Celebrating
the first ever
International Fisher Women's Day
on 5th November 2025

'Anchored in Struggle, Rising in Solidarity'



Report of the global webinar held on:
6th November 2025

WORLD FORUM OF FISHER PEOPLES

FORO MUNDIAL DE PUEBLOS PESCADORES
WORLD FORUM OF FISHER PEOPLES
FORUM MONDIAL DES POPULATIONS DE PÊCHEURS

Celebrating the first ever International Fisher Womens Day

on 5th November 2025

Report of the Global Webinar held on 6th November 2025

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About November 5th International Fisher Women's Day:

Anchored in Struggle, Rising in Solidarity

A call by World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) to recognise, honour and celebrate 5 November as International Fisher Women's Day

The **World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)** was formed at the independent Global Assembly of fisher peoples in New Delhi, India, in November 1997. Today, it stands as the largest global network of fisher peoples — a powerful collective defending the rights of traditional and sustainable fisher communities and protecting inland, coastal, and marine ecosystems from exploitation.

Over the years, WFFP has championed the struggles of fishing communities worldwide, confronting the growing threats posed by the **Blue Economy, Ocean Grabbing, Marine Spatial Planning, Sea-bed Mining, Intensive and Industrial Aquaculture**, and the worsening **climate crisis**. These developments have deepened dispossession and ecological devastation across the coasts and inland waters of the world.

At the heart of our vision is the recognition that fisher women are not marginal contributors but **central to the life, culture, and economy of fisheries**. Across the globe, women account for over 50% of fishwork — including pre-catch, catch, and post-catch activities. According to FAO (2020), women represent nearly 90% of post-catch fish processing and trading work, yet their labour remains invisible in statistics, policy, and leadership spaces. This exclusion reflects and reinforces structural gender inequalities that must be dismantled.

A Historic Step Forward: 5 November Declared International Fisher Women's Day

As resolved during our **8th General Assembly in Brazil**, WFFP proudly declares **5 November as the International Fisher Women's Day (IFWD)**.
This day was born out of the **India Fisher Women Assembly 2024** held in Kerala — a milestone event that brought together fisher women from across the country to assert their identity and demand recognition.

Before the Brazil Assembly, regional and national fisher women's gatherings were held across South Africa, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and India. Their collective voices converged at the **WFFP Fisher Women's Assembly** in 2024, and later at the **Global Fisherwomen Assembly in Hat Yai, Thailand (August 2025)** — the first-ever independent global assembly exclusively led by fisher women.

The Unseen Hands of the Sea

For centuries, women in coastal, inland, and riverine communities have:

- Governed fish markets and community trade networks
- Preserved artisanal processing traditions — salting, drying, smoking
- Passed on ecological knowledge of tides, fish behaviour, and marine biodiversity
- Managed household economies linked to seasonal fishing cycles and repaired nets
- Built solidarity, mutual aid, and informal credit systems
- Anchored community well-being and cultural life
- Defended aquatic ecosystems and water bodies — often holding the struggle when men could not

These roles are **not supplementary but foundational** to the functioning of traditional and sustainable fisheries.

Yet, patriarchal development models continue to undervalue this labour, framing "productive" work as men's catch at sea, while relegating women's contribution to the private or "supporting" sphere. A **feminist perspective** in fisheries is not merely about adding women to existing structures — it demands **a transformation of extractive and profit-driven logics**, rejecting Blue Economy enclosures, marine privatization, and the commodification of life itself.

Main Demands of the Fisher Women

- Equal **representation and leadership** of fisher women in all government bodies, cooperatives, and community institutions
- Recognition of fisher women as **full rights-holders** in all fisheries laws, policies, and statistics
- Protection of **inland, coastal, and marine rights** — secure access to waters, coasts, and resources
- **No forced land or coastal acquisition** in the name of development
- Inclusion of women from fishing and coastal communities in **all post-disaster compensation** mechanisms
- **Accident insurance, maternity benefits, and social protection** for fisher women
- Access to **fair markets, credit, and first-sale rights**, free from exploitation by middlemen
- Programmes to advance **gender justice awareness** — not only for women but for the entire community
- A total **ban on destructive aquaculture, deep-sea mining, and coastal militarisation**
- Recognition of **traditional knowledge and community-based conservation**
- **Community control** over forests, coasts, and seas

A Global Wave of Solidarity

WFFP has called upon all member organisations to design creative and inclusive programmes — at the local, regional, and national levels — to honour fisher women and strengthen our collective struggles.

