

**A Report of the
Second Conference of the Ocean Peoples
(C-OP2) 2025**

**Published by C-OP Organising Committee
July 2025**

Acknowledgements

Organising Committee of Conference of the Ocean People (C-OP):

Programme organized by: World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

In active collaboration with: Participatory Action Research Coalition - India (PARCI); FIAN International; Transnational Institute (TNI); La Via Campesina (LVC); Friends of the Earth (FoEI) Asia Pacific and India; Focus on the Global South; SDF, Thailand; KIARA, Indonesia; Social Need Education and Human Awareness, India (SNEHA), India; The Research Collective-Programme for Social Action (PSA), India; Delhi Forum, India; Coastal Action Network, India; Media Collective-Programme for Social Action (PSA), India; South Asian Solidarity Collective, India; Tamil Nadu Women Fishworkers Sangam (TNWFS), India; Law Trust, India; Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace & Democracy, South Asia

We express our gratitude to all the speakers, facilitators and resource persons who joined us at the programme and we would like to acknowledge the efforts of everyone who contributed to making the online C-OP a meaningful programme.

International Coordination: Herman Kumara (General Secretary, WFFP), Nadine Nembhard (Co- Chairperson, WFFP), Vijayan MJ (PAR Coalition - India), Carsten Pedersen (Trans National Institute), Jesu Rethinam (WFFP, Coastal Action Network)

Solidarity and Mobilisation - International: KIARA (Indonesia), SDF (Thailand), NAFSO (Sri Lanka), Coast (Bangladesh), PAMALAKAYA, Philippines

National mobilisation (India): Andhra Pradesh Traditional Fisher Union (Andhra Pradesh) Tamil Nadu Women Fishworkers Sangam TNFWS (Tamil Nadu), Nagapattinam, Karaikal, Mayiladuthurai District Fisherwomen Federation (Tamil Nadu), Samasth Machimar Samaj (Gujarat), Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation KSMTF (Kerala)

Event Coordination Team: Vijayan MJ, Jesu Rethinam, Nirmala Karunan, Jones Thomas Spartegus, Evita Das, Arun Mohan, Paula Satizábal, Carsten Pedersen, Aashima Subberwal

Social Media & Outreach team: Arun Mohan, Musthujab Makkolath, Ravi Kawre, Evita Das, Jones Thomas Spartegus, Vijayan MJ, Jesu Rethinam, Chethya Lankani, Nirmala Karunan, Prakash, Pradeep Elangovan, Vanaja

Live Interpretation Online

Interpreters Coordination – Jun Shimada

- **Portuguese-English:** Adriana Kauffmann, Julia França, Firmo Franco,

Priscilla Molina

- **Bahasa-English:** Hervina Aljanika, Dinda Azizah, Lidia Afrilita
- **Spanish-English:** Bianca Guzzo, Iván Rodriguez, Eloisa Wernet, Henrique Monnerat
- **French-English:** Maria Leão, Basak Balkan, Julia França
- **Tamil-English:** Pushparayan
- **Telugu-English:** Ashalatha, Sreedhar Rao
- **Malayalam-English:** Shiburaj
- **Hindi-English:** Raja Rabbi
- **Kannada-English:** Sreedhar Rao
- **Bengali-English:** Soutrik Goswami, Shayeri Mukhopadhyay
- **Sinhala-English:** Nimal Perera
- **Thai-English:** Areeya Tivasuradej, Kunlanut Jirawong-aram

Zoom management & Coordination: Arun Mohan & Vijayan MJ

Report compilation: Diya Davis & Aashima Subberwal

Session facilitators:

Day One: Faye Aldefolio and Yifang Tang

Day Two: Maíra Netto and Paula Satizábal

Report design and layout: Musthujab Makkolath

Contents

Preface.....	05
About the Second Conference of the Ocean Peoples (C-OP2).....	07
Day 1 – 8th of June – World Ocean Day.....	09
Mystica by Christiana Louwa.....	09
Celebrating Ocean Day – Honouring Ocean Peoples’ Ways of Life and Cultures.....	09
Assault on Ocean Peoples: the dangerous trajectory of UNOC and the Blue regimes.....	11
Militarisation, Occupation and Climate Crises.....	12
The Ocean Economy and the Blue Regimes.....	14
Industrial factory farming of fish and the struggle for food sovereignty.....	15
Closing Remarks.....	18
Day 2 – 9th of June.....	19
Mystica by the Fisherwomen of Tamil Nadu, India.....	19
Waters Rise: Reimagination; Recognition; Redistribution; Reclamation & Reparations.....	21
Astrid Puentes (UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to a Healthy Environment).....	21
Thematic Speaker: Liam Campling.....	22
Thematic Speaker: Shalmali Guttal.....	23
Democratic Struggles, False Solutions, and Mobilising Against Corporate Capture.....	24
Assertions of Ocean, Water and Fisher Peoples’ Identities, Territorial and Customary Rights.....	26
Beyond the UNOC, resistance strategies and alliances.....	27
Concluding Remarks: Daouda Ndiaye.....	29
5. Annexure A.....	33

Preface

The **World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)** is a transnational alliance of small-scale fisher movements, representing over **10 million fisherfolk across 50 countries**. Founded as a response to the growing marginalisation, criminalisation, and dispossession of fisher communities, WFFP brings together a diverse range of fisherwomen and fishermen, seafood gatherers, and coastal and inland fishing communities who are united by their shared struggle to defend their marine commons and assert their traditional and customary rights over ocean and inland waters.

WFFP is rooted in the lived realities of ocean peoples whose lives are intricately tied to the sea—not only for sustenance and livelihood, but as a source of identity, culture, ecological knowledge and social belonging. It is a movement led by those on the frontlines of climate change, extractivism, militarisation, and global economic restructuring. Across continents, WFFP members resist the multiple layers of oppression that have historically shaped and continue to threaten the lifeways of small-scale fisheries—colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, caste and racial hierarchies.

As a political movement, WFFP has taken a firm stance against the corporate capture of ocean governance, including the ongoing expansion of top-down blue economy agendas and market-based conservation measures. The organisation has been vocal in its criticism of global forums such as the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC), which it has boycotted for their failure to uphold the democratic principles of participation, accountability and transparency. WFFP members rejected invitations to UNOC1, UNOC2 and UNOC3, refusing to legitimise processes that marginalise fisher voices while allowing governments, financial institutions, and transnational corporations to dictate the future of oceans behind closed doors.

At the same time, WFFP is actively engaged in alternative multilateral spaces where fisher peoples are recognised as rights-holders, not mere stakeholders. The movement participates in the **UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**, the **FAO and its Committee on Fisheries (COFI)**, and engages with **UN human rights mechanisms** to assert the legal and political standing of fisher peoples in shaping food systems and marine governance.

WFFP's political vision is anchored in the principles of **food sovereignty, customary rights, and ecological justice**. It views the oceans as spaces of life and interdependence, not as frontiers for economic growth or investment. Through its grassroots networks, WFFP has helped build a powerful critique of initiatives such as 30x30 marine protected areas, blue carbon trading, blue bonds, and marine spatial planning, exposing how these policies, framed as solutions to environmental crisis, often become tools for land and

ocean grabbing, militarisation, and the displacement of communities.

Through its political declarations—such as the **2022 Declaration of the First Conference of Ocean Peoples** and the **2024 GA8 Political Resolutions**—WFFP has advanced the 5Rs framework: to **Reject** corporate-led false solutions, **Resist** extractivist paradigms, **Recognise** ocean peoples as rightful custodians, **Restitute** marine territories and wealth, and **Reimagine** oceans as spaces of collective care, healing and possibility

Second Conference of the Ocean Peoples (C-OP2)

Defying colonial capitalism: Union for the future of Earth & Oceans

Our Oceans; Our Sovereignty; Our Future

Organised by the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

About COP-2

The **Second Conference of the Ocean People (COP-2)**, held under the theme “**Defying Colonial Capitalism: Union for the Future of Earth & Oceans**”, was a landmark moment in the ongoing struggle of fisher peoples to reclaim their marine commons, assert their customary rights, and build a just future for oceans and coastal communities. Organised by the **World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)**, a global movement representing more than 10 million fisherfolk from 50 countries, COP2 was conceived as a political counter-space to the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3), which the WFFP and allied movements have boycotted due to its exclusionary, corporate-led governance structure. This publication is the first after the GA8 and is a report of the proceedings of the Conference of Ocean People, capturing the collective analysis, declarations, and political demands articulated by fisher peoples during C-OP2.

