



PRESS RELEASE

India Sabotages 20 Years of WTO Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations

Final version after WTO official statement – Buenos Aires, 13 December 2017

BLOOM and the Varda Group, which have been advocating for the adoption of strong fisheries subsidies disciplines at the WTO's 11th Ministerial Conference, are dismayed by the WTO's failure to agree on a binding agreement.

Since the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the Ocean, an international legally-binding agreement to eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies that fuel overfishing, overcapacity and illegal fishing worldwide, had never been so close. **However, within only a few hours of the trade talks, a few WTO members had already severely watered down the Draft Ministerial Decision. India gave it a lethal blow.**

“The culprit is known: India blocked everything, even an agreement on the elimination of subsidies that drive illegal fishing. This is irresponsible”, said BLOOM's CEO Claire Nouvian. *“It means the Indian government supports the ongoing destruction of the ocean and of artisanal fishers. The collapse of WTO negotiations will inevitably have a boomerang effect on small-scale fishers around the world, not just in India.”*

The proposed WTO subsidies disciplines were essentially targeting large-scale industrial fisheries and everyone agreed that special and differential treatment was needed for small-scale fisheries in developing countries. *“This new impasse of the WTO seriously brings the credibility of the institution into question, yet again”,* said Rémi Parmentier, Director of the Varda Group. *“At the UN, Heads of State and Government had agreed to eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies by 2020 (SDG 14.6), but at the WTO, where decisions are legally-binding, their Trade Ministers ignored this clear mandate. Hypocrisy is reaching new heights.”*

On the positive side, Members have agreed to conclude *“an agreement on comprehensive and effective disciplines that prohibits certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed members should be an integral part of these negotiations.”*

In his closing address, WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo said that a “leap” was necessary to bridge gaps between Members' positions and he was disappointed it had not occurred in Buenos Aires despite the clear mandate to implement SDG 14.6.

BLOOM and Varda call on WTO members to keep the negotiating momentum and to work towards reaching a fisheries subsidies agreement by the end of 2018, not 2019.

Analysis of country positions on WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations:

Champions	On the right tracks	Needs to do much better	Bad
NEW ZEALAND	BRAZIL	CHINA	INDIA → Blocked the negotiation. Opposed to everything, including language on subsidies provided to IUU fishing.
NORWAY	SENEGAL	RUSSIA	
EUROPEAN UNION	THAILAND	USA	
ICELAND	JAPAN	KOREA	
PAKISTAN	INDONESIA	BANGLADESH	
CANADA		GUATEMALA	
African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP)		SRI LANKA	
Least-Developed Countries (LDCs)		PHILIPPINES	
Latin American Country group (LAC) ARGENTINA, COSTA RICA, COLOMBIA, PANAMA, PERU, URUGUAY			

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Notes for the editor:

About BLOOM - A non-profit organization founded in 2005 that works to preserve the marine environment and species from unnecessary destruction and to increase social benefits in the fishing sector. More information at: www.bloomassociation.org/en

About the Varda Group - An international consultancy established in 2003 that provides strategic and campaign expertise and coordination services across a wide range of international environmental and social issues. More at: www.vardagroup.org