



WFF



REPORT

ON THE STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION PRESENTED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD FORUM OF FISH HARVESTERS AND FISHWORKERS (WFF)

Lisbon, Portugal, 23-28 May 2004

WFF and Globalization. Impact on the international situation

We witness the most unrestrained development that humanity has ever experienced in its history. Neoliberal globalization has imposed a path marked by the rules of "free trade", the supremacy of transnational corporations, the decline of the role of national States and the immobilization of the United Nations (UN) international system.

Iraq War and the big powers' imposition of their vision on people's development are the expression of a will of political and economic dominance which excludes people and directly attempts the ultimate sense of democracy and peace.

The global crisis has expanded during the past three years compromising even the existence of mankind. We have been direct witnesses of an increase of violence and terrorism that began long before the September-11-2001 attack whose detonators were hunger, misery and exploitation. It would seem that human dignity had never been included in the plan of globalization. For decades humanity has witnessed the inch-by-inch dispute between the two superpowers. When Berlin Wall was demolished the idea of neoliberalism spread as the sole option. This is a criminal idea for it is as if wolves and sheep only populated the world and it meant freedom for everybody and let the wolves eat the sheep.

The present process of globalization is having uneven results among countries and within them. While wealth is growing in the hands of less than 10 per cent of the world population mostly located in the North, there are too many countries, too many people almost underestimated or totally ignored in the process configuration that have no possibility of sharing benefits. Globalization has not been capable of satisfying the aspirations of a large majority of men and women of finding a decent job and a better

future for their children. Many of them live within the informal economy, without any type of recognized rights, in poor countries that survive precariously on the fringe of global economy, at the same time that the revolution of global communications increase public awareness on the existence of such disparities.

Local markets have fast expanded without any parallel development of the required economic and social institutions for their smooth and equitable running. The measures for the opening of markets together with financial and economic considerations override social considerations. The multilateral system in charge of the design and application of international policies shows a lack of political coherence and is not democratic, transparent and responsible enough. These regulations and policies are the consequence of a global governance system formed by powerful countries and actors. Most developing countries have no influence on global negotiations on regulations or on the determination of policies of financial and economic institutions. In simple terms, the workers and the poor do not exist in this governance process.

In the field of international cooperation, the bulk of resources of agencies have been devoted to humanitarian aid and to support war-displaced populations in detriment of contributions to guilds and social organizations or those of international representation. Development projects (not included those between governments or States) were blocked or disregarded from annual priorities due to the international situation. This issue that I will approach more in detail later on strongly forces us to look for the self-sufficiency of the organization.

In the economic field, Third World nations were affected by the progressive increase of poverty and unemployment rooted in Africa, Asia and Latin America, which do not get to fulfill goals on State reforms, adjustments and structural changes imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Pressures on weakened States have increased in order that they fulfill privatization programs in strategic areas like education, health, social security, electricity, transport, communications and their basic services. These were transferred to third parties and then relatively new areas like natural resources, patents and access to resources began to be touched. Thus, fishing communities around the world are facing an imminent danger.

In this scenario, our organization has tried to insert the most important issues from artisanal fisheries to the international agenda of social movements, which act as a

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counterbalance before the expansion of policies imposed by globalization. This raises an alternative in the international discussion on global governance and fisheries.

WFF is a response to liberal globalization. It is a weapon against the idea that the world has to be ruled by commerce, but also a space to find alternatives, to assess the sense of fishing communities, to preserve marine resources and put development at the service of society and not the other way. This is the general purpose guiding WFF political strategy and action in the past three years.

Fisheries and Globalization

Global fisheries are facing a crisis without precedent. Fish stocks and most marine species have decreased to a much lower fraction than their natural historical levels. The commercial productivity of oceans is at its lowest level; actually 73 - 75 per cent of the main fisheries of the world are being overexploited, fully exploited or recovering from depletion. Marine ecosystems as well as human communities all over the world are suffering the consequences of non sustainable fisheries.

The world production of capture fisheries and aquaculture as well as fish supply for food are presently at the highest levels in international statistics: they reached a strategic importance as food for the global population by supplying more than 15 per cent of the total animal protein that humanity consumes.