The conference was convened in response to the deepening marginalisation of small-scale, traditional and Indigenous fisher communities in global policy forums. C-OP2 was organised to denounce the increasing commodification of oceans, the corporate capture of multilateral governance, and the expansion of market-based and top-down conservation approaches such as 30x30¹, blue carbon, and blue economy initiatives. For ocean peoples whose lives are intricately tied to marine and freshwater ecosystems, not just economically, but spiritually, culturally and socially, this gathering was an act of defiance and affirmation. It brought together a diversity of actors to chart their own path forward, rooted in dignity, food sovereignty, and ecological justice.

At the heart of the conference was the assertion that ocean peoples are not passive stakeholders, but rights-holders, defenders and stewards of marine ecosystems. Drawing from their declaration at the 8th WFFP Global Assembly in Brazil (2024), participants reiterated their outright rejection of the UNOC, which they criticised for failing to uphold basic democratic principles, violating their rights to participation, and serving as a platform to legitimise public-private partnerships and other false solutions that mask continued ecological degradation. The voluntary commitments and non-binding

1 30 by 30 is a global target which calls for protecting 30% of land and seas by 2030. It is based on a ‘theory of change’ propounded within the scientific milieu, which rests its argument on the necessity of a gradual increase in the percentage of areas protected on earth, to solve the global climate crisis

statements emerging from UNOC were seen as ineffective and unaccountable, facilitating the expansion of extractive interests while sidelining communities most affected by environmental destruction and climate crisis.

The fisher peoples of the world are not asking to be included in broken systems. They are setting their own agenda, and calling on the world to join them in resisting colonial, capitalist and patriarchal violence. Their message was clear and resolute: **We are the oceans, we are the waters, and we are the peoples.**

The conference spanned two days: Day 1 focused on assaults on ocean peoples and the expansion of blue regimes, while Day 2 centred on resistance strategies and reimagining ocean governance. Structured through keynote addresses, thematic panels, grassroots testimonies, and political reflections, the programme brought together voices from across continents to deepen collective analysis and affirm shared struggles.

Day 1 – 8th of June – World Ocean Day

The sessions were moderated by Faye Aldefolio from Pamalakaya, Philippines and Yifang Tang of FIAN International.²

Mystica by Christiana Louwa

The conference opened with Christiana Louwa, Treasurer of WFFP and leader of the El Molo Forum (Kenya), who led the Mystica in the El Molo language. She began by sharing about a mystica being one that starts with blessings and prayers for protection for our children, families, community and for those who go out fishing at night or during the day; prayers for the environment, especially the waters, what can continue to provide for and sustain our families. She shared that we must understand the wisdom of our ancestors where they always said that listening to the waves, the roars and the whispers of the ocean, lakes, sea is a must, as they teach us a lot and in fact they have also been teaching us about rising water levels. If we listen, people could have moved to higher grounds and they would have prevented damage to their fishing equipment and boats. Hence, it is always important to go back to the whisper of our ancestors.

Celebrating Ocean Day – Honouring Ocean Peoples’ Ways of Life and Cultures

The session on “Celebrating Ocean Day – Honouring Ocean Peoples’ Ways of Life and Cultures” offered a powerful collective statement on the urgent need to reclaim the ocean from the grip of exploitative governance and corporate appropriation while powerfully foregrounding the struggles, knowledge systems, and lived realities of ocean people. The discussions highlighted how contemporary ocean governance frameworks, shaped by the logics of colonial capitalism, expansionism, and environmental dispossession - systematically undermine the rights, knowledge systems, and livelihoods of coastal and inland fishing communities. The celebration of the Ocean Day was not merely commemorative but sharply political. The speakers highlighted the long histories and deep-rooted cultures of coastal and fishing communities, while resisting the extractive and exclusionary frameworks being advanced globally in the name of conservation, development, and sustainability. The celebration was also a powerful assertion of an alternative imagination of sovereignty over ocean and its resources, one that sharply challenged the values of infinite greed to exploit and accumulate capital which underlie the policy paradigms of transnational institutions and corporations.

Herman Kumara, General Secretary of WFFP stated that the dominant model of conservation and development, as promoted through international forums like the UN

² Introductions of all speakers and moderators can be found in Annexure A.

Ocean Conference (UNOC), is fundamentally flawed. He stated that these platforms, despite their rhetoric of inclusion, often marginalize organized fisher movements while granting multinational corporations and Environmental NGOs the same status as state actors. He raised strong concerns about the trend of voluntary, non-binding commitments being passed off as meaningful action, noting that such mechanisms weaken accountability and enable behind-closed-door deals such as debt-for-nature swaps that strip coastal communities of their rights and autonomy. Vijayan MJ associated with the PAR Coalition, underlined how participation in such tokenistic processes like the UNOC would lend credibility to the secret negotiations taking place against the interests of marine, coastal and inland communities. Echoing the theme he noted that, COP 2 serves as a resounding call against the exploitative, expansionist, and extractive logic of colonial capitalism.

The speakers rejected the conservation agenda that manifests through top-down strategies like the Marine Spatial Plan³, 30x30, and Marine Protected Areas⁴, all of which facilitate further corporate and state control over ocean territories under the guise of sustainability. The session also situated fisher struggles within broader global struggles for sovereignty, justice, and ecological protection—from Kashmir to Palestine, from Panama to Brazil. The systematic denial of rights to inland and coastal fisherfolk was highlighted as part of a global pattern of dispossession, deeply linked to colonial capitalist expansionism and the militarization of natural resources. Herman Kumara, called for justice and compensation for communities recently affected by shipwrecks and ocean pollution, including those off the coasts of Kerala and Alaska. He strongly urged governments of all coastal countries to support the forthcoming Global Plastics Treaty, particularly provisions regulating the movement of plastic nurdles and SRS chemicals.

This critique was accompanied by strong assertions of fisher people's resistance and leadership. The session affirmed that small-scale fisher unions and movements—not elite diplomatic spaces—are the true representatives of ocean peoples. Their knowledge, practices, and deep relations with marine and inland waters constitute a living heritage that must be protected and honoured. From the Amazon and the coasts of Sri Lanka to Wular Lake and Gaza, communities are actively resisting the violence of ocean grabbing, industrial aquaculture, extractive infrastructure, and declining fish stocks brought on by overfishing and pollution. Josana Pinto, WFFP, MPP, Brazil, emphasized the need to force governments to ensure their commitments and compliance to upholding human rights.

3 Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a state-led process to organize human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives. While presented as a tool for sustainable ocean governance, it is often criticized for sidelining traditional users like small-scale fishers and enabling ocean grabbing through top-down zoning.

4 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are zones designated to conserve marine ecosystems, biodiversity, and cultural resources, often through restrictions on fishing, resource extraction, and access.

She recounted “how many comrades have been killed and thrown into the ocean and rivers in our struggle against environmental degradation in Brazil and Latin America”.

The gathering celebrated the strength of grassroots alliances—across peasant movements, women’s groups, civil society, and academic institutions. The speakers acknowledged and thanked ally organizations, movements and networks who extended solidarity to COP 2 particularly La Via Campesina and Friends of the Earth International. The commitment of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) to work with democratic UN institutions like the FAO, COFI, and the UN Human Rights Council was reiterated, especially in advancing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, food sovereignty, and human rights. COP 2 reframed Ocean Day not as a symbolic celebration but as a call to honour the frontline defenders of the ocean—its people. It asserted that the cultures, livelihoods, and ecological knowledge of fishing communities are not relics of the past, but central to the future of our planet’s marine systems.

