

5th United Nations Ocean Forum

International fisheries access
agreements – challenges and
opportunities to optimize
development impacts

4 March 2025
4–4:45 p.m.



➤ What are IFAsAs and why are they important?

Fisheries are key resources for many countries, particularly developing and least developed countries (LDCs) as well as Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

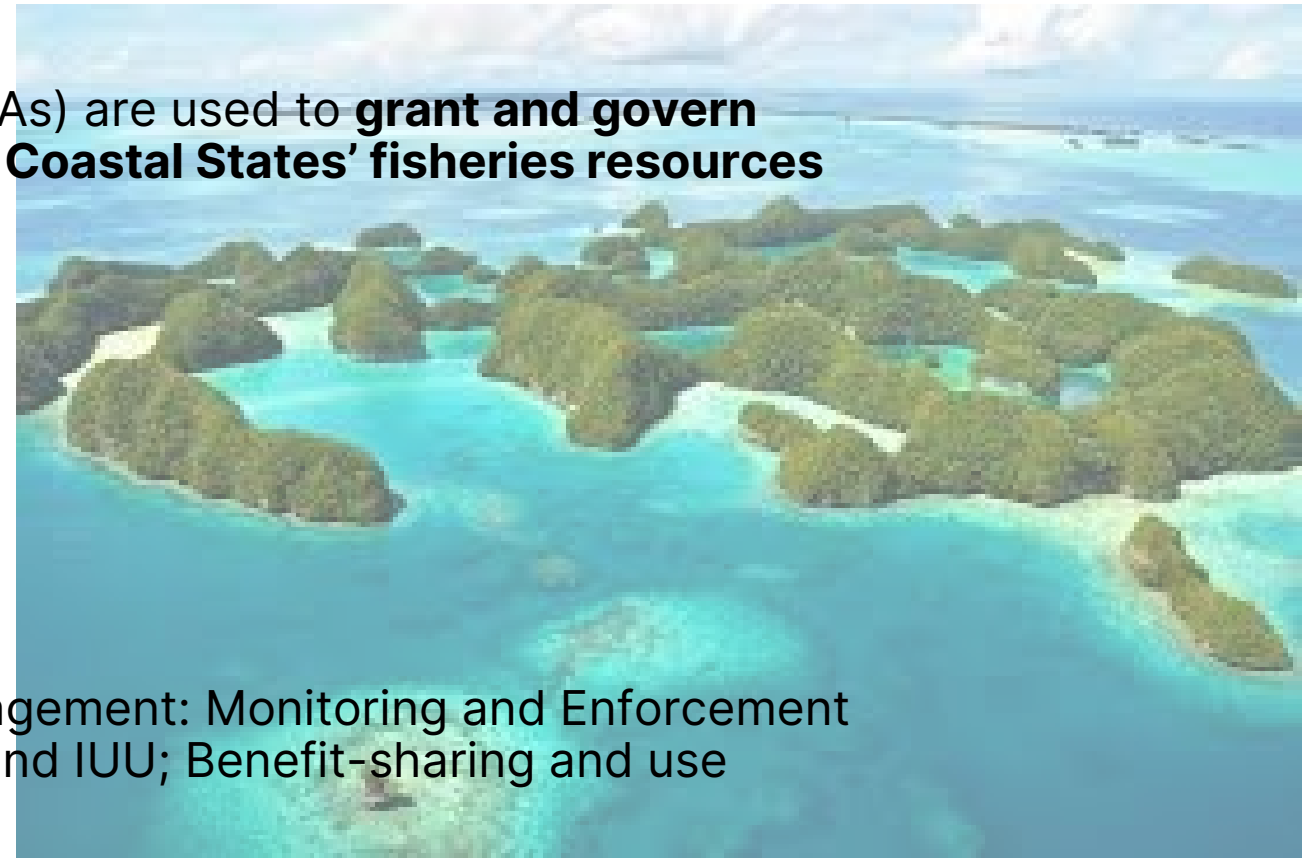
➡ revenue generation; value addition; export diversification; job creation; food security; poverty reduction; community development; social and cultural contributions.

International Fisheries Access Agreements (IFAAs) are used to **grant and govern access of Distant Water Fishing (DWF) fleets to Coastal States' fisheries resources** within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)

Types:

- Reciprocal / **Non-reciprocal**
- Government-Government / Government-private/associations / private-private
- Bilateral / Plurilateral
- Developed-Developed / **Developed-Developing** / Developing-Developing
- First generation / Second generation