In 2000, the reported world production of capture fisheries excluding China went back to the level of the 1990s to a total between 77 and 78 million tones. This result followed oscillations for the period 1994-1998 brought about by the influence of El Niño in Peru's capture of anchovy. Some relative increases have been reported in other regions, mainly in continental waters of Asia, the Indian Ocean and the central western Pacific. In some areas, especially the North Pacific, some decreases have been reported compared to 1998 figures.

In contrast with capture fisheries, aquaculture production continued to grow conspicuously. Excluding China, the world aquaculture production (excluding aquatic plants) reported an average annual growth rate somewhat lower (5.3 per cent) in the 1990s than in the 1980s (7.1 per cent).

It is believed that aquaculture still has potential in many areas and related to many species. Employment in sectors of primary production of capture fisheries and

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aquaculture has been relatively stable since 1995, and it is estimated that 35 million people worked in these sectors in 2000.

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In developing countries, artisanal fisheries have an essential role in the creation of employment and the attachment of population to their local areas. According to FAO data, while employment in agriculture increased 35 per cent during the past 25 years, it doubled in fisheries. In contrast, in developed countries excluding Iceland and Portugal, during the same period, one third of people employed in fisheries were lost. Besides, the process of production for artisanal fisheries allows a more equitable redistribution of natural resources and revenues due to the similar scale of production of all producers and to the modality of payment in use.

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Within the employment crisis and the loss of food sovereignty of peoples, small-scale fisheries proportionally create more wealth than industrial fisheries due to a larger investment in the cost of exploitation and to the higher unitary value of captured species. In several countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, the value of fish exports mostly coming from small-scale fisheries is higher than tea, coffee or cocoa exports.

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Virtually 99 per cent of artisanal fisheries captures is used commercially or goes directly to human consumption. This point is especially important because, since 1982, the Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) recognizes the importance of marine ecosystems in the biodiversity of oceans, their fragility and the need to have them protected and preserved from large-scale fisheries (Agenda 21, UNCED). Actually, many countries already get under way ecosystems-based models for fisheries management and tend to recognize although inadequately the important role of artisanal fishing communities. In contrast, industrial fisheries strategy and non-selective fishing methods have a negative impact on the sea bottom and on fish stocks, as immature fish is captured and other non-commercial species (discards) are returned dead to the sea. Mortality via discards is sometimes higher than 90 per cent of captures, as for instance in shrimp fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.

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Because of globalization effects on marine resources, many nations pay important subsidies to their commercial fishing sector in order to build and modernize their fishing vessels. These subsidies increase the fleet capacity of the granting nations giving them not only a competitive advantage but also creating a fishing overcapacity that attempts against fish resources.

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In Southern Atlantic, subsidized vessels played an important role in the collapse of the hake fisheries in Argentina. In Northern Atlantic subsidies perpetuated overfishing cycles

✓ that almost lead main cod reserves to the brink of commercial extinction. Along Western Africa coasts artisanal fishing communities witness how subsidized industrial fleets fish their waters predatorily. In the Pacific subsidies alter the competitive balance in the race for the capture of worthy fish like tuna and black hake.

Source 2 / 2 / International consortiums have concentrated almost 80% of fisheries production of the planet. PESCANOVA group from Spain operates the largest commercial fishing fleet excluding China and owns important quota in main fish markets. Its operation in all five continents through national corporations displaced the domestic industry by acquiring fishing rights and monopolizing the international market. In Asia (Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia); in USA (is located in Miami and makes distribution to the rest of the country); in Western Europe (Spain, Germany, France, Denmark, Netherlands, Italy, United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal and Belgium); in Latin America and the Caribbean (Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Uruguay and Guyana); and, in Eastern Europe (Russia, Estonia, Poland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Albania, Slovenia, Latvia and Macedonia).

2 / Multinational and bilateral free trade agreements on fisheries promoted by the EU, USA and APEC among others always demand that privatization conditions are already set up and ratified by national Parliaments, which provides a solid financial support to foreign investment. Under this expectation of foreign investment the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and recently the WTO implemented an all-scale blackmail on nations, which threatens the survival of small and medium-scale fishing communities.

2 / The interest of international consortiums on fish resources and the gradual loss of rights by States and by artisanal fishing communities can be explained through the increase of commercial and social values of resources as well as through market concurrence for controlling the access to food. Resources, as merchandise, can then be marketed at the highest prices. The results of such a policy have a universally recognized factor: the spread of hunger all over the world. Industrial countries appear to be less fishing but more fish consuming while southern countries, more fishing but less fish consuming.

2 / Out of the estimated world total of artisanal fish harvesters, 23 million survive with less than 1 USD per day. The poor from fish-related activities such as shipbuilding, processing and commercialization reach 17.3 million

2 / In short, the main tendencies in administration, management and resource access by fishing communities respond to the logic of the neoliberal model. Fishing communities do

not participate to the profound transformations that they face or, if they do, their participation is very small or null.

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Privatization of fish resources is a standard imposed to most coastal countries, especially the Southern ones. The typical mechanism in use is the individual transferable quota system (ITQ), which allows that States transfer the property of fish resources to national consortiums that could sell or lease them or even speculate with them in the market of futures and also make partnerships with international consortiums for the exploitation of fish resources within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

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Investments are part of the liberalization of fish trade. Consortiums can invest in the purchase or lease of fishing areas, capture quota or fish processing plants. Whatever the case is, the strategy is to ensure the access to resources and later on their property in order to control both the trade and the production of food coming from the sea.

Changes in fishing legislation is a phenomenon affecting most Latin American countries as a consequence of the privatizing tendency but it is directly linked to free trade agreements and treaties promoted by USA, EU and the Asia-Pacific ax (China, Japan, Korea).

Free trade agreements in fisheries act like international "cooperation" instruments to facilitate free exchange; however it is a policy of unfair exchange where the reciprocity principle action is absent, that makes possible the operation of industrial long distance waters fleets within the EEZ, the landing of their production in national ports and the obtaining of nomination of origin for their products which are labeled under their corresponding nationalities.

The use of flags of fishing convenience is a phenomenon hiding the apparent disarticulation of large industrial fleets, especially those from the EU (Spain) and Asia-Pacific, under the pressure of environmentalist and conservation laws. These fleets maintain their overcapacity while using flags of convenience of Southern countries as a means of lessening costs and entering the EZZ.

There is a progressive loss of fish rights and access to resources by fishing communities as well as displacement of population from traditional coastal human settlements.

Main activities carried out by the organization

From Loctudy 2000 to Lisbon 2004 our political strategy has been focused on five working areas:

with the support of the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters. This means that WFF headquarters is located in Ottawa under the management of the executive director.

From the institutional standpoint there are three significant events: first, the legal recognition of WFF as an international organization, which allowed going from a group structure to the conception of an actual organization governed by a Constitution and capable of establishing work contracts, projects, international campaigns, communications systems, administration and everything needed at different levels for the institutional life of WFF; second, the establishment of official institutional relations with other organizations and movements which made possible the insertion of the fisheries world and its sharing with other local and international sectors of the civil society; and third, the broadening of the WFF base of member organizations which means that our organization is virtually present in all five continents reaching almost fifty nations.

- **International recognition within the multilateral system**

At this level, we have tried to make "visible" the world of artisanal fisheries, fishing communities, fish workers and fish-related activities in the international agenda of social movements that have become a counterpower in the context of globalization.

It is an achievement that the International Labor Organization (ILO) recognizes the WFF as a counterpart to discuss labor issues related to artisanal fisheries and fishing communities looking for agreements that force States to adopt protective measures for artisanal fish harvesters. This year we will attend the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference, in Geneva, to discuss a global standard on labor in the fisheries sector included in the agenda established by ILO.

In the same direction, WFF has begun developing relations with FAO in different ambits for the discussion of issues concerning food sovereignty and fisheries as well as access rights to fish resources, particularly with the Fisheries Committee (COFI), in order to find

2 the appropriate mechanisms to facilitate enforcing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

WFF has also made advances by getting a permanent ^{seat} sit in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) where a direct representation of artisanal fish harvester organizations was absent before.

In order to discuss policies on international trade, WFF managed to participate in WTO discussions by registering an official representation at the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003. The paper *WTO and fisheries* makes clear some considerations on the threat to fishing communities represented by WTO. If WTO enters fisheries, industrial corporations like PESCOVA from Spain which operates with EU capitals, North American, Chinese, Japanese and Korean consortiums among others, could design the future of fishing communities whose livelihood depend on the access and control of natural resources.

