

## Next month's ocean conference eyes cutting \$35 billion in fisheries subsidies – UN trade officials

10 May 2017 – Harmful fishing subsidies that contribute to overfishing are estimated to be as high as \$35 billion, fisheries experts from the United Nations trade and development agency today said, highlighting one of the key issues that will be debated at next month's Ocean Conference.

“If you consider that the total export of fish and seafood products is \$146 billion, we are talking about that of each \$5 in fish products, \$1 is subsidized,” David Vivas of the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)) told reporters in Geneva.

“So it's not a small amount. People are paying very expensively for a fish. They pay it by the dish and with their taxes,” continued Mr. Vivas, a Legal Affairs Officer in UNCTAD's Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch.

This financial motivation creates “a race to the bottom” as fleets compete against each other to harvest increasing amounts of fish “at a time when seafood is already a scarce resource.

The subsidies “create incentives to deplete resources faster than if there weren't the subsidies,” Mr. Vivas said.

The international community is harvesting fish at unsustainable biological levels, according to UNCTAD. The Mediterranean Sea is about 70 per cent exploited; the Black Sea 90 per cent.

Roughly 56 per cent of all fish products come from wild harvest, with the remaining amount farmed, according to figures cited by the UN.

“The demand remains quite strong, mainly from the Asian region. Hence countries are not only going to NY to consider, issuing a political signal,” said Lucas Assunção in reference to [The Ocean Conference](#), “they are very concerned about this considerable market.”

The topic of fishery subsidies is “very contentious,” said Mr. Assunção, who heads UNCTAD's Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch.

It involves requesting countries to provide information on what subsidies they provide and prohibiting those that contribute to overfishing, as well as potentially giving differential treatment to developing countries.

UNCTAD is working towards a multilateral fisheries agreement that will be discussed at The Ocean Conference in New York in early June, and finalized at the World Trade Organization's ([WTO](#)) Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires

this December.

The idea of such an agreement has support from a number of countries and regional blocs, including the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group (ACP), the European Union, and Pakistan.

In addition to fishery subsidies, the UN trade agency is focusing in illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, and access to markets.

“Not all countries participate equally,” Mr. Assunção said of the nearly \$150 billion market for fish and marine products. “[The oceans are] a global common good that is not benefitting all countries that have coasts in equitable ways.”

Some Governments have said that they will use The Ocean Conference as an opportunity to seek access to bigger markets. The issue is of particular concern for Pacific and Caribbean island states where processing and transporting goods is often more expensive.

The main areas of work at the Ocean Conference will be a political call to action, a segment on partnership dialogues and voluntary commitments.

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## [UN-backed network brings together thousands to help tackle mosquito-borne diseases](#)

10 May 2017 – In an effort to escalate the global fight against mosquito-borne diseases, the United Nations environment agency together with partners has launched a new collaborative platform that seeks to track and control the vector responsible for close to 2.7 million deaths annually.

Dubbed the *Global Mosquito Alert*, the new initiative brings together thousands of scientists and volunteers from around the world working against mosquito borne viruses, such as Zika, yellow fever, chikungunya, dengue, malaria and the West Nile virus.

“The Alert will offer for the first time a shared platform to allow people on the ground to share their observations and information with a large body of scientists to help them monitor emerging trends in real time and leverage citizen science for the global surveillance and control of disease-carrying mosquitos,” said Jacqueline McGlade, the Director of Science at the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), in a [news release](#) Monday announcing the launch.

Built and maintained by UNEP, the platform provides real-time open data

access to policy makers and the general public, using distributed networks, cloud computing, big data and improved search functions.

It is also the first global platform dedicated to citizen science techniques to tackle the monitoring of mosquito populations, which according to UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) estimates cause up to 500 million cases a year.

According to UNEP, information generated will help mitigate risk and reduce health threats while opening up an opportunity for the general public to contribute their mosquito observations and possible solutions.

This crowd data will augment information already available from Government and public health sources.

The Global Mosquito Alert will be supported by a consortium that includes Mosquito Alert, Spain; MosquitoWEB Portugal; Zanzamapp in Italy; Muggenradar in the Netherlands; the Globe Observer Mosquito Habitat Mapper, USA/International and the Invasive Mosquito Project USA.

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## [Weather, climate and water challenges in spotlight at annual session of UN weather agency council](#)

10 May 2017 – Strengthening weather and climate services to protect lives, property and the economy from increasingly extreme and unusual weather is among the pressing issues being discussed at the annual session of the United Nations weather agency's coordinating body, which kicked off today in Geneva.

The [Sixty Ninth Session](#) of the World Meteorological Organization ([WMO](#)) Executive Council, which runs in the Swiss city through 17 May, will also provide an opportunity to help shape the agency's contribution to the global agenda on disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change.

Highlighting efforts to strengthen partnerships within the UN system, WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas [said](#) the agency seeks to meet the needs of development and humanitarian agencies for more information on El Niño and La Niña events and seasonal predictions, as well as warnings of extreme weather through a potential global alarm system.

Such an alarm system – if implemented at a global level – could serve as an aggregator and repository of authoritative weather warnings and related alerts worldwide.

Mr. Taalas went on to say that WMO will seek to increase the profile of its

expertise on water and ocean affairs, and bolster research, while continuing to provide scientific advice on the state of the climate.

