

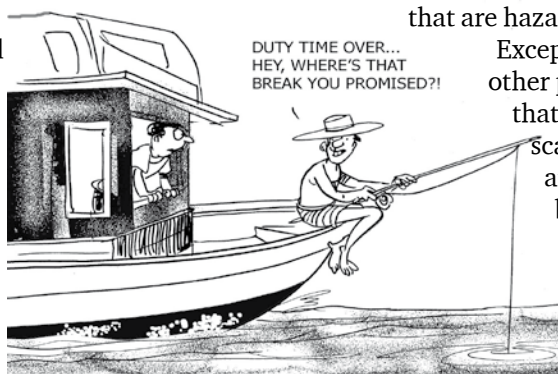
A Useful Toolkit

The Work in Fishing Convention, 2007, aims to better working and living conditions for millions in the fishing sector

Thursday, 14 June 2007, will go down in history as a particularly significant day for fishers and fishworkers all over the world. That was the day the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007, which seeks to guarantee innovative new labour standards to improve the conditions for millions of men and women working in the fishing sector worldwide.

Adopted in the year of the silver jubilee of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Fishing Convention is the first ILO instrument in fishing since the adoption of the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone regime by coastal States in the 1970s. This time around, unlike at the 93rd Session of the ILC in 2005, more countries, including China, which accounts for the largest share of fishing capacity and the largest number of fishers in the world, voted for the adoption of the Convention (see report on page 42).


The Convention has a three-tier structure. First, all provisions of the Convention, upon its ratification, would apply to fishing vessels above 24 m in length, and fishers working on board such vessels. Second, many of the provisions would apply to the majority of commercial fishing vessels and fishers working on them, regardless of size of the vessel. Third, some of the prescriptive provisions would apply to fishing vessels below 24 m over an unspecified period of time. The latter tier, presumably, applies to industrial fishing operations employing vessels below 24 m.



On the matter of compliance with the requirements of the Convention, the flag States are required to undertake inspections, reporting, monitoring, complaint procedures, appropriate penalties and corrective measures. There are further port-State provisions, albeit weak, to report to the flag State, about non-confirmation to the requirements of the Convention by a fishing vessel that calls at its port, and even to take measures to rectify any conditions on board such a vessel that are hazardous to safety or health.

Except for minimum age, the other provisions of the Convention that would apply to the small-scale and artisanal subsector are non-prescriptive; it has been left to the ILO member countries to adopt laws, regulations or other measures to implement them. It is thus now

important to press for campaigns at the national level to identify, through a consultative process, categories of fishers and fishing vessels that should be included within the scope of the Convention, and to ensure its maximum coverage. In particular, countries with large fisher populations and fishing fleets, such as China, India and Vietnam, which voted for its adoption, should ratify and implement its provisions at the earliest.

The Work in Fishing Convention, 2007, is just a toolkit. The ball is now in the court of national governments. They should consult all relevant stakeholders, especially organizations representing fishworkers, and use the Convention to develop effective measures to protect the working and living conditions of fishers, both in large- and small-scale fishing. 

New look, new beginnings

With this issue, *SAMUDRA Report* adorns new garb in the form of a bolder and more contemporary look. This is the first major design overhaul in almost 15 years, and, while the redesign brief was to impart a fresh vitality and energy to the journal, we have tried to maintain continuity with change. The fonts, graphics and other design elements have been chosen to make the reading experience more comfortable and enjoyable. Yet the makeover has not sacrificed sections and features that have been longstanding favourites with readers. Apart from a revamped

back-of-the-book section that contains short news items and tidbits, Web flagposts have been used liberally to point readers to additional information resources on the Internet. And, as the new tagline points out, our focus remains on "Fisheries, Communities, Livelihoods".

The redesign was developed by Design Difference in collaboration with the *SAMUDRA* Team. We hope you like the new version and we welcome your comments and suggestions. Please email us at icsf@icsf.net. 