



Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management IPC Working Group on Fisheries General Statement

Esteemed members of the Governmental Delegations,

We, the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), La Via Campesina (LVC), and members of the **International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)**, represent **millions of small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples from coastal and inland regions worldwide.**

It is truly an honor to stand before this esteemed gathering today, and we **sincerely thank you** for welcoming our global Committee to the Sub-committee on Fishery Management.

Before all, we, the IPC, **reaffirm our solidarity with our comrades and people in Palestine** and across the globe, where individuals face isolation and violations, denied the basic right to live in dignity. In our pursuit of justice, equity, and solidarity, let's remember those whose struggles often go unnoticed, reaffirming our commitment to a world where every person is acknowledged, and their rights are unequivocally recognized.

Today, we express concern about the **marginal recognition of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries**. It's important to underscore that the essence of this Sub-committee was to allocate a distinct space and paramount importance to the progression of the SSF Guidelines in relation to fishery management, supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries. This holds particular significance today as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the SSF Guidelines.

Small-scale fisheries employ 90% of global fishers, with women making up nearly half of the workforce. However, small scale and artisanal fisheries' **lack of recognition** sharply diverges from the support other industries receive, intensifying challenges from the "blue economy" and increased competition for marine resources, impacting People's Food Sovereignty. The IPC's ongoing people-centered assessment of the SSF Guidelines informs the following demands, backed by global evidence from the past two years¹.

¹<https://www.foodsovereignty.org/resources-fisheries-wg/>



We appreciate the FAO's efforts in strengthening monitoring, control, and surveillance against **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing**. To effectively combat IUU, the active involvement of SSF and Indigenous Peoples, in collaboration with national governments, is imperative. Governments must play a central role in defining and recognizing Small-Scale Fisheries at the national and regional levels.

The very existence of our communities is under threat due to **climate change, environmental destruction and pollution**. Rising water levels and temperatures, drought, decreasing fish stocks, changing fish migratory patterns, floods, and the increased frequency of storms are just some of the impacts of climate change affecting small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples. Development projects, such as converting fertile agriculture fields and mangroves into shrimp farms, or mining in coastal and inland areas, are destroying our natural habitats, and mercury, heavy and pesticides are accumulating in our environments and poisoning our fish and our peoples. Technological fixes, carbon trading schemes, and the 30x30 conservation agenda will not address the core of these problems. We demand to incorporate disaster prevention as an integral component of management plans, extending beyond post-disaster recovery. States must prioritize proactive measures such as early warning systems, risk reduction, and community education to safeguard small-scale fisheries, Fisher Peoples and Indigenous Peoples.

Simultaneously, caution is essential against adopting false climate adaptation and mitigation solutions, such carbon credits, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), and instead take effective measures to restore the legitimate traditional, customary, or Indigenous tenure rights of fishing communities and redistribute such rights where they have been infringed upon.

We are concerned about addressing **biodiversity**, specifically the expansion of conservation efforts, without due consideration for SSF and Indigenous Peoples and the imperative for meaningful participation. We urge for a paradigm shift towards comprehensive biodiversity consideration in fisheries management, emphasizing a holistic perspective that prioritize resilience, cultural diversity, and the overall well-being of both ecosystems and small-scale fisheries communities. States and relevant bodies must actively engage in this transformation to ensure the sustainability of our shared environment and the livelihoods of SSF communities. It is necessary for Governments to support the recognition of the important roles and contributions of Fisher Peoples, Indigenous



Peoples and SSF communities as custodians of biodiversity and as partners in its management, restoration and sustainable use. Any action on biodiversity need to recognize the values and practices and heritage knowledge from SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples.

It is essential to uphold the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, recognizing the gender-specific dimensions of tenure governance. We demand the prioritization of the human rights of - men and women (all gender) in fishery management processes to ensure an inclusive and equitable human rights based approach. **States are urged to allocate resources, enhance institutional capacity and global governance, and establish participatory mechanisms for the implementation of SSF guidelines and National and Regional Plan of Action in collaboration with small-scale fisher communities and Indigenous Peoples.**

Finally, we reiterate our commitment to working closely with Governments and the FAO to implement the SSF Guidelines at the national level while ensuring historical customary over fisher people resources (Fish, Land and Water). We call upon the FAO and the COFI members to continue to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, and reaffirm their commitment to this guidelines by allocating appropriate funds and technical support.