

## Who gains?

### Fisheries agreements between the ACP countries and the EU rarely take into account the needs of artisanal fishers

There seems to be two fundamental aspects, which feed on the current debate on co-operation in general and on co-operation in the fisheries sector, in particular. These revolve around the following questions:

- Must the ACP (African-Caribbean Pacific) countries continue or refuse to sign fisheries agreements with the Northern countries and particularly with the European Union (EU) countries?
- Can compensations remain the only main resource, which will determine the support given to ACP artisanal fisheries by the EU?

As for the first question, the response is 'maybe', depending on the state of the artisanal fisheries in the country concerned.

In fact, in some countries like Senegal, the artisanal fisheries sector is not only very dynamic but is also seeking to extend the zone which was traditionally reserved for it.

The Senegalese artisanal fisheries sector is extremely important for the country because, among other reasons, it supplies food for the population; it creates employment both at the harvest and post-harvest levels; and it contributes to more than two-thirds of fish landings.

Nowadays, the anarchic relocation of the excess fishing capacity of the Northern countries into the Southern countries is the source of serious problems for artisanal fishers from ACP countries.

In Senegal, for the past four to five years, Collectif National de Pecheurs Artisanaux de Senegal (CNPS) members have been

constantly denouncing the impact of relocation of Northern fleets in Southern countries because they lead to:

- pillage of the fisheries resource;
- destruction by the industrial boats of passive gears belonging to artisanal fishers; and
- loss of human life following collisions between fishing boats and traditional pirogues.

The main reason for these problems is the fact that both the industrial and artisanal fleets are competing for the same stocks of fish.

Today the demand for an extension of their fishing zone is a claim, which is being increasingly articulated by several fishworkers' organizations at the international level. As an example, following its April 1994 Congress, CNPS has demanded an extension of the artisanal fishing zone from six miles to 12 miles. Fishermen give two reasons for this demand: the depletion of the resource forces the fishermen to venture beyond the six-mile limit; and, the allocation of zones needs to be revised to prevent human and material losses.

#### No real attention

Perhaps it is not possible to oppose fisheries agreements but it is imperative to take into account the needs of the artisanal fishery. The 'public servants' of ACP countries talk about the necessity of defending the artisanal fisheries only when it is needed to justify the existence of their EEZ. But, in fact, they do not pay much attention to the artisanal fishery.

Fisheries agreements should only be signed under certain conditions. First of

all, the needs of the artisanal fishery should be carefully assessed in terms of the available resource. Then, the needs of the local industrial fleet should be ascertained.

**F**inally, the agreements should be based only on the excess resource not fished by the artisanal and local industrial fishery.

- All this, of course, demands preliminary actions and monitoring such as:
- an objective evaluation of available resources;
- an assessment of the artisanal fishery's needs;
- a follow-up programme to monitor the artisanal fishery's pressure on the resource;
- decentralized research programmes which should benefit the communities themselves and promote a sustainable development; and
- training programmes for fishworkers' organizations on resource management.

As for the second question raised at the beginning, it is an extremely serious matter that the ACP countries lack imagination when, in order to support their artisanal fishery, they base all their expectations on compensation.

It is also very important to be creative in the search of funding for support to artisanal fisheries in the ACP countries. First of all, it is difficult to believe that scientists paid with money, which comes from fishing agreements can be completely objective in their research on stock assessment.

Secondly, the artisanal fisheries' share of the compensation funds is insignificant. In the case of Senegal, according to the terms of the 1994-96 agreements with the EU, the artisanal sector will receive only one per cent of the compensation amount. For these reasons, the ACP countries, where the artisanal fisheries play a major

role, should put pressure to benefit from the Lome convention funds.

By doing so, the ACP countries will stop using the plea of 'support' to the fishery to sell away their resource. Only then will important projects be conducted with adequate funding. These could be, for example, an objective assessment of the resource or of the needs of the artisanal fishery; an analysis of the impact of artisanal fishery on the resource; tracing the evolution of the artisanal sector through socio-economic surveys; and training programmes for fishing communities.

Only when it is able to implement these funding programmes will the Lome Convention become beneficial. It will then not only give better recognition to organizations but will also stop the marginalization of the artisanal fishery, which is neither considered a focus of development nor as a sector worth concentrating on.

These views were first expressed by Aliou Sall, Executive Secretary of CREDETIP, during the ACP-EU Joint assembly held in Dakar in January 1995