REPORT OF FINDINGS
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

The WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and Its Implications for Indonesia's Traditional Fishers

Organized by:

Indonesia For Global Justice (IGJ)

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Venue:
University of Mataram Campus
13 May 2026

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Year
2026

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Background

The World Trade Organization (WTO) continues to advance negotiations on the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement. The issue of fisheries subsidies cannot be separated from the structural realities of global fisheries governance, particularly the practices of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the dominance of large-scale industrial fishing fleets, and the unequal distribution and utilization of marine resources. Accordingly, these negotiations are intended to discipline subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity. At the same time, there are concerns that overly restrictive subsidy rules could narrow the policy space available to governments to protect and empower small-scale fishers and may further deepen inequalities between large-scale and small-scale fisheries operators, particularly in developing and least-developed countries where the fisheries sector is predominantly composed of small-scale and traditional fishers.

Negotiations on the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement have been underway at the WTO since the Doha Round and reached a significant milestone at the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2022. At MC12, WTO Members adopted the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, which entered into force on 15 September 2025 following ratification by two-thirds of WTO Members. The agreed provisions correspond to Pillar 1 (Fish 1), which addresses overfished stocks. Indonesia is among the countries that have not yet ratified Pillar 1 (Fish 1) on overfished stocks, whereas several developed countries—including those that are not dependent on small-scale and traditional fishers and even those without maritime territories—have already ratified the agreement.

Negotiations on Pillar 2 (Fish 2), which focuses on overcapacity and overfishing, continued through the Fourteenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in March 2026. However, the negotiations reached a significant impasse and will continue through regular negotiations leading up to the Fifteenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC15). This situation reflects a fundamental divergence between developed and developing countries. Developed countries generally advocate for broader and more binding disciplines, while developing countries emphasize that the root causes of overfishing lie not solely in subsidies but also in asymmetries in global fishing capacity and the dominance of large industrial fleets. In this context, developing countries insist that WTO rules must preserve sufficient policy space to support small-scale fishers and the development of domestic fisheries sectors.

In light of these developments, there is a need for further critical discussion, particularly by amplifying the voices of Indonesia's small-scale and traditional fishers, in order to better understand the implications of this agreement for national policies and the livelihoods of traditional fishing communities, and to formulate advocacy positions and strategies that are more firmly grounded in social justice and ecological sustainability.

The WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and Indonesia's Position in the Negotiations

Rahmat Maulana Sidik, Executive Director, Indonesia For Global Justice (IGJ)

This topic was raised because it is considered both important and critical in the context of Indonesia's fisheries sector. The WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement seeks to prohibit eight categories of government subsidies that are deemed to contribute to fishing overcapacity and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The Development of Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations and the Shifting Interests of Developed and Developing Countries

Initially, the issue of fisheries subsidies was strongly championed by developing countries. The objective was to combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and address the problems of overcapacity and overfishing.

In this context, it is important to distinguish between **coastal countries** and **distant-water fishing countries**. Coastal countries are coastal or archipelagic states, such as Indonesia, that possess extensive coastlines and abundant fisheries resources. In contrast, distant-water fishing countries are states that conduct fishing operations far beyond their own territorial waters, including in the waters of other countries. At the outset of the negotiations, developing countries advocated for fisheries subsidy rules as a means of protecting their fisheries resources from exploitation by countries that lacked adequate domestic fisheries resources. The primary focus was to combat IUU fishing, overcapacity, and overfishing in order to safeguard the sustainability of fisheries resources in developing countries.

The negotiations continued to evolve between 2016 and 2018. In 2017, the mandate of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was incorporated into the discussions. This mandate underscored the importance of maintaining sustainable oceans and fisheries and eliminating IUU fishing, overcapacity, and overfishing. However, a significant shift occurred during the WTO Ministerial Conference in Argentina in 2017. The negotiating text, which had originally been intended to protect the interests of developing countries, began to change direction. Over time, the text evolved in a manner that allowed developed countries to continue maintaining subsidies for their large-scale fisheries sectors and industrial fishing fleets.

This shift occurred as a result of strong pressure from developed countries. Consequently, subsidies for large-scale fisheries could continue to be maintained, provided that these countries were able to demonstrate that their fishing activities were managed sustainably. In practice, the capacity to prove sustainable fisheries management is disproportionately concentrated in developed countries, given their superior technological capabilities, monitoring systems, and institutional capacities.

Types of Fisheries Subsidies Proposed for Prohibition under the WTO Agreement and Their Implications for Fishers

In the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations, there were initially three pillars of discussion. Over time, however, these were consolidated into two main negotiating tracks, namely Fish 1 and Fish 2. Fish 1 addresses Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, while Fish 2 focuses on the issues of overcapacity and overfishing.

Fish 1 has been concluded and has produced a final legal text. The agreement was reached at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. Consequently, IUU Fishing is now governed by a formally agreed set of rules under the WTO framework. Meanwhile, negotiations on Fish 2, which focuses on overcapacity and overfishing, are still ongoing.

Fish 2 contains provisions concerning a number of subsidy categories that may be prohibited under WTO rules. Eight types of subsidies are currently under discussion. One of these is subsidies for the construction, acquisition, modernization, renovation, and capacity enhancement of fishing vessels. In addition, fuel subsidies are also included among the categories of subsidies that could be restricted or prohibited.

This issue is of major concern for Indonesia. Approximately 2.7 million fishers in the country depend heavily on subsidized fuel. If fuel subsidies were to be prohibited under a WTO agreement, Indonesia, as a WTO Member, would be required to align its domestic policies with the agreed rules. Beyond fuel subsidies, Fish 2 also includes potential prohibitions on price support subsidies and operational subsidies for fishing activities at sea. This includes government measures aimed at maintaining fish prices at levels that remain profitable for fishers. For example, fishing ports or designated institutions may purchase fishers' catches at more favorable prices through subsidized support mechanisms. In the absence of such subsidies, fish prices could become highly volatile, potentially causing significant economic losses for fishers.

If fuel subsidies are withdrawn, fishers' operational costs will increase significantly. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that fishers are now compelled to travel farther offshore to fish. In many coastal areas and small islands, mining activities have reduced fishers' access to traditional fishing grounds. Moreover, large industrial vessels frequently encroach upon areas traditionally used by small-scale fishers. This situation is evident, for example, on Wawonii Island, where large fishing vessels have entered the fishing grounds of traditional fishing communities. As a result, small-scale fishers are forced to venture farther out to sea, incur higher operational costs, and contend with declining fish stocks in their customary fishing areas. Therefore, what should be subject to restrictions are the activities of large industrial fishing vessels that undermine the livelihoods and fishing spaces of small-scale fishers, rather than the subsidies that constitute a vital support mechanism for the sustainability of small-scale fisheries.

