

Greenpeace

Disagree, but let's still collaborate

Though it has some differences with fishworkers' organizations, Greenpeace feels there is much to gain from working together

We agree with much of what James Smith says, particularly concerning the need for fish-workers and environmentalists to work together wherever possible. There are, however, several points which require clarification.

To begin with, Greenpeace is an international organization dedicated to the protection of the environment. It works on a wide range of issues, apart from the issue of large-scale drift-net fishing. Greenpeace campaigns on such issues as the elimination of toxic substances and hazardous waste, nuclear disarmament, deforestation, global climate change, fisheries and the protection of the oceans.

Ocean issues, in particular, is an area of work in which Greenpeace has been involved for many years. One of the more recent and important successes has been the effort to halt the dumping of radioactive and industrial waste at sea.

Greenpeace has campaigned long and hard on these issues through a combination of research, documentation, public awareness and confrontations at sea to draw attention to the harmful effects of such dumping and to pressure governments to prohibit the disposal of these wastes at sea.

As we began the campaign in earnest, in the early 1980s, we felt that it was possible to eventually bring a halt to the disposal of radioactive waste, in part because of the active support, collaboration and involvement of fishermen in the North-east Atlantic and Gulf of Biscay (in particular, those from Galicia, France and Ireland). In November 1993, the London Convention, an international treaty organization governing the disposal of

wastes at sea, agreed to a permanent ban on the disposal of radioactive and industrial wastes in the oceans.

Though Greenpeace was by no means the only organization working on this issue, we were instrumental in pressuring key governments to agree to the ban. A treaty agreement alone, however, without effective compliance and enforcement, will not necessarily mean the end of the dumping of these wastes at sea. We intend to remain vigilant on this issue and expose and confront companies, vessels and nations which violate the ban.

Greenpeace is also engaged in a campaign against large-scale drift-net fishing. We initially began working on this issue in the North Pacific, over ten years ago, together with organizations representing thousands of coastal fishermen along the west coast of North America.

Throughout the 1980s a fleet of some 1000 vessels fished on the high seas of the North Pacific for such species as tuna, salmon, swordfish and squid.

Working together

As this practice spread to other regions of the world's oceans, we began working with organizations as well as governments in many different parts of the world. For example, in the South Pacific we worked with the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen and the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency, amongst others. The culmination of these efforts on the part of Greenpeace and many other organizations, including coastal fish-workers' organizations, was a unanimous resolution, adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1991, calling for a global moratorium on drift-net fishing on the high seas starting in 1993.

Based on the recent report of the Secretary-General of the UN, it is clear that European Union (EU) countries, particularly France and Italy, are alone, amongst nations of the world, in violating the UN moratorium.

And both the French and Italian governments have heavily lobbied the EU to allow their fleets to continue the practice. This poses a direct threat to the global effort to ensure the cessation of high-seas drift-net fishing in all regions of the world's oceans.

Apart from this, the fact is that large-scale drift-net fishing is an indiscriminate and wasteful method of fishing and there are alternatives. Greenpeace is not alone in recognizing the threat posed by the French and Italian drift-net fisheries.

Coastal fishers from the Basque country of the north of Spain have been fighting against the French drift-net fishery in the North-east Atlantic out of legitimate concern over the sustainability of the fish stocks and the threat this new technology poses to their more traditional methods of fishing and their livelihoods. Likewise, coastal fishworkers in the Mediterranean have expressed vehement opposition to the Italian drift-net fishery in the Mediterranean Sea. It is worth mentioning that the French drift-net fishery is not a traditional fishery but, rather, largely a creation of the state.

