

# **World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)**

## **CONSTITUTION**

Revised Version 3.0 - 2017/02

### ***PREAMBLE***

We, the Fisher Peoples of the world,  
United under the banner of  
THE WORLD FORUM OF FISHER PEOPLES (WFFP)  
With the aim of protecting our livelihood,  
Upholding fishing rights, human rights, fundamental rights,  
social justice and community responsibilities,  
And preserving and promoting our culture,  
Affirming water as the source of all life,  
Committing ourselves to sustain fisheries and aquatic resources  
for the present and for future generations,  
Gathered in Loctudy, France,  
Solemnly bind ourselves to abide by this Constitution,  
We adapt on this day, the sixth of October 2000.

## **OBJECTIVES**

### Article 1: Objectives

The objectives of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) are:

- a) To protect, defend and strengthen the communities that depend on the fishery for their livelihood.
- b) To assist member organizations to secure and improve upon the economic viability and quality of life of Fisher Peoples and their communities.
- c) To recognize, support and enhance the role of women in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the fishing community.
- d) To create an understanding of the resource as a common heritage of humanity and, through sustainable fishing practices, conservation, and regeneration of the marine and inland resources and ecosystems, to ensure that it is passed on to future generations.
- e) To protect fishing communities, fish resources and fish habitats, such as coastal zones, watersheds and mangroves, from land-based, sea-based and air-based threats. These include displacement by tourism, pollution (including the use of the sea as a dumping ground for toxic waste), destructive industrial aquaculture, over-fishing and destructive fishing practices.
- f) To establish and assert the rights of fishing communities to their customary territories in the coastal zone under their national jurisdiction for fishing and habitation.
- g) To promote a legal regime that will ensure the traditional and customary rights of fishing communities to the fishery under their national jurisdiction.
- h) To promote the primary role of fisher-peoples' organizations in managing fisheries and oceans, nationally and internationally.
- i) To protect food security, both locally and worldwide, by sustaining fish stocks for the future, and by preserving fish for human consumption.
- j) To promote equitable representation of fisher-peoples' organizations in all relevant regional and international fora and advocate their recognition.
- k) To play an active role to ensure that states and transnational corporations comply with relevant international agreements and to oppose any trade agreements that threaten the livelihood of fishers.
- l) To prevent the export of resource collapse crises and of technologies and practices that lead to these crises.
- m) To provide support for national and international struggles that are consistent with the objectives of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).
- n) *Promote and facilitate the incorporation into the local, national and regional policies, any instrument promoting the rights of Small-scale Fisheries in the context of food sovereignty and poverty eradication.*

*o) Resist the imposition of capitalist policies that promote ocean and land grabbing and undermine biodiversity in oceans, seas, wetlands and inland water bodies particularly those that allow and authorize the seizure of aquatic resources, through privatization, large scale conservation, or eviction of communities of small-scale fishers, and access to fisheries but instead, promote policies based on respect for nature and human rights.*

p) To encourage, assist and support Fisher Peoples to organize themselves where they have not already done so.

q) To promote the right of Fisher Peoples to social security, safe working conditions, fair income and safety at sea, as well as their recognition as seafarers.

r) To improve the communication between Fisher Peoples and the scientific community through the exchange of knowledge and science.

s) To acknowledge and enhance the unique culture of fishing communities.

t) To restore our access to the rights and powers originally granted to us in the charter of the United Nations.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### Article 2: Member organizations

a) Organizations which comply with the objectives set out in Article 1 of this

Constitution may be members of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). Subject to article 3, only one national organization per country may be a member. Such organizations must be democratically constituted and may include, but not be limited to, trade unions, associations, federations of cooperatives and aboriginal nations dependent on the fishery for their livelihood. They must represent one of the groups set out below:

1) Fish harvesters, i.e. any person directly engaged in fishing, known in different countries as:

- Subsistence fishers;
- Artisanal fishers;
- Aboriginal or indigenous peoples who are customary fish harvesters;
- Traditional coastal and inland fishers;
- Independent small scale owner-operators;
- Crew members in this sector.

2) Crew members of fishing units other than those mentioned above and who are presently members of organizations listed under subsection a) above.

3) Broadly based (mass-based) organizations of fishing communities and women engaged in work in support of the fishery.

4) Fish workers who are engaged in activities related to the processing, direct sale (excluding merchants) or transport of fish.

b) Corporations, transnational companies and allied affiliates owning fishing vessels and engaged in harvesting, processing and distribution of fish and those carrying out destructive fishing or industrial aquaculture cannot be members of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).

