Opening Statement by Liberia

38th Annual Meeting of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

November 12-15 2019

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 38th 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 Convention / Regulatory Areas and adjacent exclusive economic zones (EEZs). To that end, Liberia has implemented a broad range of measures to ensure compliance of our vessels engaged in transshipment activities, with the requirements of NEAFC’s Scheme of Control and Enforcement and Liberian Maritime Law and Fisheries Regulations, including: Vessel Monitoring System; Communication of Catches; Port State notifications; and inspections/investigations when required.

The Liberian international fleet does not have vessels engaged in fishing – only reefer ships engaged in transshipment. While Liberia has a large fleet of reefer vessels, it is worth noting that almost all of these vessels are engaged in various fruit trades and only a very small number are involved in the transshipment of frozen fishery products.

In combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, a reefer vessel of unknown origin is a great risk, and as a flag State with reefers in the trade of transshipping fish, this is a concern of ours. We are strongly committed to the responsible management of fishing activities and FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance. Liberia will continue to be proactive in the responsible management of our international fleet of vessels that are involved in transshipment activities.

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

We appreciate that, although there was no consensus in the Permanent Committee on Monitoring and Compliance (PECMAC) at their September 2019 meeting on a recommendation to the NEAFC Commission, the application to renew Liberia’s Co-operating Non-Contracting Party status for the year 2019 will be considered by NEAFC at this 38th Annual Meeting. 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.