STATEMENT FROM OCEAN CONSERVANCY'S GLOBAL GHOST GEAR INITIATIVE®
Second Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
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Proposal for the inclusion of an additional core obligation in the ILBI that focuses specifically on the reduction of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) in wild capture fisheries and aquaculture with specific measures across the full life cycle for its prevention, mitigation, and remediation.

Ocean Conservancy's Global Ghost Gear Initiative® (GGGI) agrees with the statements from Ambassador Meza-Cuadra, AOSIS, and GRULAC supported by Chile that addressing sea-based sources of plastic pollution, such as abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear, also known as ghost gear or ALDFG, is critical to building a truly robust instrument. We believe this is currently lacking in the options document (UNEP/PP/INC.2/4[1]).

Like microplastics, ALDFG is a distinct and unique form of marine plastic pollution, with causes, impacts and potential solutions being significantly different from other forms of plastic debris, and which vary substantially by local and regional contexts. This warrants the inclusion of an additional core obligation in the ILBI that focuses specifically on the **reduction of ALDFG in wild capture fisheries and aquaculture with specific measures across the full life cycle for its prevention, mitigation, and remediation**. The proposed measures in the options document are inadequate to holistically address this pervasive and unique form of marine plastic pollution.

As most fishing gear is made of plastic, ALDFG is a major source of ocean plastic pollution, including the proliferation of microplastics, and has implications for global food security, biodiversity, coastal economies, human health and livelihoods, and has a disproportionate impact on small island developing states. Being purposely designed to catch aquatic species, ALDFG is pound for pound the most harmful form of marine plastic pollution to aquatic life[2]. The ecological (e.g.[3],[4],[5]) and socio-economic (e.g.[6],[7]) impacts of ghost fishing are accumulative and felt globally. Plastic pollution from fishing and aquaculture is therefore a global issue that should be met through a coordinated, global effort.

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[1] Potential options for elements towards an international legally binding instrument, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastics as called for by the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 (UNEP/PP/INC.2/4)
[2] Wilcox, C., Mallos, N.J., Leonard, G.H., Rodriguez, A. & Hardesty, B.D. 2016. Using expert elicitation to estimate the impacts of plastic pollution on marine wildlife. *Marine Policy*, 65: 107–114.
[3] Page, B., McKenzie, J., McIntosh, R., Baylis, A., Morrissey, A., Calvert, N., Haase, T., Berris, M., Dowie, D., Shaughnessy, P., Goldsworthy, S., 2014. Entanglement of Australian sea lions and New Zealand fur seals in lost fishing gear and other marine debris before and after Government and industry attempts to reduce the problem. Marine Pollution Bulletin. Volume 49, Issues 1–2.
[4] Werner, S., Budziak, A., van Franeker, J., Galgani, F., Hanke, G., Maes, T., Matiddi, M., Nilsson, P., Oosterbaan, L., Priestland, E., Thompson, R., Veiga, J. and Vlachogianni, T.; 2016; Harm caused by Marine Litter. MSFD GES TG Marine Litter - Thematic Report; JRC Technical report; EUR 28317 EN; doi:10.2788/690366
[5] Hardesty, B. D., Good, T. P., & Wilcox, C. (2015). Novel methods, new results and science-based solutions to tackle marine debris impacts on wildlife. Ocean & Coastal Management, 115, 4-9
[6] Al-Masroori, H., Al-Oufi, H., McIlwain, J.L. & McLean, E. 2004. Catches of lost fish traps (ghost fishing) from fishing grounds near Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. Fisheries Research, 69(3): 407–414. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2004.05.014
[7] Mouat, J., Lozano, R. L., and Bateson, H. Economic Impacts of Marine Litter. KIMO. September 2010. http://www.kimointernational.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/KIMO_Economic-Impacts-of-Marine-Litter.pdf

For the most part, fishing gear is a significant financial investment, and most fishers do not want to lose their gear. However, fishing gear can enter the marine environment for a variety of reasons including rough weather conditions, mechanical problems, interaction with other marine traffic, human error, or gear snagging on the substrate or subsurface obstructions. As a result, an estimated 5.7% of fishing nets, 8.6% of traps and pots, and 29% of fishing lines end up lost or abandoned in the marine environment annually[8]. Fish is a crucial form of animal protein in people's diets all over the world, and global fish consumption has risen 122% in the past 30 years[9]. With global fish food consumption rates expected to increase by 14.8% by 2030[10], the ILBI should include specific measures to address this unique form of plastic pollution holistically, across its full life cycle to prevent plastic pollution and safeguard global food security, fisheries sustainability and the lives and livelihoods of those who depend on fishing.

Current frameworks to manage ALDFG are fragmented, and their existence should not be a reason for inaction or lack of inclusion of ALDFG-specific measures in the instrument. Rather, the ILBI should complement, strengthen, and clarify existing frameworks as relates to ALDFG specifically.

To this end, the current negotiations for an ILBI present a once in a lifetime opportunity to incorporate specific measures for the prevention, mitigation, and remediation of ALDFG at a global level under a dedicated core obligation similar to that proposed for microplastics in the options document. The ILBI could serve as a single umbrella where a comprehensive body of work to address ALDFG could be discussed and would promote measures across the full lifecycle of fishing gear. We urge member states and the committee to support the inclusion of an additional core obligation that focuses specifically on this unique form of marine plastic pollution from fishing and aquaculture. To support this proposal, the GGGI has published a white paper on the impact of fishing gear as a distinct form of marine plastic pollution. The paper includes a series of recommendations for specific voluntary approaches and control measures for reducing ALDFG, which would contribute to building a truly robust ILBI to end plastic pollution and positively supports a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycles of plastics, including the marine environment, as called for by the Environment Assembly resolution 5/14.

The time to act is now. An ambitious and well-crafted ILBI could have a positive impact on the interlinked global environmental crises (climate, biodiversity loss, and plastic pollution) the world currently faces—all of which are also public health and environmental justice priorities. If we are to achieve this, ALDFG, the most harmful form of marine plastic pollution, should be included as a core obligation.

[8] Richardson, K., Wilcox, C., Vince, J. & Hardesty, B.D. 2021. Challenges and misperceptions around global fishing gear loss estimates. *Marine Policy*, 129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2021.104522
[9] Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations 2020 https://www.fao.org/state-of-fisheries-aquaculture
[10] OECD/FAO (2021), *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2021-2030*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/19428846-en