

## **Inland Fisheries Assembly (November 14th) Concept Note (Draft)**

The Inland Fisheries Assembly will be held during the next WFFP General Assembly (GA) 8 in Brasília, Brazil. The goal of the Inland Fisheries Assembly is to create a dedicated space for inland fisher peoples to share their challenges and visions for the way forward on the three core themes of the GA: food sovereignty, climate change, and ocean grabbing. This assembly will focus on crafting strategies with particular insights from inland fisher peoples, while remaining open to all fisher representatives as a space for knowledge co-construction. It will serve as a platform for learning and understanding the commonalities and intersectionality of our shared identities as fisher peoples, with particular attention to inland communities, women, indigenous peoples, and youth.

### **Rationale**

The Inland Fisheries Working Group, created in 2015, aims to consolidate and strengthen the voices of inland fisher peoples within WFFP and beyond. Despite inland fisheries accounting for nearly half of the world's fisheries, inland fisher peoples are routinely overlooked in governmental fisheries policies and regulations. In some countries, such as Bangladesh and Uganda, fisheries are entirely inland, making their exclusion even more glaring.

Inland small-scale fisheries are crucial for achieving food sovereignty, especially for communities that lack access to marine fish and other animal proteins. Inland fisheries provide essential animal protein and micronutrients for these communities. Beyond nutrition, freshwater species are used for medicine and are integral to the health of many communities, particularly for some indigenous nations. For these nations, the health of freshwater ecosystems and species is directly linked to their holistic well-being, emphasizing the deep connection between environmental health and the well-being of inland communities.

Inland small-scale fishing communities have a profound and enduring relationship with the lakes, rivers, and wetlands they depend on. These waters have been managed according to customary tenure systems for millennia. However, this relationship is now under threat from unchecked industrial development, pollution, privatization, and the corporatization of food systems. Inland fisher peoples are particularly vulnerable to freshwater grabbing, where access to traditional fishing grounds is restricted or denied. This leads to a decrease in fish availability for local consumption and trade, undermining the livelihoods and food sovereignty of inland fishing communities and others who rely on inland fish as a primary protein source. Also, as access to inland water resources becomes increasingly restricted, traditional fishing communities often find themselves excluded from the water bodies they have relied on for generations. When inland fisher peoples continue to fish in these areas, they may be labeled as "trespassers" or "illegal fishers," resulting in arrests, fines, or violence.

Climate change further exacerbates these challenges, as alterations in water temperature, precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events significantly impact inland waters. These ecosystems are highly sensitive to temperature changes, which can disrupt fish metabolism, growth, and reproductive cycles, leading to population shifts and reduced catches. This can further threaten the food sovereignty of inland communities. Additionally, the rise of freshwater aquaculture—often supported by policies that marginalize inland fisher peoples—transforms local food systems. This shift results in the loss of control over food production and turns inland communities from producers into consumers, further eroding their food sovereignty.

**Objectives and Outcomes of the Inland Fisheries Assembly:**

1. Address the Impacts of Climate Change, Ocean Grabbing, and the Corporatization of Food Systems:

- Explore the specific impacts on inland fisher peoples' livelihoods and food sovereignty.
- Address how these global challenges intersect with the lived experiences of inland communities.

2. Foster Exchange of Inland Fisher Peoples' Solutions:

- Share traditional knowledge and community-led solutions to combat climate change, resist ocean grabbing, and advance food sovereignty.
- Advocate for the recognition of traditional inland fishing practices as essential to food sovereignty and ensure access to and control over inland water resources.

3. Envision the Future Work of the Inland Fisheries Working Group/WFFP:

- Collect and brainstorm ideas for the ongoing and future work of the Inland Fisheries Working Group to further strengthen the movement/Inland Fisheries Working Group.
- Testimonies gathered during the Assembly will be brought forward to the floor of the GA as the Inland Fisheries Resolution and be endorsed by the new CC at its first meeting.

4. Build Solidarity Among Fisher Peoples Representatives:

- Strengthen networks and solidarity between inland fisher peoples and other fisher representatives, fostering a united front against common challenges.

**Draft Program:**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session / Objective</b>	<b>Facilitation/Rapporteur</b>
0' – 1'	Moment of silence in memory of inland fishers who became victims of	Christiana and Olencio

	criminalization	
5' – 10'	<p>Presentation of objectives of the Inland Fisheries Assembly</p> <p>Sharing of general principles for the Assembly</p>	<p>Christina and Olencio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- some hystorical background on wffp inland fisheries</li> <li>- Revitalise the WFFP inland fisheries WG</li> <li>- shared lived experience on how global challenges are impacting livelihoods and food sovereignty</li> <li>- share practices essential for food sov. And access to resources</li> <li>- brainstorming on way forward</li> <li>- who will report on GA</li> </ul>
40'	<p>Testimonies on the impacts of climate change, ocean grabbing, and the corporatization of food systems</p> <p><i>Question: How are global and local challenges affecting your livelihoods and what key positions/strategies would you like WFFP to advocate for?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jean Pierre Kulibay from RDC</li> <li>- Aminata Diallo from Mali</li> <li>- Lider Gongora from ecuador</li> <li>- Brasil – Ana Ilda Nogueira Pavao</li> <li>- Spain – Miguel Angel Iglesias Romero</li> <li>- Pablo Rosales from Philippines</li> <li>- Susan Herawati from Indonesia</li> </ul>
30' – 50'	<p>Collective mapping of the way forward in addressing the challenges discussed</p> <p>Question: What specific actions should WFFP prioritize to advance inland fisheries and address current challenges?</p>	Open
10'	closing	