Assault on Ocean Peoples: the dangerous trajectory of UNOC and the Blue regimes

The framing of climate challenges in ocean ecosystems primarily as a financing gap has led to top-down policy approaches centred on mobilising capital as the key solution. Consequently, instruments like debt-for-nature swaps have gained traction, particularly in indebted Global South countries. Far from serving conservation, these deals have become tools of neocolonial control, violating the sovereignty of coastal nations and dispossessing traditional fishing communities. Debt is being weaponised to push through structural changes in marine governance and the political economy of artisanal fisheries, eroding local autonomy, dismantling livelihoods, and deepening inequalities under the guise of environmental protection.

Andre Standing explained the trend of financialization of conservation, particularly debt-for-ocean swaps that are poised to be promoted in the UNOC. He explained that these swaps, while presented as solutions to debt crises and funding gaps for conservation, are often opaque transactions managed by US NGOs in partnership with private banks and asset management companies. Standing highlighted that these deals come with conditionalities lasting 20-30 years, dictating how southern countries manage their fisheries and ocean space. He stressed that these transactions lack participation from affected communities and transfer enormous wealth and power to NGOs that are not representative of community groups. Standing also noted that debt swaps can be linked to other geopolitical deals, such as military agreements, urging greater understanding of their risks and downsides. Similarly, Marianeli from Ecuador described how mangrove territories, long tended and defended by fisherwomen, are now being enclosed through

blue carbon schemes and blue bonds, granting access to corporations while marginalizing communities. These initiatives, often promoted in the name of “conservation” and “sustainable development” have created a new financialized frontier of expropriation of the fisher people from the ocean and the coasts.

Militarisation, Occupation and Climate Crises

In this session, the discussions illustrated the devastating impacts of militarisation and occupation on the lives and livelihood of primary producers, especially the fisher people. The context of occupation and war in Gaza which has seen the deployment of starvation as an instrument of war, and the systematic dismantling of subsistence systems raised critical questions about the interconnectedness between food sovereignty, justice and the right to self-determination. Saad Ziada of UAWC foregrounded the struggle for land and sea in the struggle for justice, for the rights of Palestinians to “fish their water, farm their own soil and feed their own children without fear of drones, bullets or starvation”. The colonial theft of marine life and natural wealth through ocean grabbing, and destruction of the life, livelihood and fishing equipment of the fisher community has turned Gaza’s sea into another frontline in the war. He stated that, “we are starving, not from the lack of food but from the regularisation of hunger”.

Beyond conflict zones, conservation agendas being pursued by governments have also resulted in the militarisation of the oceans and waters in numerous coastal nations. Conservation frameworks like “30 by 30,” which designate Marine Protected Areas, often enforce exclusion by militarizing fishing grounds that criminalise and forcibly displace artisanal fishers. There have been increased armed violence, harassment and deaths of traditional fishers under the guise of implementing false climate solutions. Rehema Namaganda, FIAN, discussed how the extensive militarisation of the Ugandan waters to tackle illegal fishing has resulted in human rights violations and loss of livelihood for the fishing community.



Poster shared by Rehema Namaganda, FIAN Uganda demonstrating the corporate capture of the ocean and inland ecosystems and the consequent displacement and impoverishment of fishing communities.

Similarly, Alfonso Simón Raylan, from the Sea Workers Union in Panama spoke about the systematic dispossession of the indigenous fishers from their ancestral land and waters coupled with the brutal state-sponsored violence that they have had to face, under the garb of the conservation initiatives. He stated that, “the government hasn’t guaranteed us any livelihood... the only thing they have done is massacred and made us disappear”. He further commented that, “the UN-allocated funds intended for Indigenous communities in Latin America and the Caribbean rarely reach those communities themselves.”

Jean Pierre Kapalay, COPETANG, Tanzania discussed the environmental and social impact of climate change on the fishing communities, especially the large-scale displacement of fisherpeople residing in the underdeveloped coastal areas and the destruction of their fishing equipment due to the rising sea levels. This along with the changing migration paths of fish owing to low oxygen levels and rising temperatures in the sea have resulted in lower fish catch and hence, a significant loss of revenue for the fishers. Jean Pierre stated how climate change is not an abstract concept for the fishers but a visible and lived reality that is experienced in their villages, fishing boats and nets.

Coastal communities in countries like India, Thailand, South Africa, Brazil etc have often faced violence for resisting the state-corporate alliance seeking to seize coastal

and marine areas for development and tourism projects. In many instances, traditional fishing practices, crafts and gears have also been criminalized further debilitating access to their means of subsistence.

The speakers called for a paradigm shift from militarization to community-based and human rights-centered fisheries governance, urging donors to stop funding militarized conservation approaches. They emphasized that empowering fishers and coastal communities is the key and called for governments to recognize and implement the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines (SSF Guidelines). These points give a clear comprehensive picture of how states, under the umbrella of conservation and Blue Economy, are deploying coercive measures, leading to violence, human rights violations, and the dispossession of traditional fishers.

The Ocean Economy and the Blue Regimes

The session delved into the profound and often detrimental impacts of contemporary marine governance and economic development models on traditional fishing communities worldwide. Speakers from India, Thailand, and Brazil offered critical perspectives on how the push for a Blue Economy and associated policies are leading to the displacement, marginalization, and criminalization of artisanal fishers, while simultaneously highlighting their ongoing struggles for rights, recognition, and the protection of marine ecosystems.

The Blue Economy has been a driver of dispossession and marginalization for the coastal communities. The drive to maximize profits and generate “economic growth” by unlocking the “economic potential” of oceans and coasts has translated to an unprecedented expansion of development, transport, logistics, and energy infrastructure on the coasts. Additionally, marine resources have been privatized through the promotion of extractive projects, large-scale industrial fishing, aquaculture, and processing industries. The result has been loss of access to customary fishing grounds and loss of traditional livelihoods, along with coastal erosion, pollution related illnesses, and forced displacement of coastal communities.

Ramakrishna Tandel, Chairperson of the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), called it the “Red Economy” regime as “it is blood red with the loss of our rights”. He noted that port expansions in Honnavar in Karnataka, Vizhinjam in Kerala, and Vadhavan in Maharashtra have not only led to environmental degradation and coastal erosion but also intensified state violence against communities resisting displacement. The imposition of top-down development without community consent reflects a broader trend: coastal governance being restructured in the interest of capital. Tandel also exposed the exclusionary nature of schemes like the PMMSY, which claim to uplift fishers but in reality channel subsidies and support to those with large capital and industrial actors, undermining the livelihoods

of inland and Dalit-Adivasi fishing communities. Annarasa associated with NAFSO, raised the alarm about corporate-led ocean exploitation, especially foreign fishing fleets that decimate local marine stocks and ecosystems using destructive methods, while governments remain complicit.

The Blue Economy regime pointed towards a systematic erosion of hard-won legal protections for the fisher people and the marine ecosystems. Lead Mangsai from Thailand expressed concerns about new laws and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) overriding existing coastal protections, leading to the displacement of fisherfolk and the extraction of local resources. He stated that, "The influx of large-scale development and foreign investment, including provisions allowing foreigners to hold land titles and work in these zones, is creating conflicts within communities." Edmir Amanajás Celestino from Brazil echoed similar concerns, highlighting how industrial fisheries, aquaculture, ports, harbors, and even new wind energy projects contribute to the vulnerability of traditional fishing populations and favor "big capital" over the interests of traditional fishers. He explained how coastal communities are subjected to "climate change racism" as they are often the first to be displaced and face heightened risks and violence, yet are largely excluded from political processes.

