



## **IPC statement in response to Agenda Item 7 - The role of fisheries and aquaculture in food security and nutrition**

Esteemed members of the Governmental Delegations,  
Dear COFI observers,

We, the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP), the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) and La Via Campesina (LVC), members of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), recognize small-scale fishers as the mainstay of food security and livelihoods, particularly in developing countries, where their catch provides essential protein and nutrients to millions of people.

Despite their critical role, the promotion of “blue” agendas (e.g. blue economy, blue growth) have led to the invasion of traditional fishing grounds, the dispossession of small-scale fishers and indigenous peoples’ ancestral territories under the guise of conservation (Marine Protected Areas), massive-investments in aquaculture, expanding ports for global trade, and unprecedented sound blasting and drilling for oil and gas.

Territory grabbing, overfishing and depletion of marine stocks due to a shift towards export-oriented fisheries, combined with the threats of climate change, has severely impacted the food security, nutrition, and human rights of small-scale fishers and indigenous peoples, particularly their right to food and nutrition. Despite being crucial in the fight against hunger, small-scale fishers continue to be marginalized and food-insecure.

Additionally, FAO’s vision of Blue Transformation emphasizes aquaculture as a solution to food security and declining fish stocks. This approach treats fish as a commodity rather than a common resource, potentially consolidating investment in industrial aquaculture and further marginalizing small-scale fishers.

We demand that any discussion around food security and nutrition at COFI prioritize the needs of small-scale fishing and indigenous communities, who are most marginalized and whose right to food and nutrition is threatened. Governments must protect these communities from dispossession, poverty, food insecurity, and cultural erosion. Preserving their knowledge and skills is critical to safeguarding their food sovereignty and ensuring equitable access to vital food resources.

Indigenous communities and small-scale fishers are indispensable stewards of sustainable resource management and food production, possessing invaluable traditional knowledge. Governments must unequivocally recognize and support these communities’ knowledge systems, safeguarding their human rights and ensuring equitable access to resources. Governments must genuinely listen to their needs and aspirations and work with them to nourish the world without compromising their human rights.

As we mark the 10th Anniversary of the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, we strongly affirm the indispensable role of small scale fishers in combatting poverty, fortifying food security, and

advancing the sustainable utilization of marine and inland waters. These guidelines uphold the human rights of SSF and Indigenous Peoples, underscore the viability and accessibility of small-scale fishing practices, and highlight the pivotal role of indigenous knowledge in fostering sustainable development