



Support



United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC): 3 recommendations from ACP artisanal fisheries

ACP artisanal fisheries are the most important sector of the blue economy, and provide livelihoods, employment, food security and revenue to ACP populations. They rely on access to healthy oceans and ecosystems but their resilience and survival are **threatened by the negative impacts** caused by poor management of industrial fishing, pollution or competition for space by other blue economy sectors. Their future prospects and ability to innovate are hampered by **dire working and living conditions** and the **lack of access to services** and infrastructure and **lack of participation** in decision-making.

The following actions should be considered by the OACPS for the concrete implementation of Sustainable Development Goals that benefits ACP artisanal fisheries, in particular SDG 14.b that calls states *to provide access of small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets*:

1. Secure access to fisheries resources, and ensure 100% co-management of coastal areas

Artisanal fisheries depend on healthy oceans ecosystems for their livelihoods, yet they are often side-lined in decision-making processes, that fail to recognise the central rights and responsibilities of local communities in achieving sustainable fisheries as well as conservation. It is essential that artisanal fishers are empowered to participate effectively in the decisions that most affect them. This can be done by:

- Increasing and securing access rights to resources for artisanal fisheries, including by granting them exclusive fishing rights to coastal areas as already occurs in some OACPS, closing inshore areas to industrial fishing and other industrial activity, and protecting title, tenure, access, and resource rights including free, prior and informed consent for any new ocean use or activity, including for conservation purposes; and
- Balancing access rights with artisanal fisheries responsibilities for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of resources and the maintenance of the ecological foundation for food production. This should be done by ensuring that equitable and appropriate co-management systems are in place for 100% of all coastal areas, including for coastal marine protected areas.

2. Apply the precautionary approach for innovative “ocean-based” economies

The negative impacts from more powerful sea and land-based sectors promoted in blue economy strategies (oil and gas exploitation, deep-sea mining, tourism, fishmeal factories) jeopardize the future of artisanal fisheries. The precautionary approach and transparency should guide any new ocean innovative use, including:

- Not allowing nor supporting any new ocean use activity, if it negatively impacts ecosystems and the activities of communities that depend on them for their livelihoods; and demonstrably support adequate environmental regulation mechanisms for current uses and activities in national budgets, including human resources and legislation, before any new development is allowed and its regulation developed;



- Carrying out independent social and environmental impact assessments, with the utmost transparency and with the participation of affected coastal communities; and developing transparent and effective mechanisms for (1) Consultation which allows for informed and active participation of affected fishing communities, (2) Conflict resolution between users of maritime spaces, and (3) Grievance redress; and
- Publishing texts of authorisations, permits and approvals, including those for ocean, coastal sea- and land based industrial projects; publishing foreign aid projects and public and private sector partnerships and new forms of financing for ocean conservation, including blue bonds and debt-for-nature-swaps, and provide for public consultation.

3. Improve life and working conditions to support innovation

Women and men working in ACP artisanal fisheries face dire working and living conditions. This makes them vulnerable, hampers their ability to innovate, endangers their livelihoods and their contribution to food security. Without decent conditions, no innovation that makes artisanal fisheries more resilient and sustainable is possible. Their working and living conditions can be improved by:

- Improving safety at sea, including by ratifying and implementing the ILO Convention 188 on work in fisheries; and
- Prioritizing investments in:
 - basic services and infrastructure, such as access to potable water, electricity, drainage and sanitary facilities at processing sites;
 - access to market facilities;
 - capacity development along the value chain, including for the export of products;
 - assistance in accessing credit, including from commercial banks, in particular for the purchase of innovative tools; and
 - assistance for the development of artisanal fish farming.