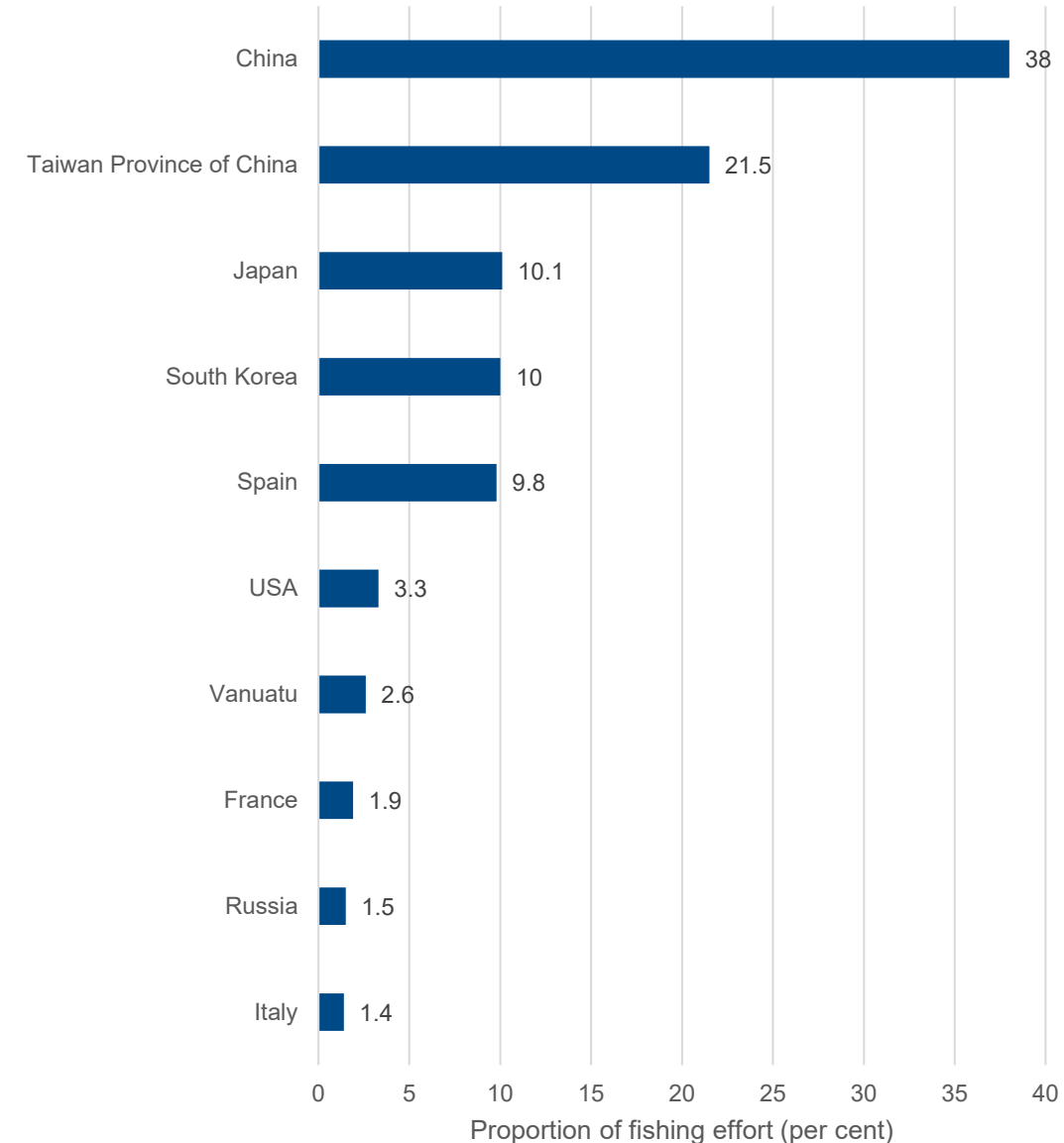
Issues: Transparency; Sustainable fisheries management: Monitoring and Enforcement capacities in coastal states; Links to overfishing and IUU; Benefit-sharing and use



Reasons for entering IFAs & leading nations

- DWF has existed for centuries, increasingly so after WW-II
- Top5 DWFNs: China, Taiwan Province of China (60% of total), Japan, South Korea and EU (Spain) (89% of total operations)
- Top5 DWFNs target four main regions of the ocean: the Pacific, West Africa, East Africa, and South America
- Over 2/3 of top5 DWF fleets target tuna, 15% target squid, and 14% utilize trawl fishing that primarily target pelagic and shrimp species
- Choosing location based on (i) economic returns, (ii) level of governance and enforcement capacity of the coastal state, and (iii) political influence/geopolitical considerations
- Also important: Accessibility to viable ports for offloading and processing catch (processing facilities), as well as resupplying