Blue Economy represents a systematic and global shift towards extractive regimes that commodify nature and displace people. What is needed instead is a framework that recognises fishers as custodians of marine and inland ecosystems, grounded in community-driven governance, legal recognition of customary rights, and the active participation of fisher youth and women in shaping their futures. There was a clear call to move beyond welfare and towards rights—specifically, the enacting of legislations such as the Coastal Rights Act and Inland Customary Fishers' Rights Act. These would secure legal recognition, protect against eviction, and affirm the role of fishers in sustaining the health of marine environments.

Industrial factory farming of fish and the struggle for food sovereignty

The session critically examined the deepening crisis caused by industrial aquaculture, particularly shrimp farming and its widespread impacts on ecosystems, traditional livelihoods, and the democratic governance of food systems. Speakers from Honduras and Sri Lanka exposed how corporate-driven, export-oriented aquaculture is displacing artisanal fishers, degrading marine and coastal environments, intensifying gendered vulnerabilities, and undermining community control over food systems. The session highlighted the growing call for food sovereignty as not just a policy alternative, but a political demand rooted in justice, dignity, and ecological concern.

A significant focus of the session was the devastating environmental and social impact

of industrial fish farming. The export-oriented shrimp production which entails shrimp factories, laboratories, and artificial lagoons consuming vast areas, have led to severe chemical pollution, destruction of vital coastal ecosystems, loss of fisher people's livelihoods and territorial conflicts. Energy-intensive factory farming globally pollutes oceans with chemicals and plastics. Claudia Pineda from FIAN Honduras, described how the expansion of shrimp farms in the Gulf of Fonseca, a region shared with Nicaragua and El Salvador spurred by export markets and multilateral encouragement since the 1970s and 80s, has led to intense territorial conflicts, destruction of mangroves, and the erosion of traditional livelihoods, especially of women shell gatherers, who have lost vital income due to habitat loss and contamination. Pineda highlighted on the denial by the Honduran government regarding this pollution and destruction, despite direct communication from communities to the UN and the government. Hemantha Withanage from FOEI detailed the severe ecological and economic damage caused by such industrial activities, further compounded by land reclamation projects for new developments.





Images shared by Claudia Pineda, FIAN Honduras showing the harmful impact of industrial shrimp farming on the aquatic ecosystem and fishing communities.

The speakers strongly positioned food sovereignty as a fundamental human right and a crucial antidote to the extractive nature of industrial aquaculture. Withange cautioned against “blue washing” — a new frontier for economic growth that facilitates corporate accumulation and the dispossession of people, effectively treating the ocean as a commodity through concepts like “blue credits”.

Warning against the corporate capture of international forums, the speakers advocated for a power shift towards a democratically governed food justice system that ensures “food for all,” emphasizing that the struggle for food sovereignty is a direct challenge to the pervasive influence of corporate interests. Pineda shared how local communities in Honduras are actively organizing to document environmental violations, formulate erosion control strategies, and reclaim their traditional practices as acts of resistance.

The session also highlighted the failure of international institutions—such as the UN, CBD, and global oceans forums, to protect the rights of small-scale producers. The speakers called for the democratization of these global institutions and laid emphasis on the urgency of building solidarity across borders, especially among fisherpeople,

peasants, women's groups, and environmental movements.

Closing Remarks by Jesu Rethinam (WFFP Women Assembly Coordinator, Coastal Action Network, India)

Jesu Rethinam concluded the session by critically addressing the current approach to Ocean Day celebrations by UN organizations and global authorities. She argued that their focus on investing in ocean resources comes at the cost of displacing communities and promoting corporate interests, rather than recognizing the cultural, spatial, and human rights of coastal populations. Rethinam asserted that "ocean sovereignty is our fundamental political right, not a humanitarian right" or a matter for charity, emphasizing that fisherfolk are demanding their rights, not requesting schemes that further displace them.

She highlighted the brutal expansion of "ocean security", which functions as a mechanism to safeguard corporate investments, leading to increased militarization along coasts and the criminalization of traditional ways of life. She criticized the enclosure of ecology and biodiversity under initiatives like 30x30, framing them as commodification (blue/green commodities, blue energy) that facilitate the sale and leasing of marine spaces without community consultation. She cited examples like offshore energy projects occupying both land and water, and the privatization of the world's largest inland lake, all of which deny communities access to vital resources.

Rethinam connected these developments to the demarcation of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) as "exclusive" zones for deep-sea mining and other commercial ventures, likening them to Special Economic Zones (SEZs) on land, where decisions are made without community involvement until implementation. She declared that such practices are intolerable, asserting that communities are here to "reimagine ocean sovereignty on their own terms". She concluded by expressing that the session not only exposed violations but also showcased the resilience and ongoing resistance of communities, including those in India, which would lead to further energized resistance.

Day 2 – 9th of June

The sessions were moderated by Maíra Netto and Paula Satizábal.

Mystica by the Fisherwomen of Tamil Nadu

The women leaders from Tamil Nadu, India came together in solidarity during the Second Conference of the Ocean People. They collectively expressed their spirituality and commitment to the mother sea. They drew pictures (kolams) in front of their houses. Kolams are drawn every day by the women in front of their houses as a sign of welcoming everyone. During festivals in the temple, when the deity is carried in a chariot in the streets, they draw very big kolams to welcome the goddess. Similarly, women in more than 25 villages came out with kolams in front of their houses numbering nearly 3000. This was to welcome COP 2025 and reject the UNOC.

As part of the day's Mystica, women leaders from the Karaikal District Fisher Women Federation, who had gathered on the Tirunelveli coast with posters, banners and lit candles, asserted their customary rights over the ocean and spoke about the threats that corporate plunder posed to the resources their communities have been protecting for centuries.

Former Karaikal District Fisherwomen Federation President Vedavalli stated that "The sea and the shore rightfully belong to the fishing communities." She emphasized that fisherwomen continue to perform immense and tireless work in the coastal space. These women not only carry and sell all the fish that come from the shore by balancing them on their heads, but also undertake all the preparatory work before the men head out to sea. She stressed that big capitalists cannot lay claim over the sea and said that "We must collectively proclaim that the ocean belong to the fisherpeoples." so, to recognise the our rights over coastal and Marine commons and protect fisherpeoples government must formulate a law.

Karaikal District Fisherwomen Federation President (Present) Sumathi stated, "The ocean is our habitat. The ocean is our resource. The shore is a intrinsic part of our lives." Therefore, under no circumstance can the fisher peoples be separated from the ocean or coastal commons. She added that to protect both the ocean and the fisherpeoples, everyone must come together and strongly commit to enacting a law soon. The gathering on the shore with lights, was a symbol that showed how like the waves that touch the shore and returns and comes back continuously, the women will not get tired and will stand for their rights, reclaiming and protecting our Mother Earth, Mother Sea and all water resources.



Waters Rise: Reimagination; Recognition; Redistribution; Reclamation & Reparations

This session powerfully illuminated the collective vision, lived struggles, and political demands of small-scale fishing communities. Speakers emphasized that the dominant models of marine governance, whether framed as conservation, climate adaptation, or blue growth, consistently exclude traditional fisher people from decision-making processes and undermine their rights, livelihoods, and territories. These exclusionary systems are reinforced by undemocratic institutions such as the UNOC. As Nadine Nembhard, Co-Chair of WFFP, stated, fisherpeople must be equal partners in shaping the future of the oceans, not subjects of top-down agendas imposed by states, multinational corporations, and international NGOs. She emphasized that the presence of attendees at this counter-event was a powerful expression of solidarity.

The discussion grounded its critique in the experience and resistance of fisher communities, particularly women at the frontlines of both environmental and economic violence. Asmaniah, a fisherwoman from Indonesia's Pulau Pari Island, testified to the devastating impacts of coal and sand mining, sea-level rise, and displacement that her community faces. She rejected externally imposed "solutions" that ignore the knowledge and agency of fisherfolk, asserting instead that island and coastal communities are the ocean's custodians, not beneficiaries of distant conservation strategies, nor mere inhabitants to be relocated or controlled.

