

Report of the Regional workshop on
WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies
in Support of its Implementation

15-16 May 2025

Fortune Beach Resort, Chennai





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Bay of Bengal Programme
Inter-Governmental Organisation

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Preparation of Report

This report on the “Regional Workshop on WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and Support of its Implementation” has been prepared by the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO).

The workshop was held on 15–16 May 2025 at Fortune Beach Resort, Chennai, India, and was organized by BOBP-IGO in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and RISE UP.

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Preferred Citation:

BOBP-IGO., 2025. Report of the regional workshop on WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies in support of its implementation: 15–16 May 2025, Chennai. Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation. 32 pp.

Executive Summary

On May 15–16, 2025, a regional workshop titled "The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and Support of its Implementation" was held at Fortune Beach Resort, Chennai, India. Organized jointly by the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and RISE UP. The workshop brought together over 60 delegates and experts from South and Southeast Asia – including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Maldives, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand – alongside representatives from the WTO, FAO, SEAFDEC, and other national and international agencies. The two-day dialogue focused on the implications, opportunities, and implementation challenges of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Key sessions covered the agreement and subsidy disciplines (including on IUU fishing, overfished stocks, unregulated high seas fishing), the situation of regional fisheries in relation to these rules, implementation implications, small-scale fishers' perspectives, national ratification processes, institutional preparedness, regional cooperation, and existing support tools for implementation. Presentations included overviews of WTO legal provisions, IISD's self-assessment tool, the WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism, and country-specific perspectives. Discussions emphasized the significant benefits that the agreement is expected to generate, but also some of the key considerations that governments will need to keep in mind in their national decision and preparation processes with regard to implementation, including the need for equity and more data transparency. The importance of concluding meaningful additional WTO rules on subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity was also highlighted, along with the need for these rules to reflect differentiated responsibilities. The workshop concluded with a consensus on advancing technical assistance, capacity building, and regional alignment in preparation for entry into force and implementation, reinforcing a shared commitment to sustainable and inclusive fisheries governance in the Bay of Bengal and beyond.



Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFS	Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies of World Trade Organization
APFIC	Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission
ASCM	Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BOBP-IGO	Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation
BOB RPOA IUU	Bay of Bengal Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
CMFRI	Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute
DWFN	Distant Water Fishing Nation
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICSF	International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (fishing)
LDC	Least Developed Country
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance
MPEDA	Marine Products Export Development Authority, Government of India
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
PSMA	Agreement on Port State Measures
RAM	Resilience Assessment Methodology
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDT	Special and Differential Treatment
SEAFDEC	Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOFIA	The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNFSA	United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WTO	World Trade Organization



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Participants at the Workshop

1. Background

The Regional Workshop on the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and Support of its Implementation was convened from 15 to 16 May 2025 at the Fortune Beach Resort, Chennai, India. Organized jointly by the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and RISE UP, the workshop aimed to facilitate an informed regional dialogue on the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS), adopted at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in June 2022.

The AFS represents a landmark achievement in multilateral trade and environmental governance. It seeks to promote the long-term sustainability of global fisheries by prohibiting subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the exploitation of overfished stocks without adequate rebuilding measures, and unregulated fishing on the high seas. By addressing harmful subsidies and supporting effective fisheries management, the Agreement contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 14.6. As of May 2025, 97 WTO Members had ratified the Agreement, with negotiations also continuing on additional provisions to curb subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing more broadly.

The workshop brought together over 48 participants including delegates from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Maldives, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, alongside representatives from the WTO, FAO, SEAFDEC, ICSF and academic and policy institutions. Participants included senior officials from ministries responsible for fisheries, commerce, trade, finance, and external affairs.

The workshop provided a platform to examine the legal and policy implications of the Agreement, discuss national ratification processes and implementation readiness, and identify technical assistance needs. Particular focus was placed on support mechanisms such as the WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism (Fish Fund) and the Self-Assessment Tool for the Implementation of the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement prepared by IISD. The deliberations contributed to strengthening regional preparedness and cooperation ahead of the UN Ocean Conference 2025, reinforcing a shared commitment to equitable and sustainable fisheries governance across the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia. The Prospectus and Agenda of the Workshop is given in Annex 1 and the List of Participants is given in Annex 2.

2. Inaugural Session

2.1. Opening Session

Dr. P. Krishnan, Director, BOBP-IGO welcomed the country delegates and other participant and set the agenda of the Workshop. He emphasized the relevance of the AFS in the regional context, noting that while the agreement is rooted in global trade, its implications deeply affect local livelihoods, welfare systems, and the sustainability of marine fisheries. Appreciating the participation of senior officials from different ministries of the Bay of Bengal rim countries and WTO, he noted that the experience and diverse voices would enrich the discourse. He further informed that the workshop is also about understanding the ground realities, sharing experiences, and shaping practical pathways for implementation of AFS once it comes into force. Dr. Krishnan concluded by encouraging open and constructive discussions, reaffirming the region's collective commitment to sustainable fisheries governance.



2.2. Key Note I: IISD

Mr. Tristan Irschlinger, Senior Policy Advisor, IISD, in his keynote address said that the event supports national-level preparation processes about ratification and implementation of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and thanked Government of India for hosting it. Introducing IISD as an independent and neutral organization committed to sustainable development, he highlighted its role in supporting WTO members throughout the negotiation process and future implementation of the AFS. Mr. Irschlinger underscored the urgency of addressing harmful fisheries subsidies, which have contributed to global overfishing and



increasing the number of overexploited stocks from 10 to 38 percent over the past five decades. He emphasized the importance of entry into force and operationalization of the agreement. Mr. Irschlinger concluded by noting the workshop's timely relevance ahead of the 2025 UN Ocean Conference and expressed hope that the discussions would strengthen regional contributions to global sustainable fisheries governance.

2.3. Key Note II: Guest of Honor

The Guest of Honour, **Mr. David Eggleston**, Deputy Consul-General at the Australian Consulate-General in Chennai, India, extended warm greetings to the participants.

He emphasised the importance of AFS as the first binding multilateral framework to curb harmful subsidies. Mr. Eggleston stated that the Government of Australia is firmly committed to its implementation and contributed US dollar two million to the Fish Fund. He urged the countries for its timely ratification to safeguard the livelihoods of the fishers in the bay of Bengal and beyond. Highlighting ongoing challenges with overfishing and subsidies, he described Australia's role in negotiations and cooperation with Pacific Island countries. He concluded by thanking organizers and participants and expressing optimism for productive discussions.



