

# This Time for Africa!

**Celebrations of the World Fisheries Day 2015 revealed that Africa's artisanal and small-scale fishers are emerging from the shadows to forge a common, united front**

**W**e demand that the African Union declares an African Year of Artisanal Fisheries, with the objective of promoting the implementation of international guidelines for sustainable artisanal fisheries at the Pan-African level”, declared Gaoussou Gueye, General Secretary of the African Confederation of Professional Artisanal Fisheries Organisations (CAOPA) [see CAOPA website <http://www.caopa-africa.org/en/>] in front of an appreciative audience that had gathered at the landing site of ImiOuar, in Agadir, Morocco.

This statement ended the celebrations of World Fisheries Day 2015, an event that has been organized each year since 2010 by the CAOPA and its local member—this year, the National Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries in Morocco (CNPAM)—to celebrate African artisanal fisheries in all its diversity.

For the first time, men and women from CAOPA's 15 national member organizations, were joined by their colleagues from the newly formed Indian Ocean Federation of Artisanal Fishermen (FPAOI) [the Fédération des Pêcheurs Artisans de l'Océan Indien (FPAOI), established in 2015, groups artisanal fishing organisations from Madagascar, Comoros, The Seychelles, La Réunion, Mauritius] and the Maghreb Platform of Artisanal fisheries [La Plateforme Maghrébine de la Pêche artisanale, established in 2014, groups artisanal fishing organisations from Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania]. They all saw this as an opportunity to discuss how their groupings could improve networking and collaborations.

“The artisanal fisheries stakeholders from the five Maghreb countries share the same values and culture, and most of us operate in the Mediterranean Sea”, said Naoufel Haddad, vice-president of the Tunisian Artisanal Fisheries Network. “The Maghreb Platform of Artisanal Fisheries will reinforce the actions of CAOPA”, he added.

A sharing of innovative experiences in the artisanal fishing sector was also on the menu at the Morocco meet. André Keith, President of the Seychelles Hook-and-Line Fishermen Association, and currently heading the FPAOI, shared

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the experience of the association for promoting sustainable artisanal fisheries products to consumers. “The Seychellois hook-and-line fishermen have launched their own label”, he said. This label offers a guarantee to the consumers that the fish they buy is of high quality and freshness, has been caught by a local boat, using selective gear, duly registered and involved in sustainable fishing, and that fishers have been paid decently.

## **World Fisheries Day**

Women from the fisheries sector came in large numbers to celebrate the World Fisheries Day. “We want to show that men and women from the artisanal fishing sector are able

*This article, by **Béatrice Gorez** ([cffa.cape@gmail.com](mailto:cffa.cape@gmail.com)) of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), is based on the coverage of the World Fisheries Day celebration by the members of the West African Network of Journalists for responsible Fisheries (REJOPRAO), namely, Nana Darko, Ogou Dama Begui and Ababacar Gueye*

to think by themselves and make proposals to develop the artisanal fishing sector”, said Micheline Dion, from the Côte d’Ivoire Women Fish Processors organization, and Coordinator of the CAOPA women’s programme. “The World Fisheries Day allows us also to highlight the role of women in fisheries”, added Rose Togbenou, a woman fish processor from the Togo Maritime Fishing Cooperative Union.

Indeed, far from the traditional idea that women’s role is confined to fish processing and marketing, CAOPA has been consistently arguing that women are active at all stages of the artisanal fisheries value chain—pre-financing and preparation of fishing trips, fishing, fish processing and marketing. Women are also the pillars of the family in African small-scale fishing communities, being in charge of the children’s education as well as household management. As Antonia Adama Djalo from Guinea Bissau, vice president of CAOPA, put it: “When women in fisheries do well, the whole society benefits”.

During the two days of exchanges and discussion that followed the celebration of the World Fisheries Day, participants were reminded that, at the global level, 10 per cent of people engaged in fishing and aquaculture were located in Africa, which is, therefore, the second continent, after Asia, in terms of jobs offered by this sector. More than 80 per cent of the 12.3 mn Africans engaged in fisheries were in the artisanal fishing subsector, providing income and livelihoods to millions of families in Africa.

Discussions were focused on how the FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) would be integrated in the ongoing reform of African fisheries and aquaculture policies. Indeed, the reform strategy being developed by the African Union identified, as one of its main objectives, “the development of sustainable small-scale fisheries by improving and enhancing the

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Women at the CAOPAO meeting at Agadir, Morocco.  
Women are being increasingly active at all stages of the artisanal fisheries value chain

contribution of small-scale fisheries to poverty reduction, food security and nutrition, and the improvement of the socioeconomic benefits to fishing communities”.

Aboubacar Sidibé, representing the African Union-Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), emphasised: “Fishing organizations everywhere say that the SSF Guidelines have to be implemented. If we want to get out of the usual top-down approach for this, fishing organizations themselves have an important role to play to popularise the guidelines, and to make them understandable by men and women from fishing communities, using their own languages, so that their preoccupations can be taken care of in future policies. There are also areas where institutions will need the support of artisanal fishers—for example, as mentioned under article 5.16 of the Guidelines, for the establishment of monitoring, control and surveillance systems”.

“In the years to come, the FAO will support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. This event is important, as we need to evaluate, together with artisanal fishing professional organizations, their capacities and their priorities in the process of the SSF Guidelines implementation”, said Joseph Catanzano, who represented FAO at the meeting. “Concerning the proposal for an African Year of Artisanal Fisheries, it is an excellent initiative. This will also be an occasion to show that the whole community of international development partners must help to address some aspects of artisanal fisheries, including the status of the professionals in the artisanal fishing sector, their rights, their livelihoods, gender issues and the issue of decent working conditions.”



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Fishing vessels at Agadir harbour, Morocco. More than 80 per cent of the 12.3 mn Africans engaged in fisheries are in the artisanal fishing sector

#### For more



[www.maghrebarabe.org/admin\\_files/SNE-Newsletter%20Q4-2014%20Eng.pdf](http://www.maghrebarabe.org/admin_files/SNE-Newsletter%20Q4-2014%20Eng.pdf)

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[seychelles-hookandline-fishermen.org/en/contact/fboa/overview/](http://seychelles-hookandline-fishermen.org/en/contact/fboa/overview/)

#### **Seychelles Hook and Line Fishermen Association**

[www.au-ibar.org/](http://www.au-ibar.org/)

#### **African Union-Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources**