



ACCEPTANCE SPEECH OF ALIOU SALL

ICSF Representative for the 'Award 2001

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of the Liaison Committee of the nongovernmental development organizations, national and international organizations, nongovernmental organizations from the North and the South, the Parliament and Commission of the European Community, before thanking you for choosing the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) as the recipient of the 'Award 2001.', allow me to introduce to you cur project and its accomplishments in a context as difficult as the one facing fisheries on an intercontinental scale.

ICSF is an international network created for the purpose of allowing fishworkers (men, women and children) to make their voices heard at the international level, so that governments and international agencies will take into consideration the problems they face both on land and at sea.

In its search for cooperation and solidarity, ICSF is close to fishworker organizations and trade unions. What

particularly characterizes the collective is that it provides the basis for close cooperation between scientists and social workers on the one hand, and between fishworkers from countries in the South and North, on the other.

To fulfill its mission, ICSF has elaborated four objectives, to develop programs of:

- studies and research
- training and exchange
- action and campaigns
- communication

The last three development decades have ended in failure, despite the innumerable efforts made in the name of development. That failure is evident in the increase of famine and in the deterioration of ecosystems in the North and the South. The survival and the dynamism of economic practices of the poor were com-

monly called 'Informal', while credit systems bear witness to the failure of the technocratic approach to development.

This notorious failure brings out the limits of the stages of economic growth theory which governed the efforts and initiatives taken in the name of development, on the one hand, and the marginalization of the target populations who were supposed "to develop", on the other hand. Speaking of the stages of economic growth theory, it is two wars behind the times, at least with respect to fisheries, which is our area. Indeed, even today the development efforts carried out by that sector are limited to transferring financial, human and technological resources from the North to the South, ignoring the situation of a sector which is involved in a whole process of internationalization.

The fisheries of the South are overexploited today by industrial fleets, which also waste resources with their system of selective fishing.

In Mozambique, for every kilogram of shrimp caught, 10 kilograms of fish are thrown back into the water. Besides these problems which are already bad enough, there are problems connected with the insecurity of millions of coastal fishermen, the ever more alarming pollution of the seas, and the monopolistic control of international fish markets by countries in the North like Japan and the European Economic Community. This monopoly casts a shadow on the outlook for fish as a food alternative that could provide a cheap source of protein to coastal populations.

Tourism, considered a source of foreign currency in many countries of the South, also continues to produce victims, such as fishing communities (mainly the women who process the catch), threatened with being "cleared away" to make room for tourist facilities.

Under the pretext of development, the countries of the North sign fishery agreements with the South, which allow industrial fleets to operate in the South's waters. These modern fleets, especially when they do not respect the boundaries of the fishing areas, cause enormous damage—invisible for the industrial countries—on the material level (the boats destroy traditional fishing gear as they cruise) and on the human level (fatal accidents are caused by collisions between industrial and traditional boats). Under this same pretext of development, the developed countries also finance an occasional project which allows them to camouflage the serious problems of coastal fishermen.

The serious problems that traditional fishermen have today, which escape the classical theory of development (i.e.. the states of economic growth theory) based on materialist considerations led volunteers from the South (mostly from India) to organize an international meeting of artisanal fishermen and their supporters in

July 1984. That meeting, which was held in Rome at the same time as the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, made it possible for some 50 fishworkers and 40 scientists and supporters to come together for an authentic consideration of the situation of fishworkers.

Before leaving Rome, the national delegations of artisanal fishermen expressed their desire that their supporters provide the means to organize at the international level in order to follow the evolution of the increasingly unified world fish market and help them organize at the local level.

Thus the Collective was founded in 1986, under the impetus of the organizations of Indian fishworkers, to follow up on the recommendations and desires of the fishworkers who attended the 1984 Rome meeting.

Today, there are several national organizations of Fishworkers. These organizations are stronger; and more structured among fishermen than among women who process the catch. Besides the Indians already organized, ICSF has helped found national organizations of fishermen in Latin America (Chile, Brazil), Africa (Senegal, with more than 4,000 members) and Asia (Thailand, Philippines). We at ICSF do not want to take the place of fishworker organizations. We try to make it possible for scientists and fishermen to collaborate, as well as facilitate exchanges between fishermen and scientists from different continents. Thus the day fishworker organizations can organize themselves, the Collective will disappear.

In the name of the International Collective, I could not end these remarks without expressing how happy we are to be encouraged in a work that calls for energy and passion, but one also full of political risks because of governments who often see us as upsetting the status quo.

The political problems we have had these last few years, simply for having committed the crime of being in solidarity with fishworkers, has often led us close to despair.

The award you are giving today to We International Collective is for us priceless encouragement, but it is also recognition of the work accomplished since 1986.

Let us hope that this is only the beginning and that the non-governmental organizations of the North are ready to become even more involved in the responsibilities demanded by the processes we have begun.

Thank you for your attention.

Brussels, April 9th 1991.