



Food and Agriculture
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Joining forces in the fisheries sector

Promoting safety, decent work and
the fight against illegal, unreported and
unregulated (IUU) fishing

Outcomes of the Gulf of Guinea Regional Technical Seminar
Accra, Ghana, 8-11 October 2019

Why a series of regional technical seminars?

The fisheries sector continues to display alarming fatality rates and generally poor working and living conditions, including severe violations to human and labour rights. Safety and working conditions do not happen in isolation and are extremely interlinked with decisions on fisheries management and on the status and health of fisheries resources. In addition, the international community has long recognized that illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is often associated with poor safety conditions and violations to human and labour rights in the fisheries sector.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have developed and adopted a range of international instruments. These instruments provide a strong legal framework for governments to promote responsible fisheries, the safety of fishing vessels and fishers, and decent working conditions in accordance with obligations under international law.

To ensure the effectiveness of these standards, it is key that governments widely ratify and enforce them (FAO, 2020). To date, unfortunately, the 2012 IMO Cape Town Agreement, on safety of fishing vessels is not yet into force, due to insufficient number of ratifications.



To augment and amplify the effort towards wide ratification of the above instruments the FAO and the Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) started a collaborative process to scope regional priorities to address safety, working conditions and IUU fishing, in collaboration with UN partners and with representatives from the sector.

In 2018, the first regional technical seminar took place in Manila for the South-East Asia countries and adopted the Manila Call for Action (FAO, 2019). The second regional seminar was held in May 2019 in Mahé, Seychelles, for the South-West Indian Ocean and participants adopted the Mahé Call for Action (FAO, 2020b).

The seminar and the process to adopt the Call for action

The document at hand presents the outcomes of the third regional technical seminar, held in October 2019, for the West Central Gulf of Guinea countries in Accra, Ghana.

The four-day event was organized with the valuable collaboration of the Fisheries

Commission for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC). The event included participants from FCWC Member States (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo), representatives from NGOs, the fisheries industry, small-scale fisheries sector as well as from workers' movements. Representatives of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) also attended the seminar.

After a first day of information exchange, participants used a participatory method to identify priority areas for the region. Participants identified the following priority areas for their discussions:

- * knowledge deficiencies;
- * decent work deficits;
- * fundamental principles and rights at work;
- * safety at sea;
- * small-scale fisheries.

The text of the Call for Action, dubbed *Accra Call for Action*, follows.



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Accra Call for Action

We, the participants of the Regional Technical Seminar titled “*Joining forces in the fisheries sector: promoting safety, decent work and the fight against IUU fishing*”,

Having exchanged information on human rights abuses within the fisheries sector, including on small-scale fisheries, on the interlinkages between and among illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and fisheries associated and related crimes; and on the interrelationship between and among IUU fishing, abuse of fishers and fish workers’ human rights, decent work deficits and sub-standard safety conditions,

Having taken note of international, regional and national instruments, which have been developed to address labour, safety and human rights protection in the fisheries sector,

Noting the continued cooperation among countries and between international organizations such as International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), United Nations Office for Drugs Crimes (UNODC), and other relevant organizations in addressing labour protection in the fisheries sector,

Understanding the need for (improved) cooperation between national authorities like Ministries and other institutions responsible for Fisheries, Food Security, Ports, Coast Guard, Maritime Safety, Immigration, Labour, Justice, Human Rights, Defence, etc., in ensuring compliance with International Human Rights, Safety and Labour Standards in the fisheries sector and international legal instruments to tackle IUU fishing,

Reiterating the role of business enterprises related to fishery and employers’ associations to respect human rights and mitigate adverse business impacts on human rights,

Recognizing the role the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), the Apostleship of the Sea (AoS), the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations (IUF), and civil society organizations like the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP), the World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers (WFF), la Confédération Africaine des Organisations de Pêche Artisanale (CAOPA), and the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) like The Pew Charitable Trusts, and national trade unions/workers organizations, fisheries associations play in addressing human rights abuses, IUU fishing, and safety deficiencies,

Taking into account international instruments available for the fight against IUU fishing, human rights abuses, labour rights abuses, poor working conditions and poor safety, such as the ILO Fundamental Conventions¹ and ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, 2009, the 2012 Cape Town Agreement on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Protocol Relating to the 1977 International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels (hereafter 2012 Cape Town Agreement), ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the IMO International Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessels Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F),

Recognising the role of fisheries sector in the global food production system and ensuring food security for the world population, expressed serious concerns on the sustainability of the fisheries sector, affected by environmental degradation of the oceans, pollution, wide spread violations of environmental laws and abuse of human rights;

Identified the following themes in the fisheries sector, related to actions to be taken to address safety, decent work, and the fight against IUU fishing in the region:

- * knowledge deficiencies;
- * decent work deficits;
- * fundamental principles and rights at work;
- * safety at sea;
- * unsustainable fishing;
- * governance;
- * legal framework;
- * transshipment;
- * crime;
- * lack of political will.

Participants discussed in depth the first four themes to formulate actions to be taken, without reducing the importance of other themes, taking gender into account as a considerable cross-cutting theme in the discussions:

Knowledge deficiencies

Participants recognized a significant lack of knowledge and information on the sector, therefore, national fisheries authorities, research centers, and NGOs from the region, working in the fisheries sector are requested to conduct surveys to map and to identify stakeholders and their organizations, like fisheries associations, in the fisheries sector.

Training and capacity building of fishers and fish workers in the fish value chain on labour and human rights by unions, fisheries associations, civil society organizations with the support of international organizations (for example ILO, IMO, FAO).

