



World Fisheries day Celebration

Declaration of Mahé

We, the African Fishers folks working in the fishery sector and, members of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Professional organizations (CAOPA) in collaboration with the Federation des Pêcheurs Artisans de l'Océan Indien (FPAOI), gathered in Mahé (Seychelles) on November 18th to 21st 2017 on the occasion of the celebration of the World Fisheries Day on the theme: “Implementation of the national and regional policies in favour of the artisanal fisheries“.

- **Whereas the African Union has declared 2016 the African Year of human rights;**
- **Whereas** the Universal Declaration of Human rights adopted by the UN General Assembly on the 10th December 1948 in Paris claiming the fundamental human rights and in equality of women and men rights;
- **Whereas the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights** adopted by the eighteenth Conference of Heads of State and Governments, in June 1981 in Nairobi, Kenya, whereby Member States recognize that the State has the duty to ensure the elimination of discrimination against women and to ensure the women and children rights’ protection;
- **Whereas the Sustainable Development Agenda by 2030 : ‘Transforming our World’**, adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, which aims at achieving human rights for all, equality between the sexes and the empowerment of women and girls;
- **Considering the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Sustainable artisanal fisheries** advocating for responsible fisheries governance and socio-economic sustainability, to the benefit of present and future generations, with a particular focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups and people – such as women, children and the elderly, indigenous peoples and groups in dire situations of food insecurity – therefore advocating a human rights-based approach;
- **Whereas Political framework and Reform Strategy of fisheries and aquaculture** adopted by the African Union aiming at similar goals;

- **Whereas, through these instruments, the FAO and the African Union acknowledging** equality and non-discrimination between men and women, participation, inclusiveness of men and women in decision-making;
- **Considering the importance of Small scale fisheries and the role of women in this sector**, thus supporting the local economies;
- **Considering that the majority of artisanal fishing communities in Africa keep on being underestimated** and their contribution to food security, to poverty alleviation , to sustainable development and use of resources – benefiting these communities as well as others – is not fully achieved;
- **Whereas African artisanal fishing communities are often located in remote and land locked areas** and generally have only a limited or difficult access to markets, not to mention that they have often only basic access to health, education and other social services;
- **Reminding that coastal pollution, deterioration of the environment, effects of climate change and natural and man-made disasters** are additional threats to those already weighing on our communities.

We, African artisanal Fisheries Professional Organizations, present through the whole value chain, and in our efforts to promote small-scale fisheries in the blue economy, we are committed to ensure that the principles agreed in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, and the International Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure for Land, Fisheries and Forests are reflected in blue economy strategies that increasingly inform policies affecting the small scale fisheries.

The blue economy is now the overarching concept used for the governance of our oceans and fresh-water ecosystems. It is an important idea. The idea of the blue economy came about through a realisation that our oceans, rivers and lakes are being destroyed through the intensification of human activities and investments, in aquaculture, tourism, mining and extractive industries, energy production, shipping as well as both industrialised and artisanal fishing. To some it is a very exciting time, where huge amounts of money can be made. In fact, most often the blue economy is talked about as the opportunity for “blue growth”. But who benefits from this growth and will it be sustainable? Our mission for the blue economy is based on some simple observations and aspirations:

1. Powerful investors and interest group will easily prosper in the blue economy as it stands. This is because they have far more influence than us. Women and men working in the small-scale fisheries sector are politically marginalised and often ignored. Small-scale fishers and fish workers in organizations such as CAOPA and FPAOI, must be given meaningful opportunities to participate in the decision making processes. This requires access to information so that small-scale fishers can be informed about the blue economy concept in compliance with the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI). **But we also want to have inclusive forms of effective co-management in fisheries where both men and women are involved equally. The blue economy cannot succeed where it is driven by opaque, top-down processes.**
2. That government makes available funding for the support and innovation within the small scale fishing sector.

3. When people talk about the **value** of different sectors in the blue economy, they must realise this is not simply measured by profits or income for the government. Yet this happens all the time. They fail to take into consideration social, cultural and health benefits of their choices. Because of the simple way value is misunderstood today, planning for “blue growth” is easily biased to favour a minority of already wealthy and privileged people. Our governments must realise the full range of benefits provided by millions of people involved in small-scale fisheries, particularly for those living in coastal communities and small-island states and for those who are more vulnerable to poverty, food insecurity and the effects of climate change. Through the blue economy lens, small-scale fisheries must be given the **visibility** that it deserves because of its unique contribution. This cannot be reduced to a simple dollar amount.
4. We urge governments and international organizations to prioritize **small-scale fisheries as an answer to sustainable and clean food production.**

In our efforts to promote small-scale fisheries, we are committed to ensure that the principles agreed in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, and the African Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy are implemented.

We therefore request from the FAO, African Union and other International Organisations to support the implementation of the actions of this statement.

Done in Mahé Seychelles the 21th November 2017.

By FPAOI and CAOPA.



Presentation of the statement to Mrs. Pamela Charlette Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture of Seychelles at the closing of World Fishermen's Day in Mahé, Seychelles.