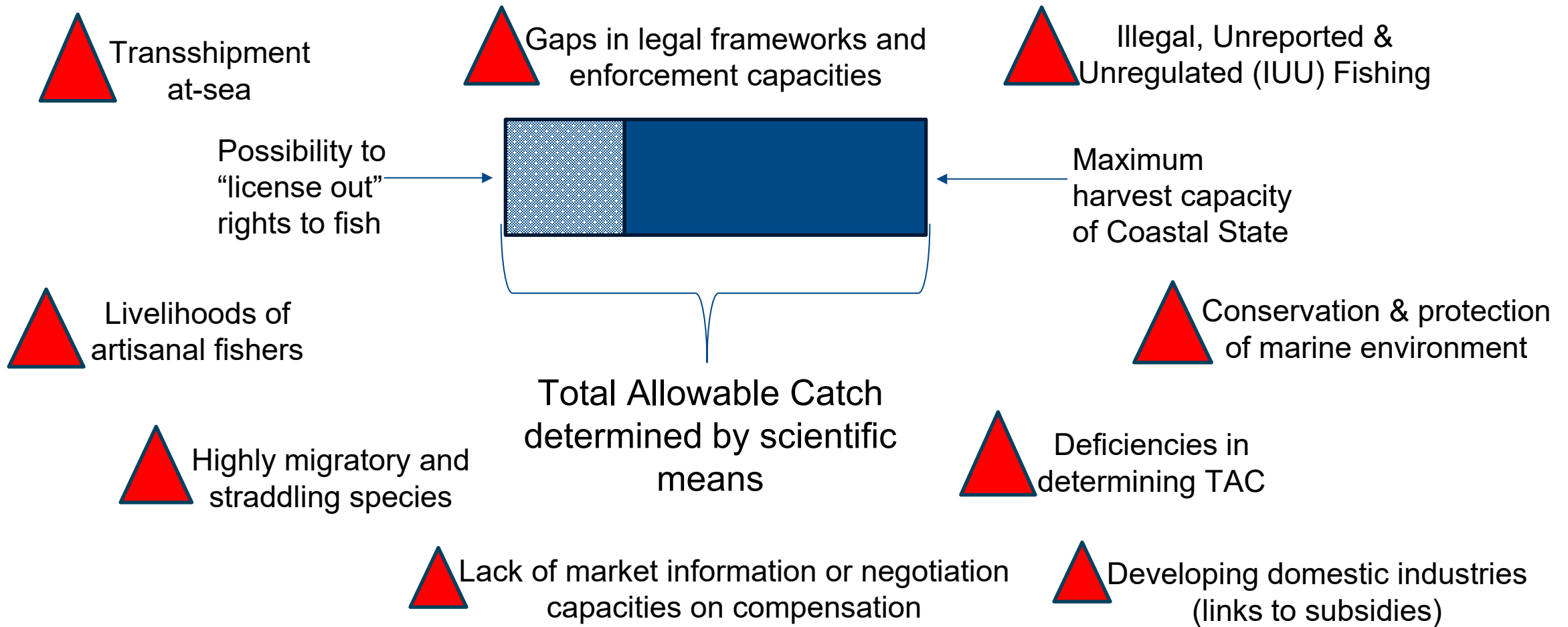
Proportion of fishing effort by the top ten DWF fleets based on AIS data (2016-17)



➤ Granting rights to fish

Rights to fish for DWF fleets should only be granted to “excess” fisheries, not harvested by the Coastal State, within the Total Allowable Catch

– yet developing Coastal States often have major challenges in fisheries management





Fair compensation for access to fisheries?

- ✓ **Starting point:** Inability of a coastal state to fully sustainably exploit its fisheries resources
- ✓ **Nature:** Monetary, non-monetary or combination
 - UNCLOS: Fees may be requested for access to fisheries; transshipment; use of local ports/airports etc.
 - Modalities: Lump sum, Catch-based, Effort-based
 - FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries: Seek to recover costs for monitoring, control and surveillance (MSC); scientific research; fisheries data collection
 - Non-monetary compensation: Technical assistance and training, infrastructure, fishing vessels or patrol boats, MCS equipment, aid to the small scale or industrial fishing sector, access to markets
- ✓ **Amount of monetary compensation**
 - In theory market-based – in reality a mix of bargaining power & negotiating capacity; economic, political & debt circumstances; competitiveness; value of the species
 - Estimated on average at 5-15% of the value of the catch for yearly lump-sums
- ✓ **Second generation: investment in local economy / job creation / knowledge transfer**

But does it have the capacities to evaluate the extent of its resources and what constitutes fair compensation?

Difficult to assess quality and value vis-à-vis foregone financial contribution

Use of revenues?



Lessons learned and good practices



Examples illustrated by Mr Lahsen Ababouch,
Independent Consultant, Former FAO Director
for Fisheries Policy and Economics



Fundamentals of balanced IFAAs

§ Transparency and equity

§ Science-based sustainable level of fishing

§ Best fisheries management practices, incl. combatting unsustainable and illicit practices

§ Clear and mutually beneficial compensation modalities, decoupling of access fees from aid

§ Share of economic and environmental costs

§ Support to fisheries management and value addition in host country (institutional and technical capacity)

§ Flag state responsibility for compliance

§ Cooperation on scientific research and data collection

§ Securing of coastal state enforcement capacities

§ Integration of Agenda 2030

§ Practical dispute settlement



Thank you