#### Article 3: Admission of Members

Only the Coordination Committee may admit member organizations. In exceptional cases, the Coordination Committee may, while respecting the objectives set out in Article 1 of this Constitution, admit as a member organization more than one national group per country if the organization represents a significant proportion of the groups or one of the groups listed in subsections 1) to 4) of Article 2 of this Constitution.

#### Article 4: Commitment

Every member organization of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) must formally accept and abide by this Constitution.

#### Article 5: Withdrawal of Members

Any member may withdraw from the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) by giving three (3) months notice to the Coordination Committee.

#### Article 6: Fees

The fee schedule as well as the method of payment shall be fixed by the Coordination Committee. In very exceptional circumstances, the Coordination Committee may waive the payment of fees by a particular member for a period of time.

#### Article 7: Suspension of Membership

a) The Coordination Committee may, after two reminders, suspend a member for non-payment of fees. Such suspension will be removed upon payment of the outstanding fees.

b) The Coordination Committee may suspend a member for actions detrimental to the objectives of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), provided that the Coordination Committee allows the member reasonable opportunity for a hearing before any decision concerning a suspension is made.

c) No suspended member may take part in the work of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) or vote at the General Assembly.

d) Any suspension may be appealed to the General Assembly.

#### Article 8: Expulsion

The General Assembly may expel a member organization for cause provided that:

- a) Expulsion has been recommended by the appropriate Continental Council.
- b) The Co-ordination Committee has given the member reasonable opportunity for a hearing into the actions giving rise to a consideration of expulsion.

### **STRUCTURE**

#### Article 9: Forum Composition

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) shall consist of:

- a) A General Assembly
- b) A Coordination Committee
- c) Five Continental Fora
- d) *One or more special invitees and resource persons*

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

#### Article 10: General Assembly

The General Assembly constitutes the highest authority of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).

The General Assembly shall be composed of all of the delegates representing member organizations who attend that meeting. The Coordination Committee may permit organizations that are not members to send observers to the General Assembly.

The Coordination Committee may nominate to the GA the name of any person/s that has made extraordinary contributions to the formation and growth of the WFFP, to serve as a "Special Invitee". A Special Invitee may participate in the meetings of the Coordinating Committee and the General Assembly but will have no decision making rights. He/she may, however, make public pronouncements on behalf of the WFFP provided that it compliments the WFFP Constitution, resolutions of the General assembly and decisions of the Coordinating Committee. Serving as a "Special Invitee" must be ratified by the GA and the "Special Invitee" may be re-nominated at the next GA.

#### Article 11: Functions of the General Assembly

The functions of the General Assembly are:

- a) To officially interpret and to amend the Constitution of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).
- b) To discuss issues of common interest and adopt resolutions on subjects on the agenda, and to do so in a spirit of cooperation and exchange of ideas.
- c) To decide on the action required to implement decisions and fulfill the objectives of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).
- d) To assign tasks or duties to the Coordination Committee.
- e) To conduct elections as per the provisions of this Constitution
- f) To ratify, annul or sanate actions and decisions made by the Coordination Committee and the Continental Councils.

#### Article 12: Member Representation at the General Assembly

- a) Each country with at least one member organization shall be entitled to representation at the General Assembly by two delegates, one of whom shall be male and the other female.
- b) Each member organization shall be entitled to nominate observers / alternate delegates to participate at the General Assembly with the right to speak.
- c) The nomination of auditors, observers and alternative delegates must be approved by the Coordination Committee.
- d) The out-going members of the Coordination Committee shall be delegates to the General Assembly in which the new officials take charge

#### Article 13: Designation of Delegates

- a) Member organizations shall name their delegates in writing to the Coordination Committee not less than 90 days before the General Assembly takes place.
- b) In the case of a country with more than one member organization, the organizations in the respective country shall try to agree on the delegates representation. In the event that the member organizations in the respective country are unable to agree on the delegates representation, they may refer the matter to the Coordination Committee for a binding decision.

#### Article 14: Decision Making Process

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) shall seek to make all decisions through consensus.

In between CC meetings, or when the need arises, the CC, upon initiation of the GS or Coordinators, may take pragmatic or operational decisions via a written round robin method wherein at least 60% of its members approve such decisions

in writing. Similar decisions may also be taken via a telephonic or electronic conference wherein 60% or more of its decision making members take part. Decisions taken in this manner must be circulated in writing to all CC members within 30 days after it is taken. Decisions taken in this manner must be ratified at the next CC meeting.

Any decisions taken in terms of the provisions of this constitution is binding on all relevant members and structures of the WFFP.