2.4. Chief Guest Note

Dr. K. Mohammed Koya, Fisheries Development Commissioner, Government of India conveyed his greetings. He said that the AFS was a landmark step toward sustainable fisheries and achieving SDG Target 14.6, with core prohibitions against subsidies fuelling illegal fishing, overfished stocks, and unregulated fishing. He hoped that the workshop would play a significant role in facilitating dialogue on challenges and benefits of the Agreement, especially, in the context of small-scale fisheries in the developing countries and its implementation. He called for regional collaboration to share experiences and strengthening capacity for sustainable fisheries management.



3. Session 1: Fisheries Subsidies and Sustainability: What is at Stake?

Dr. Hussain Sinan delivered a compelling presentation on the global state of marine fisheries and the impact of fisheries subsidies. He categorized subsidies into three types: the good, which support sustainable practices like research and management; the bad, such as fuel subsidies and vessel construction grants that encourage overcapacity and overfishing; and the ugly, which have unintended or mixed consequences. He cited 2018 estimates showing that out of USD 35.4 billion in global subsidies, USD 22.2 billion were capacity-enhancing and largely provided by five major economies.



Dr. Sinan highlighted how harmful subsidies distort the true cost of fishing, enabling distant-water fishing nations (DWFNs) to expand operations and accumulate catch histories. These inflated catch records have in turn shaped allocation decisions within regional fisheries management organizations like the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), disadvantaging coastal states such as the Maldives. Despite its heavy reliance on tuna fisheries for food security and exports, the Maldives accounts for only a small share of total catch allocations.

He called for moving beyond historical entitlement to more equitable allocation frameworks that consider socio-economic dependence and sustainability. Dr. Sinan also underscored the Maldives' leadership in sustainable fishing practices, including pole-and-line tuna fishing and marine certification initiatives. Concluding his remarks, he stressed that eliminating harmful subsidies in line with SDG 14.6 and ratifying the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies are essential steps toward fairer and more sustainable global fisheries governance. He emphasized that workshops like this one are critical for building shared understanding and coordinated action across the region.

4. Session 2: The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: An Overview

Mr. Andrea Mastromatteo delivered a detailed overview of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS), adopted at the Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) on 17 June 2022. He highlighted the AFS as the first multilateral trade agreement with a primary environmental objective—curbing harmful subsidies that drive overfishing and threaten marine biodiversity. As the second agreement to be adopted since the WTO's inception, the AFS also stands out for fulfilling SDG Target 14.6, making it a landmark in global fisheries governance.



The Agreement applies exclusively to marine wild capture fishing, excluding aquaculture and inland fisheries. It prohibits three categories of subsidies:

- To IUU Fishing – Banned when a determination is made by a coastal State, flag State, or RFMO.
- To Overfished Stocks – Banned when subsidies target biologically overfished stocks, except when such subsidies or other measures are in place to rebuild these stocks
- To Unregulated High Seas Fishing – Banned where no competent RFMO exists, preventing exploitation of unmanaged marine areas.

Mr. Mastromatteo elaborated on the notification and transparency requirements under Article 8, which obligate Members to submit subsidy-related information as part of their subsidy notifications. Such information includes the type of kind of fishing being supported and, if possible, information on stock status, catch levels, management measures, beneficiary vessels, and fleet capacity. These enhanced requirements surpass those in the existing WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM) and are critical to ensure global compliance and mutual accountability.

A substantial part of the presentation focused on the Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) provisions embedded in the Agreement. In particular, he explained the “peace clause”, which provides a two-year grace period from the date of entry into force, during which no WTO dispute settlement cases may be initiated against developing and least-developed country (LDC) Members for subsidies provided within their EEZs for IUU fishing or overfished stocks. He also emphasized procedural safeguards, such as due restraint in matters involving LDCs, and reduced reporting burdens for developing Members with a global catch share of 0.8% or less.

Following the presentation, Mr. Mastromatteo clarified several aspects in response to participant queries:

- The Agreement includes a precautionary prohibition on subsidies targeting fish stocks whose biological status is unknown, reflecting the need to avoid overexploitation in data-deficient contexts.
- The Fish fund – a voluntary funding mechanism – has been established under the WTO to assist developing and LDC Members in implementing the Agreement. The fund supports technical assistance and capacity building, particularly for legal compliance, fisheries management, and institutional strengthening.
- He reaffirmed that the Agreement is enforceable through the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, adding a layer of legal accountability to its sustainability objectives.

Looking ahead, Mr. Mastromatteo noted that negotiations are ongoing to conclude the “second wave” of disciplines, particularly those addressing subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing. These are mandated to be completed within four years from entry into force of the AFS, and progress made during MC13 is seen as a positive step toward eventual consensus.



5. Session 3: Shedding Light on the Rules in the Regional Context: What is the Current Situation?

5.1. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (Article 3)

As presented by Mr. Rajdeep Mukherjee, the fisheries sector in the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean regions has historically served as a critical engine for economic growth, food security, and coastal employment. Government support, though initially unsophisticated, was essential to

empower impoverished fishers and promote access to technology and healthcare. Over time, many non-powered artisanal vessels transitioned to motorized ones, particularly in countries like India and Indonesia, with public investment playing a transformative role. However, the region now faces mounting challenges due to Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, which threatens sustainability and governance. The shared nature of fish stocks, overlapping jurisdictions, and uneven enforcement capacities have made IUU fishing—both domestic and cross-border—difficult to manage. Estimates suggest that IUU catch in the region is substantial, yet underreported due to ambiguous definitions and weak monitoring frameworks. While several international instruments have been endorsed, implementation remains inconsistent. The BOB RPOA-IUU (2025–2032), recently endorsed by member countries, is a significant step forward. It outlines a comprehensive regional framework focused on harmonized monitoring, vessel registries, enforcement cooperation, and stakeholder capacity-building. Despite progress, constraints such as underdevelopment, limited institutional readiness, and the complexity of managing shared resources persist. Regional collaboration—through mechanisms like BOBP-IGO, FAO, BIMSTEC, and UNODC—is vital to address these issues collectively and ensure the long-term sustainability of fisheries in the region.