Vague Clauses and Their Relationship to Trade Agreements

The Fish 2 negotiating text on overcapacity and overfishing contains a provision that is often referred to as a "vague clause." This provision stipulates that the eight categories of subsidies previously considered potentially prohibited would not be deemed inconsistent with WTO rules if the subsidizing country can demonstrate that measures have been implemented to maintain fish stocks at biologically sustainable levels.

This provision has attracted considerable attention because, in practice, countries with advanced technologies, robust monitoring systems, and strong institutional capacities are better positioned to demonstrate that their fisheries are being managed sustainably. As a result, developed countries continue to have the policy space to maintain subsidies for their large-scale fisheries sectors and industrial fishing fleets. This runs counter to the original objective of the fisheries subsidies negotiations, which was to curb IUU fishing, overcapacity, and overfishing. By virtue of this provision, developed countries may in fact continue and preserve their subsidy regimes. This is precisely why the provision is often regarded as a "vague clause."

The Fisheries Subsidies Agreement is also linked to a trade agreement known as the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART). Under this agreement, there is an impetus for Indonesia to ratify the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement. Fish 1, which addresses IUU Fishing, has already been concluded and has produced a final text. If Indonesia is encouraged or pressured to ratify the agreement, and if Fish 2 is eventually adopted, Indonesia may face constraints in providing subsidies to small-scale and traditional fishers, particularly with respect to the eight categories of subsidies that remain under negotiation in Fish 2. To date, these eight subsidy categories have not been removed from the negotiating text, nor are there clear exemptions for developing countries such as Indonesia. In this context, the ART is viewed as a mechanism that could accelerate the fisheries subsidies negotiations while simultaneously increasing pressure on Indonesia to comply with and ratify the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement.

According to available data, more than 100 countries have accepted or ratified the Fish 1 Protocol, with the total currently standing at approximately 108 countries. Indonesia, to date, is not among the countries that have ratified the protocol. During the WTO negotiations held in Cameroon last March, representatives of the United States proposed that WTO Members be subject to certain criteria to determine whether they should continue to be eligible to maintain fisheries subsidies. In substantive terms, the proposal was primarily directed at China, which, within the WTO framework, is still classified as a developing country and therefore continues to benefit from special and differential treatment (S&DT), including with respect to the provision of subsidies.

However, the proposed criteria would also have direct implications for Indonesia. A country would no longer be eligible for special and differential treatment if it meets one of the following criteria: being a member of, or a candidate for membership in, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; being a member of the Group of Twenty; being classified as a high-income country according to the World Bank; or having a certain level of contribution to global fisheries production or trade.

Indonesia is considered likely to meet several of these criteria, particularly because it is currently undergoing the OECD accession process and is a member of the G20. If the United States' proposal is adopted, Indonesia could lose policy space to provide subsidies to the fisheries sector, including to small-scale and traditional fishers. However, the United States is seen as exerting considerable pressure in the fisheries subsidies negotiations. On the one hand, it is one of the major providers of subsidies to its own fisheries industry. On the other hand, it is promoting criteria that could restrict developing countries, including Indonesia, from providing support to their national fisheries sectors. In this context, Indonesia's position at the Fourteenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Cameroon is crucial in determining its stance on the ratification of Fish 1 and the ongoing negotiations on Fish 2, particularly in terms of preserving national policy space to continue protecting small-scale fishers and traditional fisheries.

Indonesia's Position in the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations

Based on intensive meetings with Indonesian diplomats during the negotiations in Cameroon, Indonesia's position was considered to be relatively strong and influential in the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations.

Indonesia has called for the preservation of policy space for small-scale fishers. It has firmly asserted that, as a developing country, Indonesia requires sufficient policy space to continue providing subsidies to small-scale and traditional fishers. This has become one of Indonesia's principal positions in the negotiations, namely to preserve the government's ability to continue supporting the small-scale fisheries sector.

There are also concerns regarding potential inconsistencies with UNCLOS. Indonesia has expressed concerns that WTO rules on fisheries subsidies may conflict with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Under UNCLOS, a clear distinction is made between coastal states and distant-water fishing nations. Coastal states, such as Indonesia, possess sovereign rights to manage the natural resources within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). However, this distinction is not clearly accommodated in the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement. As a result, the rules could potentially blur the rights of coastal states and create opportunities for other countries to exploit fishery resources within Indonesia's EEZ.

Indonesia has positioned itself as one of the countries most severely affected by Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. In its official statements, Indonesia has estimated that losses resulting from these practices amount to between US$4 billion and US$20 billion. Numerous foreign vessels operate illegally in Indonesian waters and exploit fishery resources without authorization. Consequently, Indonesia has emphasized the importance of preserving its right to take enforcement measures, including the sinking of foreign-flagged vessels found to be engaged in illegal fishing activities in its national waters.

Indonesia also views the proposed Fisheries Subsidies Agreement as one that could create imbalances between coastal states and distant-water fishing nations. In one of its statements issued on 29 March, Indonesia even described the draft agreement as a form of "maritime colonialism," arguing that it provides greater opportunities for countries with large industrial fishing fleets to continue exploiting fishery resources in the waters of developing countries.

The distinction between coastal states and distant-water fishing nations is therefore significant. Indonesia, the Philippines, and Ecuador are coastal states that possess priority rights over the fishery resources within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), as well as sovereign rights and full management authority over natural resources and fisheries governance structures, encompassing both small-scale fisheries and industrial fisheries. By contrast, distant-water fishing nations such as Japan, Spain, and South Korea are characterized by their fishing activities on the high seas or within the EEZs of other countries. Their operations depend on the rules established by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), and they may continue their fishing activities provided that they can demonstrate that their fisheries management practices are considered sustainable.

One of the reasons why specific provisions concerning small-scale fishers have not been explicitly incorporated into the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement is that the definition of "small-scale fishers" differs from one country to another. In The Gambia, for example, the classification is based on vessel dimensions. In Indonesia, the definition of small-scale fishers is regulated under national legislation and refers to fishers operating vessels of up to 5 gross tonnage (GT). These differences in definition make it difficult to formulate a uniform international standard.

Of the approximately 108 countries that have accepted the Fish 1 Protocol, Indonesia is not yet among them. This position reflects Indonesia's cautious approach, given the potential implications for its national policies on providing subsidies to small-scale and traditional fishers. Indonesia is considered to have significant interests at stake in the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations. On the one hand, Indonesia strongly supports efforts to combat IUU Fishing. On the other hand, it must also ensure that international rules do not restrict the government's right to protect small-scale fishers, safeguard its sovereignty over fisheries resources, and preserve national policy space.

The Implementation of Fisheries Subsidies for Fishers and the Structural Challenges Faced by Small-Scale Fishers in Accessing Resources

Amin Abdullah, Member of the Board of Trustees, Indonesian Traditional Fisherfolk Union (KNTI), West Nusa Tenggara

Amin Abdullah explained that the coastal population in East Lombok is estimated to number approximately 12,300 people. Subsidies for coastal communities are therefore of critical importance, as subsidies for small-scale fishers constitute an important investment for Indonesia.

The speaker further emphasized that this issue is not merely about supporting economically vulnerable groups, but also about ensuring food security, strengthening food sovereignty, and fostering sustainable economic development in coastal areas. By providing subsidies, the government can help fishers gain access to the equipment, fuel, and infrastructure necessary to improve their productivity and incomes.

A key point emphasized by the speaker is that subsidies for fishers should not be viewed merely as a form of social assistance or as a policy driven by governmental charity. Rather, subsidies constitute a state obligation and form part of the government's responsibility to protect and empower communities whose livelihoods depend on the fisheries sector. Although, from the WTO's perspective, fisheries subsidies are often regarded as having potentially negative consequences, such as contributing to overfishing, this issue cannot be understood in simplistic terms. The concept of overfishing must be examined in a more contextual manner and based on the specific conditions of each locality.

For example, the characteristics of overfishing in the Alas Strait are distinct and cannot be generalized. Overfishing may be caused by various factors, including the excessive use of fishing gear, the large number of fishing gear types in operation, the high number of fishers engaged in fishing activities, or a combination of these factors. Therefore, determining whether a particular area is experiencing overfishing must be based on actual conditions on the ground and cannot be uniformly applied across different contexts.

Furthermore, the fisheries sector is influenced by a range of factors, including international economic dynamics, rising operational costs associated with fishing activities, and the constraints faced by small-scale fisheries operators. These factors demonstrate that subsidies constitute an important instrument for sustaining fishers' livelihoods and ensuring the viability of their fishing activities.

Protection of Fishers

In Indonesia, the government has established a legal commitment to protect and empower fishers, fish farmers, and salt farmers through Law No. 7 of 2016. The law affirms that the state has the responsibility to provide protection for fishers, improve the welfare of fisheries actors, strengthen their productive capacities, and ensure the sustainability of fisheries activities.

However, an important question remains as to the extent to which these mandates have been implemented. According to the speaker, implementation has thus far been very limited, and only a small portion of the law's provisions have been effectively put into practice.

The narrative of fisher protection embodied in Law No. 7 of 2016 is considered important; however, its provisions need to be revisited to better reflect the actual conditions faced by fishers on the ground. Accordingly, the issue of fisheries subsidies is not merely a matter of international trade rules, but also concerns the state's constitutional obligation to ensure the protection and empowerment of small-scale fishers, fish farmers, and salt farmers in Indonesia.

According to the speaker, the protection of fishers cannot be adequately realized solely through social assistance, insurance schemes, or contributions to the National Health Insurance Agency (BPJS Kesehatan). While such programmes are important, the most fundamental issue is ensuring that fishers continue to have secure and protected living spaces and access to the resources upon which their livelihoods depend. The narrative of fisher protection loses its meaning if the government provides fishing vessels, subsidies, or health insurance, while at the same time fishers' living spaces and resource governance areas are being appropriated by businesses, investors, and corporations.

Limited Community Participation in Spatial Planning

One example highlighted by the speaker is Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2024. According to the speaker, the process of drafting this regulation involved very limited participation from local communities, including fishers and groups that depend on coastal resources. As a result, the zoning plan is considered not to reflect actual conditions on the ground and has the potential to generate conflicts between different economic activities.

In southern East Lombok, there are areas that are simultaneously used for shrimp aquaculture and salt farming. In practice, corporate-owned shrimp ponds discharge waste into the sea. At the same time, salt farmers rely on seawater as the primary input for their production. If the seawater is contaminated by waste from shrimp ponds, the quality of the salt produced will also be adversely affected. This example illustrates concerns that, within the next five to ten years, the quality of locally produced salt could deteriorate significantly if spatial planning and environmental management are not carried out with due care.

The management of marine areas extending from 0 to 12 nautical miles falls under the authority of provincial governments. Consequently, provincial governments play a central role in determining marine zoning and the utilization of marine space. However, according to the speaker, these decision-making processes often fail to adequately involve fishers and coastal communities. As a result, the policies that emerge do not fully protect the interests of local communities.

The Importance of Strengthening the Resource Governance Rights of Coastal Communities

In response to these conditions, the speaker and local communities are currently drafting village regulations (*perdes*) and *awik-awik* (customary community regulations) concerning the governance rights of coastal areas in several bays in East Lombok. This initiative aims to strengthen the rights of coastal communities over their managed areas, ensure the equitable use of resources, prevent conflicts arising from large-scale investments, and safeguard the sustainability of coastal ecosystems.

Accordingly, the protection of fishers must be understood in broader terms, extending beyond economic assistance to include guarantees over living spaces, resource governance rights, and the right of coastal communities to participate in all decision-making processes that affect them.

The Strategic Role of Small-Scale Fishers and the Vulnerabilities They Face

The narrative surrounding the protection of fishers cannot be separated from an understanding of who is meant by small-scale fishers and traditional fishers. According to the speaker, Indonesian legislation provides a relatively clear definition of small-scale fishers, namely fishers who operate vessels of less than 5 gross tonnage (GT). In contrast, the definition of traditional fishers has not been explicitly established in law, or at least has not yet been adequately regulated.

Small-scale fishers constitute the majority of actors in Indonesia's fisheries sector. It is estimated that approximately 97 percent of fisheries actors in Indonesia fall within the category of small-scale fishers, generally operating vessels of less than 10 GT. Their number exceeds 3 million people. This large population demonstrates that small-scale and traditional fishers constitute the backbone of Indonesia's fisheries sector.

Small-scale and traditional fishers also play a highly significant role in the national economy. Indonesia ranks among the world's largest producers of both capture fisheries and aquaculture products, accounting for approximately 8 percent of global fisheries production. The fisheries sector contributes around 2.73 percent of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with its economic contribution estimated to amount to tens of billions of US dollars. Given this substantial role, small-scale fishers cannot be regarded as a marginal group. They are a pillar of the national economy and serve as key custodians of food security and an important source of protein for the population.

