

Mr Chairman,

It is a great honor and pleasure for me as Fisheries Minister of the Faroe Islands to address COFI here today.

I welcome COFI's dedicated focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 14 and its targets are of course central to our priorities and visions for sustainable development in the Faroe Islands, as an island nation so heavily dependent on the ocean and its valuable resources.

On the national level, we have recently introduced a comprehensive reform and reorientation of our fisheries policy. In line with the interconnected SDGs, and in particular SDG 14, the major emphasis is on ensuring sustainable use of our marine living resources in national waters, as well as in the exploitation of fishing possibilities outside our national jurisdiction. The focus is on environmental protection and conservation, economic growth and innovation, and the social dimensions of sustainability.

In our international cooperation, we see many ways to further SDG 14 together with others. As a small island nation with a large ocean around us, we are particularly keen to collaborate with Small Island Developing States on fisheries and aquaculture development and innovation, with target 14.7 in mind. We are working to focus our policies on development cooperation in this regard, also with a view to working more closely with FAO and relevant international Island and Blue Growth networks.

Mr Chairman, in 2015 the Faroe Islands took the lead in the Nordic fisheries and aquaculture cooperation, with the focus on Growth in the Blue Bio-economy. I am pleased to report that we have had a very successful programme over the past 3 years. This culminated in October last year with the Large Ocean Forum on Blue Growth in Malta, which I chaired. This was a very productive gathering of experts from Nordic Atlantic countries and a number of Small Island Developing States, including Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Cabo Verde, Seychelles, Mauritius and Grenada. I will be explaining more about the Forum at tomorrow's Side Event, Blue Growth in SIDS. But let me say, that the Forum would not have been possible without the invaluable collaboration we have had with the FAO, as well as with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Mr Chairman, I would like to urge all COFI members and the FAO to embrace the concept of Large Ocean Nations and to help us promote it. Rather than focusing on our limitations in terms of land mass or small populations, we need to focus on our strengths, responsibilities and the huge potential we have in the enormous marine areas we control. We want to facilitate more direct exchange of knowledge and experiences from islands-to-islands, as Large Ocean Nations, and with a focus on Blue bio-economy. How can we make better use of our living marine resources? How can we turn post-harvest waste and un- or underutilized resources into valuable food and other commodities that can contribute to economic growth in our societies and a more sustainable use of the seas? We have the exciting example of Blue Fashion on display here this week – bringing sustainability and creativity together to generate new economic potential. I genuinely believe there is a great deal of hands-on collaboration we can develop with other islands around the world.

We look forward to working with COFI members and the FAO more closely in the time ahead. One forthcoming opportunity will be the second Large Ocean Nations Forum, which we plan to hold in the Faroe Islands in early September 2019. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

