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TALKING PONTS

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DEVELOPMENT, BLUE ECONOMY & SUSTAINABLE
ENVIRONMENT**

ON

**Blue Transformation: *Advancing aquatic food systems for
people, planet and prosperity***

**FAO HQ (Red Room)
Tuesday, 25th July 2023
09:30-10:30,**

**Excellencies;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;
All protocol duly observed.**

Today, **on the Africa Day of Seas and Oceans**, I am privileged to participate in this important panel. The African Union is doing a lot to support the transformation of aquatic food systems in Africa.

We are actively working with AU member states, RECs and partners to consolidate governance (including regulatory frameworks, planning processes, monitoring and reporting) that foster the sustainable management of aquatic resources, to ensure responsible fishing practices, protect marine biodiversity and enhance the livelihoods of coastal communities through Aquaculture production best practices.

Two weeks ago, the AUC brought together all African Union member states and RECs to discuss the gaps in Africa's ability to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and developed a roadmap for implementation of continental recommendations to strengthen our collective response to IUUF. IUUF is driving aquatic food systems to the brink of depletion.

At continental level, we have invested in capacity building programmes to empower local communities, fish-farmers, and fishers with the necessary skills and knowledge, with special focus for women.

We have also set up a network of Centres of Excellence on Fisheries and Aquaculture which aim to consolidate regional value chains, innovation and capacity building on blue foods on the continent.

However, we are faced with three major challenges. First of these is infrastructure and Market Access. During our consultations with rural women, they articulated four clear needs: capital, training on SPS standards, addressing social norms, and infrastructure and equipment to minimize post-harvest loss and access regional value chains.

The second issue is accelerating depletion of marine resources which poses a critical challenge for the health of aquatic food systems. Habitat destruction, pollution and overfishing have led many sources of food on the brink of collapse or critically over-exploited.

The third, is capital and investment in Aquaculture. Without investment on this crucial sector there will be no Innovation, no Expansion and no Transformation, as fisheries is depleting or stagnating. This cannot continue.

We need to work together towards stamp out the over-exploitation of our marine resources that threaten the livelihoods of millions of people depending on fishing and farming of aquatic resources, especially in the small island countries and coastal areas.

I thank you for your active listening.