Meeting of SPRFMO

ILO intervention

As ILO pointed out at the last meeting of the SPRFMO Commission, the promotion of minimum labour standards in the fishing sector has become a key element in ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of resources and safeguarding the marine ecosystem, which is the mandate of this Commission.

Echoing the words expressed by the Chair of this Commission in his opening remarks, SPRFMO needs to be a modern organization, and to this end, there are some important issues to be addressed such as climate change, labour issues, among others.

Within the framework of the joint FAO, ILO, and IMO Working Group on IUU fishing and Related Matters, the three organizations have collectively recognized the link between safety, labour and IUU issues, and the need for these issues to be addressed together in order to be effective. Facing these issues together help guard against overexploitation of fish stocks, protect the people catching them, and help ensure that all captains and crews on the ocean and in port are operating under the same set of rules.

Article 25, paragraph 4 of the Convention of the SPRFMO provides that *"each member of the Commission is encouraged to ensure that fishing vessels flying its flag operate in the Convention Area in accordance with applicable international obligations, and with regard to relevant recommendations and guidelines, regarding safety at sea for vessels and their crews".*

It is well-known that labour violations and crimes such as forced labour may occur concurrently with IUU fishing practices in the fishing sector. Therefore, it is worth paying attention to poor working conditions and mistreatment of crews, including forced labour and child labour on board fishing vessels.

In this regard, would be of an advantage for the SPRFMO to discuss on this important aspect and to consider that the sustainability of the fishing sector needs to incorporate labour and human rights issues in accordance with international Declarations and Conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as well as the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (No. 188).

The 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work confirms that all ILO Members have an obligation, arising from the very fact of membership in the organization, to respect, promote, and realize, in good faith, the principles concerning fundamental labour rights, such as the elimination of forced labour, abolition of child labour, the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, and the promotion of a safe and healthy working environment, among others.

In that sense, the adoption of a CMM on labour standards would not only meet the Commission's objective but would also bring the SPRFMO in line with other efforts been done by other RFMOs in this area, such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

The ILO welcomes this proposal and stands ready to support SPRFMO by providing, if necessary, technical assistance and international expertise in this area.