

Our small-scale fishery guidelines: Taking the next steps

By Naseeh Jaffer

On Wednesday 13 July 2016, small-scale fisher organisations scored a key victory in the struggle for sustainable livelihoods for fishers globally, when the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the United Nations (UN) unanimously adopted the Global Strategic Framework (GSF), the first time in history that the COFI was able to adopt a decision on small-scale fisheries without a single delegate raising a word of dissent.

The 32nd session of the World Committee on Fisheries (COFI) took place from July 11-15 this year, in Rome.



Pakistani fisherfolk on World Fisheries Day

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On November 21, 2016 the World Forum of Fisher People entered our 19th year of existence of fighting for the human rights of the world's small-scale fishing communities. So, with this newsletter we want our members, allies and supporters to get ready for a new decade to take our struggle to greater heights.

During the last few years we have made many advances against strong odds. The challenges we faced included:

1 Ongoing ocean grabbing and privatisation of our access to marine and inland water resources;

- 2 continued lack of recognition of women's and rights in the fishery;
- 3 continued reluctance to recognise the human rights of people in Indigenous, customary and traditional fishing communities;
- 4 increased blockages to access local and national markets;
- 5 lack and tardiness to support the development of the small-scale fisheries sector.

We have maintained good levels of organisation at national levels to sustain our struggle. Importantly we have achieved the adoption of the International small-

scale fishery guidelines at the Committee of Fisheries at the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. Likewise, the adoption of the Tenure Guidelines at the World Committee on Food Security provides us with more tools that we can use to take our cause forward.

Collectively we need to find ways to use these to help bring transformation in our sector that will lead to our protection and advancement.

In this newsletter, we reflect on some of these and some of the bigger challenges that lie ahead.

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The COFI meets every two years and this was the first meeting since the International Guidelines on Small-scale Fisheries (fishery guidelines) were adopted in 2014. It was the ideal moment to officially take the next steps towards implementing the fishery guidelines.

The COFI agenda was packed with issues directly relevant to small-scale fisheries. These included fisheries and food security, sustainability in the small-scale fisheries and inland fisheries. So, while the COFI had to address all these issues, and other matters, it was the fishery guidelines that took front seat for all of our civil society representatives. Our team consisted of representatives from WFFP, WFF, ICSF (all of us being part of the International Planning Committee - IPC) and various other organisations who supported us like FIAN and the Transnational Institute. We held an intensive meeting prior to the COFI to prepare our intervention and how we were going ensure the best outcome for small-scale fishers worldwide.

Reports and contributions to the plenary sessions of COFI noted that the fishery guidelines make provisions for the Global Assistance Programme (GAP) to facilitate the implementation of the guidelines. But the GAP needed to be given more substance and structure and in this context, the proposal to develop a Global Strategic Framework (GSF) tabled by the FAO was welcomed. The idea of such a GSF was previously discussed within our IPC civil society group and with the Fishery unit within the FAO.



Naseegh Jaffer at COFI, Rome 2016

It was our view that in order to implement the fishery guidelines, an instrument that had a clear programmatic framework and that was supported by an effective operational arm, was needed. Such an instrument could only come into official existence if it was developed within the context of existing rules and procedures of the FAO. This, for us, was the GSF.

Our task was to make sure that governments at COFI understood and supported the idea of the GSF. Our collective delegation embarked on a comprehensive effort to meet with as many government delegations as possible as well as various regional inter-governmental blocks. This lobbying work reached a high point at our side event that

was collectively organised with the FAO. This side event was addressed by the Indonesian Government, WFFP, WFF, ICSF, FIAN and the Too Big To Ignore (TBTI) research group and was attended by many representatives from governments, NGOs and other interest groups.

We now need to work hard to make sure that the GSF takes shape and that small-scale fisher organisations have an active role to play in doing so. This calls for us to engage collectively on the matter and to work closely together with our allies. The actual implementation of the fishery guidelines depends on this.

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The WFFP Coordinating Committee has started a new way of working to help us enter this coming period. These include the formation of working groups on inland fishing, ocean grabbing and agroecology. We believe that this way of working will provide a few platforms for members and allies to help craft a programme of action for our national and global level work. We encourage all member organisations to volunteer to take part in any of these working groups. Please contact the secretariat via email in this regard.

But we also need to improve the internal functioning of the WFFP and build a new

generation of leadership that can take us forward in the long term. For this we need programmes to involve women and young people. We need concrete information sharing platforms of which this newsletter is a start. We will produce a couple more leading up to the next General Assembly in Delhi, November 2017.

To build a stronger more active organisation, we need activists who can show dedication and resilience. We need fighters dedicated to do battle for the human rights in fishing communities. This is why we call on all WFFP members to become actively involved in the struggle.

Importantly, we also need to mobilise the Indigenous communities within our sector. Indigenous communities face a double whammy where their customary rights are violated and their fishing rights are taken away through privatisation. Such an intervention was agreed to at our last General Assembly and we need everybody's help to give effect to it.

Equally, we must encourage younger people in our communities to get involved. The youth are the leaders of the future. We must enable them to step up now.

We have work to do. Let's do it.

The World Fisheries Day will be celebrated by WFFP members world wide



Photo credit: Pakistan FisherFolk Forum

In New Delhi, India, on 21 November 1997, the World Forum of Fisher Peoples was formed and celebrated. Since then, this special date has been recognised and celebrated as a special day – the World Fisheries Day - by small-scale fishing communities gathered in different places around the world. World Fisheries Day has also become recognised as a special day by governments, UN departments including the Food and Agricultural Organisation and many other groups with an interest in inland and marine fisheries.

In September 2016, the Ocean Grabbing working group of the WFFP gathered in Sri Lanka to plan for World Fisheries Day. Supported by the WFFP leadership, it decided to plan a week of action against Ocean Grabbing from 15 to 21 November,

and many members of the global fisher movement have already planned protest campaigns, workshops and meetings.

This forthcoming World Fisheries Day will again be dedicated to the struggle against Ocean, Water and Land Grabbing and to emphasise the importance of the International Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines in the struggle for justice for fishing communities world-wide. As members of the WFFP, tens of thousands of fisher people will take to the streets to celebrate the special day and to advance their struggles for justice.

WFFP has conducted countless of campaigns on World Fisheries Day in the past. These three examples illustrate forms of campaigns:

In 2015, WFFP denounced the 'false solutions' to climate change in a press statement on World Fisheries Day: <http://worldfishers.org/2015/11/20/world-fisheries-day-wffp-denounces-false-solutions-to-climate-change/>

In 2014, the Pakistan Fisher folk Forum convened a week of action against Ocean Grabbing: <http://worldfishers.org/2014/12/11/pffs-week-of-action/>

In 2014, the women of Coastal Links South Africa campaigned for the protection of their livelihoods and to restore their dignity: <http://worldfishers.org/2014/12/11/world-fisheries-day-2014-masifundisecoastal-links-south-africas-national-gender-workshop/>

The defense and protection of small-scale fisheries and fisheries agreements between the European Union and governments in the Global South.



Small-scale and industrial fishing in West Africa

By Patric Fortuno, Apostleship of the Sea, Mauritius.

On September 7-8, 2016, the European Nordic Green Left Alliance - the left wing European Union Parliamentary Group - hosted a conference on "the defense and protection of small scale, artisanal and coastal fishing" at the European Parliament in Brussels.

The conference addressed several aspects of fisheries policies such as the impacts of the international fisheries partnership agreements of the European Union, the

consequences of the European Union Common Fisheries Policy on the coastal communities in the global south, the role of women in fisheries, and workers' rights and safety at sea. Members of the European Parliament as well as representatives of Small Scale Fishers Organisations of Europe and Africa debated on the topics in front of an audience that included fishers from various corners of the continents. The conference was an opportunity for the Members of the European Parliament to have firsthand information on the various problems affecting small scale fishing communities so as to enable them to better defend the cause of

the fisher folks at decision making level. The exchange was fruitful and interesting.

As a member of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples and of Apostleship of the Sea [AOS], Mauritius, I gave an exposé of the impacts of the international fisheries partnership agreements of the European Union on our small-scale fishing communities.

In my intervention I emphasised several challenges we face in Mauritius and in particular that we, as fisher peoples, holds a

wealth of knowledge on small-scale fisheries, accumulated over generations, although we have little or no academic education. This, coupled with lack of strong leadership, leave us in a vulnerable position. Without technical and professional training, we also find it very difficult to access credit and develop our local fishery system. When political decisions are taken without our involvement, we struggle to lift ourselves out of the low social strata we are currently part of.

Impact of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement

In our country, the bilateral fisheries agreement can be summed up as a haven for enormous profit of foreign vessel owners against the everyday struggles of local fishers and the fight to safeguard resources for our survival. Overfishing of certain species like the yellow fin tuna and uncontrolled use of 'floating fish aggregating devices' is a direct threat to the marine resources and our livelihoods.

Foreign fishing vessels are now present in the Indian Ocean because they have depleted fish stocks in their native fishing grounds. But what right do they have to catch our fish and what will happen when our resources are depleted? The answer is known to everybody: They will definitely leave us with an empty ocean.

The profit generated in this very lucrative business is not invested in Mauritius and no

consultation was ever held with us fishers on how to use the Euro 302,500 that our government receives from signing the agreement with the European Union. It is estimated that only 20% of the sum has been devoted for the direct interest of fishers, but to this day we do not see how this money is invested to our benefit.

Given the huge extent of its Exclusive Economic Zone, Mauritius cannot efficiently and effectively exercise a rigorous surveillance on vessels operating in its fishing zone. Cases of malpractice has been reported but with no consequence.

The availability of fish in the coastal areas where our local fishers operate has also been dramatically affected because the fish is caught in mass by the purse seiners before coming close enough to the shores. While this is a direct consequence of the fisheries agreement, the small-scale fishers are now also being constrained by new regulations. Net fishing in the lagoon, a traditional way of fishing, is now being blamed for causing the overfishing and therefore being phased out by the government. Allowing foreign vessels to operate in the Mauritian EEZ, whilst outlawing net fishing, is a gross discrimination against the small-scale fishers.

We can only assume that the decision makers deliberately exclude us from any meaningful participation because of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement.

The way forward

Fishing communities have to develop a strong common voice to penetrate the power structures and become recognised in decision making. Mauritian Fishers have come together with other fisher movements of the Indian Ocean countries and formed a federation to defend and promote their social and economic rights. It is for this reason that we are creating the Federation des Organisation des Pecheurs Artisans de L'Ocean Indien [FPAOI – Federation of Artisanal Fishers of the Indian Ocean].

It is also critical that the Indian Ocean fisher movements become more actively involved in the World Forum of Fisher Peoples. As a member of the global fisher movement, we are in a better position to advance our voices in regional and global decision making bodies, including the African Union and the United Nations.

Through WFFP, we will be able to advance our struggle and empower our fishing communities. Political empowerment and mass mobilisation are key ingredients in this struggle.

On world fisheries day, we will embark on a campaign against the injustices inflicted on our fisher people and for the promotion and implementation of the UN small-scale fishery guidelines.



Small-scale and industrial fishing in West Africa

Transnational Corporations: A threat to peoples' sovereignty and our planet?



Photo credit: Masifundise Coastal Links South Africa

Transnational Corporations, or TNCs, are destructive business entities that operate in many countries, with the sole objective of amassing massive wealth at the expense of poor, marginalised and working class communities globally, and they are responsible for Ocean, Water and Land Grabbing.

Privatisation of fisheries - promoted under the name of Rights Based Fishing and other terms – and activities like sea bed mining, construction of mega dams, corporate shrimp farming, and oil palm plantations are just a few examples of the destructive activities of TNCs.

Their Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are very good at packaging their projects as something that is to the benefit of the broader society, that will lead to job-creation and

economic development, but the reality is that their projects often lead to evictions, loss of livelihoods and the mass destruction of nature and the environment.

TNCs are also notorious for not paying any tax in the countries where they operate. Despite their promises of 'trickle-down' economics, the wealth created simply finds its way to tax havens and the pockets of their shareholders and CEOs, who usually live in rich Western countries.

Neoliberalism and the excessive powers of Transnational Corporations

To understand why TNCs can get away with exploiting people and destroying nature, we have to look at today's dominant political system. Over the past 40 years, neoliberalism has become the dominant

political and economic ideology all over the world.

A few characteristics of this form of capitalism are privatisation (transferring of public property and resources to private owners), deregulation (e.g. less environmental regulation and state interference in business), tax reductions for the elite (allowing companies and the rich to pay less tax), and free trade and investment agreements (strengthening the rights of TNCs and undermining States' regulatory opportunities). Together, these lead to a massive redistribution of wealth from the majority to an elite minority.

According to some, neoliberalism started with the US-supported military coup in Chile. In those days, during the Cold War, Western nations saw it as a necessity to use brutal

force to clamp down on visions that clashed with their capitalist mode of development. With US support, it became possible for Pinochet to eradicate socialist Chile and its elected president, Salvador Allende.

During the 1970's and 1980's, the Western Bloc used military and financial backing to support the rise of capitalist democracies. Institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), also played a key role in this development. The IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980's and 1990's coupled loans with strict austerity conditions, requiring recipient countries in the Global South to privatise state-owned resources and cut down on any state-delivered services such as education and health.