“We have seen a number of records broken in terms of temperatures and low Arctic and Antarctic sea ice. Sea level rise is accelerating,” he said, also warning on the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, and stressing that the benchmark Global Atmosphere Watch observing station at Mauna Loa, Hawaii, recently reached more than 410 parts per million.

CO<sub>2</sub> levels had previously reached the 400 parts per million barrier for certain months of 2016 and in certain locations but never before on a global average basis for the entire year, trapping heat and causing the earth to warm further. Carbon dioxide is the single most important greenhouse gas emitted by human activities.

#### ***Extreme weather events***

Extreme weather events are on the increase, Mr. Taalas stressed. Indeed, on the eve of the Executive Council session, Tropical Cyclone Donna reached the equivalent of Category Five status in the South Pacific – the strongest late-forming cyclone on record in the region.

Besides temperatures, we also need to focus on rainfall issues,” he continued, noting the severe drought in parts of Africa and Mongolia, as well as flooding in [Colombia](#) and [Peru](#) and, most recently, in Canada.

#### ***Year of Polar Prediction***

One of the highlights of the meeting will be the launch of the Year of Polar Prediction – a coordinated international drive to improve predictions of weather, climate and ice conditions in the Arctic and Antarctic.

The remoteness and prevalence of harsh weather and climate conditions contribute to making the Polar Regions the poorest observed in the world while, according to the WMO, there is a high level of public interest – especially among youth – about how rapid climate changes at high latitudes affect the weather and climate in the rest of the world. The expansion of human activities into the Polar Regions is also increasing the demand for more information and better predictions.

The Year of Polar Prediction is part of the 10 year international [Polar Prediction Project](#) and aims to minimize the environmental risks associated with rapid climate change in Polar Regions and to close the current gaps in polar forecasting capacity.

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# UN condemns deadly attack on peacekeepers in Central African Republic

10 May 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has strongly condemned an attack against a convoy of the UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic (CAR) that left four dead, one missing and 10 others evacuated.

“Attacks against United Nations peacekeepers may constitute a war crime,” Mr. Guterres [said](#) through his spokesperson yesterday on the attack perpetrated by suspected anti-Balaka elements against a convoy of the UN Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission ([MINUSCA](#)) on 8 May.

He called on the CAR authorities to investigate the attack “executed on the Rafai-Bangassou axis, in the country’s south east” in order to swiftly bring those responsible to justice.

Mr. Guterres offered his deepest condolences to the bereaved families and the Governments of the concerned troop contributing countries, and wished a swift recovery to the wounded.

The Secretary-General also reiterated his support to the actions of MINUSCA to protect civilians and stabilise the Central African Republic, and called “on all parties to heed President Faustin Archange Touadéra’s call to cease violence and work together towards the stability of the country.”

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013.

Also today, President of the UN General Assembly Peter Thomson arrived in CAR “to show solidarity with our United Nations people on the ground, particularly our peacekeepers.”

General Assembly President Peter Thomson along with National Assembly President Karim Meckassoua, Prime Minister Simplicie Sarandji and Head of MINUSCA Parfait Onanga-Anyanga visit wounded UN peacekeepers. Photos: Claude Adrien De Mun/MINUSCA

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Accompanied by the President of the National Assembly, Karim Meckassoua, the Prime Minister, Simplicie Sarandji and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Mr. Thomson

went to MINUSCA's military hospital to [visit the bedside](#) of the UN peacekeepers that were wounded during the attack on their convoy.

According to the Mission, Mr. Thomson, on behalf of the Organization, took the opportunity to salute the dedication of peacekeepers engaged in all theatres of operation in the name of peace.

He went on to note that he is in CAR to spread the word on the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), "but I'm also here I think you will hear from me those strong messages on sustainable development and on the solidarity that we have with what the UN mission is here."

"The United Nations is here to help with the recovery of Central Africa, and I'm here to underline that role that the United Nations has here," he added.

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## [On World Migratory Bird Day, UN spotlights common destiny for wildlife and people](#)

10 May 2017 – A healthy planet for migratory birds means a healthy planet for people, as they share the habitats on the Earth, the heads of two United Nations-backed environmental treaties said, marking World Migratory Bird Day.

"If we commit ourselves to sustainable development and preserve the habitats that we share with migratory birds, both wildlife and people will benefit, because their future is our future," [said](#) the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species ([CMS](#)), Bradnee Chambers, in a press release.

Initiated in 2006, the [World Day](#) is celebrated each year to highlight the need for international cooperation to conserve migratory birds and their habitats for the benefit of mankind.

CMS and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement ([AEWA](#)) "two intergovernmental wildlife treaties administered by UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#))" organize the campaign in cooperation with a number of partners.

The theme this year is 'Their Future is Our Future' "A Healthy Planet for Migratory Birds and People, which is closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), adopted by UN Member States in 2015 as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity.

Migratory birds face an increasing number of threats while travelling huge distances. Their intercontinental flyways include key stopover sites that are

essential for migratory birds to rest and refuel before continuing their journey. But land-reclamation and changes in global agricultural practices as well as poaching are causing habitat losses.

Habitat loss at stopover sites along the shores of the American Atlantic Coast have prompted a sharp 80 per cent population decline in the North American breeding populations of the Red Knot since 2000.

In the African Sahel, migratory waterbirds, such as the Garganey Duck, are hunted to ensure food security for people in the region.

Engaging local communities to practise sustainable hunting and in conserving waterbirds and their threatened wetland habitats is a core aspect of AEWA activities in Africa, said Executive Secretary of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) Jacques Trouvilliez.