

**WFFP YOUTH ASSEMBLY:  
STATEMENT AND RESOLUTIONS  
NOVEMBER 2024**

**“Youth is not the future, Youth is now”**

We, the Youth of the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP), convened for the second official Youth Assembly to discuss the critical challenges facing Fisher Peoples Youths worldwide. Through powerful dialogue and reflection, we identified the following key issues that contextualise the struggles we face as young people committed to safeguarding our future and the future of our Fisher Peoples.

**The Climate Crisis poses an existential threat to our future.** Rising sea levels, unpredictable weather patterns and the loss of biodiversity are devastating our livelihoods, territories and ecosystems. Pollution of our rivers and seas due to industrialisation and plastic is also threatening the health of our waters, oceans and bodies. The urgency of protecting our lands, waters and future has never been greater. For this reason, we call for the speedily ratification of the Binding Treaty on plastic pollution, which is currently being negotiated.

**Coastal developments encroach on our territories, eroding not only the physical spaces where we fish but also the traditional knowledge that has sustained our communities for generations. Our customary tenure rights are under threat.** This loss of connection to resources disrupts the intergenerational transfer of skills and cultural identity that are critical to our survival.

The extraction and **exploitation of our coastlines through ocean grabbing activities like oil and gas extraction, mining and aquaculture destroys and dispossesses the resources we depend on.** The narrative that such blue economy developments bring benefits like jobs and royalties often obscures the true costs: environmental destruction, community disintegration and displacement, and the erosion of our cultural identities. As youth, we have to reject this false narrative of job creation. **Public policies fail to protect us, leaving our voices unheard and our communities vulnerable to exploitation from extractivist corporations.**

Fisher Peoples Youths are often marginalised and criminalised for engaging in traditional livelihood activities. The lack of recognition of youth in the sector prevents us from benefiting from our work and deepens the barriers to economic and social stability.

In many coastal regions, **youth lack access to education and opportunities for further learning.** This perpetuates cycles of poverty and prevents us from building resilient and sustainable communities. Education is vital for equipping the next generation with the tools to advocate for and secure our fisher heritage.

**Fisher Youths are excluded from leadership roles and decision-making processes within the community and also outside the sector.** This exclusion silences our perspectives and leaves critical issues unaddressed.

The **struggles and socio-cultural stigmas associated with fishing** have driven many young people to seek opportunities outside the sector, often leading to migration to urban areas or to other countries, making us migrants not by our choice. This migration is threatening our heritage and culture, diminishing the work and knowledge base within communities, threatening their long-term viability. The lack of economic incentives and social support for youth in fishing exacerbates this.

**Fisher Peoples face significant social challenges, including substance abuse,** which disproportionately affects youth. The lack of opportunities, marginalisation and criminalisation is a key driver of addictions to substances in our communities. These issues destabilise families and communities, further exacerbating the struggles of young fisherfolk.

Fisher Youth voices are **rarely heard in political spaces at local, national or global levels.** This lack of representation means that our unique challenges and contributions are overlooked and the policies that shape our future are made without our input.

**Many young people lack understanding of WFFP's structure, work, and functioning** and our engagement in the WFFP processes. This disconnect limits our ability to participate meaningfully and to amplify our voices within this critical platform and all the processes and spaces in which WFFP actively participates, including FAO, CFS and other UN Spaces. In the context of the SSF Guidelines in particular, we call for space to be provided for youth to engage and participate.

As the youth of the WFFP, we call for urgent and targeted action to address these challenges. Our communities and livelihoods are at stake and we are determined to work towards a future where fisher youths are empowered, represented and supported as leaders and stewards of sustainable ocean ecosystems.

**We do not only have challenges, we also want to offer solutions:** We believe in strengthening the dignity and pride of fishing as a career, empowering the youth to defend the heritage of fisherfolk communities. We call upon our elders to support and encourage us as we navigate our future. Fishing is not just a means of sustenance; it is a tool for addressing social issues, preserving our culture, and offering recreation that can steer our communities away from challenges like drug abuse. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how fishing can serve as a resilient livelihood, even for the youth.

**Education is critical to eradicating poverty,** and it should extend beyond traditional subjects to include fishing within school curricula, just as agriculture is taught today. We propose mentoring programs for children and youth to foster early interest in the sector, and

we believe that integrating arts and culture—through weekend schools and creative workshops—can rekindle youth engagement in fishing.

**Food Sovereignty is essential for our communities' survival and resilience.** By empowering youth to take control of our food systems, we can ensure access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food produced sustainably by our own people. Fisher Peoples can be a cornerstone of Food Sovereignty, allowing us to feed our communities while preserving our ecosystems. We advocate for the use of technologies to enhance local markets and for the sharing of successful stories to inspire younger generations.

Additionally, we need capacity-building efforts, such as safety at sea and legal training, to empower youth within the sector. **Political education is essential** to enhance our collective understanding and action, especially by leveraging Human Rights instruments and UN spaces to support youth struggles. Fishing encompasses more than just harvesting; promoting the value of other professions within the sector can elevate its visibility and importance. We call for the implementation of the **SSF Guidelines** to inform and build our capacities, and we emphasise the need to educate ourselves and our parents about our customary tenure rights.

Finally, we believe in mitigating challenges like those posed by fisheries aggregating devices through collective action and innovative solutions. **The time for youth is now!** Let us harness the power of education, technology, Food Sovereignty, and our rich cultural heritage to build a sustainable future for our fishing communities.

**As Fisher Peoples Youth, our lives are deeply connected to the rivers and the sea. In this moment, we cannot turn a blind eye to the genocide unfolding in Palestine, especially the tragic killing of tens of thousands of children. Those who survive are being stripped of their fundamental human rights and their futures. As the youth of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), we stand united in calling for an end to this genocide and for a FREE PALESTINE!**

## **RESOLUTIONS:**

We, the Youth Assembly of WFFP, present the following resolutions for consideration and adoption. We want to activate the Youth Working Group (YWG) within WFFP. To operationalise the YWG, we propose that a coordination group is formed, consisting of one youth member for each of the 4 regions i.e. **Asia-Pacific, Africa, Americas and Europe and West Asia.**

We aim to identify one person per region to represent the working group, by the end of the GA8 each region should have a youth representative.

We would like to take forward the following activities as YWG:

- Conduct training for youth on the use of human rights instruments tools like the SSF Guidelines, UNDROP and other UN mechanisms to advance youth struggles in fishing communities.
- Develop political education schools to strengthen collective political understanding and action among youth in the sector.
- Provide training in critical areas such as safety at sea and legal rights, in collaboration with fisher organisations and other institutions.
- Advocate for the inclusion of fishing in school curricula, similar to agriculture, to highlight its importance and inspire interest among students.
- Educate youth and their families about the power and significance of customary tenure rights to ensure their reclaiming, protection and understanding.
- Organise workshops that use art, such as drawing, songwriting, poetry, and dance, to connect youth with fishing and allow them to express their experiences and aspirations.
- Explore and use technologies that can strengthen local markets, making fishing a more sustainable and viable livelihood.
- Identify and share success stories from fishing communities to inspire and motivate younger generations through documentation or fisher-to-fisher exchanges
- We request that WFFP considers allocating a reservation in the CC, to ensure that voices of the youth are heard and included in the internal decision making. We demand the change to start for ourselves as WFFP. We advocate for WFFP to allocate resources specifically to support these initiatives and ensure their effective implementation and functioning of the youth working groups in the region .