

WORLD FISHERIES DAY – IPC STATEMENT

Fishery WG
221st November 2021

We, in the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), represent small-scale fisher people including Indigenous Peoples from the four global movements, the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP), the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) and La Via Campesina (LVC). Our constituencies span across the entire world and both from coastal and inland fishing communities.

Today we recall that World Fisheries Day (WFD) carries our rich history and was first celebrated when we formed the global fisher movements (WFFP/WFF) in Delhi in 1997. Back then, we denounced industrial fishing and aquaculture because both sectors bring environmental destruction and expropriation of fishing communities, and we decided that this day of our birth, World Fisheries Day, would be a day to celebrate small-scale capture fisheries internationally. It is a day filled with the determination and endeavors of fisher people to be proud contributors to the world's food systems and a humane society at large.

Over the last several decades, aquaculture and blue economy development have resulted in territories being taken away from us, the pollution of rivers and the sea, and the loss of livelihoods without any remorse or empathy but a few individual jobs offered by the blue economy and the aquaculture sector. The tendency we see is that fewer and bigger corporations control more and more of the aquaculture sector. At the 34th session of the Committee on Fisheries, we witnessed a strong commitment by the committee members and the FAO to increase aquaculture production further to feed the world's population. While this reflects a global trend, our position remains that this market-driven blue economy is a *false solution* to address healthy biodiversity and the real solutions is that our water bodies can provide for the needs of our people. Macro-level policies that are driving elite developmental paradigms have failed to recognize the contribution of small-scale fish workers to local livelihoods, the economy, their contribution to food security, and the customary rights of these Fishers People and Indigenous communities over the coastal land and ocean resources.

We, therefore, call upon the international community to listen to our concerns and support Small Scale Fishers Peoples Rights and needs as espoused in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines).

We, small-scale fishers and fish workers worldwide, celebrate World Fisheries Day, stating Food Sovereignty as the true and only solution to food systems transformation and calling to recognize small-scale fishers and fish workers' contribution to ensure human well-being and healthy food systems.

As we enter the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) we call on governments across the world to incorporate the principles of the SSF Guidelines into national public policy. Importantly we say that on this World Fisheries Day, Governments must start to keep themselves in check. They must monitor the progress being made to implement the Guidelines and to monitor the impacts that it has on fishing communities.

Indeed, States must support small-scale fisher and fish workers' organisations and movements, alongside all water bodies, to assert their own human rights and developmental needs and to involve them in achieving this.

We encourage the international community to move away from the current system where the State takes over everything and gives crumbs to People and deter support to development initiatives that push small scale fishing communities to the periphery of the sector. Instead, we ask the States to recognise the small-scale fishers people, affirm their rights over the resources in the ocean coast and inland and to work closely with fishers' communities all over the world for a shift from a market-driven model to a human rights-based approach.

We reaffirm our commitment to work with our governments to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries. It is crucial that 2022 should also show results of what these guidelines are set to achieve. We are willing partners to do this.

Today, we will also continue to build international solidarity and reinforce our Global Movements.

We look at IYAFA as a crucial moment to reassert the rights of small-scale fisherwomen and fishermen and Indigenous Peoples to secure Food Sovereignty.

We highlight the fundamentality of our participation in governance processes, particularly at these times, for getting us all through the Covid-19 pandemic and to face continuous climate disasters that mainly affect fishers' lives and livelihoods.

On this World Fisheries Day, we in the IPC, pledge to fight for a just system where the rights of fisher communities are visibly responded to. We will advance small scale fishery as the best fishery to combat climate change and its associated challenges.