Beginning **5 November 2025**, WFFP launched a **five-week global campaign** connecting three key dates in our calendar:

- **5 Nov – International Fisher Women's Day (IFWD)**
- **21 Nov – World Fisher Peoples' Day**
- **10 Dec – International Human Rights Day**

Each week carries a theme that builds our movement's unity and vision:

1. **Gender Rights & Freedom from Violence** (5–11 Nov)
2. **Asserting Fisher Identity** (12–18 Nov)
3. **Community & Customary Rights** (19–25 Nov)
4. **Protect Waters; Protect Life** (26 Nov–2 Dec)
5. **Fisher Rights as Human Rights** (3–10 Dec)

Join the Tide of Change

The sea has always been a space of courage, survival, and solidarity. Fisher women have kept it alive with their toil and love.

On this International Fisher Women's Day, let us celebrate their strength — and reaffirm our collective determination to secure justice, dignity, and rights for all traditional and sustainable fisher peoples of the world.

World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)
International Fisher Women's Day – 5 November

Website:
https://wffp-web.org/
Instagram:
https://www.instagram.com/world_forum_of_fisher_peoples?igsh=MTE3Y2x2MHpwcTRmbQ==
Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/worldfishers
You Tube Channel
https://youtube.com/@worldfishers?si=HcifNdJugXw6lykQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBVDz70IiP4 Webinar on 6th November 2025

#FisherWomenUnite #InternationalFisherWomensDay #WFFPIFWD #WFFP #WomenOfTheWaves #FoodSovereignty #FoodSecurity #OceanWarriors #FisheriesRights #November5th #Nov1to5

Report of the Global Celebration of International Fisher Women's Day- November 6, 2025

Introduction

The global online gathering marking **International Fisher Women's Day on November 5** brought together fisher leaders, activists, and representatives of fishing communities from multiple regions of the world. The event celebrated the first global observance of the day and provided a platform for fisher women and their allies to share experiences, highlight challenges, and advocate for greater recognition of women's roles in fisheries.

The celebration was organized within the framework of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), a global movement representing small-scale fishing communities. Participants from different continents joined the meeting to discuss the significance of the day, present solidarity messages, and reflect on the struggles and achievements of fisher women worldwide.

The event not only celebrated women's contributions but also launched a broader campaign aimed at strengthening global recognition of fisher women's rights and leadership in fisheries governance. Discussions emphasized the importance of gender equality, environmental sustainability, and community-based fisheries management. The meeting also highlighted the ongoing need to protect coastal communities from climate change, industrial exploitation of marine resources, and social inequalities.

The program included opening remarks, cultural expressions, solidarity messages from international organizations and community leaders, testimonies from fisher representatives, and the presentation of the International Fisher Women's Day Declaration.

The programme was centrally moderated by **Melanie Brown, fisher woman and member of the Coordinating Committee of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples from Alaska**, she welcomed participants from across the world and introduced the purpose of the gathering.

"This day marks an important milestone in recognizing the contributions of fisher women and building momentum for a global campaign dedicated to our rights and recognition."

She highlighted that the event was not only a celebration but also the beginning of a five-week global campaign focusing on different themes related to fisher women's struggles and achievements. Participants were encouraged to continue engaging through community initiatives, social media platforms, and international advocacy efforts during this campaign period.

Melanie also emphasized the importance of solidarity across communities and regions, noting that fisher women share many common challenges regardless of geographical differences. After opening the session, she invited **Nadine Nembhard, Co-Chair of WFFP from the Caribbeans, associated with the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) in Belize, Central America** to deliver the official welcome remarks.

Nadine welcomed participants on behalf of the global fisheries movement and expressed appreciation for the collective efforts that made the first celebration of International Fisher Women's Day possible.

In her remarks, Nadine highlighted the longstanding struggle to ensure that women working in fisheries receive proper recognition and representation. She emphasized that fisher women contribute significantly to food systems, coastal economies, and community wellbeing. Despite this, their contributions are often overlooked in official policies and decision-making structures.

Nadine stressed that the establishment of International Fisher Women's Day represents an important step toward correcting this imbalance. She encouraged participants to continue working collectively to ensure that the day gains broader recognition internationally.

