



Contact:

Ryan Orgera, Global Director

ryan.orgera@accountability.fish

+1-941-374-0863

7 March 2023

FISHERIES GOVERNANCE REFORM STILL NEEDED EVEN AS HIGH SEAS TREATY AGREEMENT IS REACHED

Washington, DC: While the shape of a long-term UN treaty to protect high seas marine life was agreed last week, fisheries governance pressure group Accountability.Fish called today for immediate action to make existing international fisheries governance bodies more accountable and transparent.

The aim of these actions is to facilitate greater media and citizen visibility into their decision-making processes, and reduce the potential for short-term profit taking by industrial fisheries interests who seek to cash in on overfishing before the treaty goes into effect.

"After many frustrating years where previous conferences became undone by complex and muddled negotiations, the world now has an agreement that will advance the protection and management of marine biodiversity in ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction. This represents a needed and welcome step from commercially-driven fisheries management toward a more holistic and environmentally-oriented paradigm of oceans management," said Accountability.Fish Global Director Ryan Orgera.

"But with that opportunity comes danger – mainly the danger that industrial fisheries interests will try to cash in as much as they can by overfishing before a treaty comes into effect. The current Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) system remains too beholden to industry interests and too closed to media observation and citizen participation to prevent subversion of this treaty's intent without immediate action."

"Conserving the biodiversity of the high seas is essential for the earth's environmental health, and the goal of protecting 30% of the world's oceans is critical and laudable" added Orgera. "But as long as the RFMO decision-making process remains opaque and weighted towards industry interests, a lot of damage can happen before the treaty takes effect, and even then there will be a need to take



further action to bring fisheries management in line with the emerging holistic approach to oceans management.”

One key example is the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), an RFMO governing more than half of the world’s tuna supply, whose Compliance meetings are closed to all but hand-picked observers. “As long as critical meetings where actual practices are monitored and sanctioned are closed, a holistic approach to oceans management will be impossible to meaningfully implement.”

To join the movement and learn more about its aims and activities, visit www.accountability.fish