

Latin America

A first meeting

Latin American fishworkers recently came together for the first time to share their problems

San Cristobal, the largest island in the Galapagos archipelago of Ecuador, provided the setting for the First Latin American Meeting of Artisanal Fishworkers. Organized by the Federation of Artisanal Fishworkers of Ecuador (FENACOPEC), with the support of the Programme of Technical Co-operation for Fisheries (VECEP/EEC), the meeting took place from 25 to 28 November 1998.

The delegates came from the following organizations: SOMU (Union of Unified Maritime Workers), Argentina; ANPA (National Association of Artisanal Fishworkers), Columbia; FEREP / BIO-BIO (Regional Federation of Bio-Bio/8th Region Artisanal Fishworkers), Chile; FVPA (Venezuelan Federation of Artisanal Fishworkers); PENACOPEC (National Federation of Artisanal Fishworkers of Ecuador); and FIUPAP (Federation for Integration and Unification of Artisanal Fishworkers of Peru).

Chaired by Gabriela Cruz, President of FENACOPEC, the meeting was inaugurated by the Minister of industry, Foreign Trade and Fisheries, Hector Plaza.

He talked about problems caused by the global scarcity of fishery resources, and the consequences of the El Niño phenomenon in this part of the continent. He also expressed interest in the development of artisanal fisheries in Ecuador.

The main objective of the meeting was to arrive at an understanding of the issues of concern to the fishworkers of Ecuador and Latin America, particularly those relating to:

- their degree of organization;

- working practices geared towards the rational use and conservation of fishery resources;
- the development and establishment of management areas, and the use of aquaculture as a production alternative;
- labour laws and social security for fishworkers;
- a legal framework for fisheries management;
- creation of training institutions; and
- genuine and viable forms of credit to promote the full development of artisanal fishworkers in each country.

The significance of the Galapagos archipelago was highlighted by the Director of the Charles Darwin Station and by the Presidents of the Galapagos artisanal fisheries co-operatives. They described a special law that allows them to protect all their resources, and to regulate the ingress of people and species into their territory.

The meeting made particular mention of:

- making an exclusive zone or sea area available for artisanal fisheries;
- establishing a 5-mile coastal zone and a 2(10-mile territorial sea for coastal countries;
- the increasing population of sea lions in Ecuador, Peru and Chile which causes serious problems to artisanal fishworkers; and

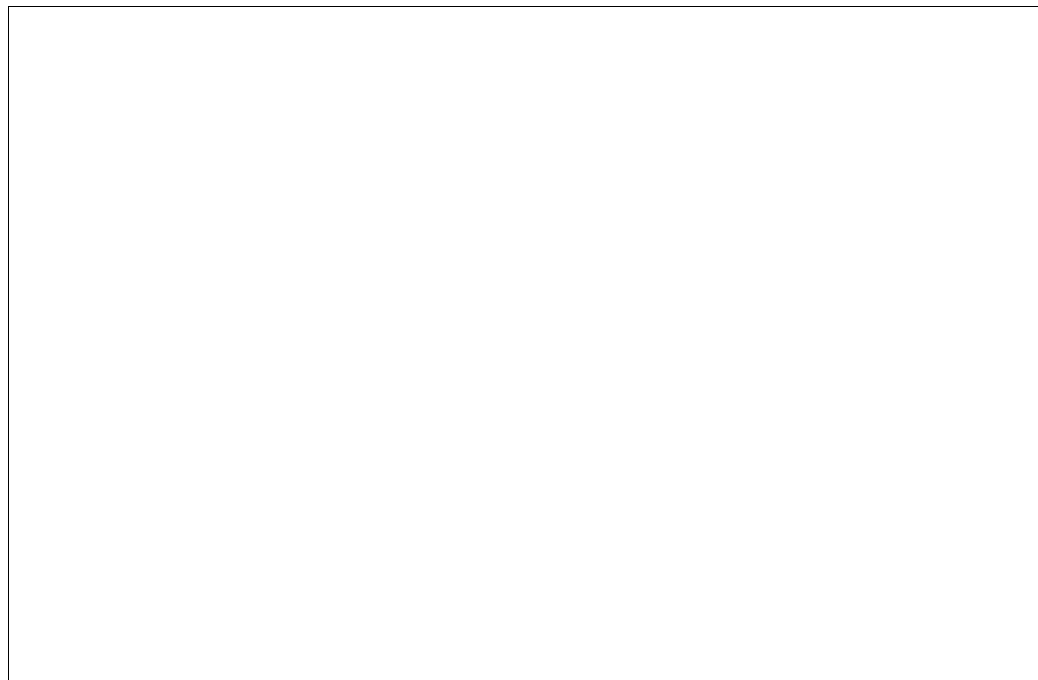
- the pollution and environmental destruction caused by effluents from industrial fisheries, the tailings from mines, and the discharge of residues.

