

**Speech of H.E. Alessandro Mariani
Ambassador, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Mauritius, for the
Seychelles and the Union of Comoros**

Contribution Agreement with the FAO
Programme to Support the Implementation of a Regional Fisheries Strategy for the
Eastern and Southern Africa – Indian Ocean region (Smartfish)

24 January 2012

His Excellency, Ambassador Callixte d'Offay, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission

Mr. Amadou Moustapha Kamara, Representative of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations for Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Indian Ocean Commission for organising, in the margin of the first Steering Committee of the SIDS programme, this event to mark the recent signature between the FAO and the EU of a grant agreement to support the implementation of a regional fisheries strategy in the Eastern and Southern Africa-Indian Ocean.

The grant agreement with FAO (which amounts to 6 million Euro) is part of an overall programme better known as **Smartfish** which has been developed under the longstanding partnership the EU has with the Indian Ocean Commission in order to foster the regional fishery sector.

We believe that the FAO is the logical partner of the EU and the IOC to implement this agreement which aims at (i) preparing an Action Plan for fisheries and aquaculture management and development, and (ii) strengthening fish and fish products contribution to food security and nutrition in the region. Concerning food security, the Agreement includes support to at least five National Plans for Food Security to better integrate fishery and aquaculture, reduction of post harvest losses

in the food chain at hot spots in four countries, and support to 15 sites for aquaculture development.

FAO has significant expertise and a longstanding experience in the fishery sector in the region, including in Somalia for which the EU has recently adopted a Strategic Framework. Therefore, its added value will consist of streamlining several existing initiatives within a coherent and consistent approach.

The joint programme has at least two major challenges:

- First: the time frame for the implementation of the agreement (2 years) is ambitious. To face this challenge we should (i) work in close consultation with national authorities and regional fisheries authorities, (ii) focus on areas where support is really needed, (iii) work in close collaboration with community-based actors, and (iv) use lessons learned.
- Second: the geographic coverage of the Agreement is wide, from island states of the Indian Ocean region to Africa mainland states. This means that actions need to be driven by the existing main market flows of fish products playing a significant role for the economy and food security of the region(such as tuna for exports and dagaa -Lake Victoria- for regional food security). National Focal Points of the Smartfish programme have a key role to play at national level and should interact at regional level; they should focus on the programme's regional added value, building on the experience of persons who have been trained in other programmes.

In the context of an increasing demand for fish and fish products in the region, the EU is strongly committed to provide technical and financial support to its partner countries to achieve sustainable development of their fisheries sector, in line with its development policy and the external dimension of its Common Fishery Policy (Fisheries Partnership Agreements).

With this new agreement, we aim at further supporting the region to foster its fishery sector, which could significantly contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goal to eradicate poverty and hunger; and to improving food security through local community initiatives.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the agreement will be fishing and aquaculture communities, and the population at large in terms of improved food security.

We are confident that the FAO will undertake all the necessary efforts to implement this comprehensive Agreement and we look forward to a constructive and successful partnership with the FAO and the Indian Ocean Commission.

Thank you for your attention.