With the transition to the market economy in Russia and China towards the end of the 1990's, neoliberalism had conquered all regions of the world. Since then, we have witnessed our governments signing more and more free trade agreements (more than 2500 agreements have been signed globally), cutting down on basic services, and privatising our natural resources. The reasons for such policy developments obviously do not rest with our governments alone.

TNCs capturing policy spaces

TNCs have various ways to get what they want. They serve on expert groups advising governments. They are well positioned at multi-stakeholder platforms of the inter-

governmental institutions (including the United Nations bodies), where they hold greater economic and political powers than social movements. They fund the election campaigns of political parties, and spend millions on lobbying politicians and state officials. They own media. They sue – or threaten to sue – states for billions, if governments plan to implement any policies that run counter to their economic interests. If necessary, for the protection of their investments (e.g. construction of dams), they even partner with militarised private security companies.

Together with this silent power-grab, over the past two decades we have witnessed TNCs succeeding in presenting themselves as good corporate citizens not to be regulated by states, but to be partnered with, for example, through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). As a result, TNCs are increasingly working hand in hand with states and UN bodies. This has led to a wide acceptance – or manufacturing of consent – that TNCs can and will implement environmental and human rights standards through voluntary Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It has led to the construct of the Global Compact which was brought to life by UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, together with business leaders from the International Chamber of Commerce (including Coca-Cola, Unilever, McDonalds, and Goldman Sachs). The Global Compact was launched at UN headquarters in 2000 in the presence of chief executives (CEOs) and top managers from about 50 TNCs. It is basically a pragmatic approach

based on partnership between government bodies (national and international) and the corporate sector, instead of embarking on strong regulatory frameworks to hold TNCs accountable.

The governance of our environment – including fisheries, coastal lands and water – have as a result been increasingly informed by PPPs and multi-stakeholder platforms. In fisheries, current examples are the Coastal Fisheries Initiative of the Global Environmental Facility, the FAO User Rights project and the bi-annual World Oceans Summits that brings together heads of state, TNCs, Environmental NGOs and financial actors to discuss the future of the oceans.

For more information on privatisation of fisheries, the CFI and User Rights see:

Article: Privatization and Corporate Capture of Global Fisheries Policy: <http://www.righttofoodandnutrition.org/node/94>

WFFP statement against the CFI: http://worldfishers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CFI_Statement.pdf

WFFP article on the User Rights project: <http://worldfishers.org/2015/04/28/human-rights-vs-right-based-fishing-the-ideological-battleground-in-siem-reap/>

The fight against TNCs

It is clear that we witness the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of transnational corporations and a capitalist elite, counting several thousand top chief executive officers of corporations, banks and foundations and close to 1500 billionaires (in USD). But it is also clear that this power depends on the silent acceptance (mostly due to lack of public information) from the majority of the populations of the world.

Without peoples' consent or acceptance, the TNCs will lose their power.

The powers of TNCs ultimately depend on their continued support from our governments. Only as long as governments continue to favor corporations over people will TNCs be capable of holding on to their powers. Reclaiming peoples' power – with the strength of their numbers in unity – is the most important element in the resistance strategy. We must unite to overcome the attempts by governments and TNCs to come into our communities and make promises and buy our people. We must resist these attempts of them coming into our communities to offer benefits for a few individuals at the expense of our communities as a whole. Our sovereignty, as united and autonomous communities with the right to decide for ourselves, is a core principle in this resistance and it cuts across the sectors we work in. As part of the broader society, we have to work in solidarity with the urban poor, farmers, Indigenous Peoples and many more in order to build and strengthen peoples' sover

Profile: Uganda Fisheries and Fish Conservation Association (UFFCA)

By Seremos Kamuturaki

The Uganda Fisheries and Fish Conservation Association (UFFCA) was established in March 1994 as a membership-based, advocacy and development civil society organisation. We operate nationally and work with and among fishing communities living around the shores of Uganda's lakes, including Lake Victoria, Lake Albert, Lake Kyoga, Lake Edward and Lake George. We focus on the strategic needs, aspirations and interests of over 5 million fishers in Uganda including men, women, youth and children from poor and marginalised fishing communities.

In Uganda, we take the lead in; (i) advocating for pro-poor fisheries policies; (ii) mobilising, organising, and building community groups and movements for joint activity, joint struggle and joint campaigns; and (iii) strengthening human rights for fishers and other vulnerable groups engaged in the fisheries sector.

