

A new world forum

The following is the Charter of the Interim Arrangement for the Operation of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers

PREAMBLE

The fishing communities of the world are uniting in the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers to uphold their human rights, social justice and culture; affirming the sea as source of all life; and committing themselves to sustain fisheries and aquatic resources for future generations, protect their livelihoods and secure preferential access for small- and medium-scale, artisanal, and traditional fishers, and indigenous peoples, to coastal resources on which they have historically depended.

I. OBJECTIVES

The World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers will work to:

1. Protect, defend and strengthen the communities that depend on the fishery for their livelihoods.
2. Assist member organizations to secure and improve the economic viability and quality of life of fish harvesters, fishworkers and their communities.
3. Recognize, protect and enhance the role of women in the fishing economy and in the sustenance of the community.
4. Create an understanding of the resource as a common heritage of humanity and ensure, through sustainable fishing practices, conservation and regeneration of the marine and inland resources and ecosystems, and that it is passed on to future generations.
5. Protect fishing communities, fish resources and fish habitats, such as mangroves, from both land-based and sea-based threats, for example, displacement by tourism, pollution, including the use of the sea as a dumping ground for toxic waste, destructive industrial aquaculture, overfishing and destructive fishing practices.
6. Establish and promote the rights of fishing communities to their customary territories under their national jurisdiction in the coastal zone for fishing and habitation.
7. Promote a legal regime that will ensure the traditional and customary rights of fishing communities to the fishery under their national jurisdiction.
8. Promote the primary role of fish harvesters and fishworkers organizations in managing fisheries and oceans, nationally and internationally.
9. Promote food security, both locally and worldwide, through sustaining fish stocks for the future, and by reserving fish for human food.
10. Promote equitable representation of fish harvesters' and fishworkers' organizations in all appropriate international and regional fora and advocate for their recognition.
11. Play a monitoring role to ensure compliance by States and transnational corporations with relevant international agreements; oppose any trade agreements that threaten the livelihoods of fishers.
12. Prevent the export of crises of resource collapse and of technologies and practices that lead to these crises.



13. Provide support for national and international struggles that are consistent with the objectives of the World Forum.
14. Encourage, assist and support fish harvesters and fishworkers to organize where they are not organized.
15. Promote the right to social security, safe working conditions, fair income and safety at sea for fish harvesters and fishworkers, including recognition of them as seafarers.
16. Improve the communication between fish harvesters and the scientific community through exchange of knowledge and science.
17. Acknowledge and enhance the unique culture of fishing communities.

II. MEMBERSHIP

1. Constituencies

- A. Organizations of the following constituencies who adhere to the objectives of the World Forum can be members:
 - i. Fish Harvesters: anyone directly engaged in fishing, known in different countries as:
 - Subsistence fishers

- Artisanal fishers
 - Aboriginal or indigenous peoples who are sea-harvesters
 - Traditional coastal fisher
 - Independent small and medium boat owner-operators who hire their own crew
 - Crew members in this sector;
- ii. Crew members in fishing units other than those above, who are presently members of organizations under (i);
 - iii. Mass-based organizations women of fishing communities who are engaged in work in support of the fishery; and
 - iv. Fishworkers who are engaged activities related to processing, sale (excluding merchants) and transportation of fish.
- B. Large corporations and allied affiliates owning fishing vessels or engaged in harvesting, processing and distribution of fish, and those carrying out destructive industrial aquaculture, *cannot* be members of the Forum.

2. Types of Organizations

- A. Members of the World Forum are organizations such as:
 - i. Trade unions, associations and federations of co-operatives that are democratically constituted.
 - ii. Aboriginal nations dependent upon the fishery for their livelihood.
- B. There should preferably be only one organization per country.
- C. In cases where there are more than one national organization, organizations seeking membership should be representative of a significant proportion of the constituencies listed above.
- D. Exceptions to the above can be made at the discretion of the Interim Co-ordination Committee, in keeping with objectives of the Forum.

III STRUCTURE

Interim Structure

1. Organizations present at this meeting as delegates and observers who meet the above criteria, and who wish to become members, will be considered interim members
2. The Steering Committee of this Forum will serve as the Interim Co-ordination Committee.
3. The Interim Co-ordination Committee will:
 - i. carry out all the regular duties or tasks of a co-ordinating committee of any international organization;
 - ii. facilitate formation of regional councils;
 - iii. accept new interim members based on the above criteria;
 - iv. draft a constitution, including guidelines for certification of voting and non-voting membership; and
 - v. hold a constituent assembly within three years.
4. The Interim Committee shall have a co-ordinator elected by this General Assembly.

Proposed Future Structure of the World Forum

1. All member organizations will constitute the General Assembly of the World Forum.
2. A Co-ordination Committee will be formed through regional representation. This Committee shall be larger than the present Interim Co-ordination Committee.
3. Regions / Continents
 - i. There shall be more than one representative from each region or continent
 - ii. This representation shall respect the balance of gender
 - iii. If members of a region so wish, they may create a regional World Forum council for co-ordination

and consultation at the regional level. Membership, however, shall be directly in the World Forum, not in the regional council.

IV FUNDING

1. The World Forum self-financing shall be self financing
2. Member organizations shall pay membership dues. Those member organizations desirous of making special additional contributions may do so.
3. The Forum shall accept only those contributions that are consistent with its objectives.

This Charter was adopted at the meeting of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers, held between 16 and 22 November 1997 at New Delhi, India