



*Confédération Africaine des Organisations  
Professionnelles de la Pêche Artisanale  
African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries  
Professional organizations*

1

On the occasion of the World Women's Day of the 8 March 2014, after two days of discussions,

We, representatives of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Professional Organizations, - CAOPA-,

On behalf of our national professional organizations from Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Morocco, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Cape Verde and Côte d'Ivoire, which welcomed us,

In the name, particularly, of the women from these organizations, and the communities that depend on fishing for their livelihoods,

We urge the Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture of all African countries,

Who will meet from 14 to 18 March 2014 in Uganda, for the second Conference of the African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture, - the CAMFA-

***To take into account our concerns and proposals when they will decide the future of our sector, by voting for the Pan African Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy Reform.***

**We believe that:**

- There are limitations in the legal and regulatory fisheries frameworks in our countries, including in relation to artisanal fisheries, in order to ensure the sustainable management of our fisheries for the benefit of coastal communities and populations;
- Ways need to be found to limit fishing capacity in fisheries where access is currently free for all;
- There are good reasons to suspect that illegal fishing is growing in many African countries and that the difficulties for combating it, both in terms of means and political will, remain huge.
- African artisanal fisheries are increasingly showing their potential, when they are supported adequately, to provide an engine for development that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.
- That the professionals, active in the artisanal fishing sector, and women in particular, are not sufficiently informed, consulted and involved in the decision-making processes that affect them directly, whether at national, regional or Pan-African levels.

**We are concerned by:**

- The growing vulnerability of women in artisanal fishing communities, which does not allow them to fulfill either their role in contributing to food security, through processing and marketing activities, or their responsibilities for the well-being of families and the education of the children;
- If the women and all of our communities are vulnerable, it is because the fish is becoming rarer and more expensive, and the costs of fishing operations are increasing;
- One of the main reasons for this situation, which has been a trend for decades, is the intensification of fishing in many African countries, by vessels flying foreign flags, or vessels of foreign origin reflagged, chartered, or fishing illegally, and the growing export of fish away from our continent, while the needs of African countries in proteins and nutrients from fish are growing, in line with the growth of our population.
- If part of these foreign vessels are fishing in the context of formal agreements, a large number of vessels also fish under opaque conditions, often not complying with the legislation in force in African waters, - including existing legislation for the protection of the artisanal fishing zone -, using highly destructive and unselective methods.
- Foreign vessels are not the only cause of the excessive pressure on African fish stocks. There is also a largely uncontrolled growth of artisanal fisheries in many African countries.
- As soon as the fish becomes less abundant because of overfishing, the tendency of desperate local fishermen in some countries, to maintain the level of catches, is to use gears with very small mesh, or even dynamite.

**We call our Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture in the context of the reform of African fisheries strategy**

***To improve governance for a more transparent and participatory fisheries management***

- By promoting with their respective States the signing of the Aarhus Convention on public access to environmental information;
- By committing to publish regularly information on fishing licenses granted and on the contracts and agreements signed,
- By putting in place transparent and independent licenses allocation committees, which include representatives of the artisanal fishing sector;
- By performing independent audits on the effectiveness of the fisheries administrations;
- By recognizing that the organisations representing democratically the artisanal fishing sector professionals are their privileged interlocutors;
- By developing with these organizations a dynamic partnership, including permanent consultation mechanisms with women and men of the artisanal fisheries sector and civil society, founded on:
  - o the recognition of the capabilities, the knowledge of the small-scale fishing communities to develop resource management and conservation initiatives;
  - o the ability of the State to share power and responsibilities for the management and conservation; to define a policy framework for the management of fisheries; to provide efficient legislation, to ensure its effective application; to provide various types of assistance to communities (means of implementation, scientific knowledge, control means, awareness activities, etc.)
- In particular, the implementation of transparent participatory surveillance schemes at the level of each country, as part of co-management initiatives, should be supported (legal recognition of the professionals involved, incentives, supply of means of communication, exchange visits, setting up of management committees )
- by giving special attention to ensure that women from the communities are represented equally (50%) in decision-making consultations, as well as in the planning and implementation of these decisions;
- by empowering the artisanal fishing communities through integrated management of the marine ecosystems adjacent to their coastal lands, reaching an agreement negotiated between the users (through their organization), and the authority responsible for fisheries, which defines the objectives of management, rights and obligations of both parties, and is duly approved by the competent local authorities;
- by encouraging active civil society groups and the media to denounce certain practices that break regulations and are unethical; in this context, freedom of the press must be total;
- where criminal activities are detected, by imposing penalties and sanctions which are of sufficient severity and are widely circulated in the media.
- by stimulating cooperation between different departments within a State, and between African States for:

- the fight against illegal fishing
- the concerted management of shared resources,
- the improvement and harmonization of legal and regulatory frameworks, in a way that recognizes local co-management initiatives;

***To give priority access to resources for sustainable small-scale fisheries***

- by exclusively providing access to small-scale fishermen to the resources that they have the ability to fish in a sustainable manner;
- by reserving the coastal zone and the continental shelf for small-scale fishery activities: defining clearly the legislation, and protecting it effectively against the incursions of trawlers;
- by acknowledging the artisanal communities access rights in fisheries legislation and in the management of fisheries resources;
- by refusing to privatize and organize a market for access rights to resources, as suggested in the reform strategy, because these systems allow those holding capital to grab the sea's resources which artisanal fishing depends on for their livelihoods, driving our communities to poverty and misery;
- by adopting, at the next FAO Committee on Fisheries, in June 2014, and implementing as soon as possible, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small scale Fisheries, in order to preserve coastal populations livelihoods, to ensure their food security, their economic survival and the preservation of their cultures
- By promoting resource recovery through management and the use of tools like artificial reefs and marine protected areas;
- By promoting the use of new technologies all along the fisheries value chain, for better management and use of the fish resources;
- By fighting against convenience flagging

***To implement the right to food, and ensure the contribution of fisheries to the realization of this right***

- -By encouraging their Governments to sign the universal declaration of human rights, and to translate it, in particular with regard to the right to food, to incorporate this in their constitution and national legislations;
- -by putting in place a pan-African process whereby citizens can appeal to press Governments to respect the right to food and the laws relating to it
- Concerning the promotion of aquaculture, which is an important element proposed in the reform of African fisheries policy strategy to increase fish production, we advocate:
  - o To restrict the development of aquaculture to non-carnivorous species, which are not dependent on fish meal produced from our small pelagics, that must be reserved for direct human consumption;
  - o To promote small scale aquaculture, through the establishment of a national agency for aquaculture development;
  - o To encourage private investment in such sustainable aquaculture through capacity-building, awareness-raising programmes, with financial and technical support, and ensuring, through this agency, that coastal populations are integrated in this dynamic and benefit from it

***We hope that our voices will be heard by our Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and we wish them fruitful debates on the adoption of a strategy of reform for African fisheries that recognizes and protects the rights of our communities to develop sustainable fisheries in Africa.***