UFFCA's Constituency

Our constituency is solely the fisher people active in the entire value chain of small-scale fisheries. It includes fishers, male fishing labourers, women fish harvesters and fish-workers (artisanal fish processors and traders) and their family members, including their children. These fisher people

all depend on fisheries resources for their livelihoods and food sovereignty. The communities where they live are socially and geographically isolated and therefore marginalised. Typically, the infrastructure development projects aimed at benefiting every citizen unfortunately does not reach them and the general lack of services lock fisher-people into the continuous cycle of poverty.

Threats to Fishing Communities in Uganda

The most serious threats are; (i) overexploitation that threaten fisheries resource sustainability leading to poverty and livelihood insecurity for fishers; and (ii) lack of access to social service provision. The lack of these services puts them at risk of ill health, of missing out on financial services and educational provision, of theft and conflicts and of exclusion from participation in social and political processes.

Proposed solutions for small-scale fisheries in Uganda

We advocate for a human rights-based system, which provides for the clarification and enforcement of tenure rights and access to fisheries resources. Our emphasis on advancing the human rights based approach is embedded within the broader perspective

on fisheries, which includes the provision of social services; health care, education, and community services such as safe drinking water, sanitation, power supply, and accessible roads.

Strategies applied by UFFCA

- Popular Education and Awareness Raising Campaigns on fishers' rights;
- Community Training in Policy Monitoring and Advocacy skills;
- Capability Building, Human Rights-based Policy Advocacy and Influencing;
- Community Action Research, Documentation and Engagement of Duty Bearers; and
- Case Study-based Independent Policy Research and Analysis of selected Policy problems.

UFFCA's Plans for the forthcoming World Fisheries Day on 21st November 2016

As the Uganda's fisheries sector is currently undergoing a number of institutional and legal reforms, there is need for the involvement of fishers in making their contribution to the policy making process so that their access to the resource is improved and strengthened. UFFCA has made plans to mobilise nationally and launch a national campaign on the theme, "Equitable Access to the Resources for all Fisher people".



Building boats on Lake Victoria, Uganda



Photo credit: Alexis Fossi - www.pescart.eu

The Indigenous Peoples' struggle: A WFFP perspective

By Sherry Pictou, Bear River First Nation, Canada

'The struggles of Indigenous small-scale fisher peoples are central to the global movement of small-scale fisheries. Whether for food, ceremony, livelihood or commercial enterprise, Indigenous fisheries share the challenges and issues of all small-scale fisheries. In addition, they [the Indigenous Fishers] face all the threats faced by Indigenous Peoples around the world: loss of customary tenure, colonisation, ethnocide, and deracination and, in some cases, genocide.' (Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Center International Learning Circle Project).

The struggle for Indigenous small-scale fishery livelihoods is closely linked to other

small-scale fisheries around the world. This struggle undertakes a resurgence of land and water based practices rooted in ancestral world-views where by all of life is inter-dependent and sustainable. The current wave of privatisation and over exploitation of Land, Water and other natural resources for profit and greed precludes the rights of Indigenous small-scale fisheries based on these interrelated cultures and practices.

With the help of the Indigenous SSF Learning Circle, and the guidance of Indigenous representation on the WFFP Coordinating Committee, WFFP continues to work towards representing Indigenous SSF Issues at international bodies like the recent COP21 on Climate Change. Further, in addition to ensuring that there is Indigenous participation in the implementation of the International Guidelines on Securing Small-scale Fisheries, it is critical to ensure that

Indigenous and non-indigenous small-scale fishers are not disempowered and further dispossessed by neoliberal approaches at the International level.

Therefore, it is equally important that complementary international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples' and the UN Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure, continues to be operationalised in the global struggle of Indigenous and other small-scale fishing communities. As a way to ensure these and other Indigenous small-scale fishery issues continue to be represented, a permanent seat on the WFFP coordinating committee has been put forward for the next General Assembly of the WFFP (GA7) to be held in Delhi, November 2017.

¹ Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples <http://www.unpo.org/article.php?id=105>



Photo credit: Alexis Fossi - www.pescart.eu

Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia: Our struggle against resource grabbing in Indonesia

Land, resource and sea grabbing in the form of the privatisation of coastal resources and small islands in Indonesia have become a major stumbling block for small-scale fishers, that they felt the need to oppose it, giving birth to the powerful fishers' organisation, Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia (KNTI), in 2009, which today represents more than 100 000 fishers all over Indonesia.