#### Article 15: Location of the General Assembly

Subject to any decision taken at a previous General Assembly, the General Assembly shall take place at a location to be fixed by the Coordination Committee.

#### Article 16: Frequency of the General Assembly

The General Assembly shall take place at least once every 3 years.

### **COORDINATION COMMITTEE**

#### Article 17: Composition of the Coordination Committee

The Coordination Committee (CC) shall be composed of two Coordinators, one of whom shall be a woman and the other a man, the General Secretary, the Treasurer and Continental representatives as per the provisions of Article 18 *and* 19, *and a representative of indigenous people within the member organizations.*

A CC member, when unavailable to attend a CC meeting, may issue a proxy to another member from his/her organization or continental forum, to attend CC meetings, save where the provisions of article 21 apply. A member with such a proxy shall have all the rights of the member who granted the proxy and shall be bound by the provisions of this Constitution. Any proxy must be channeled via the General Secretary or Coordinators.

#### Article 18: Designation of the Coordination Committee members

*The Coordination Committee (CC) will be selected in conjunction with each General Assembly (GA), through a process consisting of the following steps:*

*1) The CC nomination process starts during the last CC meeting preceding the GA;*

*2) The CC appoints a 2-person "Nominating Committee" (NC) composed by one woman and one man;*

3) *The CC gives the NC clear instructions regarding nomination criteria, on gender, geographical and Indigenous representation, as well as criteria for Special Invitees and resource persons.*

4) *The NC will consult the Continental Fora for the names of a minimum of one male and one female nominee for each Fora, and report back to the CC with the names on this slate;*

5) *The NC will consult members of the incoming nominated CC (“the slate”), to identify potential officers from among the oncoming nominees. These are CC Coordinators (one male and one female), Secretary-General and Treasurer;*

6) *The NC approaches eligible candidates to determine interest;*

7) *During the GA, each Continental Forum will ratify its own nominees. If there is not consensus within a Continental Forum, the NC will be responsible for facilitating a consensus decision;*

8) *The NC will then present the slate to the full plenary of the GA;*

9) *Before the GA closes the outgoing CC convene a CC during which the NC will present the names of potential officer of the new CC, based on their survey, and these nominations will be ratified by the CC.*

10) *The new officers will assume their positions immediately upon ratification, and report back to the full plenary of the GA.*

11) *The NC may seek advice from the Coordinators and Secretary General of the outgoing CC to resolve issues arising in the nomination process.*

#### Article 19: Designation of Continental representatives

*WFFP has five (5) Continental Fora:*

1) *Africa*

2) *South Asia*

3) *Southeast Asia/East Asia/South Pacific*

4) *Europe*

5) *North/Central/South America*

*Continental Fora convened during each GA to nominate on a consensus basis, following the proposal of the Nominating Committee (NC), two Continental Representatives (one woman one man) who will be CC members until the next GA.*

*The NC can “facilitate” the decision process of “Continental Fora”.*

#### Article 20: Functions of the Coordination Committee

The Coordination Committee acts under the authority of the General Assembly and represents the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).

Other than the duties that may be delegated by the General Assembly, the functions of the Coordination Committee are as follows:

- a) Facilitate the creation of Continental Fora.
- b) Plan and manage the activities of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).
- c) Organize the General Assembly.
- d) Propose recommendations to be put to the General Assembly.
- e) Implement measures decided upon by the General Assembly.
- f) Represent the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) in dealings with other organizations.
- g) Admit members in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.
- h) Report on its activities to the General Assembly.
- i) Maintain close links among members of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) during periods when the General Assembly is not in session.
- j) Take care of preparing a budget and managing finances of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) in accordance with Article 29 of this Constitution.
- k) *Appoint "Resource person/s", for a single term, who can add value to or who can help with any specific task or project. Such "Resource person/s" shall have speaking but no decision-making rights at a CC and GA. "Resource person/s" can be reappointed by the CC at the next GA*
- l) Generally, take any measures deemed necessary to attain the objectives set out in this Constitution.

#### Article 21: Term of Office of Coordination Committee Members

The mandate of Coordination Committee members shall be for the period until the next General Assembly. Normally the mandate will be for a term of three (3) years.