The speaker also highlighted the importance of promoting the consumption of marine fish as a more natural source of protein. Certain aquaculture commodities, such as whiteleg shrimp (*Litopenaeus vannamei*) and tilapia, are highly dependent on artificial feed during the production process. For this reason, the public, particularly university students, was encouraged to consume more marine fish sourced from traditional fishers. In this sense, supporting traditional fishers also means supporting a healthier and more sustainable food system.

Despite their substantial contributions, traditional fishers face high levels of vulnerability, including limited livelihood diversification, significant economic burdens, inadequate labour protection, and restricted access to social safety-net programmes. These conditions make subsidies and government support critically important instruments for sustaining their livelihoods.

In this context, proposals to restrict fisheries subsidies through the WTO have become a highly significant issue. If subsidies such as fuel subsidies are restricted or prohibited, traditional fishers, who already face high levels of vulnerability, will be among the groups most severely affected. Therefore, preserving the government's policy space to continue providing subsidies to small-scale and traditional fishers is an essential step in protecting the communities that have long constituted the backbone of Indonesia's fisheries sector.

Challenges in Accessing Subsidized Fuel for Small-Scale Fishers

In practice, one of the principal forms of support available to traditional fishers in Indonesia is subsidized fuel. However, according to the speaker, access to fuel subsidies is not always straightforward. Although the policy appears sound in principle, the procedures and administrative requirements for obtaining subsidized fuel are often overly burdensome for small-scale fishers. As a result, not all fishers who need this support are able to benefit from it effectively.

In practice, small-scale fishers continue to face numerous obstacles in accessing subsidized fuel. Although the government maintains that the process is simple, conditions on the ground suggest otherwise. To obtain a barcode for purchasing subsidized fuel, fishers must first possess a document known as a *pas kecil* (small vessel registration certificate). This document constitutes one of the principal requirements, yet the process of obtaining it is far from straightforward. In West Nusa Tenggara, for example, the number of certified officers authorized to measure vessels is extremely limited. According to the speaker, there are only two officials with the formal authority to conduct vessel measurements, despite the large number of vessels that require certification.

This situation demonstrates that the implementation of various regulations derived from Law No. 6 of 2023 has not been fully supported by adequate institutional readiness and resources. Consequently, many fishers still do not possess the required barcode and remain unable to access subsidized fuel. Beyond administrative challenges, several other barriers persist, including the long distance between fishing communities and fuel stations or distribution points, limited fuel quotas, and distribution systems that are perceived as not being fully targeted. The speaker highlighted the irony that privately owned high-value vehicles appear to have easier access to subsidized fuel, while small-scale fishers operating simple engines face a far more complicated process.

According to the speaker, the protection of fishers is not solely a matter of economic assistance; most fundamentally, it concerns the protection of fishing grounds that have been managed and utilized by fishing communities for generations. Traditional fishers depend heavily on these fishing grounds. If these areas are transferred to large-scale commercial enterprises, their livelihoods will be seriously threatened. Under the Online Single Submission (OSS) licensing system, businesses can obtain permits through a relatively expedited process. In practice, this system is perceived as making it easier for corporations to secure permits for the utilization of marine space, including for pearl farming, aquaculture ponds, and other commercial activities. Once such permits are granted, traditional fishers may lose access to fishing grounds that they have managed and relied upon for generations. For example, an area that has long been recognized as a fishing ground for squid or mackerel tuna may be repurposed after a permit is issued to a particular company. As a consequence, fishers are forced to abandon areas that have long served as their source of livelihood.

The sea, which was once regarded as a common property resource, is increasingly being subjected to processes of privatization. Access to marine space has become increasingly dependent on the ability to obtain permits and comply with administrative requirements. Under these conditions, small-scale fishing communities are in a more vulnerable position than large business actors that possess greater capital and resources. Under existing regulations, any party that utilizes marine space continuously for a specified period is required to obtain a marine spatial utilization permit.

These provisions reflect an increasingly administrative approach to the governance of coastal and marine areas. However, in the absence of adequate protections for local communities, such policies risk further constraining the living spaces and customary fishing grounds of traditional fishers. According to the speaker, many other issues relating to fisher protection, fisheries subsidies, and marine spatial governance remain to be discussed. However, due to time constraints, it was hoped that these issues could be explored further during the discussion session.

The Need for Fisheries Subsidies and the Challenges Faced by Women Fishers

Sri Wahyuni, Indonesian Coastal Women's Union (Kesatuan Perempuan Pesisir Indonesia)

As experienced in coastal areas of East Lombok, particularly among fishers, it is important to assess whether the distribution of subsidized fuel has truly been on target and aligned with community expectations as stipulated by the government. In addition, there is a need to discuss various constraints that are directly felt by communities at the local level. While previous discussions have largely focused on national and international issues, this forum seeks to highlight the concrete conditions faced by local communities. It is necessary to examine how government oversight and policy implementation have been carried out thus far, as well as to identify potential solutions that can be jointly advanced so that small communities can genuinely benefit from subsidy programs. The hope is that this forum or meeting does not merely serve as a space for expressing concerns or engaging in discussion, but also generates ideas and recommendations that are beneficial to the wider community, particularly in West Nusa Tenggara. This space should be utilized as a meaningful platform for discussion that provides tangible benefits to coastal communities, especially fishers who depend on subsidized fuel to carry out their fishing activities, improve their income, and support the well-being of their families.

Conditions of Access to Subsidized Fuel for Fishers and Salt Farmers in the Field

Based on the direct experience of coastal communities in East Lombok, accessing subsidized fuel is not an easy process. According to the speaker, this situation is also experienced by salt farmers. In salt production activities, fuel demand is relatively high, as lifting seawater into salt ponds can consume around 15 to 20 liters per day, depending on the size of the managed area. Therefore, the issue of access to subsidized fuel is highly important to discuss, particularly in ensuring that its distribution is truly targeted and able to meet the needs of coastal communities, including both fishers and salt farmers.

Field realities indicate that the benefits of subsidies have not been fully felt by those who are most in need. In many cases, actors with stronger legal status and better administrative access find it easier to obtain subsidized fuel. Meanwhile, smaller-scale actors whose businesses lack complete formal documentation often face greater difficulties, despite their heavy reliance on fuel for their livelihoods.

According to the speaker, this condition creates inequality. Those with greater recognition or stronger administrative support tend to access policy benefits more easily, while small-scale communities must struggle harder to obtain the same entitlements.

