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Chairman Sullivan, Ranking member Baldwin, Members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak to you today about an important issue that touches upon our work: the criminal conduct arising from overfishing that has led to severe human rights violations, in particular widespread human trafficking. We appreciate the importance of working across the U.S. government to end the exploitation of resources and people.

USAID is committed to combating human trafficking in all forms and industries around the world. A prevalence study conducted by a USAID partner in Thailand, Issara Institute, revealed that in the research area, nearly 80 percent of the fishing vessel workers may have been trafficked. Our experience shows that Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing and human trafficking have common drivers and USAID understands that addressing environmental and human rights challenges together creates stronger and more transformational impact on both sectors.

At USAID, ending human trafficking is a priority. Trafficking in persons corrupts global commerce and threatens global security. Empowering people and communities at risk of exploitation disrupts cycles of poverty. We also see well-managed wild fisheries as a development pathway that can support self-reliance, food security, decent work, economic growth, and women's empowerment. I'd like to highlight some of our findings and programs.

People are surprised by the scale of the seafood sector globally. Seafood is the world's most widely traded food commodity, supporting a \$500 billion global economy. They are a significant source of foreign currency earnings for many developing countries, providing net export revenues of US\$ 42 billion in 2014, higher than other major agricultural commodities — including meat, tobacco, rice and sugar — combined. The [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\) estimates](#) that fisheries and aquaculture assure the livelihoods of 10-12 percent of the world's population with more than 90 percent of those employed by capture fisheries working in small-scale operations in developing countries. A recent study suggests that 50 % of seafood workers are women, often engaged in post-harvest processing.

Finally, fisheries make a significant contribution to food and nutrition security, particularly in developing countries. Fish provide more than 3.1 billion people with almost 20 percent of their

animal protein. But maintaining and enhancing these benefits requires us to unwind the unvirtuous spiral we've described by creating the reverse situation where sustainable fisheries support decent work.

USAID has actively focused on the issue of human trafficking in fisheries since 2014, when we raised this problem within U.S. Government interagency discussions about IUU fishing. We have seen how **overexploitation and illegal exploitation of fishery resources is one of the drivers for labor abuse in fisheries**. Scarce fish means fisheries are less profitable, trips are longer and more dangerous, and fishers are more isolated. These conditions create a “pull” for labor abuses as ship owners and captains look for fishing crew to work under poor conditions. At the same time, boats crewed by fishers working under these exploitive conditions continue to drive over-fishing and are also associated with illegal fishing behaviors.

For the past few years, USAID has been an influential convener within the government as well as the broader donor community. We have regularly convened U.S. Government colleagues from State, Commerce, Labor, Homeland Security, and the U.S. Trade Representative to coordinate our work and identify trends and opportunities; and we've facilitated a number of events with the broader donor community in both Washington, D.C. and in Southeast Asia. As a result, USAID investments have been consistently aligned with broader U.S. government priorities in this area, and with the programmatic investments of other funding agencies and private donors.

In developing our programs we coordinate closely with other U.S. agencies that also address this issue, including State/JTIP and Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs. We also coordinate with other donor agencies.

Indeed one of our main projects, the Seafood Alliance for Legality and Traceability (SALT) is an example of how we are directly investing in collaboration. The SALT initiative is a partnership with the Packard Foundation, Moore Foundation and Walton Family Foundation to form a global alliance for knowledge exchange and action to promote legal and sustainable fisheries through improved transparency in seafood supply chains. SALT brings together the seafood industry, governments, civil society groups, academics and other stakeholders to accelerate learning and support collaboration on innovative solutions for legal and sustainable seafood, with a particular focus on traceability—the ability to track the movement of seafood through supply chains. The program has held three global workshops since its launch in October 2017, each of which have included human rights activists and experts working to end human trafficking in this sector. Going forward, specific activities will be driven by the collective recommendations from these workshops. We believe new transparency and traceability solutions will directly benefit workers on boats, as participants stated in our most recent workshop in Bangkok, by “making the invisibles visible.”

Technology for the detection of crimes at sea is a consistent refrain in our programming. We have investments in tech-enabled detection programs to address labor exploitation and to improve fisheries management to achieve ecological sustainability and conserve marine biodiversity. Our key programs in these areas are focused on Southeast Asia, which produces 50% of the world's seafood and is recognized as a hotspot for human trafficking in fisheries.

I'd like to describe two relevant projects using technology to detect human trafficking at sea. **Golden Dreams**, implemented by Thailand-based Issara Institute and also supported by the Walmart Foundation, uses social media to connect migrant workers at risk with each other through a Burmese-language smartphone app, to revolutionize safe migration, jobseeker empowerment, ethical sourcing due diligence, and anti-human trafficking. The app serves as a platform for learning and exchanging information, reviews, ratings, comments, and advice about employers, recruiters, and service providers, in both home and destination countries.

The IM@Sea project, implemented by the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) in partnership with Iridium Go! explores how satellite-based vessel-tracking technology can advance U.S. efforts to identify and counter human trafficking in the global fishing industry. With narrowband satellite devices, video cameras, data collection tools, and a risk assessment system, ILRF and IM@SEA partners tested a sophisticated, cost-effective way to generate labor and environmental risk profiles on two fishing vessels with a small trial set of crew. This project recognized that trust is as important as technology, and built a protocol, including binding agreements with vessel owners, that can be replicated to foster more ethical practices on fishing vessels.

On the sustainability side, the **Oceans and Fisheries Partnership** is a collaboration between USAID and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) that works to strengthen regional cooperation to IUU fishing, promote sustainable fisheries and conserve marine biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region through the development of transparent and financially sustainable Catch Documentation and Traceability (CDT) systems to help ensure that fisheries resources are legally caught and properly labeled. The program has documented labor conditions at both its main project sites, and is exploring ways to integrate labor practices into its approach.

I'd like to share one final example of our integrated approach to this issue: **USAID in Ghana** is addressing the challenge of child labor in fishing, particularly on Lake Volta, through its existing Feed the Future program implemented by the University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center. A community-based approach targeting parents and guardians who are in poverty and lack knowledge of the negative impacts of child labor is complemented with livelihoods support, resulting in children spending more time in school than fishing. The project partners have also

drafted an anti-trafficking policy document for the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) and the Fisheries Commission, in collaboration with Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Protection, to be incorporated into ministries' policies.

In closing we would like to highlight once again the importance of a whole-of-government approach to this issue. No single organization can solve these complex and interrelated challenges. For the past few years, USAID has been acting as a convener of regular discussions among our U.S. government colleagues, other donors, and other stakeholders to ensure that our investments to address human trafficking in the global fishing sector effectively leverage, and wherever possible partner with, other allies working on these issues. Our programs have benefited enormously from the insights we have received from NOAA, State Department, Labor Department, Justice, Department of Homeland Security and so many other colleagues. In turn we hope that our programs are now better aligned with our colleagues' priorities on the law enforcement, trade and regulatory fronts. We believe solutions are possible if we all work together. Thank you again for your time, and I look forward to your questions.