Capacity building of national enforcement authorities and particularly:

- * labour inspectors on national fisheries laws and regulations, and
- * fisheries inspectors on applicable labour standards in the sector,

with the objective to facilitate cooperation and/or joint inspections in the fishery sector.

Regional fisheries bodies such as the FCWC, are requested to raise awareness of national authorities on labour and safety issues in the fisheries sector and related existing international standards.

The participants requested the FCWC Secretariat to explore the involvement of the sector's workers representatives as legitimate stakeholders in its regional mechanisms.

¹ The eight ILO Fundamental Conventions are: the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).



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Decent work deficits

States and social partners (employers' and workers' organizations within the fisheries sector) should promote and ensure the right of fishers and fish workers to fair and transparent recruitment practices including adequate written contracts and fair wages.

States and vessel owners should ensure access to on-board medical care, sufficient hours of rest, and adequate living conditions, and prevent and address health and safety risks.

States, fish and seafood companies should take measures to provide fishers and fish workers with adequate access to protection from work related illnesses, injuries or death.

States, fish and seafood companies should pay particular attention to women and the children under their care with regards to the effects the working environment might have on their health and wellbeing.

The meeting calls on States to ratify and effectively implement the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (C188) and other instruments relevant to the fishing sector.

Relevant authorities should carry out inspections in accordance to relevant national and

international labour and safety standards and take effective measures to prevent and address any contravention thereof.

Calls upon relevant actors, in the fisheries sector including international and regional organizations, States, trade unions, NGOs and CSOs to cooperate and coordinate to address the decent work deficits in this region through, amongst others, technical cooperation, information sharing and capacity building.

Fundamental principles and rights at work

Noting the importance of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (the FPRW), the meeting further calls on States to respect, ratify, implement and promote the ILO Fundamental Conventions: the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

The participants therefore recognized the special role of the ILO in this respect, and requested ILO to consider assisting in technical cooperation programmes (such as the ILO Strengthened Coordination to Combat Labour Exploitation and Trafficking in Fisheries in Southeast Asia (SEA Fisheries project), or the Tripartite Action for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in the ASEAN Region (ASEAN TRIANGLE project)) to promote social dialogue within the (FCWC-) sub-region on promotion of workers' rights in the fisheries sector.

Fishers and fish workers are encouraged to build and strengthen their organizations and unions, to allow their voices to be heard across the sector and beyond.

States and regional fisheries bodies are called upon to support fishers and fish workers in their efforts to organize and engage in collective bargaining and to participate effectively in the decision making processes.

Participants further recognized that ILO Fundamental Conventions C87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948) and C98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949) are important in this regard.

States and social partners should promote women empowerment through capacity building of women, given the significant (economic) role they play in the sector.

States, in cooperation with fishers' and fish workers' organisations, should reinforce and expand child labour free zones in areas where fishing takes place.

States should strengthen and enforce laws and regulations prohibiting child and forced labour.

States should put in place programmes addressing drivers of child labour in the sector, such as poverty, unsustainable use of natural resources and lack of access to education.

Sensitize all stakeholders, including parents, on child labour including its detrimental effect on children's education, physical and psychological development.

Unions, CSOs, NGOs and States should document and raise awareness on their experiences addressing child labour.

The meeting requested for the organization of a regional meeting in the FCWC area (where relevant stakeholders such as employers, workers and States are represented) to discuss the experiences such as the Torkor model as a way to fight child labour.

States shall respect, protect and promote the rights of all fishers and fish workers, irrespective of their form of employment, to organize, obstacles to the unionization of fishers and fish workers should be identified and addressed.



Safety at sea

States should have in place and enforce safety laws and regulations, through inspections.

States should ratify the 2012 Cape Town Agreement.

States and vessel owners should ensure the presence of appropriate safety equipment on board fishing vessels.

States, with the support of IMO, are requested to train and certify fishers and fish workers on safety at sea (including the use of safety equipment).

States should maintain and improve search and rescue operations at sea.

States and vessel owners should establish vessels monitoring systems and automatic identification systems.

AoS is recognized for its good work (including advocacy) with respect to the mental wellbeing of fishers and fish workers, and is requested to continue efforts in this respect.

States are requested to improve operations and collaboration between enforcement agencies at national and regional level to prevent piracy and related crimes.

States and other relevant stakeholders should conduct a survey in the FCWC region on the status of safety at sea on board fishing vessels, and present results at a regional meeting.

Small-scale fisheries

FAO, CAOPA, FCWC and others are requested to organise regional and national consultations on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) by bringing together relevant stakeholders with a view to set-up a multi-stakeholder working group to develop national plans of action.

States and vessel owners are requested to ensure safety equipment (and training) such as personal flotation devices, communication equipment and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) appropriate



for the SSF sector is present on-board. NGOs are invited to support the sector in this respect.

Relevant authorities are requested to improve inspection and documentation of fishers and canoes at the landing sites within the context of safety standards.

Small-scale fishers and fish workers associations, cooperatives and unions should ensure that their members have adequate training, resources and adhere to safety standards.

Authorities should ensure that appropriate sanctions are in place for fishers operating in contravention to fishing, safety, labour and environmental regulations.

States and other relevant stakeholders are requested to develop projects for innovation of technology of small-scale processors including fish storage facilities, taking into consideration the role of women.

States in consultation with relevant actors, should develop adequate social security (including pension) schemes for small-scale fishers and fish workers. Fisher associations should advocate for such schemes.

States and private sector should work on improving sanitary conditions in the fishery value chain to ensure quality assurance of products, and also reduce health risks for fish workers, fishers and consumers.

Encourage fishers and fish workers in the SSF sector to organize themselves to improve their income level, working and living conditions through collective action.

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