



IPC statement in response to Agenda Item 6 - Integrated water resources management in fisheries and aquaculture

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 Peoples (WFFP), the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), La Via Campesina (LVC), as members of the Fisheries Group of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), and representing millions of small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples from coastal and inland regions worldwide.

In January 2024, the first session of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management took place virtually. However, despite this milestone and the broad participation in the inaugural session, 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), still have concerns about the limitations of a proposed sub-committee to address the broad scope of issues related to small scale fisheries, including human rights, social development and customary tenure rights.

We firmly believe that to effectively ensure sustainable management of water and fisheries, active engagement from small scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples, in conjunction with national governments, is indispensable. Leveraging their profound understanding of local ecosystems, small-scale fisheries communities and Indigenous Peoples possess invaluable insights that can substantially enrich the monitoring and management of fisheries resources.

We reiterate the need to recognize the intrinsic value of traditional knowledge and practices, and demand their integration into water and fisheries management strategies. Urgent action is also needed to dismantle all institutional barriers that hinder the participation of small-scale fishers in decision-making processes. Acknowledging small scale fisheries and Indigenous Peoples' contribution to sustainable resource use and management, this integration is pivotal in fostering effective and culturally sensitive management approaches.

We urge governments to fulfil their responsibility by establishing a regulatory framework that effectively recognizes and safeguards the rights of small scale fisheries and Indigenous Peoples. This includes implementing stringent control and monitoring measures, enacting clear laws, applying appropriate penalties for infringements, and promoting sustainable fishing practices. Additionally, states should foster interagency cooperation among diverse government sectors, including fisheries, agriculture, environment, and social welfare, to ensure that fisheries management policies are coherent with broader development objectives.