

Join Forces for African SSF

The year 2022 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture. In Africa, artisanal fisheries employ more than ten million men and women, and feed more than 200 million Africans. African fisheries, 75 per cent of which are artisanal, are the largest sector of the blue economy in Africa, whether in terms of contribution to food security, employment or household income generation.

In view of the summit of the European Union and African Union, our organizations call on European and African decision makers to join forces to support sustainable artisanal fisheries in Africa, by implementing, through their respective policies and partnerships, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) and the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS).

Our organizations propose that the AU and the EU take concrete action in three priority areas:

1. Our first priority, echoing Sustainable Development Goal 14b, is to ensure exclusive access rights to African coastal, inland and riverine areas for artisanal fisheries, and to empower them to manage them sustainably. In Africa, many countries are willing to establish a zone reserved for artisanal fisheries, but these are often not well demarcated, managed or protected from the incursions of industrial fishing and other marine development. In the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union, preferential access rights are granted to artisanal fisheries in the twelve-mile coastal zone. There is therefore a common desire on the part of Europe and Africa to reserve access to the resources of their coastal, inland and riverine zones for the benefit of sustainable artisanal fishing.

2. Valuing the role of women in African artisanal fisheries is key for the future of fishing communities. Women in artisanal fisheries work and live in very harsh conditions. It is not uncommon to see women fish processors working more than ten hours a day smoking fish, sometimes in the presence of children. Despite this, women are bringing in innovations every day to improve their working conditions and the living conditions of their families. The first thing women need is good quality, affordable fish for them to process. We welcome the efforts of the EU and AU, to promote concerted management of artisanal fisheries, especially small pelagics in West Africa; these must continue.

3. Today, African artisanal fishing communities are concerned about competition from other financially and politically more powerful sectors of the 'blue economy', such as oil and gas exploitation, tourism or the development of polluting coastal industries. For us, the precautionary approach should guide the development of the blue economy. Independent and transparent social and environmental impact assessments must be carried out, with the participation of affected coastal and fishing communities.

In all the actions—whether in resource management, fisheries partnerships and projects—transparent mechanisms to involve fishing communities and civil society is essential. The support given to regional and continental non-State fisheries actors' platforms through the FISH GOV I and FISH GOV II projects is a positive example of such participation. This dialogue with artisanal fisheries must be strengthened, in all aspects of Europe-Africa fisheries relations, from bilateral and multilateral fisheries agreements to project programming or the evaluation of their results.

WE ARE READY TO ENGAGE!

Read the full statement here: <https://caopa.org/en/declaration-au-eu-summit-european-and-african-decision-makers-should-join-forces-to-support-sustainable-artisanal-fisheries-in-africa/15/02/2022/news/3949/>

This statement to leaders at the summit of European Union and the African Union in Brussels (17-18 February, 2022) was made by the African Confederation of Artisanal Maritime and Inland Fisheries Professional Organisations (CAOPA); International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF); AFRIFISH, the continental platform of non-state actors in African fisheries; Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA); Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World); and Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC)