



Fisher Peoples of Africa Unite and celebrate World Fisheries Day

Statement of the African chapter of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

World Fisheries Day, 21 November 2025

L'hôtel Coco Beach, À Mbour, Sénégal

We, the African members of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples gathered in À Mbour, Sénégal to celebrate our World Fisheries Day. This is an historic occurrence as for the first time we come together to celebrate World Fisheries Day in Africa, in solidarity with the Senegalese National Collective of Artisanal Fishers. Representing over one million fisher peoples and Indigenous Peoples from coastal and inland regions in fourteen countries, we celebrate World Fisheries Day in the midst of the escalated environmental, economic, political and social crisis. We celebrate our diverse cultures that our fisherwomen and men, young and old, trace back to time immemorial.

Mother Africa is bleeding

As in times before us, our people in Africa suffer. Our Rivers are blocked by dams and polluted by mining, lakes and life within are changing because of the climate crisis and turned into oil-fields or sites for harmful aquaculture. The richest nature we have, is turned into tourist attractions and conservation sites where we are no longer allowed. Our people are being criminalised, shot at and killed for fishing where they have always fished, because pristine nature is turned into Marine Protected Areas. Militarisation of our territories and fishing grounds is increasing in many of our countries, resulting in intimidation and discrimination and the undermining the safety of our people. While caring for nature is at our hearts, it should never be at the cost of our livelihoods and lives. We unite for restitution of injustices against our people; for the regeneration of our Mother Africa!

The roots of the plunder of our natural wealth

The tentacles of greed did not leave with independence in Africa. Claiming to pursue economic and social development, most, if not all, of our nation states have embraced an extractive ideology that nature as a resource to be stripped and sold for export profits. This ideology that is rooted in market logics and turning territories and resources into private property. With it, comes policy reforms that allows for foreign investors to seize control of our land, water and resources. But the wealth is not benefiting our people; the profits leave our continent and end in the pockets of shareholders of companies registered in faraway countries. Short of money to provide basic services, our nations have built a pile of debt so big that most of our countries now pay more money to serve this debt than we spend on healthcare. We are being told '*we need the blue economy to feed people, protect nature and build a sustainable economy*', but what it really means is that we need to find a way to boost export earnings to we can escape this debt trap. It means yet another wave of plunder of our natural wealth. We unite in our struggle for economic and environmental justice!

Who bears the costs?

Fisher people relying on the ocean and inland waters all over the continent bear the cost of the looting our territories. Fisherwomen often bear the heaviest burden. As the caretakers of our homes and the providers for our families, they are the first to face the pain of restricted access to waters and dwindling resources. When they cannot harvest fish for income and food, their independence is stripped away, and the children who look to them for nourishment suffer as well. The growing

militarization and criminalization are resulting in additional violence. These barriers leave our women more vulnerable, pushing them into deeper poverty and exposing them to heightened risks as they struggle to sustain their households. Youth in fishing communities are lead to see fishing livelihoods as unviable, often resulting in our children being forced to migrate, and to risk their lives in pursue of a better life across the Mediterranean, where tens of thousands have drowned on the journey at sea.

Our fish shall feed our people

Since the times of overcapacity in the global, industrial fishing fleet, and especially after World War II, our waters have been plundered by foreign vessels. At first, the fish was consumed by people from other continents, but since the rise of industrial aquaculture in the 1980's our fish is increasingly turned into fishmeal and fish oil and used to feed other fish. A few transnational corporations are responsible for degrading our nutritious and healthy fish into feed for salmon and other species fed and raised in captivity. For each meal of salmon consumed by rich people all over the world, a meal of nutritious sardine or other small pelagic fish is taken out of the mouths of our people. With close to 300 million undernourished Africans, we have to stop this plunder of our fish. We unite in our struggle to roll back industrial fishing!

Systemic transformation is now!

Our livelihoods and traditions are intertwined with the water we fish in, the nature we live in. The path we thread, led by our great leaders before us, unites us in our struggle for Food Sovereignty: We care for nature, use our knowledge and wisdom passed on from the one generation to the next, feed our people, and bring life to our local economy. We have the solution; we are the solution!

We call upon our governments

On this World Fisheries Day, we continue our struggle for our human rights, our rights to fish, to protect and govern our territories, and to sustain the livelihoods of our men, women and youth. We demand climate reparations, the restoration of nature, and the restitution of rights that have been stripped away from us. We call on our governments to recognise us as fisher peoples who hold real solutions to the crises we face.

We have fought for the adoption of the United Nations Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, and we insist that our governments work hand-in-hand with our members to implement these Guidelines in ways that honour their true spirit. For this reason, states must join us in ensuring that small-scale fisheries remain a central agenda item in the Committee on Fisheries and are prioritised in the FAO Regional Conference.

We also call on the African Union to strengthen its commitment to small-scale fisher communities by aligning its policies and programmes with the SSF Guidelines and ensuring fisher peoples are fully represented in continental decision-making.

Finally, we demand that the FAO continue its full support to the Global Strategic Framework for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (SSF-GSF), reaffirming small-scale fishers as the real agents of change.

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