

Lisbon Symposium

NINE RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED

Some one hundred persons - fishworkers, representatives of fishworker's organisations, scientists, technicians and supporters - from 25 different countries, both from Northern as well as Southern Nations, came together for eight days in Lisbon (19- 24th of June) to share their experiences and to reflect upon the questions relating to the problems of the Marine Environment and the Future of Fishworkers.

This international encounter was made possible thanks to a joint effort from the ICSF, OIKOS (Portugal) and the Programme Mer of the CCFD (France). Many Portuguese fishermen took part in the Symposium. The Portuguese artisanal fishery sector has still a large representation within Europe (80% of the Portuguese fishermen are artisanal fishermen). It was for this reason that Portugal was retained as venue for the international meeting.

This meeting took place in the light of the global fishery crisis and the alarming situation of the marine environment endangering the future of the fishworkers and their families. The exchange of experiences between fishworkers and representatives of fishworker's organisations, both from Northern as well as from Southern countries, on the one hand and fishworkers and scientists on the other proved, to be very rich and fruitful and contributed to a better understanding of the different contexts and situations. This sharing of issues of common concern paved the way for larger international solidarity. This was, without doubt, the most positive outcome of the Symposium.

THE RIGHT TO ORGANISE

The North-South, South-South and North-North interdependence became even more evident. However, John Kurien (India) underlined that in many Third World countries, the deterioration of the environment is caused by the transfer of development models from so called developed countries. Intensive fishery activities, like shrimp fishing for example, is mainly an export oriented luxury food item for the Japanese and North American markets and not for the Indian people".

The right of fishworkers to form their own organisations, in order to counter the enormous problems of overexploitation of Southern waters by long distant industrial fishing fleets from the North, as well as the South, seems to be the most important task. This became clear at many instances throughout the Symposium and was formulated in the final recommendations below.

Marine resource management was the next important issue. The depletion of fish stocks in Northern waters in the 60's lead to the migration of the industrial fishing fleets from developed nations to the relative fertile waters of the Third World. Soon it was evident that these

intensive fishery activities would result into the depletion of fish stocks of Southern countries too. And this indeed was the case for example with the Peruvian anchovy, although other factors are also to be taken into account - the variations in the El Nino current for instance, as Gunnar Saetersdal (Norway) indicates in his intervention. The management of resources is definitely an urgent question to be solved if food stocks are to be safeguarded for the future. The Symposium stressed the need for a scientific base, but mentioned also the lack of political will from the side of the governments to put into practice such mechanisms as to ensure the application of restrictive measures agreed upon. The New Law of the Sea has shown the fishing nations as to where their responsibilities are, but the fishery agreements should, in the first place, guarantee the basic needs of the local population instead of being diverted exclusively towards hard currency returns by the respective governments.

Similarly, what is applicable to individual states is equally true on an international level. As Gunnar Saetersdal remarks, 'already in the early 50s great progress had been made in the creation of this particular science dealing with the exploitation of fish resources. Rut the international political instrument for making use of the advice from scientists lagged behind". The Symposium strongly insisted on the need for fishworkers organisations to play a decisive role in the policy making and to see that policies of stock management are implemented.

PROTECT WATERS, PROTECT LIFE

Problems of resource management, but also the protection and respect of the environment. This last aspect was also given much thought in the interventions: the importance to protect the marine environment from the onslaught of industrial pollution (dumping of chemi-

cal and industrial waste, etc...), or the deterioration of the coastal belt due to intensive aquaculture (abusive use of fertilisers polluting the surface waters and consequently the continental shelf). This type of pollution was mentioned during the Symposium by one Filipino fisherman, Sofronio Balagtas, who insisted that scientists should take notice of this grave situation endangering future life.

Many regional interventions stressed the need to recognise the important role of women within the fishery sector and that special attention be paid to the living conditions of fishworker's children. Women have no doubt an important stabilising function within the fishing community as most of them remain on shore. In addition to any economic role they may have, they also have a very essential social and political role to play. In many cases it is the women who play a key role in the fishworker's struggle for their basic rights. They are for sure the first to recognise the need to defend the protection of the environment.

The problems of trade and marketing were often debated. The issue of external debt of the Third World countries for example (the inverted cash flow of the South towards the North), it is the poor countries that feed the rich with the valuable proteins from fish products they themselves lack to feed their under-nourished population. George Kent (Hawaii) explained that "the discrepancy in supply levels was due in part to the fact that the developed countries imported more fish than they exported, while the developing countries exported more fish than they imported (shares of exports were 44% and of imports 12.2%)". It is quite evident that this has a negative impact on the nutrition status of people in developing countries.

It was also mentioned that it would be advisable if the Lome negotiations should not be carried out on an individual basis, (each individual ACP(*) country with the European Community), but rather with all concerned countries region-wise. This means, on the other hand, a strengthening of fishworker's organisations to face the challenges posed by the fishery policy makers. In general, would it not be better to reflect upon the problems of trade and marketing from a South-South angle, rather than looking at it exclusively from the North-South points of view? Such approach would mean the creation of new infrastructures for conservation, trade and price policies.

Finally the Symposium treated the question concerning the "Blue Europe" policy, i.e. the Common Fisheries policy of Europe. The development and the defence of artisanal fisheries in Europe were safeguarded by strict measures of market control through the formation of producers organisations. These organisations allowed the control of market prices. At present another acute problem arises, i.e. the need to reduce catch levels - "This is not an easy task, remarked Joseph Le Gall (France). How

to control a market, a fleet in the context of the reduction of catch levels? At present the question is being debated within each individual country. Will they come to an agreement on a European level?" Within the "Blue Europe", two controversial views exist: a European Community of big business based upon the exploitation of the South, or a "Blue Europe" where the important role of artisanal fishermen is assured. A consensus of common concern exists between the latter and organisations of artisanal fishworkers of the South, this was clearly stated during the Symposium. A cooperation to be strengthened as an urgent priority.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

To put these exchanges into concrete terms, the Symposium has adopted, after introducing some modifications, nine recommendations which will serve as guidelines for future action of fishworker's organisations and scientists. It is evident that these points have no meaning unless they are translated into concrete action at all levels.

These nine recommendations strongly express the will of the fishermen to actively participate in the decision making and implementation of fishery policy both, at the national and at the international level. This implies the need for recognition of the right of fishworkers to form their own organisations: associations, unions, cooperatives... The future of the profession itself can not be safeguarded unless this basic right is guaranteed. How else would the voice of fishworkers be made to bear weight upon governments or international institutions? By what other means would they be able to defend or find support for their demands and ensure that these demands are met with? The many challenges facing the fishworkers and their families today are such, that only by means of encouraging the establishment of professional organisations they may hope for a solution to their problems.

The recommendations also underline the problems related to the protection of offshore waters. The quality of marine environment today is a priority and a major condition to ensure employment, the basis to guarantee the future and food security of fishworkers and their families. The ecological aspect is also directly linked to the management of resources.

The recommendations also stress upon the need to recognise the role of women within the fisheries sector, the need for scientist to take the professional skills and knowledge of artisanal fishermen. They also treat the delicate question of access of foreign fleets into the exclusive economic zone of individual countries, the re-orientation of fish-marketing in favour of Third World populations, and finally the question of the "Blue Europe" policy and the fishery agreements with the ACP countries is dealt with.

(*) = African, Caribbean and Pacific countries

- o A brief report of the Symposium has been written by M. Bellveau (20 pages). A few issues are still available with the ICSF Secretariat and can be obtained by written request.
- o A selection of papers presented at the Symposium will be published shortly in SAMUDRA Dossier N°2. The texts will be published in their original languages. An extra issue in French will be published at a later date.

LISBON RECOMMENDATIONS

The basic right of fishworkers to form their own professional organisation must be the cornerstone of small-scale fisheries development.

Governments and international bodies must recognise fishworker's organizations and respect their autonomy.

The quality of the environment is a major condition for ensuring that employment, food and revenue are available for coastal populations.

Protection of the sea and the coast is a priority.

Fishworker's organizations and governments should participate jointly in the formulation of coastal planning and protection of aquatic resources.

Resource management must be carried out jointly by fishworker's organizations and governments.

The resource must remain a collective property.

Resource management methods should be an integral part of an overall fisheries policy that takes into account social, economic and ecological objectives.

The roles of women in the fisheries sector are recognised and must be supported.

Their capacity to ensure the defence and promotion of their economic, social and cultural interests must be strengthened. Special attention should be paid to the living conditions of fishworker's children.

Scientific research must develop a capacity to take fishworker's knowledge in consideration, and respect their culture.

Scientists who recognise the importance of the environment should commit themselves to support fishworker's organizations in order to help them defend their rights of access to aquatic resources.

Access of foreign fishing vessels to the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) must in every case be approved and controlled by local fishworker's organizations.

A coastal zone must be reserved for small-scale fishing.

Foreign vessels fishing in the EEZ must be equipped with satellite detection devices so that their activity can be controlled.

The extension of this method of control to the national and international levels should be discussed within the framework of the United Nations.

International fishmarketing, should be reoriented in such a way to give precedence to the interests of fishworkers and of Third World populations.

Part of the revenue accruing from fishery agreements should be used for the organization of local and regional markets.

Blue Europe must be first and foremost a Europe of fishworkers.

Joint evaluations of the impacts of the Blue Europe policies and fishery agreements with the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) states must be carried out by the European Commission, ACP states and by fishworker's organizations in the ACP states. The same recommendations apply to the North Atlantic region.

A policy of cooperation has to be implemented in negotiation with fishworker's organizations from the North and the South in response to an interdependent world.