Mystica

Following the welcome remarks, **Susan Hodge representing the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) from Caribbeans** presented a poetic reflection dedicated to fisher women around the world. The poem highlighted the resilience, courage, and determination of women working in fisheries and coastal communities.

Through her poetic expression, Susan emphasized the emotional and cultural dimensions of fisher women's work. She reflected on the deep connection between women, the sea, and community life, portraying fisher women as protectors of marine ecosystems and sustainers of cultural traditions.

The poem served as a powerful reminder that the work of fisher women goes beyond economic contribution; it also embodies cultural heritage, environmental stewardship, and intergenerational knowledge.

The Women Who Lift the Tide

Before the sun finds its first gold,
she is already a small horizon—
oars tucked under muscle and memory,
knots talking in her hands,
radio crackling like a restless gull,
hope stowed safe beside the ice.

She reads the water's handwriting—
ripple, seam, sudden shadow—
maps stitched into the mind by mothers,
aunties, sisters, market queens,
who taught that a net is also a story
and every catch feeds more than mouths.

Cast, mend, haul, share—
verbs of a thousand mornings,
of calloused palms and bright laughter,
of pots and lines, traps and tides,
of rain like beads in her hair,
of salt blessing the brow like prayer.

When storms arrive with famous names,
she fastens roofs with rope and reason,
counts boats, checks neighbors,
finds the missing, finds her breath,

and steers the village back to shore—
courage is her quiet engine.

In the smoke and song of the market
she is math and mercy in one breath:
weighing, pricing, teaching the young
how fair looks, how trust sounds,
how tomorrow is built on today's hands—
how profit can still be kind.

She is captain and crew,
owner and organizer, tender of mangroves,
keeper of reefs and seasons and rights;
she is ledger and lighthouse,
policy in plain language,
the future speaking in the plural.

Today we say your names—
from bays and banks, creeks and coasts,
from skiffs and kitchens, sheds and schools—
we say them like blessings, like bells,
so even the tide must answer,
present and accounted for.

International Fisherwomen's Day, 2025:
we raise our flags of net and needle,
of paddle, knife, and scale;
we crown the work that crowns us,
and promise, with hands like anchors:
we will lift the sea that lifts you.

The meeting began with tribites to two fisher women leaders who passed away recently, Vedhavalli[1] from Tamil Nadu, India and Solene Smith[2] from South Africa.

Context and Historical Background

The historical context of International Fisher Women's Day was presented by **Jesu Rethinam, Womens Assembly Coordinator WFFP from India**. In her presentation, she explained the background and motivations behind establishing this global day. Jesu emphasized that fisher women have long played essential roles in small-scale fisheries but have rarely received recognition in official policy frameworks. She explained that the creation of International Fisher Women's Day emerged from discussions within the global fisheries movement, particularly among organizations advocating for gender equality in fishing communities. She mentioned that the women are not just statistics, we define our own struggles.

[1] Interview published on the WFFP website: https://wffp-web.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Vedavalli.pdf
[2] Interview published on the WFFP website: https://wffp-web.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/SOLENE-SMITH.pdf

She also noted that the day was established to highlight the importance of recognizing women's work across the entire fisheries value chain, including activities such as preparing fishing gear, harvesting marine resources, processing catches, marketing fish products, and managing household economies. Jesu stressed that recognizing fisher women is not only a matter of fairness but also a critical component of sustainable fisheries management and the sovereignty of fisher peoples.

Fisher Women's Rights are Human Rights!

Solidarity Message from WFFP Leadership

A solidarity message was delivered by **Herman Kumara**, General Secretary of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples.

Herman acknowledged the contributions of earlier leaders and activists who had worked tirelessly to bring global attention to the role of fisher women. Father Thomas Kocherry, Harekrishna Debnath, Andy Johnston, Dao Kai, Tahira Ali, Mohommad Ali Shah, Matanhy Saldanah among others were mentioned.

He described the long process of advocacy that led to the establishment of International Fisher Women's Day. He acknowledged that the 5th November was when the India Fisherwomen Assembly took place and it was under the leadership of the Indian friends that they proposed to make that day as the International Fisher Womens Day at the Eighth General Assembly of WFFP, which was accepted. This proposal and all the work of WFFP till now has been supported by leaders like Douda, Naseegh Jaffer, Nadine Nemphard, Sherry Pictou, Jesu Rethinam and Purnima Meher. Many of the young friends who contributed to making this day significant were also recognized and their efforts acknowledged.