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WTO cannot control the fishing patrimony of mankind. 75% of the earth is covered by water where, according to evidence, 28,000 fish species live; 40 % of these species come from fresh water. 25% of marine species are somehow related to coral reefs. Indo-Malaysian archipelago shelters more than 2,000 species. A similar diversity could be found in fresh water systems. The Amazon basin, for instance, shelters more than 1,300 species while deep lakes like Tanganyika and Baikal hold more than 200 species each. Other ecosystems like mangrove are important as rearing areas for new species. Estimates show that 60% and 50% of animal protein come from fish in Indonesia and Ghana respectively. Approximately 13 million people living in Bangladesh's floodable plains are directly involved in fisheries while fish is the main food item for most of the 114-millions population. In some countries fisheries is still "invisible" due to failure to register or declare it. In a similar way, statistics showing women's and children's work – mainly in Africa, Asia and the Amazonian region – are still inefficient. Fisheries are often of vital importance to the poorest segments of communities including individuals without land, and become a means of livelihood by default. This food-security function of fish biodiversity is an undervalued element of the natural capital owned by some countries, but it is a conspicuous aspect for international trade pursuing resource ownership as a means of controlling and trading with food products. If WTO would ever succeed to definitely include fisheries within its regulations, biodiversity could be a constituent part of the trade liberalization process and the natural capital would be subject to trade regulations and not to human needs.

WFF has established institutional relations with UNCLOS Secretariat as a means of stopping the advances on fisheries by multilateral bodies. The scope is to open a pressure space in order to recover the sway of law on free trade agreements and thus disarticulate potential WTO agreements on fisheries issues, protect the EEZ, and make of it an effective instrument to preserve fish resources and their access by artisanal fishing communities.

- **Alliance with international movements and other sectors of the civil society**

WFF has pursued to privilege, develop and deepen an alliance with the world of the family farming agriculture represented by Via Campesina. WFF and Via Campesina are confluent in the ambits of food sovereignty, rights of access to natural resources, territorial settlement of communities and preservation of biodiversity as peoples' patrimony and not that of industrial corporations. Particular stress has been put on international campaigns against the utilization of genetically modified organisms (GMO) that are invading traditional food systems including fisheries, the establishment of patents on living organisms, and the denunciation of the impact of trade policies on local communities. In 2001, the World Forum on Food Sovereignty of Havana, Cuba, was a historical milestone in the encounter between the farming and the fisheries worlds.

To strengthen the impact of proposals and the international pressure, WFF has joined the network Our World is Not for Sale (OWINFS) that articulates social and environmental movements, guilds and NGO that have a monitoring action on international policies. This allows the flow of information needed to adequately react before the threat of privatization and trade liberalization.

From the same perspective WFF is part of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World where different social actors converge. WFF has moved forward the development of the Chart of Human Responsibilities in the context of artisanal fisheries as a platform to face the transformations that WFF promotes. At the same time WFF is part of the Réseau Mondial des Agricultures Paysannes et de Mondialisation (APM), a project of *Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le progrès de l'homme* (FPH) from France.

The Collectif Pêche et développement from France, which was the supporter of the WFF Constituent Assembly held in Loctudy, in 2000, shared with WFF the capacity of its professionals facilitating the processes of discussion, analysis and proposals.

Particular close relations have been created between WFF and the International Forum on Globalization (IFG) with headquarters in USA. This has facilitated relations with environmentalist organizations and made available to WFF some wealthy information on globalization and development supporting the design of alternative options to international policies on the management of natural resources.

Since the creation of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, in 2000, the WFF has participated in workshops, conferences, and seminars, to articulate its proposals with those of other international movements in the search for a new international arrangement.

• **Relations with international cooperation bodies**

The *Fondation Charles Leópolde Mayer*, from France, is one of the main funding organizations supporting the activities of the WFF. It has provided a working platform not only through funding specific projects but also conceiving a space for the encounter, the coordination and the proposals toward the global governance in which we are involved.