This situation was also evident when the distribution of subsidized fuel experienced disruptions in East Lombok. At that time, fishers reported difficulties in obtaining fuel, both due to limited supply and because the purchasing process remained complicated, even for those who already possessed a fisher identification card. As a result, fishing activities were disrupted. Fishers faced uncertainty, as operational costs increased while fuel availability was not guaranteed. This situation directly affected their income and household welfare. According to the speaker, this issue requires collective attention from all stakeholders. The policy on subsidized fuel must be ensured to truly benefit small communities in need, rather than remaining effective only on paper. Forums such as this should not stop at voicing complaints but should instead generate concrete solutions and recommendations to ensure that subsidy implementation becomes more equitable, targeted, and directly beneficial for fishers and salt farmers in coastal areas.

The speaker also expressed hope that the Indonesian Coastal Women's Union (Kesatuan Perempuan Pesisir Indonesia/KPPI) and other coastal women's groups continue to play an important role in advocating for the rights of coastal communities. Coastal women are not only present in discussion forums or in submitting written aspirations, but also actively engage in fieldwork to accompany communities and directly observe the challenges they face. According to the speaker, coastal women are currently also conducting research on coastal tenure systems. Through these activities, they directly encounter a range of issues faced by local communities, particularly in coastal areas.

Drought-Related Challenges

The challenges identified are not limited to access to subsidized fuel. Coastal communities also face more fundamental issues such as poverty and limited access to clean water, particularly in southern coastal areas. These conditions are deeply concerning. In several field visits, field facilitators even witnessed how community members had to sell their rice stocks simply to purchase clean water. This reality demonstrates that the problems faced by coastal communities are far more complex than fuel subsidy issues alone. In this context, the presence of coastal women's organizations becomes highly important. They not only identify issues on the ground but also act as driving forces advocating for solutions to a range of structural problems faced by communities, including access to resources, protection of living spaces, and fulfillment of basic needs such as clean water.

National Fisheries Subsidies, the FAO Definition, the Globalization Landscape of the Maritime Sector, and the Importance of the Fisheries Economy for Fishers' Welfare

Muhamad Karim, Academics, University of Trilogy, Jakarta

In his presentation, Muhamad Karim explained that fisheries subsidies are essentially a form of government intervention aimed at supporting the fisheries sector so that it can continue to function and meet societal needs. Referring to the FAO definition, fisheries subsidies are understood as government actions that can influence the profitability of the fisheries industry in the short, medium, and long term. From an economic perspective, subsidies serve a noble purpose: addressing market failures and ensuring the continuity of fishers' livelihoods and activities.

However, in practice, fisheries subsidy policies do not always operate in accordance with their original objectives. Many subsidies fail to reach their intended beneficiaries and are instead enjoyed disproportionately by large-scale business actors rather than small-scale fishers. This remains one of the major challenges facing Indonesia today. Based on research conducted by colleagues from the Indonesian Traditional Fisherfolk Union (KNTI), it was found that some small-scale fishers do not genuinely experience the benefits of the subsidies that the government frequently promotes.

Muhamad Karim further outlined three principal forms of fisheries subsidies. First, beneficial subsidies, which are directed toward activities such as research, conservation, and the restoration of fish stocks. Second, capacity-enhancing subsidies, which are designed to increase fishing capacity, including fuel subsidies. According to him, this category of subsidies generates the greatest concerns because it can contribute to overcapacity and overfishing. Third, ambiguous subsidies, namely empowerment programmes whose direct benefits for the welfare of small-scale fishers are difficult to measure.

In his presentation, he also highlighted the issue of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. These practices include fish theft by unauthorized foreign vessels, the sale of catches without official reporting, and the use of prohibited fishing methods such as fish bombs, poisons, and other destructive fishing gear. According to him, these practices pose a serious threat to the sustainability of Indonesia's marine resources.

Beyond economic and environmental concerns, Muhamad Karim also addressed the social and humanitarian issues still faced by Indonesian fishers. He explained that fishers play a crucial role in providing an important source of protein for society, yet they often do not receive priority in state policies. This condition is reflected in fuel subsidy policies, a significant portion of which has been redirected to other sectors, while the needs of small-scale fishers have not been fully met. He also highlighted issues concerning the safety and protection of fishing crews, including cases involving Indonesian crew members working on foreign vessels who have experienced abuse and, in some instances, lost their lives. According to him, legal protection and occupational safety guarantees for workers in the fisheries sector remain very weak.

Muhamad Karim further highlighted the increasingly alarming condition of fish stocks. Data from 2022 indicate that nearly 70 percent of fish stocks have been subjected to overfishing. This situation is closely linked to the high levels of subsidies that enhance fishing capacity, particularly in major fishing nations such as China, which is among the world's largest providers of fisheries subsidies.

The discussion then turned to the history of subsidy policies in Indonesia. He explained that fisheries subsidies were implemented during the administration of President Megawati Soekarnoputri and subsequently underwent changes during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. At present, much of the subsidy framework has been shifted to other mechanisms, including those involving the banking sector and other forms of energy support. At the same time, conditions on the ground reveal an irony in fuel subsidy policies, as existing regulations often fail to correspond with the realities experienced by fishers.

Muhamad Karim also explained that fishers in Indonesia fall into various categories, including small-scale fishers, traditional fishers, fishing labourers, and vessel-owning fishers. However, in practice, subsidy policies often fail to take these distinctions into account, resulting in assistance that is poorly targeted. He also highlighted Indonesia's failure to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 188 concerning work in the fishing sector, despite the fact that the safety and welfare of fishing crews remain critical issues.

In the concluding part of his presentation, Muhamad Karim emphasized that fisheries subsidies need to be examined more critically because they concern both the sustainability of marine resources and the welfare of fishers. The fundamental questions that need to be addressed are whether the state is still genuinely providing subsidies to small-scale fishers, where these subsidies originate, and to whom they are actually being distributed. According to him, without effective oversight and appropriate policies, subsidies will merely serve to advance the interests of large-scale fisheries industries and increasingly diverge from their original purpose of protecting small-scale fishers.

Legal and Political Aspects of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, Regulatory Dimensions of Fisheries Sector Subsidies, and the Relationship Between Fisheries Subsidies and IUU Fishing Practices in Indonesia

Dr. Muh. Risnain, S.H.,M.H., Academics, Mataram University

In his presentation, the speaker explained that discussions on fisheries subsidies cannot be separated from the dynamics of international trade and the evolution of various global agreements governing the fisheries sector. According to him, developments in international agreements adopted in 2022 reveal a clear divergence in perspectives between developed and developing countries regarding subsidy policies. Developing countries generally continue to view subsidies as an important instrument for protecting small-scale fishers and sustaining the fisheries sector, whereas developed countries tend to advocate for the reduction or elimination of subsidies on the grounds of environmental sustainability and the need to address overfishing.