He also highlighted the progress made in engaging with international institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other global bodies in order to gain broader recognition for the day. Many officials of government authorities are also recognizing this across the globe.

Herman emphasized that fisher women are central to the survival of coastal communities and that their leadership is essential in defending marine ecosystems and sustainable fisheries. He encouraged participants to continue advocating for the official recognition of the day at national and international levels.

Solidarity Messages by allied organizations and networks

Moderator: Faye Aldefolio, Pamalakaya (National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organization in the Philippines)

Faye invited representatives from various international movements and community organizations to share their perspectives.

She highlighted the importance of creating spaces where fisher women from different regions can exchange experiences and build alliances. The solidarity messages that followed reflected on the diversity of challenges faced by fishing communities while reinforcing the shared commitment to gender justice and environmental sustainability.

One of the first solidarity messages came from **Bhavana Rabari, the South Asia representative of the Wørld Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Pastoralists (WAMIP) for the South Asian region**. Bhavana emphasized the strong connection between indigenous communities and marine ecosystems. She highlighted that fisher women are guardians of traditional knowledge and central to coastal resource governance. Her message

stressed the importance of recognizing indigenous women's leadership in environmental protection and community development.

Another solidarity message was delivered by **Yildiz Temürtürkan** , **International Coordinator World March of Women**. She emphasized that the struggles of fisher women are closely linked to the global fight for gender equality and social justice. Yildiz highlighted the importance of building alliances between feminist movements and fisher communities to strengthen advocacy efforts.

Betty Fermin, Director of Global Movements Program, Why Hunger shared a message emphasizing the role of fisher women in ensuring food security and supporting sustainable food systems while focusing on food sovereignty. She noted that the work of fisher women contributes significantly to community nutrition and economic resilience, particularly in regions where fisheries are a primary source of livelihood. She mentioned about work on land and sea and how fishing communities reflect on the collective spirit to preserve the mother earth.

Anna Maria Suárez Franco, **Secretary General of FIAN International** focused on the human rights dimensions of fisheries. She emphasized that access to food and natural resources is a fundamental human right and that fisher communities play a vital role in protecting these rights. Womens involvement in pre and post harvest was highlighted. She stated that,

"Celebration is also resistance

Today as the Blue Economy, industrial aquaculture and climate 'solutions' expand, women's access to the sea, rivers and commons is reduced."

She mentioned that women face the impacts of climate disasters and the various problems caused by anti people policies but they continue to feed the world.

Morgan Ody, General Coordinator of La Via Campesina highlighted the connections between fisher communities and broader movements advocating for food sovereignty. She emphasized that fisher women are central actors in defending sustainable food systems and resisting industrial exploitation of natural resources. She mentioned about the Nyleni Forum and the International Conference on Agricultural Reform and Rural Development as important spaces for interventions.

Globalise the Struggle, Globalize Hope!

Voices from Fisher Communities

Moderator: Subashini from National Fisheries Solidarity Organisation (NAFSO), Sri Lanka

An important segment of the global gathering for International Fisher Women's Day focused on testimonies from representatives of fisher communities around the world. These contributions highlighted the lived realities of small-scale fishing communities and emphasized the essential yet often invisible role played by women in sustaining coastal livelihoods. Subashini highlighted that speakers from different regions discussed environmental challenges, gender inequality, policy gaps, and community resilience, illustrating that fisher women across continents face interconnected struggles.

Sherry Pictou – Honorary district chief of a tribal organisation, Professor and former Co-Chair of WFFP from Nova Scotia, Canada shared perspectives from the Mi'kmaq indigenous

communities in Canada and highlighted the report of Mi'kmaw Women Fish Harvesters Gathering[3].

She mentioned about the treaty that the community had fought for and won, which was aimed at getting livelihood rights to the fishing community and it is over 25 year later that the community is finding a way to implement that. In the mean time, the fisher people were forced to be a part of the manstream commercial fisheries framework in Canada but few years ago they declared that they wanted to be in a sustainable fisheries model. Around 39 women came together and a report of the gathering was brought about where these recommendations were discussed.

She emphasized that fishing is not merely an economic activity for indigenous peoples but also a cultural and spiritual practice closely tied to identity, history, and community survival. Within these communities, women play vital roles in harvesting, processing, and distributing seafood resources.