The *Comité Catholique contre la faim et pour le développement* (CCFD), from France, made contributions through specific projects to finance the Coordination Committee meetings and the WFF presence in various international meetings in Central America, Europe and Asia.

We have developed a profound relation with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) whose contribution provided financial resources to support the administrative structure of WFF since the opening of its office in Canada.

A new relation has been established with *N(O)VIB-OXFAM*, from Netherlands, which supported the activities that WFF carried out in Mexico, in September 2003, related to the WTO. It is now one of the sources of funding that makes possible the holding of this assembly.

The WFF has discussed with the European Union the impact of the Common Fisheries Policy on fishing communities and presented various initiatives to its cooperation system which are in the process of funding.

We express our gratitude and recognition to each of these bodies. Without their help the work of WFF in the various ambits of the international policy would have not been possible.

From the point of view of the WFF political direction, the Coordination Committee has held five official meetings during the period 2000-2004: Canada (2001), Chile (2001), El Salvador (2002), Mexico (2003) and recently here, in Lisbon, before the General Assembly. This allowed the establishment, revision and adjustment, in all WFF working phases, of all the policies to be implemented according to the mandate of the Loctudy 2000 Constituent Assembly.

- **Sources of Funding**

- International Cooperation projects (2001 – 2004)***

- Fondation Charles Leóplold Mayer (FPH), France*

- Comité Catholique contre la faim et pour le développement (CCFD), France*

- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Norway*

- N(O)VIB, Netherlands*

- Inter Pares, Canada*

- Donations and grants from organizations in various countries (2001-2004)***

- National Association of Small Boat Owners (NASBO), Iceland*

- Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters (CCPFH), Canada*

- Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association (PCFFA), USA*

- Confederación Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile (CONAPACH), Chile*

- Federación de Cooperativas Pesqueras de El Salvador (FACOPADES), El Salvador*

- Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU-UPM), Canada*

- Louisiana Shrimp Association, USA*

- WFF French Branch, France*

The financial report is attached.

• Challenges

The conclusion of this report summarizes the challenges faced by artisanal fisheries and WFF:

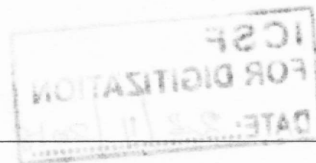
- Artisanal fisheries should be able to face globalization by strengthening its organizations at the local, national and international levels. If organizations are not strong, united and democratic, capable to give responses and make proposals, any international action will be senseless.
- We should abandon marginality schemes that characterize fishing communities in many countries. There is a need for self-evaluation of the artisanal fishing profession together with the ancestral knowledge treasured by communities. We represent a political and economic force in each and every one of the countries where fishing communities exist.
- We should go forward in the creation of alliances with other sectors of the civil society in order to break the classic scheme that treats fisheries as if they were not part of a major society structurally affected by globalization phenomena.
- We should use effectively international policy instruments like UNCLOS. We must not be apart from negotiations held between governments and international consortiums or international free trade agreements.
- We should stop the WTO action on fisheries and mobilize national and international organizations looking for changes leading to human and fraternal global governance.
- We should impede that ocean resources be a part of the exclusive patrimony of transnational corporations.

WFF is not an organization that ignores the problems its member organization face. WFF is what each one of them wishes, contributes or aspires to. In this sense our biggest weakness lies on the economical dependence on projects. We cannot claim for autonomy if we are not able to generate our own revenues. I encourage each and every one of the organizations that are present here to face the challenge if we wish that this dream of the history of fisheries keep on growing and becoming stronger.

Finally, I wish to express my recognition to all those who have been working for WFF for so many years. To men and women involved in fisheries; to those who, not being fish people, have understood the challenge and joined us; to the Coordination Committee that in extremely difficult conditions has kept the will of supporting the work of WFF.

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peace, democracy and the creation of a new international arrangement. You are the carriers of the secrets of the sea, of fish, of algae, of shellfish. Build a stronger new society with the same wisdom that you face the paths of the sea!

Pedro Avendaño,
Executive Director



This assembly is the expression of that part of the global society that contributes to
peace, democracy and the creation of a new international management. You are the
custodians of the secrets of the year of light of shalim. Build a stronger, new
society with the same wisdom that you face the paths of the sea!

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Pedro Avendaño
Executive Director

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