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Fishers on the beach in Ghana. © Samuel Aboh



A CALL TO ACTION from small-scale fishers*

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.b calls on states to secure access to marine resources and markets for small-scale fisheries.

Action is urgently required to address the following key challenges to ensure that small-scale fisheries are protected and restored, and that they **continue contributing to economies, health, culture and wellbeing.**

Context

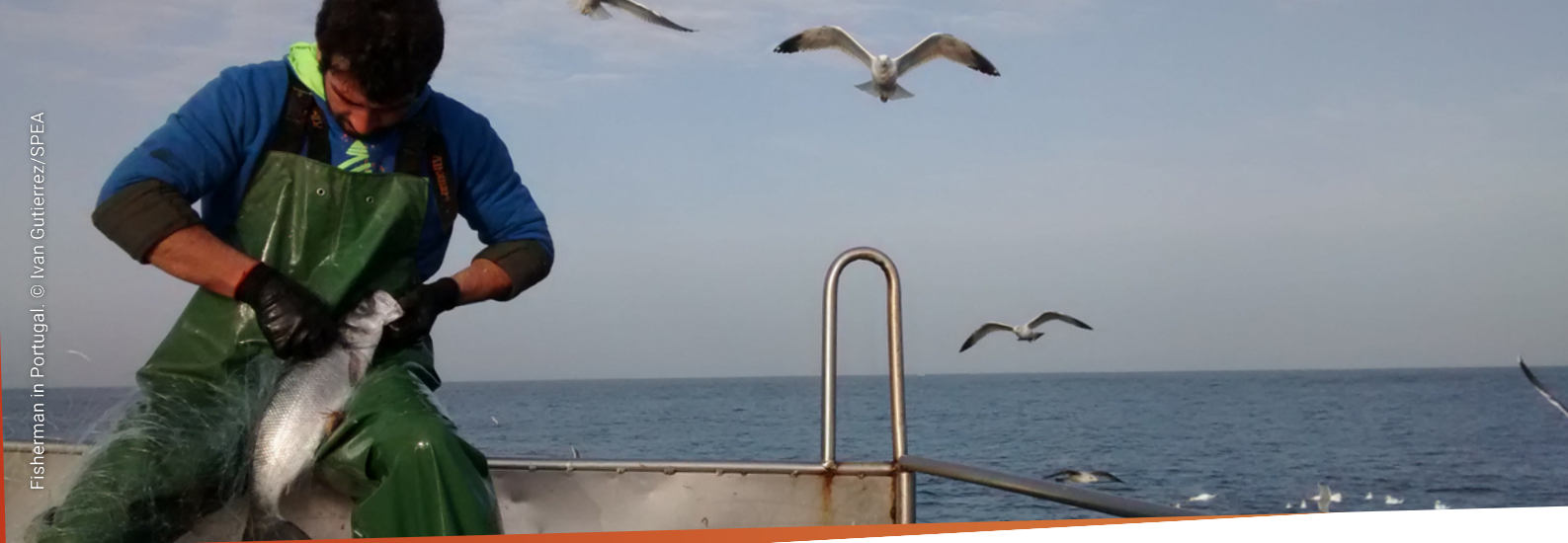
Women and men in maritime and inland small-scale fisheries (SSF) make a major contribution to livelihoods, employment, food security and revenue, in contrast to their marginalisation in decision-making. Coastal fishing communities are the most numerous ocean users. To ensure healthy and resilient fishing communities, SSF require secure and preferential access to healthy oceans and ecosystems to effectively play their key roles as guardians of the ocean.

SSF demand that governments address the lack of science based, transparent, participative fisheries management and threats posed by pollution, competition for space and resources by other blue economy industries, and to invest in long-term resource management, ecosystems restoration and innovations introduced by women and men from fishing communities

History

The 1984 International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters in Rome (Rome Conference) marked a milestone in the history of small-scale fishers participation on the international stage. This landmark event gathered over 100 participants from 34 countries to protest their exclusion from the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, and to exchange their experiences, analyse their problems and commit to future actions. The initiative gave rise to the foundation of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) 2 years later in 1986, as an international NGO comprising the “support organisations” behind the 1984 Rome Conference.

Thanks to this historic event, small-scale fisheries' representatives have, since then, been able to register and make their voices heard in FAO fisheries discussions, starting with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries process, launched in Cancun in 1992, and leading to the Voluntary Guidelines to Secure Small-scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication (VGSSF) in 2014.



The Call to Action

Since January 2022, small-scale fisheries organisations from Africa and the Pacific, the African Confederation of professional Artisanal Fishing Organisations (CAOPA) and the Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) network, coordinated their actions for the EU-AU summit (February 2022). Looking forward, they jointly drafted a Call to Action on the occasion of the 7th Meeting of OACPS Ministers in charge of Fisheries and Aquaculture which was held in Ghana in April 2022. This Call provided a basis text for the current joint document.