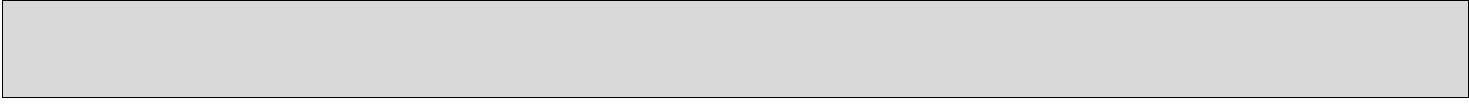
The following resolutions were adopted:

- to present the conclusions and proposals of the commissions, which were elaborated and approved at the meeting, to the authorities in Latin American States;
- to demand that all the Latin American countries ensure that the rights and guarantees recognized by the various Na Lena I Constitutions, International Treaties and Agreements, are met by implementing the following:
 - a policy for comprehensive social security for artisanal fishworkers and their families.
 - laws against the discharge of hydrocarbons into the soil, into rivers, lakes and seas, to protect artisanal fishworkers, and to provide compensation for any damage and harm caused. support for social and organizational activities directed and administered by the respective fishworker unions.

- incentives for fishworkers and their families in education, training and technical support, as well as protection of the environment and natural resources.
- to demand that artisanal fishworkers, as actors competent in all activities relating to fisheries, participate in science and technology programmes directed towards the management of living marine resources.
- to demand that Latin American governments define clear policies for artisanal fishworkers through addressing, in concrete terms, the laws concerning the 200-nautical mile limit.
- to demand a Second Latin American Meeting of Fishworkers to be held in Mar del Plata, Argentina.
- to establish a Latin American Confederation of Fishworkers' Associations and Unions, whose statutes will be decided during the Second Latin American Meeting of Artisanal Fishworkers.

The objectives of the Confederation are:





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- to defend the conditions of life, work, income and social security of artisanal fishworkers and their families;
- to strengthen existing fishworkers' organizations and unions in all countries, and to establish them where they do not exist;
- to study, analyze, and develop proposals for the harvesting, management and conservation of living marine resources and fisheries development in general, and to make declarations, recommendations and demands on the national States and civil society as a whole;
- to develop a genuine and effective participation in international forums, working as a regional bloc, to advance our objectives;
- to participate actively in national policy debates on fish harvesting, and to promote the adoption of a responsible fisheries management for marine resources and ecosystems, which can protect and favour the access rights of the coastal communities to marine resources; and
- to spread the principles of worker solidarity so as to maintain, create and arrange the implementation of social programmes with national governments and/or fishworker organizations, which must be directed and administered by fishworkers through their trade unions and/or fishworker organizations.

In the case of Ecuador, taking into account the concerns expressed for Galapagos, the development of a new fisheries law is urgent, one which would allow the recovery of mangroves for the development of *Concha prieta* and the a rational harvest of shrimps in estuarine waters, as well as one which would limit the capacity of artisanal vessels and the number of individually owned vessels.

In the context of Latin America, in addition to the disappearance of

customary fishing areas, direct trade is the main constraint for the development of the artisanal fisheries. Also problematic are the difficulties with the modernization of vessels and gear, and the lack of social security systems and life insurance. 🇪🇺

This report is by Claudio Nizama Silva, secretary general of FIUPAP. It has been translated by Luz Pisua of Instituto Huayuna, Lima, Peru