Ultimately, this session framed the rising of waters not only as a symptom of climate collapse, but also as a metaphor for political awakening and collective resistance. The speakers called for a global convergence of ocean peoples' movements, rooted in solidarity, shared struggle, and mutual learning, to reclaim the oceans, rewrite their future, and demand justice. As was powerfully articulated, "We are the ocean; we should have sovereignty."

Astrid Puentes (UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to a Healthy Environment)

Astrid Puentes, in her capacity as Special Rapporteur, emphasized the critical importance of viewing all ocean issues as human rights issues, advocating that ocean management should inherently be approached from a human rights perspective. Puentes shared her reason for participating in the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) which was to advocate for the inclusion of human rights in the political declaration, noting its omission despite the inclusion of indigenous peoples.

She highlighted her ongoing efforts to ensure that the message of human rights is incorporated and that states are held accountable for their obligations to protect these

rights. Puentes underscored the vital role of fisher communities, including children, women, and young people, in safeguarding sustainable fisheries and coastal areas. She agreed with the expression of the desire for sovereignty and autonomy of the Indonesian fisherwomen, without the need for external intervention from the UN, investors, or other organizations, as a clear illustration of what needs to be done.

Puentes advocated for integrating ancestral and traditional knowledge from small-scale communities, as outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, for better protection of coastal areas and for developing solutions to the climate change crisis. She stressed the need to protect environmental human rights defenders who are on the front lines of defending the ocean, acknowledging the threats, harassment, and assassinations they face. Puentes underlined the state's responsibility to protect these individuals and implement existing laws. She concluded by pledging her alliance with the fisher peoples as Special Rapporteur to the UN, hoping to learn from the discussions to help the UN better understand the importance of equity and participation.

THEMATIC SPEAKER: Liam Campling (Professor, Queen Mary University, London)

Liam Campling provided a valuable analysis of the ocean economy, linking the struggles faced by communities to broader industrial and capitalist forces. He highlighted that the ocean economy extends beyond just fishing to include shipbuilding, oil and gas, and marine equipment, noting an increase in military uses. Campling emphasized that, similar to the land economy, the ocean economy is characterized by a high degree of capital concentration, a systemic tendency of capitalism that is uneven across different sectors from shipbuilding to fishing. He asserted that companies, as organizational forms of social life, aim to maximize post-tax profit, often by outsourcing risk and externalizing costs, particularly environmental ones, thus stressing that power dynamics are crucial to understanding the ocean economy.

Regarding fishing, Campling stated that in regions like West Africa and the Indian Ocean, fishing efforts are predominantly by higher-income countries, with industrial fishing interests from Global North countries and China dominating these areas. He explained the global value chains for seafood, noting that hundreds of vessels supply to around 200 factories which then supply to only five companies that control the canned tuna market. Similarly, for sashimi, vessels supply to four trading companies that dominate the Japanese market, indicating that fishing vessels are often squeezed by these powerful market players.

In the shipping sector, Campling pointed out that the top 10 container shipping companies

move 83% of the world's containers. He linked the complex histories of container shipping from Western Europe and Asia to colonial pasts that shape contemporary politics in the shipping industry. China and South Korea are the two dominant countries in shipbuilding, with growing geopolitical competition, including over "green" subsidies. Campling questioned whether the ocean business can resolve sustainability issues, noting that individual companies are often squeezed by competition from those who produce cheaply.

He highlighted that shipping accounts for 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions. While emissions per ton-mile have decreased, this is a relative measure, and the overall number of ships is increasing, meaning per-vessel improvements don't negate the overall impact. Campling argued that alternative fuels are often a form of "market differentiation" for firms rather than a coherent solution, leading to a chaotic approach. He concluded that shipping capital cannot be relied upon to navigate the ecological crisis, as individual companies are constrained by competition, and state regulations are undermined by geopolitical factors. He suggested that grassroots struggles are necessary to tip the balance in the world economy.

Campling emphasized the need for "transformative sustainability" and a "just transition" in shipping and fishing. He stressed that a genuine and just transition must be equitable socially, ecologically, and between the North and South. He advocated for top-down approaches like South-South cooperation, progressive taxation of "blue capital," and regulating firms to transition, as they wouldn't do so voluntarily. He also called for bridging the gap between small-scale fishing communities and workers in industrial fisheries and other ocean industries, seeing these alliances as crucial to transforming capitalism towards socio-economic reproduction.

THEMATIC SPEAKER: Shalmali Guttal (Focus on the Global South; UNDROP Working Group)

Shalmali Guttal asserted that platforms like the UNOC and other global multilateral initiatives, along with trade and investment agreements, are inadvertently enabling the commodification and corporate capture of resources. She argued that these mechanisms allow corporations and large financiers to concentrate profits through the creation of new financial instruments for commodification, such as blue economy initiatives, food and carbon markets. Guttal contended that these efforts are creating new markets instead of genuine solutions, effectively reducing diverse ecosystems to tradable commodities valued in monetary terms.

Guttal criticized the categorization of communities, particularly "small" fisherfolk, implying they don't need support. She explained that this compartmentalizes holistic activities, allowing for targeted support and subsidies that ultimately benefit larger

commercial interventions, akin to “big fish eating small fish.” She emphasized that the multiple gains brought by fisherfolk – including contributions to nutrition, biodiversity, and local economies – are often reduced solely to their revenue, and their profound contributions to health and well-being are not recognized.

She highlighted the significance of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), stating that it recognizes artisanal fishers for their inherent value beyond profit-making. UNDROP acknowledges their special relationship with land and water, their dependence on these resources, and their past, present, and future contributions to food availability and sustainable development goals (SDGs). Guttal stressed that without these communities, the biodiversity in wetlands and ponds would be lost, and crucial food sources would disappear.

UNDROP also recognizes the severe impacts of climate change, dispossession of territories, loss of access to fishing grounds, and difficulties in the participation of small-scale fishers in decision-making processes. It acknowledges the poverty, hunger, high risks, intimidation, and even trafficking faced by fisher people and fish workers in the industry. Guttal firmly stated that the rights outlined in UNDROP are already enshrined in other international treaties and are legally binding, countering claims by governments or multinational corporations that they are not. She urged fisher people to view themselves as equal stakeholders and rights holders, encouraging them to join hands with other rights holders globally.

Guttal suggested that while specific articles of UNDROP may vary in salience across regions, communities should work with available mechanisms, including Special Rapporteurs who serve as allies to the people whose rights they protect. She noted that challenges faced by fisherfolk are often shared by other small producers worldwide, including shrinking public sectors, criminalization, and the expansion of multi-stakeholderism. Guttal highlighted the importance of building grassroots support, acknowledging that while human rights articulations may lack the direct legal power of trade agreements, collective action can make them tangible regulations on the ground, drawing parallels to how the narrative of the UN Food Systems Summit was challenged and debunked.

Democratic Struggles, False Solutions, and Mobilising Against Corporate Capture

This session critically examined how global economic frameworks and national policies increasingly undermine the rights and livelihoods of small-scale fishers, often under the guise of progress or regulation. Speakers from the Philippines and the Pacific articulated the challenges posed by corporate dominance, flawed international agreements, and the urgent need for grassroots mobilization to reclaim democratic control over marine

resources.

Speakers underscored how global economic frameworks—especially those driven by trade liberalisation, deregulation, and conservation financing—undermine democracy in the governance of fisheries. Instead of addressing structural injustices, these frameworks push policies that penalize the most marginalized communities while favouring actors with economic and political clout. The World Trade Organization (WTO), in particular, was identified as a key vehicle of corporate power. Adam Wolfenden, PANG, argued that the WTO's fisheries subsidy negotiations reflect a broader agenda of disciplining states in the interest of powerful corporations, with little regard for historical or structural disparities between countries. Far from promoting sustainability, these negotiations threaten to criminalize small-scale fishers and remove crucial state support from already struggling communities.

