

Not Without Our Consent

The following Statements were made by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) at the Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) during 5-9 September, 2022

Statement on Agenda Item 5: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

We agree with the observation that the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies with the current focus on overfished stocks and IUU fishing will have a global positive impact on the SDG indicator 14.6.1. The impact, in our view, can be far more positive if the overfishing and overcapacity pillar is further developed and also balanced by special and differential treatment of low income, resource poor

access rights of small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources, it may be noticed that it remains a major challenge and needs a concerted action from FAO Member States, especially to develop effective legal and policy frameworks with the active participation of small-scale fisheries organizations to ensure that small-scale fishers are not displaced from their fishing grounds and that small-scale fishing communities are not denied their legitimate living spaces adjacent to marine and inland waterbodies.

We fully support the observation that we need robust, effective, participatory and integrated monitoring and reporting frameworks to track the progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

... we encourage FAO Members to develop national plans of action upholding the principles of equity, fairness and justice

Statement on Agenda Item 6: Supporting Small-scale and Artisanal Fisheries

We notice that small-scale fisheries (SSF) have an important role in FAO's Blue Transformation Programme Priority Area. Based on the FAO tool box, its guidance document on applying a human rights-based approach, and IPC's people-centred methodology for assessing the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, we encourage FAO Members to develop national plans of action upholding the principles of equity, fairness and justice. These action plans may draw from the action points developed by CSOs in relation to IYAF 2022. We also support the call from IPC to organize an SSF summit, similar to the one organized in Rome prior to this COFI meet, to develop regional plans of action for the SSF.

It is crucial that all initiatives in support of SSF promote meaningful participation of fishers, fishworkers

and livelihood fishing in developing countries—a proxy for small-scale artisanal fishers and fishworkers as we understand it.

FAO should provide technical assistance to WTO in matters related to dealing with overcapacity and overfishing issues and in determining appropriate treatment of small-scale fisheries in developing countries.

Towards increasing the share of sustainable fisheries as a percentage of GDP in SIDS, LDCs and other countries in relation to SDG indicator 14.7.1, it will be good to know if there is data to show if Members who seriously implement CCRF and the SSF Guidelines indeed have increased their share of sustainable fisheries as a percentage of GDP.

When it comes to legal and institutional framework to protect

(both men and women) and Indigenous Peoples (IP) in decision-making processes related to fisheries development and management, and biodiversity conservation. It is pertinent to enhance legal spaces for the operation of unions, associations and cooperatives of fishers, fishworkers, fishing communities, and IPs at national and subnational levels.

To complement State efforts, innovative approaches are needed to create a mindset to broaden the scope of these organizations to undertake new tasks such as fisheries management, including co-management, recognition of a diversity of governance models for protected areas, safety in fishing operations and social protection, also within the framework of gender equity. FAO may develop guidance documents to support these organizations, and to assist in their training and capacity-building needs.

While welcoming the salient findings of the Illuminating Hidden Harvest (IHH) study, we request that it shines a light on the respective shares of different gear groups under SSF, especially small-scale trawl and purse seine catches in total fish production. It is important to know the range of fishing vessels that is reported as SSF vessels. A clearer understanding of the structure of small-scale fishing fleet can assist in valorising equitable, sustainable and selective small-scale fisheries.

Statement on Agenda Item 10: Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Fisheries and Aquaculture

My name is Felicito Núñez, and I am going to speak on behalf of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the signatories of the Call to Action from Small-Scale Fisheries, which asks FAO members to develop national strategic plans guided by the SSF Guidelines to implement five priority actions by 2030.

In my community, we Garifuna fishers are worried when we see that tourism destroys the coral reefs that we have taken care of for more than 200 years. Or when large industries come and displace us in the name of the Blue Economy. Or the conservation of marine species.

Regarding the agenda item that concerns us now, we want to stress that the 30x30 process is only possible if indigenous and fishing peoples' human rights are recognized, respected and ensured by law. Conservation needs are to be addressed with our 'Free, Prior and Informed Consent' and with absolute respect for our forms of traditional governance.

Marine Protected Areas and other area-based solutions only prevent immediate human impacts, such as prohibiting fishing or oil exploration, but do not provide a solution for ocean warming or acidification. To protect ecosystems, increase their resilience to climate change and enhance their potential to mitigate climate change. The drivers of resource degradation and biodiversity loss that also affect the remaining 70 per cent must be addressed. In our call, we therefore seek that we are guaranteed preferential access and allowed to co-manage 100 per cent of the coastal areas.

We also demand to be protected from the competing sectors of the Blue Economy. That FAO members do not allow nor support any new use of the oceans that may have a negative impact on ecosystems and the communities that depend on these ecosystems for their livelihoods.

We are caretakers of the territories where we live and their natural resources. We ask FAO members and their partners to listen to us in our efforts to manage our marine resources. We insist on the urgent need of implementing a human rights-based approach to marine conservation.

Nobody enters another person's house without asking. Any decision about the conservation of our territories must have our opinion and consent.

Thank you very much. 🙏

For more

Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on Agenda Item 5: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Statement by ICSF

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/cofi-35-icsf-statement-agenda-item5/>

ICSF's SSF Guidelines

<https://www.icsf.net/ssf-guidelines/>

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<https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi/documents-cofi35/en/>