

## Small fish in Joburg

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) provided fundamental principles and a programme of action for achieving sustainable development. Now, 10 years on, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), to be held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September, is expected to be the Plan of Implementation for the speedy realization of the remaining UNCED goals. Of these, the most important is the eradication of poverty as an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable development.

Following the 2001 Reykjavik Conference on the Ecosystem-based Approach to Fisheries Management, the importance of an ecosystem approach is now recognized. The Draft Plan of Implementation for the WSSD that came out of the Fourth Session at Bali proposes developing an ecosystem approach to the conservation and management of the oceans by 2012—one of the few time-bound commitments that countries have agreed to so far.

Of the top seven fish-producing countries in the world, five are developing countries. Three of them—China, India and Indonesia—have a huge population of nearly one billion people living below the income poverty line of US\$1 per day. The majority of these people live in coastal areas, either participating in fisheries or contributing to activities that often have a negative impact on marine and coastal ecosystems.

Sustainable development of natural resources and poverty eradication are, therefore, matters of paramount concern to the poor in coastal fishing communities. In this context, we support the proposal in the WSSD Draft Plan of Implementation to establish a World Solidarity Fund to eradicate poverty and to promote human and social development. Without international co-operation, it is difficult for many developing countries, ravaged by, among other things, poor commodity prices in world markets, to move towards sustainable development.

In many poor countries of Asia and Africa, displacement of people as a result of development initiatives and other causes has led to migrations of peasants, agricultural labourers and forest dwellers into coastal fisheries. Such migrations often make it doubly difficult for the poor in fishing communities to eke out a decent living from fishing activities. In this context, we support tenure arrangements that recognize and protect indigenous and common-property resource management systems in the Draft Plan of Implementation. This should also include appropriate arrangements for both fishing and farming communities.

Providing access to fisheries resources for people living in poverty should be in consultation with those fishing communities that already enjoy access to the same resources, to make sure that there is enough fish for all. Fisheries management instruments, including institutional reforms to introduce limited-access regimes and input control measures, should precede such initiatives. Here again, international co-operation is essential to achieve such goals.

Most importantly, the WSSD should recognize and acknowledge the fact that in poor, labour-surplus fishing economies, selective artisanal and small-scale fisheries are the vehicles for poverty eradication and sustainable development. It should recognize that the small-scale model in fisheries has the best ability to accommodate the largest number of people per unit of capital, and that it has, simultaneously, the capacity to be responsible for both fisheries resources and aquatic ecosystems. From a socioecological point of view, artisanal and small-scale fisheries make better sense. That fact should be better recognized in the WSSD's Plan of Implementation.