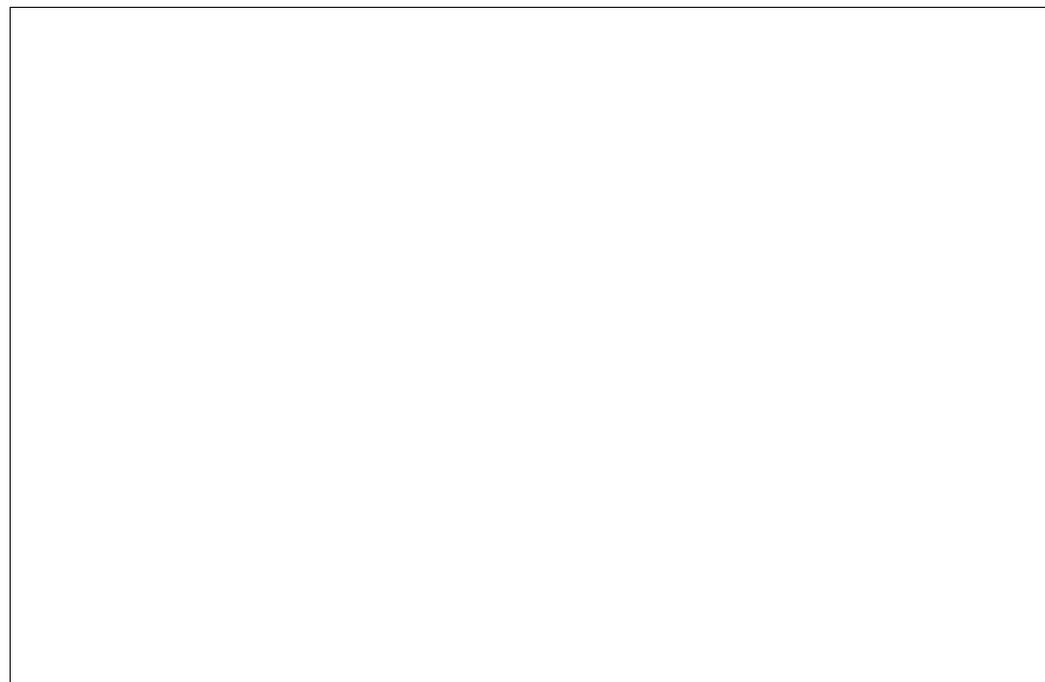
Since the mid-1980s, France has devoted substantial technical and financial resources to reviving the albacore fishery in France, after a 20-year decline (during which time France directed significant investments toward developing tuna fishing in tropical waters). This has been done through promoting and providing incentives to French fishermen for the use of large-scale drift-nets to fish for tuna in the North-east Atlantic.

The government's effort is comparable, in many ways, to the classic pattern of fisheries aid to developing countries. The government programme was designed, in our view, to provide quick returns, economic as well as political, without taking into consideration the longer term social or environmental consequences of developing a drift-net fishery in the region.

If the French government were to devote as much effort and resources to seeking alternatives as it has to promoting and defending drift-net fishing, we believe the fishworkers and the environment would be much better served.

Mutual understanding

We have worked closely with organizations of fishworkers in both Spain and Greece opposing the French and Italian drift-net fishing, based on a mutual interest in sustainable fishing. In addition, we are concerned over the



impact of this method of fishing on other species in the marine environment, not solely the impact on fish of commercial value.

In this regard, James Smith's reference to Greenpeace training the 'ecological weapon' on European fishworkers, enhancing anti-fishworker sentiment in Europe and engaging in blanket condemnation of European fishworkers is somewhat perplexing. We have worked with fishworkers' organizations in Europe (and in other areas of the world) on drift-net fishing, as well as a range of other issues of mutual concern.

Recently, for example, we have been working with the largest union in Denmark, SID, as well as coastal fishworkers' organizations in Belgium, on marine pollution issues, in preparation for the North Sea Ministers Conference in 1995.

James Smith also contends that Greenpeace's support for the participation of fishworkers' organizations in resource management is limited to indigenous peoples and some other traditional fishermen from the South.

Greenpeace has, at the UN and elsewhere, consistently advocated for the right of fishworkers and other interested NGOs, both in the North and the South, to participate in decision-making with respect to fisheries management and development.

However, this should not imply that we will always be in agreement with the positions taken by fishworkers' or other organizations involved in fisheries management decisions.

