

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: The Question of Sustainable Fisheries

Student Officer: Dongwook Kim

Position: President of Economic and Social Council

Introduction

Ensuring sustainable fisheries around the world is a very significant question. Many people rely on fisheries as their primary food, and many people rely on fisheries as their source of income. According to the International Labor Organization, at least 35 million people around the world have a part-time or a full-time job at the fishing industry.¹ This labour is demanding and dangerous, and many people die from the hazardous waves and bad weather conditions. The 35 million people are not the only ones involved in the fish industry, there are many others indirectly involved. However, if we increase the scope to the larger scale, there are many more workers that are involved in the fishing industry. For example, people who work in the market specifically in the fishing corner, people who own a restaurant that specializes in marine products, and etc.

Furthermore, there are many other countries in which fish has a specialized value on their culture. For example, especially in East Asia, Japan is famously known for their sushi and sashimi, and their cultural foods are based on their marine products and they have been historically known for their outstanding products on the marine products. Although unsustainable fisheries might only lead to the limitation of production of these products, but it will directly affect the Japanese culture and world reputation as it is losing a mean in which it can advertise itself to the world and have influence to the global culture. So the delegates should be in mind that ensuing fisheries does not only have monetary and ecological value, but it also has cultural and traditional values that might not have direct effect to the economy, but a significant indirect effect and limitation of a country's stance in some cases.

Fish also serves as a main source of protein to many people. In fact, the Food and Agricultural Organization estimated the population that relies on fish as their primary source of animal protein to at least one billion people worldwide in 2000, and this number has substantially increased in the past decades and is projected to increase in the future as well. For these people, the delegates should find a way to ensure the sustainable but manageable production of fish.²

¹ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_075579/lang--en/index.htm

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1084135/>

Definition of Key Terms

Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), MPA is defined as any area of sea dedicated to protect and maintain the biodiversity and cultural resources that is managed in other effective and legal means.

Sustainability

The definition of sustainability in this question, is whether something can be maintained at a certain level for a long time. In this case, the level will be chosen specifically by the delegates, and the delegates should propose a method in how they will maintain the aforementioned level.

Fishermen

It is up to the delegate's choice in whether they will focus on fishermen that do it for a living, or they would include fishermen that fish for a hobby. However, it is recommended that the delegates include clauses that addresses the problems caused by the individual fishermen, and how they will be resisted from disturbing the ocean and affecting endangered species.

Inland/Marine Fishermen

Although it is up to the delegate's choice in whether they would like to focus on marine and/or inland fishermen, it is recommended that the resolution is slightly more focused on the marine due to its large proportion in the market and degree of damage it is taken from the human actions.

Sustainable Development Goal 14

The sustainable development goals are a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.³ Goal 14 in the SDG is specifically related to life underwater, and is aimed to maintain the biodiversity within the ocean. The issue we are discussing in the committee is basically a part of this goal 14.

³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

Explanation of the Question

The question is on how to create a sustainable fishery and how they can maintain such fishery. Although it might be possible to create a fishery that seems sustainable, the delegates should focus on regulations and rules that individual governments should impose individually or as an alliance of nations to ensure that sustainability is continuable.

As fisheries are the primary source of fish, it is very crucial for the delegates to ensure sustainability in the fisheries, especially if they are representing a less developed country (LDC) that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is heavily relying on the primary sector.

As previously stated in the introduction, many people heavily rely on direct and indirect markets relating to fish, and also heavily rely on the rich source of protein it provides for a relatively cheap price. Moreover, fish takes part of the culture of many countries, and therefore it is crucial to sustain the fisheries to preserve culture and tradition.

Diverse areas fisheries affect

It is easy to believe and think that fisheries will only affect people who rely on fish economically and nutritionally will get affected from this issue, it certainly is not. As stated in the introduction, fish also takes part of cultures and traditions of certain countries, and these traditions can be lost due to unsustainable fisheries. Already in the world, many species are endangered and illegal to capture. However, some illegal organizations try to capture these marine organisms to sell it at a high price. Although we could simply regulate the illegal organizations, it is also crucial to understand that these organizations are only hunting because there is a high demand but low supply, which makes the product highly profitable and worth the high risk. If the fisheries were maintained at a sustainable level at a first place, would have this issue rose at all?

Furthermore, the society has become globalized and it is now common to consume food from other cultures and nations. Food serves as a big part in globalization and could be used as a mean to promote a country which can lead to higher reputation and increased tourists. For some countries, where their famous food is relied on the species of ocean, unsustainable fisheries will mean that they will have to limit their production within their nation, which will inevitably lead to a lower degree of country promotion. Although there might be a certain degree of exaggeration in this example, it is clear that fisheries will not only affect a small population's economic status and health status, but it can lead to a delay of globalization and halt of a country's promotion.

Sustainability

Although already emphasized many times, the most important aspect of this question is whether it is sustainable. The delegates should focus on what they would define as sustainability, and how they would ensure that the fisheries are sustainable. They should also look at how much each country relies on the fish income wise and nutrition wise. After checking, they should find a way that can resolve their issue without affecting the country income and nutrition wise.

