Opening Statement by Liberia

37th Annual Meeting of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

November 13-16 2018

London, United Kingdom

Thank you Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen- good morning to all.

On behalf of the Republic of Liberia, I would like to thank the Commission for allowing us to participate in this 37th North East Atlantic Fishery Commission (NEAFC) Annual Meeting as observers.

Our goal in re-applying for Co-operating Non-Contracting Party (CNCP) status is to continue to allow our reefer vessels to transship fish in the NEAFC Regulatory area. To note, our international fleet does not have vessels engaged in fishing—only reefer vessels engaged in transshipment. While Liberia has a large fleet of reefer vessels, it is note-worthy that almost all of these vessels are engaged in various fruit trades and only a very small number are involved in transshipment of frozen fishery products.

In battling illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, an unknown origin of reefer vessel cargo is a great risk, and as a flag State with reefer vessels in the trade of transshipping fish, this is a concern of ours. We are strongly committed to the responsible management of fishing activities and will continue to be proactive in the responsible management of our international fleet of vessels that are involved in fisheries.

Liberian vessels are prohibited from engaging in transshipment activities in any convention area without first obtaining proper licensing from the Liberian Administration authorizing them to do so. Before licensing a vessel, we check that the vessel has no history of IUU activities. We also impose sanctions that are adequate in severity to be effective in ensuring compliance and discouraging violations.

We appreciate that despite the lack of a recommendation from the Permanent Committee on Monitoring and Compliance (PECMAC) in their September 2018 meeting, that the application from Liberia has been brought forward as a meeting document for this 37th Annual Meeting and that this issue might have to be resolved by holding a vote to grant Liberia Co-operating Non-Contracting Party status to NEAFC for the year 2019. We look forward with hopeful anticipation that our application will be approved by the members of NEAFC.

Mr. President, once again, I thank you and may I wish you and all the delegates here a successful and constructive meeting.