

The challenges of fisheries arrangements: **the perspective of African coastal communities**



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The panel at the event in the European Parliament. From left to right: Gaoussou Gueye, Sid'ahmed Abeid, Micheline Dion, Dawda Saine, Keith Andre, Caroline Roose and Grace O'Sullivan.

On 11 November 2019, MEPs Caroline Roose and Grace O'Sullivan organised a meeting at the European Parliament to hear the voice of representatives of African artisanal fishing communities from countries that have signed a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPAs) with the EU. On this occasion, the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA) collected the presentations made during this meeting by representatives of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Organisations (CAOPA), invited as part of a joint initiative of WWF, Birdlife and CFFA. This initiative aims, through dialogue with stakeholders and the European institutions, to identify the changes needed in SFPAs to ensure that they become effective instruments of an EU-African partnership for the development of environmentally, socially and economically sustainable fisheries in Africa.

Introduction: Towards 2022, the International Year of artisanal fishing and aquaculture

By Gaoussou Gueye, President of CAOPA, member of the CFFA Steering Committee

Our organization, the African Confederation of Professional Artisanal Fisheries Organizations, CAOPA, now brings together men and women in artisanal fisheries from 25 African countries. CAOPA is a member of the steering committee of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, based in Brussels since 1994. This shows you how much the fisheries agreements that bind our countries to the European Union have long been a concern of African artisanal fisheries professionals.

We are in Brussels as part of a joint initiative of WWF, Birdlife and CFFA, which have decided to reflect together, and with the involvement of their respective African partners, on how to improve the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements. We have been following the evolution of the European Union's fisheries agreements for more than 20 years, and for us, as African artisanal fishing communities, these bilateral agreements remain the most visible instrument of fisheries relations between the European Union and our African countries. It is therefore essential to make them effective tools

"In 2022, it will be the International Year of Artisanal Fishing. Together, we can ensure that African States and the EU contribute to it by making fisheries agreements a tool for the protection of our fragile coastal ecosystems"



Gaoussou Gueye, President of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Organisations

for promoting the sustainable development of fisheries in our countries.

Many improvements have been made to these agreements. I will insist particular on the transparency of these agreements. Today, unlike agreements with other fishing powers such as China or Russia, we know in detail what is in the agreements and protocols with the European Union. Other key achievements have also been made, but further progress is still needed, to which my colleagues will return.

To maintain the achievements of these agreements, and to make the progress still necessary to make them effective partnerships to promote sustainable fisheries and fishing communities, there must be renewed political will on the part of both the European Union and our countries.

That is why this week, which we are spending in Brussels at the invitation of WWF, BirdLife and CFFA, we will use it

to meet as many European decision-makers and stakeholders as possible, in order to share with them our experiences of fisheries agreements and our suggestions for improving them. You can be assured that we are doing the same with our respective governments.

In three years' time, 2022, it will be the International Year of Fishing and Artisanal Aquaculture, declared by the United Nations. Together, we can ensure that African States and the European Union contribute to this International Year by making fisheries agreements a tool for the conservation and protection of our fragile coastal ecosystems, which are the indispensable foundation for the future of our artisanal fishing communities.

I would like to thank the organisers of this meeting very much for giving us the opportunity to make the voice of African artisanal fisheries heard today in the European Parliament.

Taking women into account in Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements: the case of Ivory Coast

By **Micheline Dion Somplehi**, President of USCOFEPCI

I am the president of the *Union des Coopératives des femmes transformatrices de poisson de Côte d'Ivoire*, USCOFEPCI.

Our biggest problem today is access to fish as a raw material for processing. In Côte d'Ivoire, the low fishing season lasts eight months of the year. For us, as processing women, this means an abundance of raw materials from mid-July to mid-November, during which time we are supplied by local artisanal fisheries. But then, for eight months, there's almost nothing.

Four months of fish to be processed does not allow processing women to make a decent living from their activity. So we must turn to imported fish, caught by industrial fishing, and

landed in Abidjan, the most important port for the landing of tropical tuna in the Gulf of Guinea.

In particular, we buy what is called "the fake tuna". It is the damaged tunas, which are too small and are not used by canneries, that constitute the "fake tuna". For European tuna vessels landing in Abidjan, we are talking about tens of thousands of tonnes of false tuna. Today, this 'fake tuna' is sold without control. These catches do not appear in official statistics. False tuna is often given to the crew of boats who sell it to local intermediaries to improve their wages, and it is these local intermediaries who then sell it to women.