Management of Marine Protected Areas

Although Marine Protected Areas are currently widely placed within the oceans, it is still not enough to preserve the fish species and its natural habitat. According to the National Ocean Service, marine protected areas span a range of habitats, including areas such as the open ocean, inter-tidal zones, estuaries, and Great Lakes. The usage of Marine Protected Areas will help maintain a certain population of the endangered species, but it is only imposed after a species becomes endangered. It would be useful for the society to create marine protected areas in habitats that are projected to have endangered species, rather than creating marine protected areas where endangered species already exist. This will lead to prevent the problem itself, rather than resolving a problem after it has already occurred.



Clear in this image, Marine Protected Areas compose small bulks of area rather than a huge bulk of ocean (South Africa's new declared MPAs)

Illegal and Ineffective fishing methods

There are many illegal fishing methods present in the world. One of the most popular methods is using a battery to stun the fish. If the battery explodes, or exposes electricity into the water, fish in a certain area do not die, but get stunned and rise above the water, which makes it simple for the fishermen to hunt the fish. Although some people might believe this is effective, as fishermen can only hunt the fish they need, which will lead to less waste of fish. However, many fish are damaged during this event and some that get stunned continuously eventually die due to the stress.

Another way that exploits the ocean is bycatching. Bycatch is when fishermen do not intend to catch certain types of fish, but their method makes them unintentionally catch certain fish and marine species that is found later after organized, and is hard to let free. These are usually methods done with the help of the net, and many unwanted animals suffocated in this net without any intentions. Many turtles, dolphins, and endangered species suffer from bycatching and this exploitation of unwanted endangered species accelerates the extinction of certain species. Although bycatching has significant problems like aforementioned, the effectivity is irresistible to many fishermen. It is very effective as it can catch mass population of fish at a single action so to the fishermen, where profitability is their utmost goal, they would not give up the method that creates bycatch because of the scarification of few endangered species.

Key Member States and NGOs Involved and Their Views

International Labour Organization

Although the International Labour Organization is not directly involved in this issue, they care about the workers directly and indirectly involved in the fish market, and therefore they care to a certain degree that the issue is resolved. They provide us with quantitative measures that we can regard when talking about the people that are economically dependent on fisheries.

Oceana

Oceana is the largest organization in this field; it is solely devoted in promoting and working for marine conservation.⁴ It was established in 2001 by multiple funds and is involved in efforts to stop ocean pollution. It also campaigns to protect vulnerable places in the ocean, and work for the establishment of more MPAs to protect these vulnerable places.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

It is one of the world's leading conservation organizations. However, it is not solely devoted to the conservation of species in the ocean, but works to conserve the general wildlife of the world. One of their main priorities is to collaborate with fishing companies and scientists to understand and meet sustainability levels that are required for the ocean.⁵

⁴ <https://dipndive.com/blog/10-amazing-organizations-fighting-to-save-our-oceans.html>.

⁵ <https://dipndive.com/blog/10-amazing-organizations-fighting-to-save-our-oceans.html>

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The United Nations Environment Programme is a leading organization in the environment field, and leads other organizations and involved individuals to head the right way by doing research and discussions. It works hard in strengthening environmental standards which will eventually protect the environment, including the ocean and biodiversity within it.⁶

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society

It is a world marine life conservation organization and it is famous for its straightforward actions and propulsion. It tries to stop illegal activities done by firms to hunt high profitable endangered species, and its primary goal is to ensure the biodiversity of ocean and ensure the species survival for future generations. Although they do not work directly for the fisheries, their action of fighting against organizations that violate the law is crucial in maintaining and ensuring sustainable fisheries from external factors such as human greed.⁷

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1974	Many groundfish species record the lowest level of population ever recorded
1976	After the enactment of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act (MSA), the number of groundfish trawl feet significantly increased
1990	Groundfish exploitation reach its highest in history, and stock biomass reached its absolute lowest.
1995	A resolution was implemented in the General Assembly of the United Nations and this resolution was used worldwide for decades until the modern era to serve as base of solving the issue and to help maintain sustainable fisheries. It is referred to the 1995 agreement for the implementation of provisions of the UN ⁸

⁶ <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/08/unep-united-nations-environment-programme/>

⁷ <https://seashepherd.org/>

⁸ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/49/118>

- 2009 Due to the enactment of many laws and severe weather conditions, most fishermen had limited days to actually fish, and many fish species were therefore underfished.⁹
- 2018 Scientists and experts are currently working hard to solve the issue and many regulations on the fisheries were placed. However, the problem of underfishing of certain species due to the low profitability is also happening and these bycaught species are wasted. Its actions are based on the aforementioned agreement.¹⁰

