

**Speech of His Excellency Mr. Alvaro CEDENO MOLINARI,  
Ambassador of Costa Rica at the World Trade Organization**

Good morning. On behalf of the Costa Rican government it is my great honor to participate for the first time in this event. My country greatly appreciates the work undertaken by the Fisheries Transparency Initiative.

Costa Rica is a country that is ten times larger in its ocean boundaries than in its land borders. Only recently we have become aware of this circumstance, precisely at a time in which there is a growing concern and a sense of urgency about the way in which we as a human civilization are dealing with our fisheries and other marine resources.

We could call it a paradox that, having such a vast extent of territorial seas, we have developed as a nation with our backs to our ocean. Or I should say oceans, as we have access to both the majestic Pacific and the enchanting Caribbean.

We could further call it a paradox that 14 of the 17 poorest counties in Costa Rica are on the coast. Given the wealth of natural and renewable resources that our seas have to offer, it is this Administration's commitment to find ways to help engage these coastal communities with the riches of the oceans in a sustainable, environmentally friendly and socially inclusive manner.

As many others, we are deeply concerned with the current situation of marine fisheries worldwide. Only seven years ago we passed legislation to develop marine areas for responsible fishing. Such areas with biological or sociocultural importance are to be regulated in a way that it ensures the better use of its fisheries resources in the long term. For this purpose, the Costa Rican Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture engages with coastal communities and other institutions.

Despite the importance of fisheries for food and livelihood, overfishing and other destructive fishing practices have severely decreased the world's fish populations. Of great concern to us is the depletion of tropical species which, still today, seem to be so abundant but may in fact be hyperstable fisheries, which give the impression of being abundant due to catch rates remaining high, but may actually be very close to collapsing. The only way to determine hyperstability and to prevent collapse of a species that seems abundant is with proper collection of significant data. Biology has an important role to play in order to improve the quality of the data that we collect, aggregate and share domestically and internationally, in order to better understand the condition of tropical fisheries.

More than ever, it is imperative to reform global fisheries governance in ways that support sustainable development. Fisheries are the quintessential example of the tragedy of the commons, public goods that are natural and renewable but if depleted beyond its carrying capacity, could collapse to the detriment of all people for whom fisheries are their main source of protein in their nutrition, and also their main source of income in terms of employment.

Increasing transparency and participation could greatly contribute to overcome many of the challenges faced today by global fisheries management and promote responsible fisheries.

Costa Rica values the work that the Fisheries Transparency Initiative is currently undertaking. We are fully committed at the highest level to create the conditions in our country that will allow an open and accessible flow of fisheries information. We will further ensure that this information be reliable, trustworthy, publicized and made available to all interest groups who may interpret it and use it accordingly.

We look forward to the discussions of the Advisory Group Meetings today and hope we can contribute with its objectives today and in the near future.

Thank you.