



**December 2024**

***Contribution from Gaoussou Gueye, President of CAOPA***

**FCWC Ministerial Conference on promoting decent work and strengthening the resilience of marine ecosystems for a sustainable fisheries sector**

**Distinguished Ministers,**

**Mr. Secretary General of the CPCO,**

**Dear participants of all protocols,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Small-scale fisheries in the countries of the central-western Gulf of Guinea has a key role to play in protecting biodiversity, strengthening the resilience of marine ecosystems and ensuring food security for local populations.

To enable them to play this role, it is important that FCWC and its members provide them with adequate support. The first step is for member countries to set up and ensure the protection of zones reserved for small-scale fishing. These zones must be clearly delimited, protected by appropriate means, and legal frameworks must be established to prevent the incursion of industrial fishing vessels, such as trawlers, into the zone.

Last September, the Fisheries Ministers of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States, meeting in Tanzania, underlined their commitment to protecting and promoting small-scale fishing zones as an essential aspect of sustainable fisheries management. We hope that the FCWC and its members will reiterate and implement this commitment.

For CAOPA, to encourage small-scale fishing areas to contribute to improving the resilience of eco-systems, it is important to promote the co-management of these areas in a transparent manner, including all small-scale fishing stakeholders, including women active in the sector. The aim of this co-management is not only to guarantee the sustainability of resources and encourage their sustainable use for the benefit of local communities, but also to protect marine and coastal ecosystems, which have been weakened by overfishing, destructive fishing methods and the consequences of climate change.

Climate change is also affecting working conditions in the small-scale fishing sector: some fishing villages and processing sites are disappearing into the waves due to coastal erosion. Sailing conditions have become more difficult because of more unstable weather, and the state of some fish stocks, already victims of over-exploitation, is deteriorating further because of climate change, forcing fishermen to go further and further out to sea, where conditions are more dangerous. It is impossible to talk about decent working conditions today without taking into account the adaptation of our sector to the impacts of climate change.

Safety at sea can be supported by concrete activities such as training for captains of canoe and investment in geolocation technologies, which can also be used to collect data on small-scale fishing with a view to resource management. Improving working



conditions for women in small-scale fishing involves promoting innovative tools and practices, such as improved smoking ovens and the use of solar energy.

Regional and international collaboration is essential if these objectives are to be achieved, whether in terms of managing shared resources, organizing exchanges of best practice or harmonizing management measures. By addressing these issues at FCWC level, all the cards are in the hands of the countries of the central-western Gulf of Guinea to improve the resilience of coastal ecosystems, and the living and working conditions of the communities that depend on these ecosystems for their livelihoods.