



STATEMENT

MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK – FAO Sub Committee Fisheries Management, January 2024

For hundreds of years, small scale fishing communities, as well as Indigenous Peoples all over the world, have governed, conserved and sustainably managed ecosystems, habitats, fish stocks and other natural resources they depend on. Their contributions to a healthy aquatic environment are deeply rooted in their culture, knowledge and practices. Their intimate knowledge of the aquatic environment and the resources contained therein, based on ancestral and experiential knowledge, is itself a vital resource and source of information, and forms an integral part of an important biocultural diversity. Today, about 90 per cent of all fishers and fish workers are involved in small-scale fisheries and their catch accounts for at least 40% of the total capture fisheries, through operations that often take place in areas with high biodiversity. For all these reasons, small-scale fishing communities as well as Indigenous Peoples deserve special consideration when looking at how to mainstream biodiversity in fisheries management.

Importantly, the new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), through several targets, shall ensure the full recognition and respect for human rights, for communities, including artisanal fishing communities', rights to resources, to meaningful participation, and access to justice and information related to biodiversity. It also establishes a special safeguard for the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, (as laid out in UNDRIP), especially to their territories, their culture and ancestral traditional knowledge, their full and effective participation, as well as their right to free, prior and informed consent. The GBF shall also guarantee the protection of environmental and human rights defenders.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is also the first environmental treaty to have a specific target on women's rights and embeds a gender-responsive approach in which all women and girls have equal opportunities and capacity to contribute to the GBF's objectives. However, it is the States responsibility to design national plans of actions and policies that take these aspects into account, and we strongly believe that FAO can play a key role in supporting the implementation of human-rights based conservation and fisheries management.

Small-scale fishers, including Indigenous Fishing Peoples, welcome efforts to recover lost productivity mostly caused by industrial overfishing exacerbated by pollution and climate change. When deprived of their means of subsistence and development, they are entitled to just and fair redress. This is essential for ensuring future well-being and continued assurance of healthy aquatic food from healthy aquatic ecosystems.

In that context, we welcome the commitment by FAO to expand its support to small-scale fisheries actors in their role as resource stewards that conserve and sustainably use aquatic biodiversity, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). We believe this should be done through the elaboration and implementation of **transparent, participatory, gender-sensitive National Action Plans that recognize the essential role of local fishing communities and Indigenous Peoples for biodiversity conservation**. This would provide an opportunity for the Parties to the Convention to design and implement conservation strategies, to improve policy coherence, whilst ensuring the full and effective participation and contribution of small-scale fishing communities, as well as Indigenous Peoples (men, women and youth).

With respect to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), we welcome FAO's emphasis on participatory approaches, and we would like to further emphasize the important role that artisanal fishing communities as well as Indigenous Peoples play in the implementation of any conservation measure. It needs also to be recognized that in many countries, there are already existing marine/coastal territories and areas governed and conserved by small-scale fishing communities, as well as by Indigenous Peoples (such as Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas, ICCAs, or Locally Managed Marine Areas, LMMAs).

The FAO should support its members to **1) identify and recognize both existing and new community conservation initiatives, 2) improve information, monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms, and 3) mobilize resources to initiate and sustain these efforts**.

These conservation initiatives should not take place in isolation, but should be considered as part of wider transparent, participative management processes which artisanal fishers are calling for. This for us, is essential for ensuring the objectives of the GBF while respecting and ensuring the rights of small-scale fishing communities, as well as Indigenous Peoples, and securing the future of their livelihoods.

In that context, FAO should also support member States, especially developing country Parties, with capacity building and appropriate technology transfer that can assist collective actions and community- and Indigenous Peoples-based monitoring and information systems and implement the [SSF call to action](#)¹ and [rules of conduct](#)² that emphasized the above requests.

Signatory organizations:

Afrifish

APAS-Santo Cristo (Associação De Produtores De Amêijoa Da Fajã De Santo Cristo)

Aprapam (Association pour la Promotion et la Responsabilisation des Acteurs de la Pêche Artisanale Maritime)

Awfishnet (African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network)

Blue Ventures

CaFGOAG (Canoe Owners Association of Ghana)

CAOPA (African Confederation of Professional Artisanal Fisheries Organisations)

CFFA (Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements)

CoopeSoliDar

IITC (International Indian Treaty Council)

Mundus Maris

SFBOA (Seychelles Fishing Boat Owners Association)

SSNC (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation)

WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature)

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>

² Rules of Conduct for Working with Small-Scale Fishers and Fishworkers to Save Our Ocean, February 2023. Available at: <https://caopa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Copy-of-Rules-of-conduct.pdf>