However, Pictou explained that indigenous fisher women often encounter multiple layers of marginalization. Colonial histories, restrictive fishing regulations, and gender biases have limited the recognition of their contributions. She stressed that many women continue to struggle for equal opportunities and safer working conditions within the fisheries sector. According to her, meaningful policy reforms must recognize indigenous knowledge systems, strengthen community rights, and ensure that women's voices are included in fisheries governance.

Morgan Brimacombe from Canada added to the discussion and mentioned about the positive outcomes and action points of the report pertaining to enhanced safety measures, family and child care support and financial training. Long term strategies included systemic improvements of gender equity, training and financial access and treaty rights education.

Masnuah, PPNI, Indonesian Women Fishers' Association, Member WFFP CC from Indonesia focused on the ecological and economic consequences of large-scale marine development projects. She highlighted how industrial aquaculture, particularly shrimp farming, has significantly transformed coastal landscapes in many parts of Southeast Asia. These developments frequently involve the destruction of mangrove forests and other coastal habitats that support small-scale fisheries.

Masnuah explained that the loss of mangroves directly affects fisher women who depend on coastal ecosystems for collecting shellfish, seaweed, and other marine resources. As these ecosystems decline, women's income opportunities and food security become increasingly threatened. She argued that development policies often prioritize industrial profits over community welfare and environmental sustainability. Her intervention emphasized the need for stronger environmental protections and greater involvement of coastal communities in decisions affecting their resources.

Josana Pinto, a fisher woman from the Brazilian Amazon, National Coordinator of the Movement of Artisinal Fishers of Brazil and Coordination Committee Member of WFFP spoke about the role of fisher women as both food producers and environmental defenders. She explained that women engaged in small-scale fisheries contribute significantly to local food systems by harvesting, processing, and selling seafood products. In many coastal communities, their work ensures that families and local markets have access to fresh and affordable food.

Pinto also emphasized that fisher women frequently act as protectors of marine ecosystems. Through their daily interactions with coastal environments, they develop strong ecological knowledge and become advocates for sustainable resource use. She highlighted that their

[3] https://witlukutimk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Fisherwomen-Gathering-Report-2025.pdf

struggles are not only about economic survival but also about defending coastal territories from destructive industries and environmental degradation.

Yasmin Ali Shah, Chairperson- Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum womens wing discussed the complex challenges facing fisher communities in Pakistan. She noted that climate change has intensified problems such as rising sea levels, unpredictable weather patterns, and declining fish stocks. These environmental changes have made fishing increasingly difficult and uncertain.

In addition to ecological challenges, Shah also addressed political and legal issues affecting fisher communities. She mentioned the recurring problem of fisher people being detained when they cross maritime borders during fishing activities. Such incidents create hardship for families and communities that depend on fishing for their livelihoods. Shah emphasized the need for international cooperation, fair policies, and stronger protection of the rights of small-scale fishers along with fisher peoples perspectives to be included in policy making.

Ravadee, WFFP Coordination Committee member representing Sustainable Development Foundation, Thailand focused on the issue of policy recognition. She explained that although women contribute significantly to fisheries through activities such as processing, marketing, and managing community resources, their work is rarely acknowledged in official fisheries frameworks.

According to Ravadee, many fisheries policies still treat fishing as a male-dominated occupation, overlooking the diverse roles played by women. This lack of recognition often leads to women being excluded from leadership positions and decision-making platforms. Ravadee mentioned that Marine Spatial Planning and industrial aquaculture needs to be looked at as an issue and its impacts understood. She stressed that achieving gender equity in fisheries requires deliberate policy reforms that recognize women as key stakeholders in coastal resource management.

Susan Hodge representing the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) from the Caribbeans shared reflections on the experiences of fisher communities in the Caribbean. She emphasized the importance of securing tenure rights for small-scale fishing communities and protecting their access to coastal resources. Without secure rights to fishing grounds and coastal areas, many communities face displacement and economic instability.

Hodge highlighted the value of community-based resource management systems, where local fishers actively participate in protecting marine ecosystems. She shared examples from the different islands. She mentioned that Anguilla and Saint Martins is where artisinal fishers are present. Laws and marine parks set basic access rules but tenure means work in protecting the water front when tourism and coastal real estate try to push in. She mentioned that in some countries there is co-management and mapped zones. In Belize, there is managed access with licenses.