The speaker further explained that fisheries subsidies are fundamentally intended to help domestic fishery products remain competitive in international markets. Subsidies may take the form of fuel assistance, fisher insurance, low-interest credit schemes, business capital support, production facilities, and various other forms of government assistance. In the context of international trade, subsidies are often contested because they are perceived as lowering the prices of products in foreign markets, thereby allegedly disadvantaging competing countries. Indonesia itself has, on several occasions, been accused of engaging in dumping practices and providing subsidies deemed unfair in international trade.

The discussion then turned to subsidy prohibitions within the WTO framework and other international agreements relating to the fisheries sector. The speaker highlighted that, in many cases, suspicions regarding IUU Fishing are more frequently directed toward traditional or local fishers, even though, in his view, such practices are often carried out by foreign vessels operating in the waters of developing countries. He explained that IUU Fishing consists of three components: Illegal Fishing, namely fishing activities that violate a country's laws; Unreported Fishing, namely fishing activities that are not officially reported; and Unregulated Fishing, namely fishing activities that are conducted in a manner inconsistent with the rules established by international fisheries management organizations.

According to the speaker, the reporting of fish catches is crucial because it is directly related to the sustainability of fish stocks and the determination of fishing quotas. If catches are not reported, the state will face difficulties in assessing available fish stocks and determining safe catch limits. Such conditions can also create opportunities for illegal fish trade and increase economic losses to the state.

In his presentation, the speaker also discussed the concepts of coastal states, land-locked states, and flag states in international fisheries law. Land-locked states may still gain access to certain fishery resources if such rights are granted by the state that possesses jurisdiction over the relevant maritime area. Meanwhile, the concept of a flag state allows a country to operate vessels flying its flag and to access certain waters in accordance with international regulations. According to the speaker, arrangements of this kind often give rise to concerns that international agreements disproportionately benefit developed countries, which possess greater fishing fleet capacities and more advanced technologies than developing countries.

The speaker also noted that IUU Fishing activities frequently occur in maritime areas extending up to approximately 200 nautical miles from the coast, areas that are generally more accessible to large-scale foreign fishing vessels. By contrast, Indonesia's approximately 2.7 million traditional fishers depend heavily on government subsidy policies to sustain their livelihoods. Consequently, the removal of subsidies is considered likely to have direct repercussions for the welfare of small-scale fishers and to further aggravate the economic conditions of coastal communities.

In the context of national policy, the speaker referred to Law No. 7 of 2016 on the Protection and Empowerment of Fishers, along with its implementing regulations, which provide the legal framework for fisher protection in Indonesia. According to him, fuel subsidies and various forms of government assistance constitute an integral part of the state's efforts to safeguard the welfare of traditional fishers. Therefore, international policies that advocate the reduction of subsidies need to be examined carefully to ensure that they do not conflict with national interests.

In the concluding part of his presentation, the speaker addressed Indonesia's position regarding the ratification of international fisheries subsidies agreements. He argued that ratification should not be undertaken hastily merely because of global pressures or the interests of developed countries. In his view, Indonesia would be required to undertake numerous obligations if it were to ratify such agreements, while the consequences for traditional fishers and the national fisheries industry may not necessarily be beneficial. The speaker emphasized that national interests must remain the primary consideration in determining Indonesia's position on the ratification of international agreements, particularly amid concerns over the emergence of new forms of colonialism through global trade mechanisms and the control of marine resources by developed countries.

Types of Fisheries Subsidies and Law No. 7 of 2016 on the Protection and Empowerment of Fishers, Fish Farmers, and Salt Farmers

Parid Ridwanuddin, LHKP PP Muhammadiyah and Researcher at AURIGA

In his presentation, the speaker explained that the ways in which states perceive the sea have profoundly shaped contemporary fisheries policies and international trade regimes. According to him, there are three major paradigms in the historical governance of the oceans. The first is the closed sea paradigm, developed by Portugal and Spain, under which the sea is regarded as a space that can be controlled and monopolized. The second is the free sea paradigm, which emerged through Dutch thought and conceives of the sea as an open space accessible to all. The third is the commons paradigm, which views the sea as a shared resource that must be protected and utilized collectively for the common good.

The speaker explained that, within the context of the WTO and international trade, the dominant paradigm is that of the sea as a free space. Under this paradigm, every state has the opportunity to access marine resources provided that it possesses adequate technology, fishing fleets, and capital. This situation has created significant imbalances in the fisheries sector, particularly between developed and developing countries. According to him, there are stark differences between foreign fishing fleets and Indonesian local fishers in terms of fishing technology, vessel capacity, and the level of capital and state subsidies available to them.

The discussion then turned to the growing push for the reduction or elimination of fisheries subsidies in various international forums. Based on FAO data from 2025 on global fishing activities, developed countries remain the world's largest providers of fisheries subsidies. At the same time, however, developing countries are being encouraged to reduce their subsidies on the grounds of environmental sustainability and the need to address overfishing. The speaker argued that this situation illustrates the persistent inequalities embedded within the global trading system.

According to the speaker, Indonesia's fisheries subsidies differ fundamentally from those of major fishing nations. The subsidies provided by Indonesia are generally not intended to support national vessels in fishing within the waters of other countries; rather, they are primarily directed toward assisting domestic fishers in meeting the operational costs of going to sea. Consequently, efforts to eliminate fisheries subsidies are seen as potentially harmful to small-scale fishers who rely heavily on government support.

The speaker also addressed Australia's marine conservation policies as an example of how developed countries pursue their interests in controlling access to marine resources. In this context, he argued that one of the counterarguments Indonesia could raise against WTO pressures to remove subsidies is the fact that fish stocks in Indonesian waters are increasingly being depleted as a result of the large-scale exploitation carried out by industrial fishing fleets and foreign vessels. Therefore, in his view, the principal problem does not lie in subsidies for small-scale fishers, but rather in the weak oversight of large-scale fishing activities.

In his presentation, the speaker also explained the zoning system under the government's measured fishing policy. He argued that Indonesia's greatest challenge is to ensure the sustainability of domestic fish stocks by limiting permits for large-scale fishing vessels and giving greater priority to small-scale fishers in the utilization of fisheries resources. According to him, support for traditional fishers is essential because they are the group that depends most directly on the sea to meet their daily needs and livelihoods.