At first, KNTI was established to oppose Law No. 27 of 2007 for the Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands, which they challenged in the Constitutional Court, with the Court revoking the article of that Law in 2011, a major victory for fishers in Indonesia and KNTI.

However, privatisation remains a threat to fishers, and new ways are continuously looked at to privatise natural resources, making ocean grabbing increasingly pronounced. One of the new threats is artificial land/reclamation projects where around 40 places are being claimed for 'development' purposes. These all pose a severe threat to small-scale fisher folks who risk evictions and loss of access to landing sites and fishing grounds. It is therefore necessary for us to use the human rights-based approach for the protection of fishers and fish workers, including economic, social

and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights in the struggle to protect the livelihoods of fisher folk in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, small-scale fisheries dominate up to 88% of the overall fisheries industry, with an estimated 2.7 million fisher folks and small-scale fisheries providing up to 80% of the domestic fish consumption.

Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia (KNTI / Indonesia Traditional Fisherfolk Union) was established in 2009, when 'The World Ocean Conference' was held in Manado, North Sulawesi. The formation of KNTI was facilitated by various environmental civil society organisations (CSO's) such as WALHI (Friends of the Earth Indonesia), JATAM (Anti Mining Advocacy Network), and Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity for Human Rights), and traditional fisher folks representatives from all over Indonesia. As a leader organisation in the struggles of small-scale fisher folks, KNTI has grown to have 22 community organisers and its membership reached about 100,000 fisher folk, men and women all over the Indonesian archipelago.

World Fisheries Day, 2016

On World Fisheries Day, November 21, 2016, KNTI will hold a Mass Rally at the Dutch embassy in Jakarta, to protest against the Dutch government giving financial and technical support to two Dutch companies, Boskalis and Van Oord who are busy with dredging and reclamation projects in Indonesia.

This is part of KNTI's ongoing advocacy campaigns which centers around the Jakarta Bay Reclamation Project aimed at constructing a series of artificial islands. One of these islands (the 'G Island') is intertwined with dredging and reclamation by the two Dutch contractors: Boskalis and Van Oord. These Dutch corporations got export credit insurance at a value of 200million Euros from the Dutch government. The Dutch government also supports the development of the National Capital Integrated Coastal Development Project (known as Garuda Project) in Jakarta Bay, by providing financing and technical support for the development of a master plan and by facilitating contracts for these corporations. Fishers in Indonesia are against these projects as it will severely impact their livelihoods.



Reclamation kills fisherfolks

A Human Rights Declaration for fisher peoples

By Natalia Laino

In 2010, the United Nations Human Rights Council took the decision to negotiate a Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas, and an open-ended working group was established under the Human Rights Council to negotiate this declaration. The declaration is still being negotiated and Natalia Laino and Jorge Varela were nominated by the Coordinating Committee to represent WFFP in the process.

The Declaration is a very significant document for all those who work as farmers and fisher peoples, Indigenous Peoples, nomadic peoples, shepherds, rural workers and landless people. It provides historical impetus to fill a legislative gap in the Human Rights of peasants and rural fishing peoples, nomadic peoples, shepherds, rural workers and indigenous peoples.

The decision by the UN Human Rights Council to negotiate the declaration did

not come out of the blue. It was a process initiated by La Via Campesina with support from FIAN, CETIM and others some ten years ago and in 2008 it led to the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants – Women and Men. This La Via Campesina declaration also informed the first draft of the declaration that is currently negotiated by the Human Rights Council.

At the third session of the open-ended working group held in Geneva on 17 to 20 May 2016, Jorge Varela and Natalia Laino represented the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and provided inputs to ensure that small-scale fishing communities are accommodated in the text (the draft declaration). Together with allies - including La Via Campesina, FIAN and CETIM – we emphasised the need to work in solidarity and towards a common goal:

At this session of the working group, we emphasised that the declaration should extend our universal rights by filling existing normative gaps in protection. It

should be forward looking, to deal with emerging gaps and thus end discriminatory practices against us.

We therefore called on States to unite in order to recognize and further guarantee the realisation of the rights of peoples covered by the declaration, including fisher peoples. All states and involved UN agencies need to keep on working on how to best promote and protect small and medium food producers and rural populations.

We entered the meeting with a joint statement, emphasising that we will play our part in the process and take up our responsibilities. We committed to engage in the process and prepare for the 36th session of the UN Human Rights Council in 2017. Click here to read the joint statement signed by WFFP or find the statement on www.viacampesina.org



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