Such approaches not only strengthen environmental sustainability but also empower communities to take ownership of their resources. She mentioned that Caribbeans are a seismic zone and is prone to hurricanes which makes the situation of fisher people more fragile and hence this is needed.

Nekla Tarcoz, Founding Member of the Istanbul Fisheries Cooperative from Istanbul, Turkey. As a representative of hundreds of families whose livelihoods depend on fishing, she asserted that fishing is a way of life. While congratulating the fisher peoples movements from across the world she mentioned that fisher women in Turkey have been conducting research and are working on the impacts of global climate change. She further highlighted on the impacts and said that,

"These impacts are not limited to changes in biodiversity; they directly affect our lives in economic, social and environmental ways. The increase in new species in the Mediterranean is causing

changes in the fisheries sector, while some invasive species are creating serious economic and ecological problems. Species such as pufferfish and lionfish are having serious impacts on our local fishers and are an indication that the existing balance in our seas is being disrupted. At the same time, rising sea temperatures, coral mortality and mass fish deaths are further demonstrating the vulnerability of our marine ecosystems. At this point, we need to establish comprehensive systems of monitoring and research so that we can better understand the changes taking place in our seas and adapt to them. Governments and local institutions must take decisive action on these issues. It is also extremely important to develop and diversify national policies rather than relying on narrow, short-term approaches."

She stated that awareness raising activities are important, but it is important to have practical and collective solutions.

"We also have a responsibility to ensure that future generations inherit healthy seas and sustainable livelihoods."

Leah Louwa representing the Elmolo Forum, Kenya spoke about the challenges faced by fishing communities living near inland water bodies. She described how environmental pressures, including water scarcity and ecosystem degradation, are affecting traditional fishing livelihoods. Women in these communities often carry additional responsibilities related to household survival and community organization. Leah emphasized the importance of supporting women's leadership in local fisheries initiatives. Women are the symbols of resilience and courage.

Diaba Dlop, Senegal

Highlighting that this is a historic day she expressed that Fisheries and aquatic resources are sources of food for billions of people and provide livelihoods and employment for more than 50 million people around the world. Given the important economic role that we play in the fisheries sector, this day is particularly significant. As women, we are present throughout the fisheries value chain, particularly in marketing and processing. This day strengthens the bonds of solidarity among all of us involved in the sector, while also bringing current issues concerning the future of fisheries to the forefront. It highlights the importance of fisherfolk organizing, and especially of organizing as women. She mentioned that there is a need for strengthening the social, cultural and economic resilience—not only to ensure women's empowerment, but also to safeguard food and nutritional sovereignty in our countries. She asserted that women are present throughout the entire value chain, yet we remain poorly represented in decision-making bodies. There are enormous difficulties linked to climate change: the depletion of fish resources, the advancing sea, land grabbing, irregular migration, and lack of access to land.

It is also an opportunity for women around the world, particularly those involved in women's organisations, to join hands, unite our strength and ensure that the celebration of this day does not end today. She spoke about the Network of Women in Artisanal Fisheries in Senegal which is the only network that brings together women fish processors and other women working in the artisanal fisheries sector. She mentioned that the women are also fighting to protect the oceans, because our lives depend on the sea.

"As long as there are fish, we can earn a living and there is a means to survive. It is through fish and fisheries that we support our families, pay for our children's education, and meet the everyday needs of our households and communities."

Fatima Majeed, a senior vice chairperson of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, highlighted the severe environmental and social challenges confronting coastal communities in Pakistan. Women have no health care and education facilities. She discussed issues such as pollution, the destruction of mangrove forests, and the impacts of climate change. These factors have significantly reduced fish availability and increased economic insecurity for fishing families.

Majeed also emphasized that women often experience the greatest burden during environmental crises because they are responsible for maintaining household food security and supporting community networks. She explained that her work focuses on encouraging women to participate more actively in cooperatives and community organizations so they can strengthen their collective voice in fisheries governance.

Ramakrishna Tandel, Chairperson, National Fishworkers Forum, India addressed the importance of solidarity among fisher communities globally. He emphasized that small-scale fishers face similar challenges regardless of national boundaries, including competition from industrial fishing fleets and coastal development projects. Tandel highlighted the need for collective advocacy to protect the rights and livelihoods of traditional fishing communities. He shared the importance of marking the International Fisher Women's Day

Naseegh Jaffer, former General Secretary, WFFP from South Africa cshared his reflections on the importance of strengthening international networks that support fisher women's movements. He noted that global gatherings like this one create opportunities for activists and community leaders to exchange experiences, learn from one another, and build stronger alliances. According to Jaffer, sustained cooperation among grassroots organizations is essential for advancing gender justice and protecting small-scale fisheries worldwide.