Wolfenden also criticized the absence of the “common but differentiated responsibility” principle—a cornerstone of global environmental justice—which leads to blanket rules that disproportionately burden countries with fewer monitoring resources. Additionally, laws on IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing, are used to criminalize traditional practices and force small countries into onerous compliance regimes, even when the primary violators are industrial fleets. Likewise, bans on certain subsidies or proposals for “blue finance” benefit those who have the institutional capacity to navigate these schemes, while excluding the communities most affected by ecological degradation.

Such trade frameworks are directly mirrored and reinforced by national legal decisions. Terrence Repelente (Pamalakaya, Philippines) cited the 2023 Philippine Supreme Court decision, which opened 90% of traditional fishing grounds to large commercial operations. He noted government complicity in this, enabling corporate access.

The session revealed how policies presented as solutions often serve as “false solutions” that exacerbate existing problems, particularly concerning food security and sovereignty. Interventions like IUU fishing laws and subsidy negotiations, though framed as solutions, often serve corporate interests while undermining equitable access and sustainable livelihoods. The session highlighted the ongoing democratic struggles and powerful grassroots mobilization against these corporate and state-led exclusions. Despite the dismissal of a petition against the Supreme Court's decision in the Philippines, Repelente reported that fisherfolk, previously disengaged, are now organizing in the thousands. Adam underscored the power dynamics at play, noting that the WTO is currently in crisis due to major countries pushing back against historical dominance, calling for participants to pressure their governments to withdraw from these negotiations.

Hugh Govan spoke from UNOC where he briefly highlighted the staggering inequalities

fisher peoples face in contrast to the wealth of donors and corporations dominating the UNOC space and promoting the 30x30 agenda.

Assertions of Ocean, Water and Fisher Peoples' Identities, Territorial and Customary Rights

This session brought to light the deep-rooted cultural, spiritual, and political ties that fisher peoples across the globe share with oceans and coastal ecosystems. Speakers from Latin America, the Caribbean, South Asia emphasized how dominant legal frameworks, conservation agendas, and blue economy initiatives erase long-standing relationships between communities and marine spaces.

A significant focus of the session was the critique of prevailing ocean governance regimes—particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)—that frame the sea as empty space available for state or corporate exploitation. These frameworks fail to acknowledge the presence, history, and knowledge systems of ocean peoples. They asserted that the ocean is a deeply cultural and ancestral domain, intrinsically linked to the identities, livelihoods, and customary rights of diverse fisher and coastal communities. Ana Isabel Márquez Pérez challenged this hegemonic view by introducing the concepts of *maritorio* and *aquatorio*, which recognize that marine spaces, like terrestrial ones, are deeply embedded with cultural meaning, livelihoods, and social systems. She pointed out that 40% of the global population lives within 100 km of the coast, yet their diverse relationships with the ocean remain invisible in policy and law. This hegemonic conception of the sea has resulted in the physical and symbolic fragmentation of sea cultures and “*maritorios*.” In a similar vein, Jones Thomas Spartegus, PAR Coalition, criticized post-WWII international bodies, including the UN, for facilitating the “looting of resources” and “branding nature as a resource,” allowing “imperialistic nations” to dictate the future. Spartegus rejected the framing of UNOC as a conference, calling it an “open auction” where “colonies are now defined as corporations,” enabling resource exploitation.

In spite of the recognition of customary rights in international instruments such as the SSF Guidelines and UNDROP as well as the domestic law in the several countries, legal protections accruing to the fishers have been attenuating. Mitchell Lay, CNFO, emphasized that the fundamental “right to fish” for small-scale fishers—including procedural, substantial, and legislative rights—is increasingly undermined by conservation agendas like “30 by 30,” the spread of aquafarms, debt-for-nature swaps, and the expansion of tourism and marine-based industries. He highlighted how legal frameworks are being reshaped to restrict fishing access and exclude small-scale fishers from decision-making.

Speakers affirmed that fisher peoples’ identities are inseparable from the ocean, not only as a site of livelihood but also as a spiritual and cultural domain. Marianeli, Ecuador,

spoke about how the rights of the fisher people extend beyond mere economic activity to encompass deep cultural aspects and identities. Echoing the conference theme, speakers proclaimed the inherent sovereignty of ocean peoples, rejecting the notion of oceans as “common property” or unclaimed spaces prior to the assertions of nation-states or corporations. Framing themselves not as marginal communities but as the “living descendants of the ocean-rimmed world,” fisher peoples claimed historical and cultural rights to marine spaces that predate modern legal frameworks. This sovereignty includes what Jones Thomas Spartegus called “amphibian rights”, the right to exist and move fluidly across land and sea and cannot be granted or withdrawn by institutional actors.

Beyond the UNOC, resistance strategies and alliances

This session examined the growing need for grassroots political formation, cross-movement, and international solidarity in response to the ongoing crises facing coastal and inland fishing communities. Against the backdrop of systemic exclusion and environmental degradation, speakers reflected on the limitations of state-led and UN-driven frameworks such as the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC), which often serve to legitimize extractive and exclusionary agendas under the guise of conservation and sustainable development.

A strong emphasis was placed on the urgency of building collective resistance from below—led by fishers, peasants, workers, and migrants to confront the capture of ocean and inland water governance by corporate and elite interests. Yukari Sekine, TNI, emphasized the importance of popular education, cross-sectoral convergence, and scholar-activist engagement in building capacity for a just transition rooted in redistribution, sovereignty, and democratic control over resources. She stressed that this moment demands organic, accountable dialogue between movements and academia, and the development of alternative infrastructures that can challenge dominant paradigms.

The session also highlighted concrete efforts of movement-led resistance through the example of the Fisher People’s Tribunal held in South Africa⁵, as presented by Ben Cousins, PLAAS. The tribunal offered a powerful space of public truth-telling and accountability, grounded in testimonies from over 100 small-scale fishers and supported by legal and academic expertise. The tribunal found that despite progressive legal frameworks, small-scale fishers in South Africa continue to face structural exclusion, criminalization, and violence, particularly at the hands of conservation authorities and extractive industry actors.

5 Details about the South Africa Tribunal can be found here: https://www.masifundise.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/23-April-2025_South-African-Fisher-People-Tribunal-Jury-Verdict.pdf

The Jury's findings brought attention to how post-apartheid economic policies have entrenched a pro-business, market-driven approach that systematically marginalizes small-scale fishers, while enabling environmental destruction and corporate impunity. Deep-seated inequalities, rooted in colonial and apartheid histories, continue to shape the lived realities of fishing communities, especially women and youth, across South Africa.

While sharing his reflections on COP-2, Carsten Pedersen, TNI, advocated for a greater emphasis on political formation for the WFFP at local and national levels, encouraging engagement in political processes. Pedersen urged communities to share specific examples of how they mobilize and build alliances with other working people, asserting that these grassroots efforts are essential for building local power and gaining political influence in national-level decision-making processes, ultimately leading to changes that can be seen at an international scale.

The session emphasized that resistance strategies must move beyond isolated struggles and build unified, transnational alliances to dismantle systems of dispossession and ecological destruction. In doing so, it laid the foundation for imagining what resistance can look like beyond the UNOC, where justice, autonomy, and dignity for fisher peoples are central.

Concluding Remarks Daouda Ndiaye (Co-Chair, WFFP)

Daouda Ndiaye, Co-Chair of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), delivered the concluding remarks, expressing gratitude for the solidarity shown in their struggle. He emphasized that the communities and seas are under threat from human, financial, and multinational institutions that are transforming the ocean into a commodity. He lamented that those who have lived by the ocean for generations are being treated as insignificant.

