



CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

High-level Meeting

-- Promoting the Blue Bioeconomy – Making Best Use of Ocean Opportunities – Harpa, Reykjavik, Iceland, 13th of September 2017

1. The Icelandic Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Ms. Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, on behalf of the Government of Iceland, convened a High-level Meeting on promotion of the Blue bioeconomy in Reykjavik on the 13th of September 2017. The Meeting was organized in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Directorate General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the United Nations University, and supported by the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Participants also included representatives from Bangladesh, Canada (both at federal level and from the states of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island), Capo Verde, Costa Rica, Nigeria, State of Penang Malaysia, United Nations Industrial Development Organization UNIDO, and the World Bank.
2. The meeting commenced with a welcome address by the chair of the first session of the meeting, Mr. Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Iceland. The minister stressed the importance of responsible and sustainable utilization of ocean resources. “It is our responsibility to use them in a sustainable manner and make every effort to extract maximum value along the value chain” the minister said. He also emphasized that as means to address environmental and economic challenges, different institutions and countries have initiated Blue bioeconomy strategies identifying opportunities for blue growth in areas such as fisheries and aquaculture, blue biotechnology, renewable energy, research and innovation. “By promoting and implementing these strategies we can change our tomorrow and through innovations in bio-technology we can amplify our achievements even more.”
3. The address was followed by a keynote lecture by Ray Hilborn, Professor in the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences at the University of Washington in the United States, under the heading; “Fisheries management – which countries pass and which ones fail?”. The professor gave an overview of how fisheries are managed around the world and showed that areas with strong fisheries management have rebuilt stocks, whereas stocks in areas with less effective fisheries management are often declining and generally overfished. This great diversity meant that there is no one state of the world's fisheries, but rather various different states of affairs in different areas around the world. Professor Hilborn then addressed the challenges that different states face when moving towards improved fisheries management.
4. Participants at the meeting expressed concern over the challenges many states continue to face in improving fisheries governance, including combating IUU fisheries. A number of participants described the challenges they were facing in developing further their blue sector, including fisheries, fish-processing and aquaculture. It was noted that, in many states, some but limited potential lies in expanding the current fisheries. However a more significant economic benefit could accrue to many states and regions by transitioning to higher value-

added and more sustainable fisheries. Dr. Tumi Tómasson, Director of the United Nations University Fisheries Training Programme, moderated these discussions amongst the participants.

5. The second session of the meeting commenced with a keynote lecture given by dr. Anna Kristín Daníelsdóttir, Director of Research and Innovation at MATÍS - Icelandic Food and Biotech R&D, entitled: “What does a strong Blue bioeconomy require?” Dr. Daníelsdóttir recognized that the basis of a strong Blue bioeconomy is effective resource management and then turned to issues such as: how value can be added to marine resources throughout the whole of the value chain; the possibility to incentivize 100% utilization of marine resources and thereby increase food security in a sustainable manner and drive economic growth; and, the competence and infrastructure that is important in that regard.
6. Participants, encouraged by dr. Daníelsdóttir’s lecture, spoke of new opportunities in reducing waste and increasing value to fisheries products, where a target of 100% utilization could be useful. They also spoke of the importance of making use of underutilized resources such as seaweed and plankton. It was recognized that substantive investment is needed to release the potential of new and emerging products and processes e.g. the establishment of biorefineries and that such transformation can be hampered by social, structural or legal factors. A note was also made of existing and potential programs aimed at encouraging and supporting innovation in the seafood sector, with a value-chain approach, at national, regional and global levels. The importance of training programs and other educational initiatives for people occupied in the seafood sector was also mentioned.
7. Participants acknowledged that transparency is necessary in the seafood sector and that traceability was important to combat fraud. It was also acknowledged that market competitiveness will in coming years be affected by needs to adapt and predict to emerging consumer trends including increase in E-commerce and the effects of social media.
8. Participants emphasized that there was a lot of commonality between the seafood sector in their respective states and regions which therefore could benefit from increased cooperation and the setting up of new partnerships.
9. Participants recognized the need to take a food system and value chain approach where innovation at all stages should be encouraged. Social issues, such as ensuring social equity, gender equality and inclusiveness should also be encited. John Ryder, Head of the Fish Markets, Trade and Products Branch, Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division, FAO, moderated these discussions amongst the participants.
10. In her closing address, the chair of the second session of the meeting, the Icelandic Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Ms. Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, spoke of the importance for policy makers to act responsibly and make difficult decisions rather than take the easy options. Long-term thinking must guide the way, rather than short-term benefits that can undermine sustainability. The potential of the Blue bioeconomy must be made better known to the general public and use should be made of new advanced ways of communication to present this potential. She stressed that, moving forward, closer cooperation and coordination with other sectors was also crucial to the successful development of the Blue bioeconomy.