In addition to discussing international policies, the speaker also addressed recent developments in Indonesia's maritime and fisheries regulations. He explained that fisheries governance was first regulated under legislation enacted in 2004, which was subsequently amended in 2007. Later, the government enacted the 2014 Maritime Law as a broader legal framework for governing the marine sector. However, according to him, there is still no regulatory framework that effectively protects small-scale actors in the fisheries sector, particularly traditional fishers.

The speaker also referred to the efforts of civil society groups that petitioned the Constitutional Court, which eventually contributed to the enactment of Law No. 7 of 2016 on the Protection and Empowerment of Fishers. The law was initially expected to strengthen protections for small-scale fishers. However, according to him, these protections began to weaken following the adoption of the Job Creation Law, which is considered to have altered various mechanisms for protecting communities and governing natural resources.

In the concluding part of his presentation, the speaker emphasized that Indonesia has strong grounds for maintaining fisheries subsidies, particularly because the majority of Indonesia's fishing activities take place within its domestic waters and most actors in the fisheries sector are small-scale fishers. Therefore, state-provided subsidies should be understood as a form of social protection and support for the livelihoods of coastal communities, rather than merely as an economic instrument that must be eliminated in the interests of global trade.

Participants' Responses and Discussion Session

During the question-and-answer session, participants from academia, journalism, government institutions, and civil society expressed critical views regarding the impacts of the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and its implications for traditional fishers in Indonesia.

Ria from KNTI East Lombok highlighted that, to this day, women fishers remain largely unrecognized by the government. According to her, there is still no adequate acknowledgment of women as fishers, even though women who collect shellfish and engage in other fishing-related activities are also fishers and contribute significantly to sustaining the economy of their island communities. Across all of the presentations, from the first speaker to the last, it became evident that the central issue under discussion was the potential impact of the World Trade Organization's fisheries subsidy elimination agenda on small-scale fishers. The WTO considers fisheries subsidies to be a contributing factor to overfishing. However, in the Indonesian context, this issue needs to be viewed more proportionately, given that the majority of fishing activities are still carried out by domestic small-scale fishers. The elimination of subsidies could, in fact, further worsen the conditions of small-scale fishers. They are highly dependent on subsidies to cover the operational costs of going to sea, particularly fuel costs, which account for approximately 60 to 70 percent of total fishing expenses. Without subsidies, many fishers would be unable to continue fishing and would risk losing their livelihoods. The discussion emphasized that the WTO's proposal to eliminate fisheries subsidies has the potential to exacerbate the vulnerabilities of small-scale fishers. These communities rely heavily on subsidies, especially fuel subsidies, which constitute a substantial share of their operational costs. Small-scale fishers also play an essential role in providing food and protein for Indonesian society, yet they continue to face numerous challenges, including difficulties in accessing subsidized fuel, low prices for their catches, and inadequate government protection. Therefore, participants stressed the need for policies that are more responsive to the needs of small-scale fishers and women fishers, so that the welfare of coastal communities can be genuinely improved.

Another participant, **Gito,** emphasized that the condition of small-scale fishers in Indonesia remains highly vulnerable. Based on field observations, fuel costs account for approximately 60 to 70 percent of total fishing operational expenses, while the majority of fishers are still unable to access subsidies optimally. According to the participant, if the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement is implemented without adequate safeguards for developing countries, the consequences could be severe. Economically, fishers would face rising operational costs, declining incomes, and an increased risk of bankruptcy. Socially, such conditions could exacerbate poverty in coastal areas, increase unemployment, and trigger conflicts among fishing communities. The participant questioned whether the primary objective of the agreement is genuinely to promote environmental sustainability or, instead, to constrain the policy space of developing countries in protecting their populations. In his view, global inequalities remain deeply entrenched, as developed countries have long strengthened their fisheries industries through substantial subsidies, while developing countries are being restricted when attempting to provide support to their small-scale fishers. Ultimately, the participant stressed that the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement is not merely an issue of international trade; it is fundamentally about the livelihoods and survival of millions of small-scale fishers in Indonesia.

Another response was delivered by **Siti Fatimah from the Coastal Women's Association of North Lombok Regency (KPPI)**. The participant noted that, based on the presentations of the speakers, the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, adopted on 3 June 2022 and entering into force following ratification by the required number of countries, contains three principal prohibitions: subsidies for illegal fishing, subsidies relating to overfished stocks, and subsidies for fishing operations on the high seas that are not regulated by international mechanisms. According to the participant, these provisions may conflict with Law No. 7 of 2016, which obliges the state to provide support and protection to fishers, including coastal women. She emphasized that coastal women constitute one of the groups most severely affected by the implementation of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement. For many years, coastal women have advocated for recognition as fishers and as key contributors to household and coastal economies, yet such recognition remains limited. When the economic conditions of fishing households deteriorate as a result of reduced subsidies, women often bear the heaviest burden, including increased economic pressures within the household that may contribute to family conflict and even domestic violence. Beyond the issue of subsidies, the participant also highlighted the impacts of industrial development in coastal areas, such as shrimp farming and the discharge of waste into the sea, which have forced fishers to travel farther offshore in order to secure adequate catches. Consequently, fuel consumption has increased substantially, further intensifying the economic burdens faced by fishing communities. According to the participant, if WTO policies are implemented without adequate protections for small-scale fishers and coastal women, the conditions of coastal communities will deteriorate further. She therefore questioned what strategies coastal women and fishers should pursue to ensure that the implementation of the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement does not disadvantage them, and how the government can ensure that international commitments do not diminish the rights of small-scale fishers and coastal women to receive protection and support from the state.

A **participant from the International Relations study program** questioned why Indonesia has not invested more substantially in the development of fishing vessel technologies and fishing gear that would enable Indonesian fishers to operate effectively within the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), extending up to 200 nautical miles. According to the participant, such investments are important to ensure that fishery resources in these waters are not easily exploited by foreign vessels. Moreover, government support for fishers should not rely solely on fuel subsidies but should also encompass technological development and the promotion of more sustainable energy alternatives.

Baiq Nur Ani, a member of the NTB Derwani Council, stated that the distribution of subsidized fuel in practice remains poorly targeted and that various administrative and structural barriers continue to prevent small-scale fishers from accessing their entitlements. This situation directly affects coastal women, who are responsible for processing and marketing fishery products to support their households. In addition to difficulties in accessing subsidized fuel, coastal women also face rising prices of supporting materials, such as plastic packaging, as well as low market prices for their products. The participant emphasized that women fishers and the families of small-scale fishers require stronger social protection measures, particularly during periods when fishers are unable to go to sea because of extreme weather conditions. She also stressed the importance of understanding the social conditions of coastal communities in areas such as Sekotong, North Lombok, and East Lombok, each of which possesses distinct characteristics and challenges. Furthermore, she called for stronger advocacy efforts to protect small-scale fishers from the pressures of coastal development, including hotel construction and other investment projects that threaten the livelihoods and living spaces of coastal communities.

