

Pace-setting Speech by Dr. Sloans Chimatiro – Country Director, at the Sustainable Fisheries Session: Our Ocean Conference, Malta, 6th October 2017

Title of presentation: Sustainable Fisheries: Evidence for a Human-Centred Approach

- **Thank you Master of Ceremonies**
- **Your Excellency the Commissioner**
- **Honourable Ministers**
- **Your Excellency Ambassadors**
- **Director Generals**
- **Captains of the private sector and fisheries industry**
- **Distinguished colleagues**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I wish to welcome you all to the sub-session on sustainable Fisheries. I want to thank the European Union for inviting me to this auspicious conference and for your visionary in placing fisheries and ocean governance, at the forefront of the European Union's development agenda.

Oceans are important for human kind, but one of the most important benefits that come out of the oceans is the fisheries resources. The economic impact of fisheries, especially small-scale fisheries, is enormous because a dollar's worth of landed fish generates 3 more dollars of economic output through secondary activities in the value chain.

This is very important considering that research evidence shows that poor families in less developed countries in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific, spend the bulk of their incomes on food. From my personal experience working in African fishing communities, I have learnt that despite the rise of aquaculture production, many Africans still depend on small-scale fisheries. Therefore, a productive small-scale fisheries sector with good access to markets helps reduce the cost of living and improve the quality of people's lives.

However, these benefits are under threat due to overfishing; incoherent land-use planning and settlements, as well as competing uses of the oceans. Clearly, the world stands to lose if nothing is done; and this loss will be reflected in terms of lost fish production, hence food, lost jobs, and lost welfare gains. And replacing these with alternatives is more expensive than investing in rebuilding the fisheries stocks.

Worldwide experiences indicate that reforms in policy and institutional framework within which fishery operations take place, are crucial in order to communities to realise the full benefits from the fisheries sector. However, we still have challenges because of (i) inadequate policy recognition of the importance of small-scale fisheries for livelihoods, food and nutrition security; and (ii) sensible policy choices that have resulted in unintended consequences (e.g. open access, no ownership, insecure rights and unsustainable utilization)

It is pleasing to note that the world leaders have made a lot of commitments towards sustainable fisheries, and we can see clear signs of coherent policies and strategies in many of our regions and countries as well as communities levels. However, a lot still needs to be done. Sustainable operation of fisheries are directly linked to the management arrangements that govern them properly. This can be achieved by designing and implementing institutional and governance reforms that place the fisheries on a path to sustainability, while taming markets to be a vehicle for encouraging change.

Therefore, I wish to urge you to reflect on what you have already been doing, and focus on some of the most important concrete actions. And these include the need to:

1. Support decisions by countries to make policy shifts towards governance reforms that will place fisheries on a path to sustainability.
2. Together with fish resource users, design strategies for creating secure rights aimed at transitioning away from open access to more secure rights for our fish-dependent communities
3. Develop mechanisms for equitable access to and sharing of benefits from fisheries;
4. Develop strategies for enhancing fisheries governance and mainstream governance reforms into local and country fisheries management strategies
5. Engage fishers and fishing communities in oceans dialogue and decision making; and
6. Invest in research to generate evidence to catalyze outcomes around improving fisheries management and governance. However, research should take into account Indigenous Knowledge Systems, that have worked for fishing communities for time immemorial

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished delegates, I wish to remind you that being a renewable resource, fisheries are wealth (in economics, wealth is defined as **valuable assets owned by a person or community**). In other words, the world's fisheries resources represent a **renewable natural asset or capital** that is capable of generating substantial amounts of food and **wealth** over time and in perpetuity. Therefore, well-managed fisheries can produce significant food, welfare and economic benefits for fishing communities, while at the same time contribute to economic development of our countries.

I thank you for your attention.