Ndiaye highlighted the devastating impacts of climate change—rising sea levels, eroded beaches, and destroyed ecosystems—for which he asserted the fishing communities are not responsible. Instead, he attributed the crisis to industries involved in extraction that generate CO₂. He explained that fisherfolk are the primary victims, forced to venture further for diminishing fish stocks, and are now seeing their traditional fishing grounds taken away in the name of conservation, with vast zones being privatized. He noted the irony that while asked to protect the environment, they are often excluded from conserved areas.

Ndiaye stressed that fisherfolk, youth, and women are the first victims of these crises, being forced to abandon their ancestral jobs. He affirmed that fisher people are the true defenders of the ocean, possessing the knowledge to fish and to protect the ocean. He

stated that “we can’t save fisher people without justice,” asserting that it is time for a clear choice.

Finally, Ndiyaye called for unity to protect the ocean, criticizing those who legitimize their oppressors, whether out of ignorance or for financial gain, by participating in conferences that exclude them. He concluded by powerfully asserting that the WFFP will always stand with the oppressed and expressed hope that their message would be heard.



Fisherwomen from Andhra Pradesh, India in Solidarity with C-OP 25



Fishworkers from Karnataka, India watching C-OP 25 live



Fishworkers from Tamilnadu, India watching C-OP 25 live

Annexure A

Speaker	Bio
Day 1	
Faye Aldefolio	Faye Aldefolio is a young activist associated with the organisation Pamalakaya based in the Philippines. Pamalakaya (National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organization in the Philippines) is an alliance of activist fisherfolk groups in the country with over 100,000 individual members and 43 provincial chapters. It was formalized as a federation in 1987. Faye has worked as a youth advocate for the peasant movement since over 7 years in the Philippines and currently is serving since the past 2 years as the youth and women's desk officer of PAMALAKAYA.
Yifang Tang	Yifang Tang is a senior researcher who has been associated with FIAN International, based at the international secretariat in Germany . FIAN is a human rights organization dedicated to advocating for the right to adequate food and nutrition. Yifang's work has focused on, among others, safeguarding the rights of small-scale fisher communities by researching and supporting communities to claim their human rights. She also serves as the Secretariat of the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition, to which WFFP is a member.

Christiana Louwa	Christiana Louwa is one of the strongest woman leaders of the fisher movement. She has been a part of several peoples movements over the years and has been an advocate for the rights of the fisher people. She is currently an office bearer and holds the position of the Treasurer of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples. She is from the indigenous fisherfolk community and represents the EIMolo Forum, Kenya.
Vijayan MJ	Vijayan MJ is a research scholar and policy analyst representing the Participatory Action Research Coalition in India which is focused on the collective endeavour of building action for social change through people centred research. He is a founding member of Friends of the Earth India, General Secretary of the Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy, and an advisor to several national movements including the National Fishworkers Forum. Internationally, he has been a chief facilitator of WFFP GA-7 (2017) and Indian Ocean tribunals (2020-21). He is associated as a scholar with Carnegie Europe's CRN - a global think tank on civil society.
Herman Kumara	Herman Kumara is a leader of the global fisher movement. He has played a role in bulding the fisher movements in Sri Lanka, South Asia and in various parts of the world. Herman is the General Secretary of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples and is the Convener of the National Fisheries Solidarity Organisation (NAFSO) of Sri Lanka.
Josana Pinto	Josana Pinto is a small-scale fisher from the Brazilian Amazon, National Coordinator of the Movement of Artisanal Fishers of Brazil and Coordinating Committee member of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples

André Standing	<p>André Standing is a senior advisor to the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA). The CFFA is a platform of European and African-based organizations that raises awareness about the impacts of the EU-Africa fisheries arrangements on African artisanal fishing communities. Dr. Standing researches on issues related to fisheries transparency, the rise of the blue growth and blue economies narratives and the rise of conservation finance. He recently has been spearheading criticisms to debt-for-ocean swaps. Publication from Andre “Blue Finance: How much debt can the ocean sustain? Implications for coastal fishing communities in South Africa”https://www.tni.org/en/publication/blue-financeSwap baby, swap – US environmental organisations to convert \$100 billion of debt to save nature, but to what end?: https://www.cffacape.org/publications-blog/swap-baby-swap-us-environmental-organisations-to-convert-100-billion-of-debt-to-save-nature-but-to-what-end</p>
Saad Ziada	<p>Saad Ziada is the coordinator of the Union of Agricultural Work Committees in Gaza (UAWC). This is a Palestinian non-governmental organization that focuses on agricultural development and empowerment of farmers in Palestine. Saad has been involved in advocating for the rights of Palestinian farmers and fishers, particularly in the face of challenges posed by Israeli occupation</p>

Rehema Namaganda	Rehema Namaganda is the Country Coordinator of FIAN Uganda, the national section of FIAN International, a human rights organization dedicated to advocating for the right to adequate food and nutrition. In this role, she leads initiatives addressing land tenure, food sovereignty, and legal protections against forced evictions. She is also pursuing her research and PhD.
Alfonso Simón Raylan	Alfonso Simón Raylan is a representative of the Sindicato de Trabajadores del Mar (Union of Sea Workers) in Panama. He has been working on significant issues with regards to the fisher peoples struggles and especially the issues relating to the Gnabe Bugle people related to artisanal fishing.
Jean-Pierre Kapalay	Jean-Pierre Kapalay is an active member of the Collectif des Pêcheurs du Lac Tanganyika Fishermen (Collective of Lake Tanganyika Fishermen), Tanzania and a coordinator of Convivium Slow Food Tanganyika. They are actively involved in raising awareness and sustainable management of Lake Tanganyika resources, including organizing workshops and conferences to promote responsible fishing and environmental conservation.
Lead Mangsai	Lead Mangsai is representing the Association of Thailand Federation of fisherfolks) . This is a group that has been working for the rights of the fisher people. They have been leading struggles against extractive fishing by commercial fishing boats largely meant for export that exploit the natural resources

Ramakrishna Tandel	Ramakrishna Tandel (NFF, India) Ramakrishna Tandel is the Chairperson of the National Fishworkers Forum in India which is four decade old federation of independent trade unions across the country. This is an organization that has advocated for the rights of the fisher people and coastal communities. Ramakrishna belongs to Maharashtra and has been associated in a leading role with the Maharashtra Machimar Kruti Samiti (MMKS) since many years.
Edmir Amanajás Celestino	Edmir Amanajás Celestino is a Researcher with the Program for Education, Research, and Extension in Territorial Development and Public Policies (PEPEDT/UFRRJ), the Center for Studies in the Sea Economy (CEEMAR/UFRRJ), and the Research Group on Territory, Identity, Gender, and Environment (GEPTIGAM/UFPA). He coordinates initiatives to strengthen and support the social organization of coastal populations, traditional communities, and Indigenous peoples through the creation of social management networks and sustainable territorial development.
Claudia Pineda (FIAN Honduras)	Executive Director of FIAN Honduras, a National section of FIAN in Honduras. FIAN Honduras has been supporting fishing communities in the Gulf of Fonseca who are fighting against industrial shrimp farming, an export industry strongly promoted by the Honduran government and operating with little government oversight.

Hemantha Withanage	Hemantha Withanage is a Sri Lankan environmental activist who founded the Centre for Environmental Justice in 2004. In 2021, he was elected as the chairperson of the Friends of the Earth International. His role involves leading a network of civil society organizations and peoples movements across the globe that advocate for environmental justice globally.
Jesu Rethinam	Jesu Rethinam is the coordinator of the Womens Assembly, WFFP and is a Coordination Committee member. Jesu is actively involved in various forums and networks particularly focusing on coastal communities and fisherfolk. She has played significant roles and continues to hold positions in organizations such National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), and Coastal Action Network (CAN), among others. She is a socio-legal development practitioner with over four decades of experience in legal aid, social activism, and community development. She is the Director of Social Need Education and Human Awareness (SNEHA). Her work has been published internationally, contributing to the discourse on coastal ecology, disaster management, and human rights especially with the lead taken on the Blue Economy Tribunals which have enhanced the advocacy efforts.