Speakers' Responses

Parid Ridwanuddin, of the LHKP PP Muhammadiyah and a researcher at AURIGA, explained that advocacy for fishers must be carried out comprehensively, encompassing not only the protection of individual fishers but also the protection of their living spaces, fishing grounds, and tenure rights. According to him, several decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia have provided a strong legal foundation for such efforts, including rulings prohibiting mining activities on small islands and affirming that both terrestrial and marine spatial planning must be guided by principles of justice. The speaker further explained that Law No. 7 of 2016 has already established a broad range of protection mechanisms, including fuel subsidies, insurance schemes, business capital assistance, scholarships, and support for research and the development of fishing technologies. In his view, the primary challenge lies not in the absence of legal provisions, but rather in ensuring their effective implementation. This requires communities and fishers' organizations to actively demand the allocation and realization of public budgets through regional planning processes, such as the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD). With organized and sustained advocacy efforts, the rights of fishers, coastal women, and their families can be defended and advanced more effectively.

Dr. Muh. Risnain S.H., M.H. added that there are two major challenges that still need to be addressed. First, the government must consistently implement Law No. 7 of 2016. According to him, if this law were effectively implemented, many of the problems faced by fishers could, in fact, be resolved. However, its implementation has thus far fallen far short of expectations. Programs that once existed, such as fisher insurance schemes, are no longer functioning optimally, while other forms of assistance, including fuel subsidies and fisher empowerment programs, remain highly limited. He also highlighted issues related to the management of coastal areas, such as the regulation of fishing activities in Senggigi, which raises fundamental questions regarding the living space and sources of livelihood available to fishing communities. Second, Indonesia needs to strengthen investments in fisheries technology and fishing fleets so that national fishers are capable of operating within the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), extending up to 200 nautical miles. According to him, the direction of the blue economy agenda should enable Indonesia to become a maritime power capable of utilizing its own marine resources, ensuring that its people do not merely become spectators in their own country. This objective can be achieved through greater subsidy support and budget allocations that are more responsive to the needs of fishers. However, he argued that budgetary support for the maritime and fisheries sectors, including in West Nusa Tenggara, remains extremely limited. Therefore, increased budget allocations and a stronger commitment from the government are essential if Indonesia's aspiration to become a strong maritime nation is to be genuinely realized.

Muhammad Karim of Trilogy University explained that subsidies represent only one form of fiscal support available to the fisheries sector. According to him, developed countries in Europe continue to provide substantial support to their fisheries industries despite limiting direct subsidies, primarily through alternative policy instruments such as low-interest credit schemes, infrastructure development, and technological innovation. Such approaches, however, have not yet been optimally implemented in Indonesia. One of the key obstacles, he noted, lies in banking regulations that do not allow fishing vessels to be used as collateral for obtaining credit, even though these assets often possess considerable economic value. Therefore, in addition to advocating for the continuation of subsidies, Indonesia also needs to reform its financing and banking policies to ensure that fishers can more easily access capital and obtain the support necessary for business development and modernization.

Rahmat Maulana Sidik, Executive Director of Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ), explained that the state in fact possesses the capacity to invest in the fisheries sector, including in the development of fishing fleets for Indonesian fishers. He referred to the government's plan to build approximately 1,200–1,500 fishing vessels by 2028, with an estimated budget of around IDR 91.5 trillion. According to him, the principal issue is not the availability of financial resources, but rather the government's political will and commitment to prioritizing the fisheries sector within the national development agenda. Regarding the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, the speaker expressed the hope that the Indonesian government would refrain from ratifying the agreement, as it could potentially constrain the state's ability to support small-scale fishers. He also emphasized the importance of advancing legal recognition and protection for coastal women, safeguarding fishers' fishing grounds, and prohibiting mining activities in coastal areas and small islands that threaten the living spaces and livelihoods of coastal communities. In closing, the speaker stated that Indonesia for Global

Justice (IGJ) will continue to monitor the negotiation process at the WTO and provide input to Indonesian diplomats to ensure that international policies do not undermine the interests of small-scale fishers and coastal women.

Amin Abdullah of the Fisher Resource Development Institute (LPSDN) emphasized that the Indonesian government has, in principle, expressed an intention to develop offshore capture fisheries through the provision of fishing vessels to fishers. However, in his view, the implementation has not been sufficiently serious, as the assistance provided has largely taken the form of short-term projects. Many of the vessels distributed do not correspond to the actual needs of fishers, the fishing gear is often unsuitable for local conditions, and the programs are rarely accompanied by adequate technical assistance or clear maintenance schemes. According to him, similar challenges are evident in the aquaculture sector, including lobster farming, where Indonesia remains unable to produce feed independently and consequently struggles to compete with countries such as Vietnam. He also expressed appreciation for the efforts of Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ) in continuously raising the issue of fisheries subsidies at the international level. He stressed that fishers' organizations need to be strengthened in order to encourage the Indonesian government to reject the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, arguing that if the agreement were implemented without adequate safeguards, millions of fishers could potentially lose their livelihoods. According to him, such vulnerabilities are already visible in southern East Lombok, where local fishers are only able to fish within limited waters, while high-value fishery resources, such as tuna, are increasingly exploited by large foreign fishing vessels.

Moderator's Remarks, Amri Nuryadin, Executive Director of WALHI West Nusa Tenggara (NTB)

Amri Nuryadin, emphasized that advocacy for fishers must be directed toward the comprehensive recognition and protection of fishers' rights. Such protection should not be limited to individual fishers but must also include the empowerment of coastal communities and the protection of coastal areas as their living spaces. In addition, stronger legal measures are needed to ensure that the distribution of subsidies, particularly subsidized fuel, is properly targeted, as highlighted throughout the discussion. The moderator also stressed the importance of developing a common agenda to demand the implementation of existing regulations at both the national and regional levels, so that all rights and benefits guaranteed under the law can be effectively realized. In the context of international policy, the forum urged the Indonesian government not to ratify the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement before a comprehensive assessment and review have been undertaken. At the same time, the moderator underscored the importance of advocating for the legal recognition and protection of coastal women as an integral part of fishing communities.

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