The timeline above should be used for the delegates to grasp the general idea of this issue and also keep in mind the flow of this issue. How the issue happened in the first place, how it was dealt in the past, and how it is getting dealt currently. The delegates should keep in mind and read over the 1995 agreement as it serves as a base for the future resolutions and also work as the fundamentals of the solutions that are currently implemented and the future solutions that will be implemented.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Responsible fisheries and illegal, unregulated and unreported fisheries, May 2000. **(A/AC.259/1)**
- Actions taken by states and regional fisheries management August 2011 **(A/66/307)**
- Fisheries by-catch and discards and their impact on the sustainable use of the world's living marine resources February 1995 **(A/RES/49/118)**¹¹
- Report on the activities of the team of specialists on sustainable fisheries since the twenty-fourth plenary of the United Nations centre for trade facilitation and electronic business November 2019 **(ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/25)**
- Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 agreement for the implementation of provisions of the United Nations June 2017 **(A/RES/72/72)**
- **Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 agreement for the implementation of provisions of the United Nations November 2018 (A/RES/72/125)**

It is advised that the delegates should read over some of the resolutions. However, the delegates do not have to read the resolution (A/RES/72/72) as the following one is a more recent resolution that has the according modifications. It is recommended that the delegates read only a few of the

⁹ <https://www.catchshareindicators.org/northeast/about-the-fishery/history-and-timeline/>

¹⁰ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/72/125>

¹¹ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/49/118>

preambulatory clauses but not specifically focus on trying to read the massive amount of preambles. Rather, the delegates should read the operative clauses that are more relevant in solving the issue and worth of debate when the committee is in session.

Although delegates can use the resolutions stated above, they should not try to copy and paraphrase from the resolution but only use it as a tool to grasp the idea of the issue and create their personal and unique solutions that are worth debating.

It is also recommended that before or after writing the resolution, the delegate should check the resolutions above or search the internet to make sure that the United Nations are not already implementing the strategy and if the United Nation is, they should develop further on it and make it more plausible and creative.¹²

Possible Solutions

There are many possible solutions to this issue, however it is the delegate's duty to find a creative one, or build on one of the solutions that are already in place.

Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

One possible solution to this issue is to increase the Marine Protected Areas (MPA). MPAs are created in the current society to protect certain types of fish, or for the purpose of research in many cases. As our committee is currently focusing on ensuring sustainable fisheries in the economic and ecological way, it will be great to increase these MPAs in oceans that have a focused species of endangered species, or possible endangered species.

Education

Another possible solution is to educate the fishermen on how to protect fish species, and explain to them the continuous decreasing of fish will lead to a huge economic disaster for the sector, and will also lead to an ecological disaster. Creating public service announcements, leaflets, presentations; including education regarding fish in mandatory education, high school education, and specific education to people who want to major in an area related to marine life will help resolve this issue.

The issue of sustainable fisheries derive purely from human. Whether it is the economic sustainability problem that is happening or ecological sustainability problem that is happening, it is both caused by indirect and direct human influence. For example, the economic sustainability problems currently occurring is due to the overfishing done by farmers and tourists, and this could be resolved by the decrease in greed of the human population. The ecological sustainability problem that is currently occurring is due to the plastic waste and general waste done by the population. Many of the oceans are suffering from the plastic waste and general waste that humans are producing on a daily basis, and it

¹² <https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>

takes hundreds of years for them to degrade. If humans create less plastic waste and use biodegradable materials from now on, many of the fish will not die by the waste created by the human population.

Another way to solve this issue would be to help educate the fishermen on the most effective way to fish. Although it might look positive to the fishermen to catch as much fish as possible at the moment as the ocean is a shared resource and it is mainly treated as a first come first base, it would be beneficial for the farmers if they all decrease their fishing and manage the ocean most effectively so the fish can reproduce more before the massive farming so that the population can maintain a certain level.

Possible Regulations/Limitations

If this is not possible due to human greed and psychology, it would be beneficial to create a certain level of limit for the fishermen to catch a day/week/month. This will lead to a decrease in fishermen accidents as they would not try to overload their boat; it will lead in maintaining a certain amount of fish population as government agents and many people would thoroughly analyze the amount of fish that can be captured; it will lead to the best economic outcome for both the fishermen and the general population as no fish will be wasted due to exploitation of farmers.

Another possible solution to resolve this issue and maintain sustainable fisheries is to limit methods and create stronger regulations that will make this work. For example, as stated above, it would be beneficial to limit methods like fishing with the usage of battery and methods that can cause excessive bycatching. It would be perfectly acceptable to ban fishing that uses battery but it would need strong regulations, that the delegates should come up with, to ensure the society that this prohibition is actually taking place. It would also be beneficial to prohibit the exploitation of fishing with nets. Experts and governments should investigate areas that has limited chance of bycatching, and should limit fishermen to use nets only in certain areas: a similar concept with marine protected areas. This will lead to less exploitation of the ocean and it will decrease the unwanted deaths of marine species including the endangered ones.

These are only some suggestions that the delegates can develop upon; it would be beneficial for the committee if delegates bring up creative solutions that the committee can discuss upon.

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