

Committee on Fisheries: Thirty-fifth Session

Agenda Item 6

Supporting Small-scale and Artisanal Fisheries

Statement

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)

We notice that small-scale fisheries (SSF) have an important role in FAO's Blue Transformation Programme Priority Area. Based on the FAO tool box, its guidance document on applying a human rights-based approach, and IPC's people-centred methodology for assessing the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, we encourage FAO Members to develop national plans of action upholding the principles of equity, fairness and justice. These action plans may draw from the action points developed by CSOs in relation to IYAFA 2022. We also support the call from FAO and IPC to organize SSF summit, similar to the one organized in Rome prior to this COFI, particularly to develop regional plans of action for the SSF.

It is crucial that all initiatives in support of SSF promote meaningful participation of fishers, fishworkers (both men and women) and Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in decision-making processes related to fisheries development and management, and biodiversity conservation. It is pertinent to enhance legal spaces for the operation of unions, associations and cooperatives of fishers, fishworkers, fishing communities, and IPs at national and subnational levels.

To complement State efforts, innovative approaches are needed to create a mindset to broaden the scope of these organizations to undertake new tasks such as fisheries management, including co-management, recognition of a diversity of governance models for protected areas, safety in fishing operations and social protection, also within the framework of gender equity. FAO may develop guidance documents to support these organizations, and to assist in their training and capacity-building needs.

While welcoming the salient findings of the Illuminating Hidden Harvest (IHH) study, we request that it shines a light on the respective shares of different gear groups under SSF,

especially small-scale trawl and purse seine catches in total fish production. It is important to know the range of fishing vessels that is reported as SSF vessels. A clearer understanding of the structure of small-scale fishing fleet can assist in valorising equitable, sustainable and selective small-scale fisheries.