5.2. Overfished Stocks (Article 4) and Unregulated High Seas (Article 5)

Dr. Rishi Sharma explored the concept of overfishing in the context of global fisheries management and trade-related subsidies, referencing key provisions of the WTO Agreement. He began by defining the concepts of “overfishing” and “overfished stock” and explained how they relate to management objectives such as Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) and biological reference points. Articles 4 and 5 of the WTO Agreement were discussed, emphasizing the prohibition of subsidies to overfished stocks and the importance of exercising restraint when stock status is unknown. The presentation covered the challenges in assessing stock status, issues related to growth, recruitment, and ecosystem overfishing, and the uncertainties in fisheries models illustrated through Kobe plots. Global and regional stock statuses were reviewed using FAO and RAM Legacy data, revealing considerable proportions of overfished and unassessed stocks, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. The presentation further addressed the limitations of MSY as a universal target, especially in mixed-stock, data-limited, and capacity-constrained fisheries. Solutions proposed included improving selectivity, reducing catchability, and adapting fisheries management to reflect ecosystem complexity. The role of APFIC in advancing sustainable fisheries management, capacity building, and potential coordination with WTO mechanisms was highlighted as a way forward for the region.



6. Session 4: The Benefits, Practicalities and Challenges of Implementation

6.1. From a Government and Policy Perspective

Dr. James J. Nedumpara examined the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS), its three core pillars—subsidies to IUU fishing, overfished stocks, and other subsidies—and the associated notification, transparency, and dispute settlement provisions. He discussed the special and differential treatment for developing countries and the termination clause of the Agreement. Highlighting implementation challenges, he noted issues specific to the Indian legal framework, such as the lack of central legislation on IUU fishing in the EEZ and the complexity arising from federal-state jurisdiction over fisheries. The presentation addressed the need for capacity to identify overfished stocks and apply formal stock assessments, referencing CMFRI data indicating a majority of assessed Indian fish stocks were healthy. He also outlined frameworks applicable to the EEZ and high seas, including UNCLOS and FAO guidelines, and underscored challenges in aligning WTO obligations with domestic legal systems. Finally, he detailed practical implementation constraints, especially in developing countries—such as inadequate data, institutional limitations, and weak monitoring systems—and emphasized the importance of technical assistance and capacity building to support effective implementation and compliance.



6.2. From a Small-Scale Fisheries Perspective

Mr. Sebastian Mathew of the International Collective in Support of Fish workers (ICSF) examined the implications of the Agreement for small-scale and artisanal fisheries in the Bay of Bengal region. He provided a global context of marine capture fisheries production, trade growth, and employment patterns, emphasizing the dominant role of developing countries. The presentation highlighted India's position as the fourth-largest marine capture producer, with significant overfishing concerns linked to mechanized trawl fleets. He reviewed provisions of the WTO Agreement relating to IUU fishing, noting the SDT clause for developing countries and the legislative efforts by countries like Bangladesh and the Maldives. The IOTC vessel records and IUU listings were presented, showing varying national responses. He emphasized that the 'peace clause' under Articles 3.8 and 4.4 should apply to small-scale and artisanal fisheries operating even beyond territorial waters. Overall, he emphasized that any special flexibility for artisanal fishers should be limited to non-towed gear and exclude bottom trawlers. The presentation concluded by positioning the Agreement as a potential catalyst for institutional reforms, highlighting its benefits in promoting sustainability, supporting livelihoods, rebuilding fish stocks through targeted subsidies, and strengthening the role of small-scale fisheries in food security and poverty alleviation.



7. Session 5: Support Mechanisms and Tools for Implementation

7.1. The WTO Fish Fund: Financial Assistance for Implementation

Mr. Jonathan Werner outlined the objectives, structure, and operational mechanisms of the Fish Fund, a financial instrument established to assist developing and least developed country (LDC) WTO Members in implementing the disciplines under the Agreement. The presentation covered

the Fund's development over the past 18 months, including governance milestones, funding contributions, and implementation strategy. Two types of catalytic grants were introduced to support members in addressing legal, institutional, and technical gaps, with practical examples illustrating eligible activities. The fund currently holds approximately US\$ 17 million and targets annual disbursements of US\$ 5 million, with a strong focus on accessibility, regional balance, and LDC inclusion. A user-centric application portal, along with support from the Secretariat, facilitates the submission and execution of funding proposals



7.2. IISD's Self-assessment Tool for the Implementation of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies

Mr. Tristan Irschlinger, Senior Policy Advisor at IISD, introduced a tool designed by IISD to help WTO Members conduct a self-diagnosis of their national alignment with the rules under the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS). It consists of two components: a Checklist for data entry and assessment, and a Guide offering explanatory support. The tool enables Members to evaluate their current and ongoing alignment with the Agreement, identify required actions and technical assistance needs, and compile relevant information such as subsidies, catch data, fish stock status, and IUU fishing activities. Emphasis was placed on the tool's applicability within the context of the Fish Fund, both as a preparatory activity (Category 1) and as a foundation for larger implementation projects (Category 2). The tool is publicly available, already in use by several WTO Members, and supported by IISD for effective application.



8. Session 6: The Way Forward in the region: Prospects for Acceptance of the Agreement and Expected Assistance Needs for Implementation

8.1. Indonesia

Ms. Anisa Farida delivered a presentation titled "Indonesia's Perspectives on the Comprehensive Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies". The presentation outlined Indonesia's strategic considerations regarding the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, emphasizing the country's extensive maritime profile and the socio-economic dependence of millions on small-scale fisheries. She highlighted the limited and indirect nature of fisheries subsidies in Indonesia and the need for sustainable practices amid growing global protein demand. The importance of additional provisions (Fish 2) was underscored, in alignment with SDG 14.6 and Indonesia's Blue Economy Roadmap 2023–2045, which includes expanding marine protected areas and promoting sustainable aquaculture. Ms. Farida reaffirmed Indonesia's international commitments through various regional and global agreements and expressed key concerns with the draft Fish 2 provisions, particularly around distant water fishing, protection for artisanal fishers, and consistency with UNCLOS 1982. She noted that the ratification of Fish 1 remains in the pre-





ratification stage due to its complexity, involving multiple stakeholders and legislative processes. Finally, a need assessment for implementation identified both opportunities—such as established legal frameworks and stakeholder coordination forums—and challenges, including data gaps, integration issues, and funding needs.

8.2. Bangladesh

Mr. Shah Alam Mukul delivered a presentation titled "WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS): Bangladesh's Perspective & Priorities". The presentation outlined the global fisheries subsidies landscape, highlighting the dominance of harmful capacity-enhancing subsidies and their negative impacts, such as overfishing and inequity. Mr. Mukul detailed Bangladesh's current subsidies, including social protection schemes, infrastructure support, and beneficial programs for fisheries management. Key concerns raised included the inadequate consideration of socioeconomic realities, insufficient SDT provisions—especially the short transition period—and challenges in conducting stock assessments and aligning with WTO reporting. Bangladesh also noted definitional ambiguities in the Agreement and emphasized the need to preserve sovereign rights within its EEZ as per UNCLOS. Mr. Mukul stated that Bangladesh would delay ratification of the Agreement until further negotiations on overcapacity and overfishing are advanced, citing the country's recent acquisition of EEZ rights, underdeveloped fisheries infrastructure, and the vital role of marine fisheries in national food security and livelihoods.



8.3. Maldives

Ms. Maisa Abdul Wahid delivered a presentation titled "Implementation of the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement: Challenges and Opportunities in the Maldivian Context". She emphasized the fundamental role of the fisheries sector in the Maldives, noting its importance to national food security, exports, and livelihoods across the inhabited islands. Although tourism leads the economy, fisheries remain vital, with 17,000 fishers and tuna comprising 91% of the country's physical export value. Ms. Wahid highlighted that the Maldives employs the globally recognized sustainable pole-and-line fishing method. She explained that Inter-agency stakeholder efforts are being undertaken to find a way to endorse the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. The presentation also addressed expected challenges in implementing the agreement, particularly its lack of provisions tailored to the unique needs of small and vulnerable SIDS like the Maldives. She outlined expected assistance needs, including legal and legislative support, capacity building for monitoring and surveillance, financial resources for transitioning to sustainable practices, and stakeholder engagement through awareness initiatives.



8.4. Malaysia

Dr. Shuhardi Turaz Radzik Bin Aznan delivered a presentation titled "Prospects for Acceptance of the Agreement and Expected Assistance Needs for Implementation". The presentation confirmed Malaysia's ratification of the Agreement with the instrument of acceptance deposited on 26 February 2024. He outlined the domestic processes underway to fulfill commitments, including the establishment of committees for national fish stock assessment and IUU fishing management, and the implementation of standard operating procedures. Malaysia provides monthly Fisher's Living Allowances to eligible local fishers to support income stability amid rising living costs. The presentation identified key assistance needs for effective implementation, such as increasing awareness among stakeholders, improving the accuracy and timeliness of scientific data collection, enhancing MCS systems, and aligning legal and regulatory frameworks with WTO requirements. The conclusion reaffirmed Malaysia's commitment to the objectives of the Agreement and emphasized the importance of targeted assistance for successful execution.





8.5. Sri Lanka

Mr. M. Marcus delivered a presentation titled "WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and Expected Technical Assistance for Implementation", outlining Sri Lanka's fisheries sector profile, policy framework, and approach to the WTO Agreement. He highlighted the composition of Sri Lanka's fishing fleet, with the majority of vessels operating in coastal areas, and a marine fish production average comprising 55% coastal and 45% offshore/deep-sea catch. The sector employs over 223,000 individuals in marine fisheries. Sri Lanka's fisheries policy emphasizes sustainable management, community co-management, marine conservation, and tackling IUU fishing. The main legal framework is the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act, with a new act under finalization to enhance regulation, conservation, and enforcement. Mr. Marcus noted Sri Lanka's international commitments to agreements such as UNCLOS, UNFSA, and the PSMA, and confirmed that Sri Lanka is in the process of ratifying the WTO AFS. The presentation emphasized potential benefits of ratification, including improved sustainability, international reputation, and access to technical and financial support. He concluded with a summary of Sri Lanka's expected technical assistance needs, including support for stock assessments, compliance, transparency reporting, and awareness for small-scale fishers.



8.6. Thailand

Mr. Viji Pasomsapya delivered a presentation titled "Thailand's Intervention under the Session: The Way Forward in the Region – Prospects for Acceptance of the Agreement and Expected Assistance Needs for Implementation." The presentation outlined Thailand's perspectives on the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, emphasizing the country's commitment to sustainable fisheries management and alignment with international standards. Mr. Viji highlighted Thailand's ongoing efforts in legal and institutional reforms, transparency, and capacity-building to ensure effective implementation of the Agreement. He also addressed the necessity of technical assistance to support data collection, monitoring systems, and stakeholder engagement, particularly for small-scale fisheries. The intervention reflected Thailand's readiness to advance regional cooperation and contribute to the collective implementation of the Agreement in Southeast Asia.



8.7. India

Dr. K. Mohammed Koya delivered a presentation titled "WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies – Indian Perspective" on 16 May 2025 in Chennai, outlining India's position, sectoral overview, and key concerns regarding the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. He described India's extensive marine fisheries sector, comprising 2.02 million sq. km of EEZ, 11,000 km of coastline, and a fishing population of over 3.7 million. The average annual subsidy per fisher in India is USD 35, contrasting sharply with developed countries where subsidies reach up to USD 76,000 per fisher. India emphasized its sustainable practices, including a 60-day annual fishing ban and the use of traditional, low-powered vessels. Speaking about the latest draft text in ongoing negotiations for additional WTO rules on fisheries subsidies, Dr. Koya raised concerns about weak disciplines on historical subsidizers and distant water fishing nations (DWFNs), the inadequacy of aggregate subsidy approaches, and the limited applicability of the Agreement's provisions to developing countries. India highlighted the need to exclude EEZ fisheries from OCOF disciplines, called for a 25-year transition period, and stressed that socio-economic aspects of small-scale and artisanal fishers must be respected under Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT). Additional concerns included non-specific fuel subsidies and onward transfer of access rights under government-to-government agreements. India reaffirmed its readiness to engage constructively with WTO Members to ensure balanced and equitable outcomes.



9. Discussion/ Q&A

I. WTO Agreement – Integration with Regional and Global Mechanisms

Q1. How can WTO Fisheries Subsidy negotiations be better aligned with regional allocation mechanisms like IOTC?

A1. WTO negotiations can support more sustainable and equitable fisheries governance by aligning subsidy rules with regional allocation frameworks such as IOTC. Integrating comparative analyses of subsidies, fleet sizes, and catch outputs helps reveal distortions caused by subsidized overcapacity. Coordination between WTO rules and RFMO decisions is crucial to ensure fairness and sustainability for coastal states, especially in the Indian Ocean where overfishing—like the yellowfin tuna decline—is linked to subsidy-driven expansion.

II. National Readiness and Evidence-Based Negotiation

Q2. How can countries like the Maldives and BOBP-IGO support the development of regional subsidy classification systems to improve negotiation capacity?

