Let me acknowledge my colleagues who are still in this room, the Minister of Public Works, Transport and Housing in Spain, the Mayor of Torremolinos for good host that he is, the president of the IMO, the IMO Secretary-General, all the officials present here and the generous financial and in-kind contribution by the Government of Spain towards this conference.

Following the many speeches made by various speakers such as Ministers, Deputy-Ministers, Ambassadors, representatives of various organisations and officials, there is general agreement that the annual high number of casualties in the fishing industry can be reduced with a binding regulatory regime.

We heard from various speakers that the major challenges faced by the world include amongst others: over-exploitation of fish stocks, IUU fishing, over-capacity in fishing fleets, degraded environment and ecosystems, climate change, natural disasters and safety issues for fishermen at sea.

The vast amount of seas and oceans can be the primary source of providing food security through sustainable fishing. The Food and Agricultural Organisation posits that aquaculture is the fastest growing food-producing sector which accounts about 50% of the world's food fish.

Therefore, fishing industry plays a very critical role in our lives as they ensure that human beings can consume seafood as a major source of proteins.
However, it is very unfortunate that this important industry is reported to be one of the most dangerous professions in the world.

It is against this background that this conference calls upon the international community to act and ensure that fishing vessels are seaworthy, fishing personnel are properly trained and are provided with conducive working environment.

All the speakers and panel members agree that the CT Agreement provides a great scope to improve the safety record of the industry. At the end of the day, the most effective change will only occur when the industry itself embraces the need for a safety culture that has eluded it for so long.

This conference has emphasised that “States should ensure that fishing facilities as well as all fisheries activities must allow for safe, healthy and fair working conditions for fishermen, and must meet internationally agreed standards adopted by relevant international organizations”.

We have heard how fishers regularly operate dangerous equipment and often work extremely long hours in hazardous conditions without adequate rest. Injury rates are high and medical care is often inaccessible.

This conference believes equally that the pursuit of regulations against IUU fishing will protect fishing industries around the world from possible loss of income resulting in job losses. It came out strongly from this conference that a fisherman must be able to provide for his family and if there is a loss of life, some form of benefit must accrue to his/her family.

Fishers must have consistent remuneration and enjoy all the benefit advocated for by the ILO.
We must promote gender equality in the fishing industry through proper policies and regulatory imperatives. Women must be given a platform and equal opportunities to participate.

It is very ideal to have technical instruments in place, regulating for fishing vessels. However, such mechanisms are not complete without addressing the depletion of living marine resources which is mainly caused by illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The IUU fishing poses a serious threat to sustainable economic growth and food security particularly for those countries and communities which are heavily dependent on seafood. To tackle IUU fishing requires multi-disciplinary approach at national and regional levels. Information sharing on illicit activities is crucial when fighting IUU fishing.

The Cape Town Agreement ensures that the fishing industry is aligned with other sectors particularly the international merchant ships. It is a vital instrument that closes the gap in international maritime safety especially for the safety of fishers and combatting IUU Fishing through Port State Control.

This conference agrees that it is upon all of us to act now and ensure that this profession becomes attractive and fishing personnel are safe and protected while we enjoy seafood on our tables.

From the conference we have two additional ratifications and more member states promised to deposit the instrument sooner rather than later.

We have heard how more than 40 countries committed to signing the declaration showing their intention to ratify. This is a good sign that we are on the correct path and all actions by member states point to a happy ending.

Following the enthusiasm and optimism in this conference, South Africa would like to encourage IMO Member States to ratify the Cape Town Agreement in
numbers because it is the only mechanism available in our disposal to bring into effect the provisions of the Convention and the Protocol.

We are all convinced that the commitments by member states at the 2019 Torremolinos conference are genuine. We are impressed with the number of countries that have either shown the interest to ratify or have expressed their interest to ratify.

This conference has painted a picture that given the growing realisation by many States of the need to protect fishers and by extension to safeguard the source of livelihood for many fishing communities, we are now ready as the world of nations to fully consent to the force of entry of regulation to that effect.

Just to remind everyone, the CTA’s overall objective is to promote safety standards and eliminate IUU fishing operations, and we all know that Spain’s contribution through the Torremolinos Convention of 1977 which was amended 15 years later by the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993, comes second to none.

Let me conclude by saying The Republic of South Africa, like all participants in this conference facility, believes that the 2019 Torremolinos Conference on Safe Fishing and IUU Fishing was a great success.

THANK YOU