Ahead of the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) in Lisbon, CAOPA and LMMA reached out to small scale fishers organisations in Latin America, in Europe and in Asia, to ask them to join the Call to Action. An intense process via videoconferences late at night for some and early in the morning for others, resulted in this final text you have in hands. At UNOC, several other SSF organisations joined the Call and agreed to continue the collaboration further.

The key demands from the call

SSF across the globe face the same challenge of being recognized and included in decision-making. Meanwhile, they are increasingly facing competition for space, as other industries are being promoted under the guise of Blue Economy. Other sectors of SSF are even less known, such as inland fisheries, due to the lack of systematic documentation, and limited understanding of their dynamics and contributions to society.

The Call to Action revolves around 5 key demands, namely, that governments (1) urgently secure access and co-manage 100% of coastal areas, (2) guarantee the participation of women in fisheries and support their role in innovation, (3) protect SSF from competing blue economy sectors, (4) are transparent and accountable in fisheries management, and finally (5) build resilient communities to face climate change and offer prospects to youth. Each demand has several subpoints which detail what actions governments should be taking.

When governments signed up to reach Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, they committed to guarantee a secure access to resources and markets to SSF (SDG 14b). The signatories to the call take guidance from the VGSSF asking their governments to put their words into actions through national action plans to be implemented by 2030.

About the signatories

All the signatories are organisations representing small-scale fisheries around the globe including from Africa, the Pacific, South and central America, and Europe. Here are the initiators of the Call. Visit the website to see the full list of signatories and civil society and INGOs supporting the call.

The African Confederation of Professional Artisanal Fishing Organisations (CAOPA)

The African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Professional Organisations (CAOPA) was created in 2010 and brings together professional organisations of men and women from 26 African countries. Its main objective is to foster a pan-African dynamic for the development of sustainable artisanal fisheries for the well-being of fishing communities, and to contribute to the food security of populations. CAOPA is a member of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative International Board, and coordinates the Pan African Platform of Non-State Actors in Fisheries, set up by the African Union. The organisation has observer status at COFI (FAO).

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Website: www.caopa.org // **Twitter:** @AfriqueCaopa // **Facebook:** caopa.africa

The Locally Managed Marine Areas Network (LMMA)

Founded in 2000, the LMMA Network is a unique and diverse tapestry of fishing communities, NGOs, government agencies and researchers all working together to promote food security and livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. LMMA supports small-scale fishing Networks in Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Pohnpei, Fiji and the Solomon Islands, and engages with more than 15 other countries in the Indo Pacific.

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The Network of Marine Areas of Responsible Fisheries and Marine Territories of Life

The National Network of Responsible Fishing Marine Areas and Marine Territories of Life is a structure for innovation and the recognition of the human rights of small-scale artisanal fishers in Costa Rica. It is a conglomerate of diverse organisations ranging from Marine Areas of Responsible Fishing, fishing organisations of diverse nature, communities of marine management areas, indigenous groups, afro-descendant groups, mollusc communities, among other forms of fishing and community organisation.

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Fisherwomen by the Niger in Guinea.
by Julien Harneis.

The Low Impact Fishers of Europe Platform (LIFE)

The Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE Platform) is a European platform of associations of small-scale fishers committed to fishing in a low impact manner. LIFE's mission is to unite small-scale low impact fishers to achieve fair fisheries, healthy seas, and vibrant communities. Registered as a non-profit organisation, LIFE participates in decision making processes that affect its members, including at international level.

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AKTEA

Created in 2006, Aktea is a network of women in fisheries and aquaculture who work collectively to at European and national level to gain recognition for the role of women in fisheries and aquaculture and to achieve gender equality in these sectors. AKTEA's other priorities include: gaining access for women to decision-making processes within fisheries management at EU level (Advisory Councils) and within national fishers' organisations; access to vocational training; and the defence of small-scale fisheries and fishing communities in general.

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Kesualan Nelayan Traditional Indonesia (KNTI)

The Indonesian Traditional Fisherfolk Union looks to the welfare of traditional fishermen. In May 2009, at least 100 fisherman leaders from various regions in Indonesia attended the Congress of Indonesian Traditional Fishermen and agreed to immediately form an organization. They conform a strong community that jointly advocates for the livelihoods of traditional fishermen, and fight for the rights of those who have been displaced or threatened by mining or other industries.

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Confederación Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile (CONAPACH)

The National Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen of Chile, Conapach, was constituted in 1990 by the artisanal fishermen's unions from all over the country. Subsequently, artisanal fishermen's cooperatives and trade associations have been incorporated. Its mission is to represent Chile's artisanal fishermen and women, safeguard their rights and improve their living conditions.

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Fédération de pêcheurs artisans de l'Océan Indien (FPAOI)

In October 2015, the coastal fishing professionals (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Reunion) of the fishing industry came together and formed the Federation of Artisanal Fishermen of the Indian Ocean (FPAOI). It advocates for the defence and sustainability of the artisanal fishing profession in the Indian Ocean, the sharing of experiences, the support of projects on common themes and the creation of a unique database of shared knowledge.

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