Day - 2	
Paula Satizábal	Paula Satizábal is a Colombian researcher at the Helmholtz Institute for Functional Marine Biodiversity (HIFMB) in Germany. She is part of the Marine Governance Group and is a marine political ecologist, working on justice issues in the oceans. She has been supporting the work of WFFP and has been engaging in several international processes including the Ocean, Water and Fisher Peoples' Tribunals, contributing to the mobilisation for the rights of fisher peoples.
Maíra Netto	Maíra Netto started working with fisher communities in 2015 as a researcher and educator and has been supporting the WFFP and the Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais (Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fishermen, MPP) in Brazil. She is currently working as a consultant for the North American Marine Alliance (NAMA).
Nadine Nembhard	Nadine Nembhard is the co-chair of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). She is associated with the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) in Belize, Central America. She has formerly been the General Secretary of WFFP and is someone who has led by example, as a woman leader she has strengthened WFFP by asserting the rights of the ocean people and addressing important issues faced by the constituent groups including the impacts of the Blue Economy, Ocean Grabbing, Industrial Aquaculture among others.

Asmaniah	Asmaniah or known as Teh Aas is a brave woman who has been involved in the struggle to stop ocean grabbing in Pari Island, she has also mobilised in Jakarta to stop the privatisation of 1000 islands. The “Pari Island Women Group” has occupied the Rengge coast to stop privatisation and discrimination against women.
Astrid Puentes Riaño	Astrid Puentes Riaño is the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. She has more than 20 years of experience on environmental law, human rights and climate change and has worked for and with communities, environmental defenders and Indigenous Peoples in Latin America, contributing to the protection of their rights and territory, including in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Astrid’s recent thematic report, Ocean and Human Rights, underscores that ocean issues are fundamentally human rights issues—emphasizing the protection of customary and traditional rights of Indigenous Peoples and fisher peoples critiquing the Blue Economy from a rights-based perspective, highlighting concerns around weak ocean governance, and criminalization of human rights and environmental defenders. Link to the report: https://docs.un.org/A/HRC/58/59

Liam Campling	<p>Liam Campling is a professor of International Business and Development at the School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University of London. Liam has studied international fisheries trade policy and global value chains for over two decades, with a numerous list of publications, including the book “Capitalism and the Sea” published in 2021, which explores the intricate connections between capitalism and marine environments. Liam has also been a long-time supporter of the movement, offering critical political economy analysis, which has been incredibly valuable for WFFP’s political formation and strategic planning.</p>
Shalmali Guttal	<p>Liam Campling is a professor of International Business and Development at the School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University of London. Liam has studied international fisheries trade policy and global value chains for over two decades, with a numerous list of publications, including the book “Capitalism and the Sea” published in 2021, which explores the intricate connections between capitalism and marine environments. Liam has also been a long-time supporter of the movement, offering critical political economy analysis, which has been incredibly valuable for WFFP’s political formation and strategic planning.</p>

Hugh Govan	Hugh Govan has been associated with the Locally Managed Marine Areas Network. His work involves promoting community-based marine resource governance in the Pacific region and his focus has been to build capacities of communities that can lead to more sustainable livelihoods. A supporter of fisher organisations in the Pacific since decades, he has been contributing towards building the work and perspectives of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples. Hugh is an 'action' researcher, working in collaboration with early career and established scholars. He continues to be a critical voice in global forums advocating for the rights of the fisher people.
Terrence Repelente	Terrence Repelente is a representative of PAMALAKAYA in the Philippines. Pamalakaya (National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organization in the Philippines) is an alliance of activist fisherfolk groups in the country with over 100,000 individual members and 43 provincial chapters. It was formalized as a federation in 1987. He works on issues concerning the rights and livelihoods of small-scale fisherfolk.
Ana Isabel Márquez Pérez	Ana Isabel Márquez Pérez is an anthropologist, Assistant Professor of Social Sciences at the Caribbean campus of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in San Andres Island. Ana has centred her work on dignifying the ways of life and mobilising for the territorial and maritorial rights of Raizal people and Caribbean fishers. Contributing to the strengthening of local mobilisation and the safeguarding of fisher peoples' cultural legacies.

Mitchell Lay	<p>Mitchell Lay is the Programme Coordinator of the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO). He has more than 20 years fishing experience and has represented the CNFO at many regional conferences on topics ranging from ecosystem-based management (EBM) to fishing subsidies and the World Trade Organisation (WTO); and more recently working on the virtual leadership institute to build the leadership capacity of fisherfolk organisation leaders.</p>
Jones Thomas Spartegus	<p>Jones Thomas Spartegus (PAR Coalition, India) is an activist from Tamil Nadu in India. From a young age Jones has been active member of the fish workers movement, including the Kudankulam anti-nuclear movement, mobilising for fisher struggles for identity, rights and territories. He is the Youth Assembly Coordinator of WFFP and has been one a strong voice and avid advocate of the notion of 'Ocean Peoples', which takes the entire focus to a much wider scale, moving beyond small-scale or fisher people. He is a representative of the WFFP in the UN Human Rights Council, the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), advocating for the rights and well-being of ocean peoples globally. He was also one of the key researchers in the Blue Economy Tribunals in the Indian Ocean.</p> <p>Video interview at the 55th session of the Human Rights Council: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrSV93tBuOQ</p>

Marianeli Torres	Marianeli Torres Benavides is the national coordinator for the defense of the mangrove ecosystem in Ecuador, C-CONDEM. She has a Master's in communication research and Social Education. She works with women harvesters and fisherwomen from the Ecuadorian coast and Latin America. Marianeli is a delegate at the Food Sovereignty working group of the WFFP and to the global network SLOWFOOD, Slow Fish chapter.
A. Annarasa	A. Annarasa has formerly been the chair and secretary of the northern Province Fisheries Federation, Sri Lanka. He is activist advocating for the rights of the fisher people since several decades. He has been focusing on issues and concerns raised against the destructive bottom Trawling issue within the country and between India and Sri Lanka. He has particularly been serving as the spokesperson of the northern Province Fisher Peoples Union.
Ben Cousins	Emeritus Professor Ben Cousins was one of the Jury members from the South Africa's Fisher Peoples Tribunals. His research focuses on the political economy of agrarian and land reform, examining the interplay of production, property, and power. His work has been incredibly valuable to policy-makers and civil society groups in their efforts to reduce poverty and inequality. He founded the Institute of Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape.

Yukari Sekine	Yukari Sekine is working closely with the Transnational Institute and is involved in a few research networks including a network for academics working with the Nyeleni Global Forum, including the Collective of Agrarian Scholar-Activists from the South (CASAS). She did her PhD on rural politics and resistance to land grabs in Myanmar and has supported WFFP with the preparations for the Nyeleni Global Forum.
Morgan Ody	Morgan Ody is the General Coordinator of La Via Campesina International (LVC). Morgan works for the human rights of peasants and rural workers worldwide. LVC has played a key role supporting WFFP. The movements work together mobilising for food sovereignty, which requires connecting agrarian and coastal struggles.
Carsten Pedersen	Carsten Pedersen is a political activist and researcher at Transnational Institute (TNI). His work addresses fundamental questions: Who has the rights to territories and resources? Who decides for what purpose these should be used? How does material and social life connect the seas with the land? Carsten has worked for WFFP at the international secretariat between 2014-17. He continues to support the global movement in his current capacity at TNI and contributes to various international processes from these perspectives.
Daouda Ndiaye	Daouda Ndiaye is the Co-chair of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). He is the vice-president in charge of communication for the Joint Commission of the Professional Artisanal Fisheries Organizations of Senegal (CONIPAS) and part of the National Collective of Artisanal Fishermen of Senegal (CNPS from the French).