

Acceptance Speech
by
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International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)

On behalf of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), I am honoured and pleased to receive the Margarita Lizárraga Medal Award in recognition of ICSF's role in support of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

ICSF had the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Lizárraga in the process leading to the adoption of the Code in the mid-1990s. Those memorable occasions gave us the chance to witness, first hand, her commitment to promoting responsible fisheries and ensuring the meaningful participation of small-scale fishworkers in the process.

Dr. Lizárraga's association with us, however, goes back before she joined FAO, to the time of the International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters (ICFWS) held in Rome in 1984, parallel to the FAO's World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development.

Ten years later, in June 1994, Dr. Lizárraga traveled to Cebu, Philippines to represent FAO at the ICSF Conference on the theme: *Struggle of Fishworkers: New Concerns for Support*. Her mission was to brief fishworker organizations from all over the world, present at that Conference, about FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and to seek their participation in its implementation. Her sincerity, conviction of purpose and enthusiasm prompted ICSF to engage seriously with the process of popularizing the Code.

The Code has since become an integral tool in much of ICSF's activities, that encompasses, among others, research, training, capacity-building and outreach aimed at facilitating the participation of

fishworkers in decision-making processes affecting their lives. Yet, eight years after the introduction of the Code, the ground reality of the fisheries world leaves no room for complacency. The life of millions of fishworkers and their families in coastal fishing communities continues to be characterized by poverty, social and economic vulnerability, insecure access rights to land and sea resources to which they have traditionally enjoyed access, and lack of alternative employment possibilities, even as the resources that have sustained them are under stress.

This is the challenge before us today. We consider the larger political significance of the award to be recognition of the beliefs that the ICSF espouses — the centrality of fishworkers and the inherent viability and superiority of the small-scale fisheries to achieve the goals of a just, sustainable, participatory and self-reliant process of development. These were also values central to Dr. Lizárraga's larger vision for responsible fisheries management and development.

Dr. Lizárraga is no more in our presence. But the values that she stood for are an enduring and reassuring motivator. They challenge us to stand by our commitment to placing people at the centre of our concerns for responsible fisheries. It is thus with great honour that we accept the Margaret Lizárraga Award Medal and we are grateful to the FAO for bestowing it on ICSF.

Thank you.