#### Article 22: Vacancies in the Coordination Committee.

- a) If an member organization notifies the Coordination Committee that a member of the Coordination Committee no longer holds the position that provided the political base for his or her election to the Coordination Committee, this matter will be referred to the appropriate Continental Council. If the Continental Council determines that this notification is valid, the Continental Council shall be authorized to declare this position vacant.
- b) If the circumstances described in a) above involve a Coordinator, the General Secretary or the Treasurer, the Coordination Committee is authorized to take appropriate action.
- c) The Coordination Committee is authorized to fill a vacancy in the position of Coordinator, General Secretary or Treasurer.

d) In the event of a vacancy in the position of continental representative in the Coordination Committee, the Coordination Committee, after deliberate consultation with all members of the continental council, is authorized to fill the vacancy for the duration of its term.

#### Article 23: Procedures

The Coordination Committee shall establish its own rules, decide on its own procedures and determine how often to meet. The Coordinators or the GS shall convene a special meeting, when at least 60% of the CC members request so in writing.

#### Article 24: Functions of the Coordinators

- a) To make all decisions jointly and in consultation with the General Secretary.
- b) To convene the General Assembly and the Coordination Committee.
- c) To preside over the General assembly and the Coordination Committee.
- d) To coordinate the activities of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) according to this Constitution, the decisions of the General Assembly and the Coordination Committee.
- e) To facilitate new membership to the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).
- f) To represent the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) at other national and international fora and to delegate others to do so.
- g) Generally, to take any measures deemed necessary to attain the objectives set out in this Constitution, to be reported to and to be ratified by the Coordination Committee.
- h) To issue public and press statements in the name of and on behalf of the WFFP and to delegate any other CC member to issue such public statements all of which should be in accordance with the WFFP Constitution as well as GA and CC decisions.

#### Article 25: Functions of the Treasurer

- a) To handle all financial matters of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)
- b) To act according to the decision of the Coordination Committee.
- c) To expend funds as per decision of the CC and upon written instructions from the Coordinators and General Secretary collectively.
- d) To have the accounts of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) independently audited every year.

#### Article 26: Duties of the General Secretary

- a) To work collaboratively, on a consensus basis, with the Coordinators.
- b) To maintain an office of communication, animation and documentation.
- c) To keep official records of the WFFP.
- d) To carry out tasks assigned by the Coordination Committee.
- e) To spearhead the implementation of administrative and programmatic operations of the WFFP
- f) To issue any public statement on policy, programmatic and any operational issue that is based upon decisions taken within official structures of the WFFP.

#### Article 27: Term of office

The term of office for the Coordinators, Treasurer and General Secretary shall be for a period of three years unless the timing of the next General Assembly dictates otherwise. No individual may be elected for more than two consecutive terms to any of these offices.

### **CONTINENTAL FORA**

#### Article 28: Establishment of Continental Fora

- a) The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) recognizes five Continental Fora in accordance with the provisions of Article 18 of this Constitution.
- b) Member organizations of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) in each of the continents mentioned in Article 18 form the respective Continental Forum.
- c) Each Continental Forum shall decide upon its own structures and mode of operation respecting the Objectives contained in Article 1, and in accordance with other directives and spirit of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). Such statutes are subject to the approval of the WFFP Coordination Committee.
- d) The Continental Fora shall designate their representatives to the Coordination Committee.

#### Article 29: Continental Councils

- a) Each Continental Forum shall have a Continental Council as its governing body with a Continental Coordinator and other officials deemed necessary.
- b) The functions of the Continental Councils shall be to ensure the coordination and the consultation of member organizations in their respective continents, and the implementation of the programme of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).

## ***GENERAL PROVISIONS***

### Article 30: Financing

a) Revenues for the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) shall derive from:

1. Members fees;
2. Donations or grants deemed acceptable by the Coordination Committee;
3. Any other source deemed acceptable by the Coordination Committee.

b) The Coordination Committee shall not accept funds from large corporations or any other body acting in a manner which is contrary to the objective of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP).

### Article 31: Quorum

The quorum for the purpose of the meetings of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) shall be as follows:

- a) General Assembly – Two thirds of the delegates
- b) Coordination Committee – More than 50% of members of the Coordination Committee

### Article 32: Media / Public Statements

No person, unless authorized under the provisions of this constitution may issue any official public statement purporting to be in the name of WFFP or any component thereof.

### Article 33: Dissolution

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) may be dissolved by a consensus.

### Article 34: Offices

The offices of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) shall be located as determined from time to time by the Coordination Committee.

### Article 35: Official Languages

The official languages of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) shall be English, French and Spanish.

### Article 36: Interpretation

Between General Assemblies the Coordination Committee has authority in matters concerning the interpretation of this Constitution.

Article 37: Status

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) is an independent organization.

By authority of the General Assembly, the Coordination Committee may undertake any measures deemed necessary to confer on the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) a juridical personality in accordance with the applicable laws of a country in which the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) carries out its activities.

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