

FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Thirty-Second Session

Agenda Item 9.1

Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Outcome of and follow up to the Global Conference on Inland Fisheries

Statement

**World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF),
World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), International Collective in
Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and International Planning Committee for
Food Sovereignty, 13 July 2016**

1. Inland small-scale fisheries are a source of employment, income and food security for millions of men and women fishers, fishworkers and indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, both in developed and developing countries. This fact is often overlooked in the dialogue on marine fisheries. Inland fisheries often have cultural significance in the fishery traditions of indigenous peoples and traditional inland fishing communities.
2. The legal and policy space accorded to inland fisheries in the context of freshwater resources is often minimal and the consumptive use of water resources is typically given disproportional priority over non-consumptive uses such as fisheries.
3. Equitable and reasonable utilization of water resources is essential to protect the life and livelihoods of inland fishing communities and indigenous peoples, to conserve aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity on which we all depend, but especially to conserve those small indigenous freshwater species such as *dagaa* and *mola* that provide essential nutrients to the poor, particularly rural women and children in Africa and Asia.
4. We urge FAO member countries and the Committee on Fisheries to recognize this importance and vigorously champion equitable allocation of freshwater resources and riparian areas to secure sustainable small-scale inland fisheries in the context of food security, poverty eradication, livelihood protection and social justice, including gender justice.
5. We further urge FAO member countries to achieve this by protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of access and control of inland

fishing communities using the twin frameworks of the SSF Guidelines and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT).

6. We strongly support endorsement of the proposed ten steps¹to responsible inland fisheries for future activities related to food security, livelihood protection and poverty alleviation. These steps should also provide for livelihood support to riparian and inland fishing communities and include them in decision making. The traditional knowledge of inland fishing communities should be acknowledged in policy making and resource management.

7. In relation to step 6, viz., improve governance, especially for shared waterbodies, we would like to draw the Committee's attention to a regional civil society workshop: **Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Mekong Region: SSF Guidelines in Action, held in Thailand on 30 April to 01 May 2016**, which recognized the importance of improving governance, especially for shared waterbodies.

8. We draw attention of COFI to the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (UNWC), which entered into force in August 2014 and which has the competence to deal with governance of non-consumptive use of international watercourses. We urge you to apply this Convention to manage transboundary inland fishery resources in the work of FAO, particularly in the context of inland fisheries.

9. Mr. Chairperson, we would also request you to adopt an inclusive approach to inland fisheries by extending the proposed ten steps-to inland fishing for diadromous species, as well as to all fisheries including brackishwater fisheries on the landward side of the shoreline.

The statement was made by Ediltrudith Lukanga, WFF

¹The Rome Declaration: Ten Steps to Responsible Inland Fisheries. FAO 2015