



International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty Working Group on Fisheries

IPC statement in response to Agenda Item 12 Enhancing COFI discussions on fisheries management: Proposal for a new COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management

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), La Via Campesina (LVC), members of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), note with concern the proposal (COFI/2020/10) to continue the consultation process regarding possible options for a new Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management as well as a review of the current COFI process closer to the 35th Session of COFI in 2022.

As the most important global forum for policy debate in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, the role of COFI as the main platform for developing global normative instruments must, indeed, be strengthened. IPC also supports the need to discuss the progress in implementation of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) on a regular basis, to strengthen ocean governance, and to address climate change and food security as cross-cutting issues.

While COFI meetings enjoy the highest participation of both member countries and observers, the Sub-Committees at their meetings, more or less, have half the number of member countries at COFI, and a fraction of COFI observers. It is undebatable that COFI attracts the best participation. Unlike at the Sub-Committees, the attendance at COFI has been demonstrating an increasing trend since 2003. Furthermore, the active attendance at COFI meetings provides an opportunity for civil society organisations (CSO) to be heard by the largest possible number of state and non-state actors.

Small-scale artisanal fisheries issues have a bearing on almost all COFI agenda items, not just fisheries management. Moreover, issues related to the small-scale artisanal fisheries are much broader in scope than what a sub-committee on fisheries management can potentially offer, such as social development and a human rights and tenure rights approach in marine and inland fisheries.

The SSF Guidelines support the recognition and enhancement of the critical role of small-scale fisheries – encompassing all activities along the value chain – towards sustainable development, and the eradication of poverty and hunger, promoting a human rights-based approach. A comprehensive discussion of small-scale fisheries cannot be subsumed in a narrow discussion on fisheries management, as has been proposed.



Considering all of the above, the IPC would urge the Committee that COFI continue as the forum to address strategic and policy issues related to small-scale fisheries, as a stand-alone agenda item. If the current COFI process were to be reviewed, we would like to propose that the rules of participation of COFI be reformed to bring them on par with those of modern United Nations institutions like the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

