

Workshop on Fisheries, social analysis and organisational strategies in Africa
Accra, Ghana
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Statement

We, the supporters of artisanal fishworkers, from nine countries in Africa, namely, Benin, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Senegal, Madagascar, Mozambique and South Africa, are concerned about the growing crisis in the fisheries sector and the impact of this on food security. Millions of women and men, whose dependence on the fishery is economic, as well as cultural and social, are experiencing a growing threat to their life and livelihood.

Our Concerns:

1. Large, foreign industrial fishing and processing companies are manipulating the political system and are, therefore, influencing the future of small-scale fishworkers at the global level. They are undermining the sovereignty of the state and reducing it to an executive institution.
2. The growing overcapacity of the world's fishing fleets, and the increasing deployment of these fleets from other continents to African waters, is further adding to the existing overcapacity.
3. Despite their sovereignty, their rich natural resources, and their numbers, the 70 ACP countries have no power in the negotiations, both on the fishery agreements and on the Lomé convention. This situation arises from a complexity of historical factors, which have provoked dependence and led to a disintegration of their economics.
4. The new generation of fishery agreements between the EU and ACP countries favour the certain and the development of joint ventures, thereby marginalising the professional organisations in the small-scale fisheries sector in the process of negotiations.
5. The unwillingness of governments and other international institutions to inform and communicate with the public, and, in particular, with coastal fishing communities. The consequent alienation of fishworkers from their resources results in their disinterest towards fishery management policies that do not keep their long-term interests in mind. It leads to the increasing use of intensive and destructive fishing practices by the artisanal sector, which threatens fish stocks and consequently the future of their fishery.
6. The lack of transparency in (and often contradiction between) development policies and practices.
7. The absence of collaboration and / coordination between the different actors who are involved in the development of the fishery sector.
8. The lack of information about, and recognition by society of, the role of women in the artisanal and traditional fishery sector, leading to their marginalisation in the fishery and in decision making processes.

9. The increasing pollution and degradation of coastal zones by human activities on sea and on land.
10. With the coastal zone being targeted for modern development activity, including tourism, coastal communities are being marginalised and are losing their rights of access to the coastal zone.
11. With the increasing demand for shrimp and other high-value species in the world market, we fear that the West African coastline will soon be targeted for intensive aquaculture thereby causing irreparable damage to the coastal ecosystem and to coastal communities as has happened in several parts of the world.
12. The working conditions of seafarers on board foreign industrial fishing vessels are inhuman and violate international standards of safety and conditions of work.

We recognize that, in general, the fishworkers in Africa are not well organised and are therefore, unable to combat the impact of adverse global and national government policies. This also hinders debate on issues that need to be dealt with at regional level.

We are also conscious of the fact that their counterparts in Northern countries also face similar problems and that this calls for better partnership between small-scale fishworkers around the world.

Given these concerns, we pledge that we will do our utmost to work towards a fishery that will sustain the life and livelihood of coastal communities, and that of the coming generations.