A2. The Maldives is developing a framework to classify subsidies as beneficial, harmful, or neutral, and has indicated readiness to collaborate with BOBP-IGO to extend this regionally. Most relevant data are publicly available, and coordinated extraction and analysis can strengthen the evidence base for WTO negotiations, especially under Fish 2. Dr. Sinan emphasized the importance of stakeholder consultations and practical realities in making these agreements effective and fair.

III. WTO Rules and Legal Ambiguities

Q3. Why does the Agreement use the term “Fisheries Subsidies” even though it primarily refers to “fishing”?

A3. The term “fisheries subsidies” has evolved to reflect broader sectoral support, even though the operative clauses focus on the act of fishing. The choice is historical and not technically inconsistent, as “fisheries” is used to capture both resource systems and associated economic activities.

Q4. How does the Agreement treat the three dimensions of IUU fishing?

A4. The Agreement refers to IUU fishing as a composite term but does not enforce a uniform definition. What is effectively considered to be IUU activities will be determined by each WTO Member based on its relevant national laws, or by regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements in accordance (RFMO/A) with their dedicated rules and procedures. While the IPOA-IUU serves as a reference, enforcement is based on countries' domestic legal frameworks', RFMO/As' related rules and procedures, and ensuing notifications to the WTO.

Q5. How will WTO panels interpret terms like “best scientific evidence available,” especially given the legal discretion allowed to Members?

A5. WTO panels are expected to interpret such terms contextually, based on the Agreement text. They may consider external rulings like those from the Permanent Court of Arbitration for relevant context, but are in no way bound by these rulings. The Agreement encourages credible science but also allows flexibility, acknowledging the diverse capacities of Members.

Q6. How does the Agreement accommodate countries that are not parties to UNCLOS?

A6. The Agreement applies equally to WTO Members regardless of UNCLOS ratification. It includes a safeguard clause to ensure it doesn't prejudice international law obligations, thereby protecting both Members' rights and systemic legal coherence.

IV. Small-Scale Fisheries and Equity Concerns

Q7. How are the needs of small-scale fishers in countries like Bangladesh addressed under the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement?

A7. While the Agreement does not directly fund small-scale fishers, it prohibits subsidies that harm their resource base, such as those to IUU vessels or the fishing of overfished stock for which no rebuilding measure is implemented. Indirectly, it creates fairer conditions for small-scale fisheries by reducing competition from heavily subsidized foreign fleets that engage in unsustainable fishing activities.

V. Implementation and Monitoring

Q8. Who will monitor implementation and compliance under the Agreement?

A8. WTO Member governments are responsible for monitoring the application of the rules and notifying their subsidy programs. Members can raise concerns in the WTO Committee on Fisheries Subsidies regarding other members' compliance with the subsidy rules and notification obligations. This self-monitoring model relies on transparency and peer accountability. Beyond committee oversight, if a Member believes another is not fulfilling its obligations, it can pursue resolution through the WTO's dispute settlement system.

Q9. Are there measures to ensure that harmful subsidies are phased out fairly, without hurting small-scale fishers?

A9. The Agreement only targets harmful subsidies—those that encourage IUU fishing, the fishing of overfished stocks for which no rebuilding measure is in place, or fishing in unregulated areas. It allows continued support for sustainable practices and rebuilding efforts. While the agreement applies equally to all such harmful subsidies, it also provide a transition period in the form of a peace clause for its two main rules (on IUU fishing and overfished stocks), providing legal certainty to developing countries that they will not be challenge through dispute settlement for a period of two years from entry into force.

VI. WTO Fish Fund and Technical Support

Q10. What kind of support does the WTO Fish Fund offer for developing countries implementing the Agreement?

A10. The Fish Fund, established under Article 7, provides grants (not loans) for technical and legislative capacity-building. Only Members who have ratified the Agreement can access the fund. Applications must clearly link to implementation needs and are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Q11. Can the IISD self-assessment tool help countries apply for the WTO Fish Fund?

A11. Yes. While not mandatory, the IISD tool helps countries identify legal and policy gaps and frame funding requests. It is downloadable and confidential, allowing countries full discretion over its use and data sharing.

Q12. Are there provisions for data confidentiality and ownership under the Fish Fund?

A12. Yes. Countries retain full ownership of data generated through Fish Fund projects. Even if a country withdraws from the Agreement, the capacity built and data collected remain under national control.

Q13. Can countries claim their subsidy is for stock recovery while others dispute it? How is this resolved?

A13. Yes, countries may claim subsidies support stock rebuilding, but other Members can challenge these claims within the WTO Committee on Fisheries Subsidies or via dispute settlement. Transparency and evidence about the subsidy's contribution to stocks rebuilding are essential to defend such subsidies under Article 4. Importantly, subsidies can also be maintained if other types of measures (not necessarily the subsidy itself) are implemented to rebuild stocks. Here again, detailed information about the design, implementation, and impact of these management measures will help make the case that they justify the continuation of the subsidy.

Q14. Can technical assistance be provided before ratification of the WTO Agreement?

A14. While funding from the Fish Fund is only accessible after ratification, countries may still request technical assistance from the WTO Secretariat or through collaborating agencies like FAO or IISD, to prepare national systems for compliance.

Q15. Does the Fish Fund accept contributions from corporations or philanthropic donors?

A15. No. The Fish Fund only accepts contributions from WTO Member governments, as per its governance rules. However, Member-sponsored proposals may leverage co-financing from other sources, provided all reporting and accountability is retained by the Member.

Q16. Will the WTO assist with litigation or legal support for compliance?

A16. No, the Fish Fund does not cover litigation. It may support legislative and regulatory reforms. For legal disputes under the Agreement, Members may seek assistance from the WTO Secretariat or the Advisory Centre on WTO Law.

Q17. Is there a formal link between the IISD tool and WTO project proposals?
A. No formal link exists, but the IISD self-assessment tool can inform project proposals, but the use of the tool can be funded under Category 1 (gap and needs identification) and the tool's results can also inform a more substantive request under Category 2 (implementation). Use of the tool is voluntary but encouraged for evidence-based planning.

Q17. What is the process for replenishing the Fish Fund?

A. The Fish Fund relies on voluntary contributions. While there is no binding replenishment schedule, early success of funded projects is expected to attract further contributions from WTO Members. The Steering Committee oversees the fundraising strategy.

Other Q&As (Answers are largely opinion of experts/presenters)

I. Regional Fisheries Governance and Equity

Q1. How can future IOTC negotiations better integrate analyses of subsidies, fleet sizes, and catch outputs to address historical inequities?

A1. Future IOTC negotiations should incorporate systematic analyses of national subsidies, fleet capacities, and production outputs to reveal disparities. This approach would promote more equitable allocations and highlight how distant water fishing nations have inflated catch histories via subsidies. Linking IOTC allocation processes with subsidy reforms would enable better governance and help ensure that smaller coastal states are not disadvantaged in future access negotiations.

Q2. How do subsidies distort catch histories and undermine fair allocation in regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs)?

A2. Subsidies have historically inflated catch records, allowing distant water fishing nations to dominate allocation discussions. This skews access rights and disadvantages coastal states like the Maldives. As Dr. Sinan noted in his research, these distortions create intergenerational losses and hinder equitable management within RFMOs.

II. Small-Scale Fisheries, Messaging, and Policy Integration

Q3. What are the key differences in how governments and small-scale fishers perceive management measures?

A3. Governments often frame reforms in terms of sustainability and compliance, whereas small-scale fishers evaluate them based on livelihoods and fairness. In countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, small-scale fishers generally support measures that improve quality and sustainability but may resist those perceived as top-down or threatening their income. Effective messaging and participatory engagement are critical to bridge this perception gap.

Q4. What role does messaging play in the acceptance of fisheries reform by small-scale fishers?

A4. Clear and effective messaging is crucial. Complex agreements or regulatory changes must be communicated in a way that resonates with fishers' lived experiences. Where messaging has emphasized benefits for small-scale fishers—such as improved stock health or reduced competition—acceptance has increased.

Q5. What are the social and operational realities influencing resistance among small-scale fishers?

A5. Resistance often stems from uncertainty, misinformation, and fear of exclusion. Small-scale fishers may not oppose reforms in principle but need assurance that these will not compromise their access, income, or traditions. Sensitization, co-design, and respect for customary practices are vital.

III. Scientific Evidence and Stock Assessment Challenges

Q6. What is the challenge in weighing data-rich versus data-poor stock assessments?

A6. Decision-makers sometimes give equal weight to all stock assessments, regardless of data quality. This approach can obscure the need to improve data systems and underplays uncertainty in poorly studied stocks. As one expert noted, equal weighting of tier 1 (data-rich) and tier 3 (data-poor) stocks may give a misleading picture of sustainability.

Q7. How important is regional cooperation and improved data systems for multi-species fisheries management?

A7. In regions like the Bay of Bengal, managing multi-species fisheries effectively requires reliable data and regional cooperation. While some data exists (e.g., census or gear surveys), its use in policymaking remains limited. Countries need both incentives and capacity-building to upgrade data systems and promote collaborative assessments.

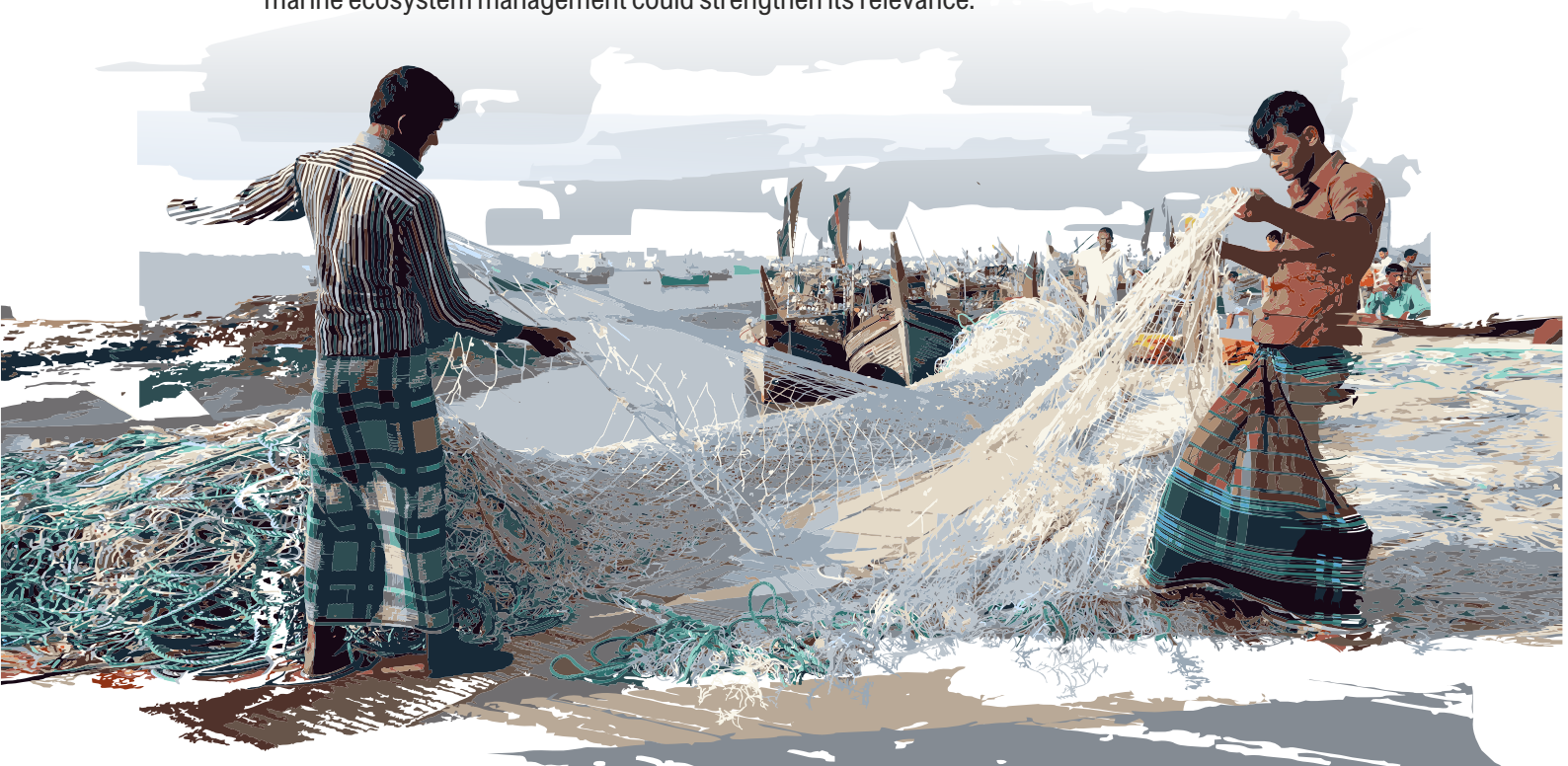
IV. Institutional Mechanisms and Financial Cooperation

Q8. What would be the cost of reviving APFIC, and is it feasible for developing countries?