But, to the extent the process can be made participatory; we have much to gain from working together on areas of common interest. As regards CNPS, we hope that our work in helping publicize CNPS' concerns and demands internationally, both individually and as a member of the CFFA, has proved beneficial to CNPS.

Certainly, the recent involvement of CNPS in the final negotiations over the new agreement between the EU and Senegal appears to be an important step toward recognizing the right of artisanal fishworkers to participate in these negotiations. Although we believe that Greenpeace support has been of assistance to CNPS, the extent to which Greenpeace's support is useful is ultimately a matter for CNPS to decide.

James Smith does raise a number of significant points. We agree with his statements that it is important for fishworkers and environmentalists to find ways of working together.

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Certainly, there are many areas where the interests of fishworkers' and environmental organizations coincide. This clearly emerged from the discussions at the ICSF Cebu Conference, as reflected in the Final Conference Statement.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the interests of fishworkers and environmentalists may or will not always be the same. This is all the more obvious when one considers the fact that, just as fishworker's organizations do not agree with each other and, in fact, may take opposing views on some issues, the same holds true of environmental organizations.

Greenpeace's framework

What is needed is a clear understanding of the various positions advocated by organizations of fishworkers, environmentalists and others. The framework for Greenpeace's approach to fisheries, as outlined in the positions we have put forward at the UN Conference on Straddling Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, contains the following elements:

- stringent conservation standards and measures must be applied to fisheries to ensure sustainability;
- significant reductions in large-scale fishing capacity;

- major reductions in by-catch, waste and discards and the promotion of selective fishing gear and practices;
- the protection of the marine environment from the adverse impacts of non-fishing activities (for example, marine pollution, habitat degradation) as integral to fisheries conservation;
- a precautionary and ecosystem approach to fisheries management, involving consideration of the impact of fishing on other species in the marine environment, not solely those targeted for commercial exploitation;
- effective mechanisms for the monitoring, control and surveillance of the vessels fishing on the high seas and distant-water fishing within EEZs;
- commitments by all states to adopt and implement strengthened conservation standards within the EEZs;
- effective mechanisms for transparency and public participation, including the participation of fishworkers' organizations, in fisheries management and decision-making processes at the national and international levels;
- respect for the rights and special interests of small-scale, artisanal, indigenous and women fish-workers and communities dependent on fisheries for food and livelihood.

From Greenpeace's perspective, the increasingly large-scale and industrial nature of fishing and fisheries development and the relentless advances in the sophistication of fishing technology, as well as the absence of any real effort to assess the ecological or social impacts, are amongst the major problems facing fisheries today. The issue of large-scale drift-net fishing is central to the issue of technology in fisheries and particularly

relevant to ICSF members in the light of the discussions at Cebu and the ICSF call for a ban on bottom trawling in tropical waters. This and many other issues related to technology, the environment and transnational linkages in fisheries were subjects of discussion at Cebu and we look forward to ongoing consideration of these issues by ICSF as outlined in the Cebu Conference Statement.

We welcome dialogue with fishworkers' organizations. We recognize that, in many areas of the world, coastal fishworkers are at the forefront of the struggle against pollution and degradation of marine and coastal areas and are working to secure fisheries conservation and the future of their livelihoods.

We have much in common on these issues and look forward to working together, as much as we are able, on issues of mutual concern. We have much to learn from consultation and dialogue with fishworkers.

At the same time, we hope that fish-workers are willing to recognize the concerns of Greenpeace and other environmental organizations regarding fisheries and the health of the oceans.

Greenpeace places enormous value on the words of John Kurien, 'collaboration' with ICSF. We have great respect for ICSF and look forward to continuing to work together in the future. Likewise, we respect the work of CCFD and look forward to ongoing discussions with James Smith and other members of ICSF.

This statement has been prepared by Matthew Gianni, Mike Hagler, Helene Bours, Cliff Curtis, Assumpta Gual, Juan Gatos Cardenas and Traci Romine on behalf of the Greenpeace international Fisheries Campaign

Editors Note: SAMUDRA would like to take this debate forward. Readers are requested to send in their views to ICSF's Madras office.