

## **BELGIUM:**

### **“Battle for Fish” International Seminar**

In November, 1992, eight European NGOs met with the European Community (EC) to establish a framework for fisheries agreements between EC fishing companies and less developed countries, which would lead to broader perspectives for development. As a result of that meeting, the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CFFA) was created.

On December 1, 1992, CFFA held an International Seminar, in Brussels (Belgium), called The Battle for Fish Conference. Sixty nine countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) participated, all interested in reviewing fishing treaties with Europe. Diplomats of diverse countries, Representatives to the European Parliament, specialist news reporters, representatives of European fishworkers and delegates from a large number of governmental organizations attended the Conference.

The objective of the Conference was to discover the best way to design equitable fishing treaties and to find the way to revise existing agreements.

The arguments put forward by the participants were: respect for marine ecosystems; the conservation of fish resources; sustenance of coastal populations; technological progress for those populations through the development of artisan and industrial fishing, etc. Emphasis was given to the need for financial compensation, adequate to the exploitation of national waters, with mention being made of the threat to European fishworkers and their jobs, arising from the supply of high quality fish by Third World fishworkers.

The delegation from Namibia raised its voice: “We are a country which has recently gained its independence at the cost of sufferings known to all. We wish to end the exploitation of our seas. We, today, and our children tomorrow, have a right to eat. We seek development for our country, specially in terms of fishing rights. What will be left, when everything has been stolen, even our hopes for the future?”

## **ARGENTINA:**

### **Treaty with the European Economic Community**

European experience, specially that of some of the new members of the Community, has been difficult in terms of relations with African countries, for example. The impact of new treaties has been initially negative for fishworkers and for those countries, in general. Although significant financial resources have been in-

The National Collective of Fishworkers of Senegal (CNPS) also spoke: “Artisan fishworkers take 75% of the catch, 15% is taken by the local fishing industry, and only 10% goes to foreign ships. We call for recognition of artisan fishing and seek a portion of the benefits provided for in the ACP agreements, so that artisan fishing can develop as a profession and continue to organize”.

Are European fishworkers and their families really informed with respect to the continued deterioration of their profession, and with respect to the inequality in the precedents set between Europe and ACP countries? Do the people of Korea and Taiwan know that their well-being is often based on the exploitation of the Philippine people? Do Polish families imagine the harsh conditions to which Polish fishing crews are subjected, as they exploit the waters of Latin America? The diversity of perspectives reveals the complexity of the problem.

Among the Conference results was the agreement to review Common Fishing Policy (CFP), which will shape EC management of this issue during the coming 10 years. With considerable reductions in the CE fleet foreseen, significant impact in ACP coastal fisheries is expected. The process of renegotiation (together with the end of term in established treaties) creates an opportunity for improving and implementing more just fishing agreements, with a view to providing more equitable benefits for all parties. Of particular concern to many ACP nations is that their fish stocks will be harvested in a sustainable and productive way, ensuring the full mobilization of their potential to serve as an engine for much needed social and economic development.

The Report of the Conference, produced by CFFA, as well as the expositions and studies presented, are available from the Office of the ICSF Secretariat, in Brussels. ■

involved, CEE ships have taken over artisan fishing grounds in Senegal, for example, destroying fishing skills and triggering social conflict. The treaties have given priority to companies connected with local governing groups and have generated profits at the cost of artisan fishworkers and the countries, as a whole.

Serious conflicts arose in Namibia over the presence of Spanish trolling fleets taking herring. That new country expelled those fleets from its jurisdictional waters, while a new treaty with the CEE has not yet been signed, given that Namibia is seeking to impose severe restrictions.

Europeans claim to be aware of those difficulties and, for that reason, have created so-called "second generation treaties", such as that signed with Argentina at the end of 1992.

The main points of that treaty should be considered by fishworkers throughout the world because it may affect them eventually:

- The treaty will be in effect for 5 years and grants Community access to new fishing opportunities, of great commercial value, and will reduce the idle capacity of the European fleet considerably.
- It allows for catches of up to 250 tons annually of species which are very valuable commercially (including 120 thousand tons of hubbsi herring), conger and other resources.
- Access is given to foreign ships, many of which will fly the flags of member countries, while others will operate in temporary associations, through which they will have access to a third of the total catch quotas for the species mentioned in the treaty.

## INDIA: SIFFS ship yards

In India, a group of ship building workshops associated with the South Indian Federation of Fishworker Societies (SIFFS) has generated an interesting experience. That federation operates in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, with 1070 Kms. of coastline, on which live around 100 thousand fishworkers. Of those, 6,500 are members of SIFFS, in 3 districts, 2 of which are in Kerala (Quilon, Trivandrum), while the other, Kanya Kumari, is in Tamil Nadu. 99% of the fishworkers are Christian, with the remaining 1%, Muslim, which implies great cultural homogeneity, specially in Kerala. The State-organized cooperatives are for owners only and do not function adequately. SIFFS grass-roots communities are registered as 'Village development societies', providing commercialization, savings and credit facilities.

Fish commercialization is carried out through auctions in each grass-roots community of between approximately 50 - 60 persons. One employee holds the auction, under the supervision of a committee. Fishworkers receive an advance on the sale and a receipt. During the day, they go to the office to receive the balance.

- The treaty allows for the permanent transfer of a significant number of Community ships through the creation of joint companies, in which Europeans may hold up to 100% of the capital. That part of the fleet, under the Argentinean flag, will have access to two thirds of total catch quotas.
- In exchange, the European Community will offer commercial concessions in favour of sales in the European market, by way of tariff reductions for fish product imports from Argentina.
- During the five year term of the treaty, the European Community will invest 162.5 million ECUs, European Monetary Units, of which 95.4 million will subsidize the joint ventures, 39.1 will be investments in those companies, and 28 million will go to a scientific programme and specific measures.
- The parties will seek to establish scientific and technological cooperation projects in order to promote the conservation and rational exploitation of resources and balanced development of the industry. Port facilities will be improved and professional and technical formation in the fishing sector will be promoted.

Only the future will demonstrate the impact of these treaties on the fishing economies of countries both in Asia and in Latin America. ■

To generate savings, between 5% and 10% of each member's daily catch is retained in a savings pass book. The money belongs to the fishworkers but is deposited in a bank and does not earn interest. Fishworkers may obtain loans. In each community, there is a 3% commission, a 2% compulsory savings rate and a 10% loan 'repayment rate.

They may apply for loans when fish are scarce, as occurs between January and April. Social security is limited, given that there is no illness insurance and pensions are paid by the Government. In case of accidents at sea, the Government pays 10,000 Rupees.

Each community pays interest to the district federation. SIFFS does not receive donations and is financed by boat construction activities and sales of motors. The SIFFS Boat Research and Production Center has undertaken research into new kinds of vessels constructed of marine plywood, protected by resin applications and fiber glass. 1,500 boats have been built since 1982. Some private concerns have copied the SIFFS model but have not been able to compete with