A8. Reviving the Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission (APFIC) would cost an estimated \$250,000–\$500,000 annually. With 21 member countries, the per-country contribution would be modest. However, beyond financial feasibility, sustained political commitment and active participation are the key challenges.

Q9. Will APFIC include marine areas like the Bay of Bengal and South China Sea?

A9. Yes. APFIC's mandate includes marine and inland fisheries, and it is well positioned to address issues in the Bay of Bengal, South China Sea, and other regions. Expanding aquaculture mapping and supporting marine ecosystem management could strengthen its relevance.



10. Closing Session

Dr. Sivaja Nair, RISE UP concluded the session noting that it had been a truly enriching and insightful experience. She thanked all participants, presenters, and attendees for their valuable contributions throughout the workshop. Emphasizing a key takeaway, she highlighted that while regional cooperation is essential, there is also a strong need to invest in national-level efforts, particularly in capacity building and institutional strengthening. She affirmed RISE UP's willingness to support such initiatives by bringing in additional partners and experts for deeper engagement at the national level. She also made a specific request to the WTO to consider developing a repository of frequently asked questions on its website, noting that several discussions revealed confusion and misinformation around key issues. She closed by expressing appreciation to all involved and encouraged continued dialogue and action-oriented collaboration for a sustainable ocean and the wellbeing of coastal communities.

Mr. Tristan, IISD concluded the session with warm appreciation and encouragement, thanking all participants for their time and engagement over the two-day workshop. He acknowledged the valuable discussions, clarifications, and shared concerns, and emphasized that support would continue beyond the event. He assured participants of ongoing assistance from the WTO Secretariat, the Fish Fund, and IISD, encouraging them to reach out for any help with Fish One, Fish Two, or related implementation efforts. Highlighting the strong progress made on fisheries subsidies at the WTO, he commended members for reaching Agreement on Fish One and urged continued momentum on Fish Two, noting its importance in addressing the broader challenge of harmful subsidies. He emphasized that while challenges remain, consensus is within reach and encouraged countries to stay committed. Tristan closed by thanking the co-organizers and support teams, particularly Dr. P. Krishnan, Ms. V. Cheryl and Dr. Sivaja Nair, for their outstanding efforts in making the event a success.

The Director, BOBP-IGO concluded the workshop by expressing appreciation for the active participation and reaffirming BOBP-IGO's commitment to regional collaboration. He acknowledged the strong alignment among countries on the need for a collective regional voice and emphasized that BOBP-IGO, as mandated by its Governing Council, will facilitate the process of building consensus on issues of mutual concern beyond national priorities as follows:

- 1. Capacity Development and Tool Adaptation:** The first action step will involve partnering with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) to apply their implementation support tool in the Bay of Bengal region. All member countries will be invited to nominate experts from relevant ministries for a structured, online training program. IISD will support BOBP-IGO in using the tool in the region, and discussions are underway with the WTO Secretariat to support a physical validation workshop.
- 2. Country-Specific Proposals under Category 2:** In parallel, BOBP-IGO will support countries in developing Category 2 proposals for assistance from the WTO Fish Fund to support their efforts to implement the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Early dialogues with the WTO Secretariat and IISD have been encouraging. While the final decision rests with national authorities, the direction for tailored country proposals is promising.
- 3. Development of a Data-Limited, Multi-Species Management Framework:** Simultaneously, BOBP-IGO will collaborate with FAO and SEAFDEC to design a comprehensive management framework for multi-species, multi-year fisheries not covered under existing RFMOs. This approach—being led by Dr. Rishi Sharma of FAO—will integrate ecological, economic, and governance dimensions and respond to the challenge of unmanaged fish stocks. Some of these components will be embedded into the ongoing FAO-GEF-NORAD-funded BOBLME Project, ensuring alignment and avoiding duplication.
- 4. National Stock Assessment Capacity Building:** To strengthen scientific reporting and stock assessment capabilities, BOBP-IGO will organize a regional workshop in Kochi from 29–31 May 2025, with participation of five experts from each South Asian country. Dr. Rishi Sharma will serve as a key facilitator for this training program aimed at building a regional cadre of technical experts.

5. **Legal and Regulatory Preparedness:** In support of legal harmonization, BOBP-IGO has constituted a dedicated legal support team that will provide free legislative assistance to member countries on request. The team includes subject matter experts from law universities and institutions. This platform will assist countries in aligning their national laws with the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.
6. **Communication and Outreach:** Effective communication will be central to regional cooperation. Under the BOBLME project, BOBP-IGO and SEAFDEC will develop strategic communication products, including a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document based on the workshop deliberations. This will be reviewed with inputs from the WTO Secretariat and shared regionally to promote awareness and stakeholder engagement.
7. **Documentation and Regional Reporting:** All country statements and expert presentations will be synthesized into a regional status paper, capturing the readiness, gaps, and convergence areas in implementing the WTO Agreement. A draft will be circulated to all member countries for comments and finalization.
8. **Resource Sharing and Institutional Memory:** Finally, all materials from the workshop—including presentations, resource documents, and photographs—will be compiled into a shared digital folder and distributed to all participants via email and WhatsApp for easy access.

Dr. Krishnan closed the session by thanking the WTO Secretariat, IISD, RISE UP, SEAFDEC, FAO, and all national representatives and technical experts for their insights and commitment. He underscored that this workshop has laid a strong foundation for collective action and expressed confidence in the region's ability to move forward together in building sustainable, inclusive, and equitable fisheries governance.



Programme Agenda

Time	Activity	Resource
Day 1: 15 May 2025		
0830 - 0900	Registration	
0900 - 1000	Opening of the Workshop	
1000 - 1030	Group Photo & Coffee Break	
1030 - 1130	Session 1: Fisheries Subsidies and Sustainability: What is at stake?	
	Moderator	Pattaratjit Kaewnuratchadasorn Senior Policy Officer, SEAFDEC
1030 - 1100	Lead Presentation	Hussain Sinan Director General (Fisheries), MoFOR Maldives.
1100 - 1130	Open Discussion and Q&A	
1130 - 1300	Session 2: The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: An overview	
	Moderator	Tristan Irschlinger, Senior Policy Advisor, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
1130 - 1215	Lead Presentation	Andrea Mastromatteo Director, Rules Division, WTO
1215 - 1300	Open discussion and Q & A	
1300 - 1400	Lunch Break	
1400 - 1530	Session 3: Shedding Light on the rules in the regional context: What is the current situation?	
	Moderator	Sivaja Nair Programme Manager, Rise Up
1400 - 1430	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (Article 3)	Rajdeep Mukherjee Policy Analyst, BOBP-IGO
1430 - 1500	Overfished Stocks (Article 4) and Unregulated High Seas (Article 5)	Rishi Sharma, Senior Fishery Officer, FAO-RAP, Bangkok
1500 - 1530	Open Discussion and Q&A	
1530 - 1545	Coffee Break	
1545 - 1645	Session 4: The Benefits, practicalities and Challenges of Implementation	
	Moderator	P. Krishnan, Director, BOBP-IGO
1545 - 1605	From Government and Policy Perspective	James J. Nedumpara, Professor and Head, Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL)
1605 - 1645	From a small-scale Fisheries Perspective	Sebastian Mathew, Senior Advisor, International Collective in Support of Fish Workers (ICSF)
1625 - 1645	Open Discussion and Q&A	