Concluding Remarks

The event concluded with closing remarks from Melanie Brown, who thanked participants for their contributions and encouraged them to continue celebrating and advocating for International Fisher Women's Day. She mentioned that the global celebration of International Fisher Women's Day marked an important milestone in recognizing the contributions of women in fisheries. The event brought together diverse voices from around the world and highlighted the shared challenges faced by fishing communities.

She emphasized that the success of the event demonstrated the growing strength of the global movement for fisher women's rights.

Declaration of International Fisher Women's Day

A key highlight of the event was the reading of the **International Fisher Women's Day Declaration**, presented by **Susan Gui** from KIARA (People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice).

DECLARATION OF NOVEMBER 5 INTERNATIONAL FISHER WOMEN'S DAY

We, the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), representing various countries and backgrounds, continue to fight to support the struggles of fishers, including diverse groups of traditional and Indigenous fishers and fisherwomen, as well as women, men and youth who gather and process marine products. We invite all parties, especially all countries, to hear and support our declaration to recognize and protect our collective and traditional rights by designating November 5th of each year as International Fisherwomen's Day.

We, **as representatives of national and regional fisher organizations from 50 countries representing more than 10 million fishers**, reaffirm the message that fishing communities—water and sea communities—are the guardians of our planet's waters and are rights holders who work and act for food sovereignty, the protection of biodiversity, and ways of life that are in harmony with nature. However, our survival and prosperity depend on systemic change to the global food system, transformation away from the dominant capitalist model of economic expansion, and on the recognition, protection, and advancement of our historical customary rights by governments over land, inland waters, coasts, mangroves, seas, and all our traditional territories.

We as WFFP see Fisherwomen as an important actors in protecting our mother sea with respect and their heart. We believe that fisherwomen can not be define only for the women who go to the sea. Fisherwomen should be respected and recognize their existence also their contribution, we believe that fisherwomen are women who depend on marine and fisheries resources for their livelihood, protect and manage the coastal and sea areas with local culture and traditions. For WFFP, fisherwomen can be defined as every women who involved in the fisheries value chain, their contribution are in pre-production, production, and post-production. Fisherwomen are not limited to those who use fishing vessels, but also include those who do not use fishing vessels but still strive to contribute to the sustainability of marine and fisheries resources.

By that, this declaration is a demand from the collective voice of the global fisherwomen's movement, voiced through the WFFP Women's Assembly, and born out of the experience of a lack of recognition and the significant contribution of women in the fisheries production chain from pre-production, production, and post-production. Recognition and protection of what women offer to the fishing world must be carried out through the observance of the identity of Fisherwomen.

We strongly condemn the use of starvation as a weapon of war. We stand in solidarity with fisherfolk and all **Palestinian** people, demanding the protection of their right to self-determination and an immediate end to the ongoing genocide. Fishing communities around the world suffer from internal conflicts, including those related to the so-called "war on drugs" and other conflicts such as those in the **West Philippine Sea, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Myanmar, and the Sahel countries.** We call on all countries to respect international law and human rights as the foundation for building peace among communities, particularly the recognition and protection of women.

Fisherwomen witness firsthand and feel the direct impact of the seizure of coastal and marine space for industry and development, the destruction of marine ecosystems (mangroves, seagrass, and coral reefs), ocean warming, and the current climate crisis. **The declaration of November 5th each year as International Fisherwomen's Day** is an assertion from all parties, especially all countries, to realize and affirm the struggle for the recognition and protection of Fisherwomen.

The Urgency of the Demand to Establish International Fisher Women's Day

Women are central to traditional fishing livelihoods. We are working for the acknowledgement of the contributions of our fisherwomen, shellfish gatherers and collectors. **Discrimination against women in decision-making processes at all levels**, including in cooperative systems and government regulatory frameworks, is a major threat to the realization of our rights. Women are leading the fight against attempts to erase our history and homogenize our fishing identities and cultures. It is important to consider women as guardians of Mother Earth, agroecology, and biodiversity. Women's perspectives and rights must be fulfilled in public policies, programs, and legal frameworks. Fisherwomen, gatherers, and shellfish collectors have been advocating for our rights in our communities and in the global fisheries sector, and they must be supported to do so.

As part of fishing communities, we are directly confronted with false solutions offered by various parties that deprive us of our rights, such as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that exclude traditional fishing, Marine Spatial Planning, the industrialization of capture fisheries that eclipse small-scale harvesters and industrial aquaculture for blue food in the name of food security, development for extractive industries and infrastructure, and false climate solutions such as blue carbon, carbon credits & trading, biodiversity offsets, and 30x30 conservation. These false solutions centralize control over food systems and fishways, dispossessing communities of their ability to feed themselves, and stripping them of their food sovereignty. Many of us have successfully protected nature (coastal areas, seas, and small islands) through Marine Conservation Areas led directly by communities in a participatory and democratic manner. We will continue to reject neo-colonial conservation methods, including 30x30, that prevent us from advancing nature protection based on our own community leadership.

In the context of roles in the fisheries production chain, the term “ fisherfolk” is still synonymous with the role of fishing carried out by men. However, upon closer inspection, women are involved in the preparation of fishing gear, fishing, processing of catches, selling of catches, and financial management. However, these roles are still not portrayed, are ignored, and go unrecognized in fisheries management and policy development in fisheries governance.

Small-scale fisheries play an important role in poverty reduction and food security, but this role is often underestimated or even ignored in management and policy formulation. The active involvement of women in the decision-making process for policy making is key to developing appropriate strategies for poverty alleviation and food security. Above all, this action is a form of protection and empowerment for women, who are also key actors in the fisheries production chain.

In the global context, the recognition of various women's rights as a form of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women has been agreed upon through the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This convention is an international human rights agreement adopted by the United Nations, which obliges its member states to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas and promote equal rights. In CEDAW 1979, the recognition and protection of women's rights that must be fulfilled by the state are as follows:

1. The right to work;

2. The right to good health and safety services at work;

3. The right to access and receive a good education;

4. The right to social security;

5. The right to training and education (formal and informal);

6. The right to organize and establish cooperatives as a forum for the struggle for equality;

7. The right to participate in all community activities;

8. The right to obtain credit for fisheries, services, marketing, and technology;

9. The right to land; and

10. The right to obtain housing, sanitation, electricity, clean water, and transportation.

In addition to CEDAW 1979, there is also an international agreement on the recognition of the basic rights of fisherwomen that has been formulated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), namely the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. In this international agreement, countries are obliged to treat fisherwomen specifically in order to obtain their basic rights as follows:

1. The right to adequate housing;

2. The right to safe and hygienic basic sanitation;

3. The right to safe drinking water for individual and household use;

4. The right to energy sources;

5. The right to savings, credit, and equitable investment schemes;

6. The right to recognition of the existence and role of women in the small-scale fisheries value chain;

7. The right to freedom from discrimination, crime, violence, sexual harassment, corruption, and abuse of power;

8. The right to freedom from forced labor;

9. The right to participate in work;

10. The right to gender equality as referred to in CEDAW; and

11. The right to technological development for women working in the small-scale fisheries sector.

Recognition of the rights that should be enjoyed by women fishers is clearly and explicitly stated in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. On this basis, a shared commitment from all parties is still very much needed to realize November 5th each year as International Fisherwomen's Day, with the principle that:

1. International Fisherwomen's Day is a form of recognition of gender equality. There can be no gender equality without recognition of the identity and profession of fisherwomen;

2. Protecting and fulfilling the right to access and manage marine spaces is a form of recognition of the identity and profession of fisherwomen;

3. There can be no protection of environmental sustainability through conservation without recognition of the leadership of Fisherwomen in conservation;

4. Development that displaces and seizes people's maritime management space is a form of neo-colonialism; and

5. There can be no human sovereignty/gender equality without sovereignty to determine their own destiny.

Conclusion

This declaration is a call for concrete action to recognize the role and contribution of women who work as fisherfolk, known as fisherwomen. We believe that gender equality cannot be achieved without fundamental changes to the existing system. The International Fisherwomen's Day Declaration is a goal that must be achieved. We will continue to advocate for the recognition of the International Fisherwomen's Day Declaration at the global level, and ensure that governments in each country designate International Fisherwomen's Day as a national holiday!

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International Fisher Women's Day celebrations

Indonesia







Sri Lanka









India



















Bangladesh





Congo





Congo







Thailand



