

...Our wet Planet

The United Nations has convoked an Earth Summit to determine the present state and future condition of the planet's environment, the basic living space for all of us. Innumerable actions have been undertaken to prepare for this conference by official agencies of the United Nations system, governments and civil society, especially non-governmental organizations representing all kinds of activities and tendencies.

The road to Rio '92 has been long and difficult. We still have no certitude about what will come of this conference, since participating countries have opposing interests and action is often blocked by diplomatic details incomprehensible for scientists, social leaders and citizens looking for clear decisions regarding problems of pollution, climatic changes, protection of species and agreements between countries to provide the financial means needed to launch global and pinpointed actions to defend an already seriously endangered environment.

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers has done its bit for this process by gathering the concerns of fishermen and fishworkers around the world, expressed in conventions, seminars and campaigns over the last eight years, and summarized in the Charter of Basic Rights of the Fishworkers of the World, spelling out the rights to a clean environment for the preservation of resources and just social and human treatment on the part of authorities and society as a whole.

The international movement of fishermen and fishworkers has consolidated its bases. In many countries its organizations have achieved encouraging results. Efforts are slowly accumulating, and on coasts around the world new groups are rising up to continue the struggle for their legitimate rights to a clean, protected coastal area reserved for fishing and aquaculture, participation in decision-making bodies, the active participation of women in fishery activities and their organizations, access to resources and to the benefits of modernization, especially social and job security, technical and financial support, and respect for their customs and traditional systems for managing and protecting resources and the environment.

This double issue of SAMUDRA is a contribution to the Earth Summit, to inform government representatives and the general public about the efforts being made by fishworkers around the world to be recognized as persons, have their rights respected and be accepted as environmental workers, human beacons watching over seashores, rivers and lakes, protecting water to preserve life.

This contribution is made in the hope that the efforts of national and regional organizations lead to the creation of a representative international organization of fishworkers, capable of making its voice heard in international forums to support emerging groups in their efforts to conquer new professional, social and economic spaces, a task which the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers has made its own. □

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