Time	Activity	Resource
Day 1: 15 May 2025		
0930-1030	Session 5: Support Mechanisms and Tools for Implementation	
	Moderator	Hussain Sinan, DG-Fisheries, MoFOR, Maldives
0930-0950	The WTO Fish Fund: Financial Assistance for Implementation	Jonathan Werner Manager, WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism
0950-1010	IISD's Self-assessment Tool for the Implementation of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies	Tristan Irschlinger Senior Policy Advisor, Fisheries Subsidies, IISD
1010-1030	Open Discussion and Q & A	
1030-1100	Coffee Break	
1100-1230	Session 6: The Way Forward in the Region: Prospects Expected for Acceptance of the Agreement and Assistance Needs for Implementation	
	Moderator	P. Krishnan, Director, BOBP-IGO
1100-1200	Country Presentations (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand)	Heads of Country Delegations
1200-1230	Open Discussion and Q & A	
1230-1300	Wrap-up and Concluding Remarks	



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Brief Profile of the Speakers / Moderators



Mr. Tristan Irschlinger, Senior Policy Advisor, IISD

Focusing on fisheries subsidies at the International Institute for Sustainable Development. With significant experience working on trade and sustainable development issues, he brings an excellent understanding of international cooperation to the study of financial support for fisheries.



Dr. P. Krishnan, Director, BOBP-IGO

Served as a scientist for over 20 years in Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) under Government of India. He has published over 100 research papers on diverse areas in fisheries and environment management. He spearheads many regional programs on fisheries management in the BOB region. He also serves as the vice chair of the RFB Secretariat Network (RSN).



Dr. K. Mohammed Koya, Fisheries Development Commissioner, Department of Fisheries, India

He has a strong background in fisheries science and management. He focuses on pelagic fish population dynamics, sea cage farming, and the use of geospatial technology in marine fisheries management.



Dr. Sivaja Nair, Programme Manager, Rise Up

Social scientist and have been engaging on equitable and sustainable ocean governance through the campaign priorities of Rise Up- Sustainable small-scale fisheries, Ratification of high Seas Treaty, Deep Sea Conservation and Ocean-Climate Nexus.



Dr. Hussain Sinan, Director General, Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, Maldives.

Researcher and policy maker - an extraordinary combination. His research work focuses on equitable governance particularly focusing on the role of RFMOs and he is also keen on issues surrounding ABNJ.



Mr. Sebastian Mathew, Senior, Adviser, ICSF

With an experience of around three decades in the sector. He has been actively engaging in WTO discussions and negotiations and also bringing the conversations to the SSF sector around the world.



Dr. James J. Nedumpara, Professor and Head, Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL)

Advising the Government of India on trade, investment, and dispute settlement. He has represented India in WTO disputes, contributed to FTA negotiations. He has held visiting positions at leading global institutions and serves on the Executive Committee of Trade Lab and as Co-Chair of SAIELN.



Dr. Rishi Sharma, Senior Fishery Officer FAO-RAP, Bangkok

Analyst in global stock status. He is a lead scientific officer on deep sea fisheries, and work on global tuna fisheries and MSE's in open access waters. His major focus currently is on evaluating SDG 14 ("Life Under Water") at global and national levels and building institutional capacity on stock assessment.



Mr. Andrea Mastromatteo, Director, Rules Division, WTO

He has worked since 2004 on WTO dispute settlement panels in the area of trade remedies and subsidies, participated in the Doha Round negotiations on the Anti-Dumping Agreement and acted as the Secretary to the Committee on Trade in Civil Aircraft.



Dr. Pattaratjit Kaewnuratchadasorn, Senior Policy Officer, SEAFDEC

Her work focuses on sustainable fisheries, food security, food safety, and regional collaboration. She is involved in initiatives like the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI). She also played a role in the ASEAN conference on the implementation of the Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) Guidelines.



Mr. Rajdeep Mukherjee, Policy Analyst, BOBP-IGO

With over 20 years of experience in regional fisheries development, he is passionate about advancing ocean governance and have contributed to several efforts to curb illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and to build the capacities and resilience of fisheries institutions and communities in the face of climate change and other challenges



Mr. Jonathan Werner, Manager, WTO Fish Fund

He collaborates with governments and international organizations to help implement the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. He has managed trade and development programs across Africa and the Asia-Pacific regions. His work involves extensive engagement with high-level policymakers, multilateral organizations, and private sector stakeholders.

About the Organisers



International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

IISD is an award-winning independent think tank working to accelerate solutions for a stable climate, sustainable resource management, and fair economies. Our work inspires better decisions and sparks meaningful action to help people and the planet thrive. We shine a light on what can be achieved when governments, businesses, non-profits, and communities come together. IISD's staff of more than 200 experts come from across the globe and from many disciplines, and our work affects lives in nearly 100 countries.



Bay of Bengal Inter Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)

The BOBP-IGO is an intergovernmental regional fisheries advisory body with Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka as its contracting parties. It is mandated to enhance cooperation amongst its member countries and other countries for sustainable fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal region. Formed in 2003, BOBP-IGO works closely with its member countries to address key challenges in marine fisheries, and fisheries-dependent livelihoods.



RISE UP

It is a global network of over 600 organizations—including civil society, small-scale fishers, Indigenous peoples, businesses, and foundations—united by the Blue Call to Action to protect, restore, and equitably govern the ocean. Launched in 2019, RISE UP is hosted by Seas at Risk and funded by the Oceano Azul Foundation and Oak Foundation. It aims to drive bold, rights-based, and science-backed action to address the ocean crisis, build political momentum, and push governments to deliver meaningful commitments, especially in the lead-up to the UN Ocean Conference 2025.



Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation

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