



STATEMENT: Taking Small Scale Fisheries into consideration in fisheries management through a human rights based approach

Current fisheries management practices with special considerations for small-scale fisheries - sub-committee on fisheries management, first session, 15-18 January 2024

We welcome the proposed focus by the FAO Sub Committee on Fisheries Management on identifying and understanding which management approaches and tools are most suitable for sustainable small-scale fisheries (SSF). In our view, this calls for a human rights' based approach, as developed in the VGSSF, ensuring not only responsible fisheries management but also social development, gender equity, and the recognition of fishers and fish workers' rights, including in terms of access to resources. In this regard, we believe that the most appropriate approach is to prioritize **transparent, gender sensitive, collaborative management schemes**, whilst ensuring at the same time that the artisanal fishing communities' tenure and access rights are respected and secured.

To address over-exploitation of resources and destruction of ecosystems, particularly in coastal areas, artisanal fishers have [called for](#)¹ closing inshore areas to industrial fishing and to other destructive and polluting activities – such as offshore energy production, tourism, large-scale aquaculture and fishmeal factories. These areas reserved for artisanal fishers should further be fully co-managed, putting in place specific legal frameworks that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the authorities and fishers. Sufficient and appropriate support should be provided for fishing communities to engage in co-management (including compensation for expenses incurred related to participatory surveillance and closed fishing seasons) and for protecting these zones from other competing industries.

¹ A Call to Action from Small-Scale Fishers, June 2022. Available at: <https://caopa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Call-to-action-online-pdf.pdf>

Recognizing the key role of women in fisheries and co-management and enhancing their status and capabilities, are essential. It is also vital to ensure they are given equal opportunities for effective and meaningful participation in fisheries management, including in the drafting of national and regional fisheries management policies.

Fisheries management on its own will not ensure sustainable fisheries

However, in a context where blue economy is booming, fisheries management on its own will not guarantee sustainable fisheries. The precautionary approach, transparency and effective participation of small scale fishing communities should guide any new ocean use. This means any new ocean use that will negatively impact ecosystems and the local communities that depend on them for their livelihoods should not be welcomed. When it comes to maritime spatial planning, which is promoted as a way to organize and manage the occupation and use of the ocean by the various users, it will be key to develop, with the utmost transparency and with the meaningful and effective participation of affected coastal communities, mechanisms for: (1) independent social and environmental impact assessments, (2) consultation which allows for informed and active participation of affected fishing communities, (3) conflict resolution between users of maritime spaces, and (4) grievance redress. To support this, adequate provision should be included in national budgets for enforcement of environmental regulation, including the implementation of international and regional laws and conventions, before any new ocean use is allowed.

Improving data collection on environmental and social aspects of SSF

We welcome the emphasis proposed on the need to broaden current practices of fisheries management to include ecological, social, economic, nutritional and gender objectives. A first step to achieve this will be to collect gender disaggregated data to, on the one hand, highlight the contributions of small scale fisheries to food and nutrition security, livelihoods, conservation. On the other hand, data should also be collected to highlight specific needs to be met to enhance the social well-being of communities, like casualties at sea and in processing activities, to enhance work safety and overall working conditions and social protection, including availability of child care, sanitation and rest facilities.

The lack of data is also apparent in inland small-scale fisheries. Thus, there is a need to better document these fisheries, their contributions and the challenges they face, so that they can be recognized and supported at a national and international level.

In case data of importance to fisheries management already exists, such as information related to various access arrangements entered into by coastal countries with fleets of foreign origin, the publication, to the minimum standards of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI), of all relevant information, including legislation, fishing authorizations, data on performance and the rationale for management regulations is important.

RFMO for small pelagics

We fully support the proposal to develop a roadmap for ensuring that one hundred percent of marine and inland fisheries are placed under effective management, with the objective to deliver healthy fish stocks and secure equitable livelihoods. We recall, given the looming food

crisis, in particular in developing countries, and the key role fish plays in human nutrition, an additional objective should be to maximize the contribution of these fisheries to food security.

In the light of this, we call for resource access allocation systems to give priority access to those who fish most sustainably from an environmental and social point of view, and contribute most to food security, prioritizing fish for human consumption rather than for the reduction value chain (for fishmeal and fish oil).

In its efforts to ensure all fisheries are under effective management, we believe that the establishment of a new RFMO for the management of small pelagics in West Africa should be a priority, as these shared resources, some of which are considered over-exploited, constitute an essential pillar of food security in the region.

Signatory organizations:

Afrifish

Awfishnet (African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network)

CAOPA (African Confederation of Professional Artisanal Fisheries Organisations)

CFFA (Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements)

Coopesolidar

RAMPR (La Red de áreas marinas de pesca responsable)

SSNC (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation)