

Small in Scale, Large in Scope

The forthcoming Ocean Conference should focus on the Sustainable Development Goals targets to ensure access to marine resources and markets for small-scale fishers

During the preparatory meeting for the Ocean Conference in February 2017 at the UN Headquarters, New York, it was observed that the Conference, to be held during 5-9 June 2017, will be the first UN conference to shed light on the importance of oceans and seas for sustainable development.

Under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that began its execution on 1 January 2016, the Ocean Conference is to identify ways and means to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, namely, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Probably, it is a harbinger of conferences to come on other SDGs.

From a small-scale fisheries perspective, the SDG targets include providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets (14 b). Based on the 2014 Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines)—negotiated under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)—this should mean adopting measures, at least, to: (i) restore access for small-scale artisanal fishers and communities to marine-fishery resources and land that they have lost; (ii) establish preferential access to land and fishery resources for fishing, post-harvest and dwelling; (iii) ensure equitable access to land and fishery resources not to be wiped out by competing uses of coastal zones; (iv) provide access to judicial mechanisms to resolve disputes over tenure rights to land and the adjacent sea; (v) provide access to local, national, regional and international markets and trade information so that small-scale fisheries products are well recognized in the market place; and (vi) ensure capacity development to benefit from trade.

FAO is the custodian agency for SDG target 14 b and we would encourage it to develop indicators that are conceptually clear, with established methodology and standards, to assist Member States to generate information towards supplying reliable and timely data for systematic follow-up and progress reviews in relation to target 14 b at the international level. Mapping out coverage of designated artisanal fishing

zones in relation to marine waters under national jurisdiction, for example, can be a robust indicator of how access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine-fishery resources is currently protected under national and subnational legislation.

It is worth emphasizing that in terms of dependence on marine living resources for life and livelihood, small-scale artisanal fishers and their communities are the most significant stakeholders of the coast and ocean space. The Call for Action outcome document of this Conference should recognize this aspect.

National fishworker organizations, in particular, should influence their country delegations to uphold this facet.

While identifying ways and means to support the implementation of SDG 14, guidance should be drawn from international human-rights standards contained in, and principles derived

from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related human-rights instruments. Building on successful partnerships and stimulating innovative new partnerships to advance the implementation of SDG 14 should uphold consultative and participatory processes, and ensure transparency, accountability and social responsibility to integrate and balance the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. There should also be sufficient recognition of indigenous and local knowledge in planning, decisionmaking and implementation, as well as gender-sensitive interventions in governance and conservation, as one delegation pointed out in the preparatory meeting.

Issues of interest to small-scale fishing communities are, in fact, spread over targets related to several other SDGs (see www.icsf.net). The Call for Action should, therefore, not get compartmentalized, but should recognize that the SDGs are integrated and indivisible.

We hope the Ocean Conference and its follow-up processes would lead to bringing about conditions that can enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty eradication, and pave the way to secure the socioeconomic well-being of fishing communities, particularly women, indigenous peoples and the vulnerable and marginalized sections of these communities. **3**

