



February 1, 2024

Director-General of the World Trade Organization

Re: Ratification and Improvement of WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement

Dear **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**,

At the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 12th Ministerial Conference, members of the WTO reached a landmark agreement to curb harmful fisheries subsidies, as mandated by the 2017 Buenos Aires Ministerial Decision and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 Target 6. The deal establishes, for the first time, a set of binding global rules that will require governments to consider the legality and sustainability of the fishing activities they subsidize.

The new WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (the Agreement) should help curtail overfishing, improve ocean health and protect livelihoods in coastal communities. This deal, the first multilateral agreement reached by the WTO that links trade and the environment, creates a global, legally binding framework that prohibits subsidies for illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and the fishing of overfished stocks, as well as subsidies to vessels fishing on the unregulated high seas. Those matters are extremely relevant for the Latin American Artisanal fisherman

The conclusion of this agreement, however, is not enough on its own. First, the Agreement can only enter into force and start to deploy its effects once it has been formally accepted by two-thirds of the WTO's membership (109 members). We call on Latin American countries to intensify and speed up its domestic efforts to ensure the Agreement is ratified and can deliver its benefits as soon as possible.

Second, trade ministers also committed to continuing negotiations on outstanding issues and recommending additional rules by the next WTO ministerial conference to have a comprehensive agreement. In particular, talks will continue with a view to concluding new disciplines to curb the subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity. These additional rules are essential. While the Agreement prohibits subsidies in the situations where concerns regarding the sustainability of fishing are the most acute, additional rules are needed to better address the root cause of the problem – i.e., when subsidies incentivize the generation of excessive fishing capacity and encourage fishing beyond sustainable and profitable levels. WTO members must ensure that we don't miss this generational opportunity to replot the course of global fishing fleets toward sustainability. A comprehensive agreement will contribute to improve the health of ocean ecosystems, and help ensure that the ocean will continue to provide for the many millions who depend on it, now and into the future.



The ULAPA (Unión Latinoamericana de la Pesca Artesanal) formed by organizations of artisanal fisheries of Peru, El Salvador, Colombia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Argentina, Panamá, México, Guatemala, Dominican Republic and Chile, are calling upon world leaders to work swiftly to ratify the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and complete the second round of negotiations. We encourage all countries to ratify as soon as possible and to take the lead and a decisive role to complete the second round of negotiations. The next WTO ministerial conference in Abu Dhabi is only a few weeks away. We must maintain the positive momentum from the Agreement's adoption and work to strengthen and implement it as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Zoila Bustamante Cárdenas', is centered on the page.

Zoila Bustamante Cárdenas
Presidenta
Unión Latinoamericana de la Pesca Artesanal
ULAPA