

TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, 2009

Agenda Item 9: Securing sustainable fisheries: Towards responsible fisheries and social development

Intervention

on behalf of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC).

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving us this opportunity to speak.

The World is facing a crisis economically and morally. Poverty is at its highest level. Hunger is rampant and social justice is diminishing.

I am speaking here on behalf of the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP), which consists of national network organizations of fisher people from 32 countries across the world, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC).

First of all, I would like to bring to your attention that small-scale fisheries contribute over half the world's marine and inland fish catch, providing food security to people.

We employ over 90 per cent of the world's fishers. We support a very large number of people, both men and women, employed in fishing, fish-processing, distribution and marketing.

We contribute directly to food and livelihood security, balanced nutrition, poverty reduction, and rural development.

Our small-scale fisheries are known to be relatively more sustainable. Our fisheries help alleviate poverty and help realize right to food in rural areas where few alternative employment and income opportunities exist.

For us, fisheries are not only an economic activity—they are as much a culture and a way of life, with skills, knowledge, social norms and systems of internal governance passed down and honed over the generations. Our fisheries provide the model on which to sustain fisheries into the future.

We make significant contributions to economic and social development and cultural values, but our communities often face difficult living and working conditions, due to a range of factors. Human life in our communities is losing its value. The vulnerable small-scale fishers are more and more ignored and marginalised.

Insecure rights to land and fishery resources, threats from pollution and irresponsible aquaculture, inadequate access to food, unfavourable working conditions, poor health and educational services, and absence of social safety nets are issues confronting us on a daily basis. As a consequence of the above, the women in our communities are experiencing greater discrimination and unjust treatment.

The Bangkok Conference on Securing Small-Scale Fisheries was the first initiative of its kind with small-scale fisheries as the central theme. We appreciate that FAO and the Royal Government of Thailand organized such a Conference to secure sustainable livelihood of small-scale fishery-dependent communities. We urge the Committee on Fisheries to maintain the momentum established by the Bangkok Conference.

We propose that FAO should add a chapter to the Code on sustainable development of small-scale fisheries to create conditions whereby our men and women, and indigenous communities, can enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights, as well as their civil and political rights. This Chapter should form an integral part of the Code. It should be developed through a negotiation process with full and effective participation of small-scale fishing communities.

We are pleased to notice that small-scale fisheries have been a permanent agenda item since the 25th Session of COFI and we would urge FAO to continue to do so..

We look forward to a positive response from COFI.

All that we want is a more humane and caring society.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.