In the port of Abidjan, a processing woman buys the fake tuna from Lebanese and Burkinabe intermediaries at 1000 CFA per kilo, that is, 2 euros

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Micheline Dion Somplehi, President of the Union des Coopératives de femmes transformatrices de poisson de Côte d'Ivoire

per kilo. During drying and smoking, this fake tuna loses a third of its weight. Therefore, 1.5 kg of false tuna, worth €3, is required for one kilo of processed product. The woman must also pay for transport and firewood. In the end, the woman can sell the kilo of fake tuna processed at 2800 CFA per kilo, that is, 4 euros per kilo, while the raw material already costs her 3 euros. In other words, she works very hard, in very difficult conditions, to earn almost nothing.

Worse still, as the intermediary often makes an advance to buy this overpriced fish, she is forced to continue working at a loss to pay it back and ends up in debt and in the greatest poverty.

This is why, in the framework of the latest fisheries agreement between the EU and Ivory Coast, women

requested direct access, without intermediaries, to 10,000 tonnes of false tuna from European vessels.

This may be an interesting alternative to supply processing women when there is nothing else. We are pleased that this possibility has been taken into account in the protocol, although we are still waiting with great anticipation for this to happen. The sectoral support of the last protocol also provides support to support the local processing sector by women.

We hope that once this supply system is up and running, it will help to demonstrate that local landings by European fleets for the benefit of processing women, coupled with targeted sectoral support, can be part of the development dynamics of African artisanal fishing communities.

The challenges of access to the surplus: the case of Mauritania

By Sid'ahmed Abeid, President of the artisanal section of the FNP

Thank you for giving an artisanal Mauritanian fisherman the opportunity to speak today. My name is Sid'Ahmed Abeid, and I am President of the artisanal fishing organization of the National Federation of Fisheries (FNP) of Mauritania. I have been a fisherman for over 40 years.

As you know, Mauritania is a developing country. The activity that has contributed to making Mauritanian small-scale fishing a driving force for the social and economic development of our country is octopus fishing. I can tell you about it, because I was the first fisherman to start fishing octopus in 1978.

Today, we are 80,000 artisanal fishermen and we use 10,000 artisanal boats and 300 artisanal bridged boats (less than 14m). As for octopus fishing, we provide 80% of the national

production in quantity and 82% in value. We provide 90% of the employment in the sector, with people working in 140 product freezing processing plants, 12 pirogue manufacturing workshops, a 14 m deck boat yard, and hundreds of equipment stores, thousands of fish merchants, carriers, hundreds of women processors, pot manufacturers, etc. In small-scale fishing, the value added is 8 times higher than the value added in industrial fishing. The pot fishing we do is a selective fishing: we take the octopus that hides at the bottom of the pot by hand, and if it is too small, we put it back alive in the sea. This is what we call sustainable development.

And Europe is, and will remain, our leading partner in sustainable fisheries. A great victory that the artisanal fishermen have obtained is the cessation of octopus fishing by European boats competing with us in our waters since 2012. After their

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Sid'Ahmed Abeid, President of the artisanal section of the Mauritanian National Federation of Fisheries (FNP)

departure, the concrete results are as follows: the number of fishermen who make a living from octopus fishing has doubled, the number of pirogues has increased by 50%, the number of freezing plants has almost tripled. The repercussions of this exit from the European fleet have made it possible to improve the living conditions of the Mauritanian population. That is why we have decided to celebrate Octopus Day on 26 July each year on the day of the signing of the fisheries agreement with the European Union and the departure of European cephalopod vessels, and also to ask for the Mauritanian law to include the fact that octopus is reserved for artisanal fishing.

Another important aspect of the protocol was the new zoning adopted for the different fishing categories, including shrimp trawlers and trawlers targeting small pelagics. This made it possible, first, to protect our resources, and also our Banc d'Arguin, and second, to avoid competition with the local fishing industry.

One issue I want to raise for shrimp trawlers is the importance of bycatch. Often more than two thirds of their catches are made up of overexploited demersal species, which we fish. It is therefore important to keep these trawlers away from access to our endangered demersal resources, and the new zoning contributes to this. Another element to highlight is the mandatory landing of 2% of small pelagic catches for human consumption. This has led to an increase in fish consumption per person per year from 4 to 12 kg.

These three key measures of the last protocol: landings, stopping access to octopus, and new zoning, must remain an *acquis* in any future protocol.

My message to you is that the same principle should apply to all EU sustainable fisheries partnership agreements: when local artisanal fisheries have the material and human resources to sustainably exploit a resource, that resource should be reserved for them.

Regional sustainable management of small pelagics in West Africa: a key issue for food security

By Dawda Foday Saine, General Secretary of NAAFO, in The Gambia

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm the General Secretary of the Gambia National Association of Artisanal Fishing Organisations. My country, together with our neighbours, Senegal and Mauritania in particular, share one of the most valuable fish in Africa: the sardinella.

This fish is often referred to as the 'fish of the poor', because of its nutritious qualities and its affordability for the poorest of our citizens. The sardinella also generates numerous jobs in fishing communities: fishers, women fish processors, boat builders, transporters, fishmongers. Overall, we

estimate that one pirogue targeting sardinella provides jobs for a hundred men and women.

But today, this is changing. Sardinella is scarce and is becoming too expensive for our people to afford. First of all, there is overexploitation. Although sardinella is a shared resource, there is no regional management, despite renewed efforts by regional bodies, like SRCF, FAO, or NGOs. Data collection and the research on small pelagics are outdated and very limited. Still, these scarce data all point to a severe decline of the stock.

Secondly, we are facing the threat of numerous fishmeal factories in our region, that are literally plundering sardinella, processing it into fishmeal

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Dawda Foday Saine, General Secretary of the National Association of Artisanal Fishing Organisations in The Gambia.

and fishoil to be exported. This directly competes with those who fish for human consumption, and also with the women who traditionally process this sardinella. Livelihoods are lost, food security is threatened.

The growth in fishmeal processing factories in Mauritania, Senegal and the Gambia has been predominantly driven by foreign investors, particularly Chinese. Artisanal fishing organisations have mobilised since 2015, to denounce these unsustainable fishmeal factories. Today, our position is clear: we want all the fishmeal production units that use fresh fish as raw material to close down.

In addressing this crisis, the national governments of Mauritania, Senegal and the Gambia have, of course, primary responsibility. However, foreign partners also have a role to play, particularly the European Union who is committed to promote sustainable fisheries and food security.

Regarding the role of the European Union, first of all, we welcome the fact that, through the fishing agreements, EU trawlers fishing for small pelagics do not have access to round sardinella in Senegal or the Gambia, and that the new zoning in Mauritania keeps them far enough from the coast

so that they can't catch the sardinella.

But the European Union could do more. At international level, the EU should challenge our countries, and countries like China on the impact of the fishmeal sector. Through its fishing agreements, the EU should promote, through sectoral support, and also through designated aid projects, research and scientific advice on small pelagics.

Indeed, good data collection and robust research on small pelagics are the basis for good scientific advice, which is the first step towards joint sustainable management of these shared resources.

We also want to underline that some European owned companies, such as the french company Olvea, which produces fishoil from West Africa, wishes to ecolabel this production. This is not acceptable for us.

The rapid increase in the capacity of the fishmeal and fish oil industry in the region is unsustainable, and it is clear that an enormous reduction in capacity is needed. If companies are genuinely concerned about sustainable fisheries, West Africa artisanal fisheries and food security, then disinvesting in the fishmeal sector is the only way forward.

Information and participation of local stakeholders to SFPA negotiations: the case of The Seychelles

By Keith ANDRÉ, President of The Seychelles Fishermen and Boat Owners Association (SFBOA)

The Seychelles Fishermen and Boat Owners Association (SFBOA) is the longest existing fisher association in the Seychelles, since 2003. Our members are boat owners and fishermen from across the whole domestic sector, from on foot octopus fishermen to mini longline operators targetting tuna with hook and line. We

have been the leaders in setting up, in 2015, a regional platform for the Indian Ocean Islands the 'Fédération des Pêcheurs Artisans de L'Océan Indien'. The FPAOI represents the interests of over 120 000 small scale fishers from the IOC region, who, together, account for 45 % of landings in terms of value and volume.

In terms of information and participation, it is true that the SFPA between the Seychelles and the EU is

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Keith André, President of The Seychelles Fishermen and Boat Owners Association.

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the only agreement out of the many that is made public. However, until now, neither Seychelles fishing sector, nor the civil society has been informed about the state of play in the EU – Seychelles negotiations. We haven't been involved in any way in the negotiation.

This lack of information and participation of key stakeholders like the local sector and civil society goes against many international agreements and protocols of which both The Seychelles and the EU are signatories, such as the Cotonou Agreement, the FAO SSF Guidelines and SDG14 all of which promote information and participation of stakeholders.

Furthermore, The Seychelles as a member of the Fisheries Industry Transparency Initiative - the FITi-, and host of its secretariat, should make information and participation of fisheries stakeholders in SFPAs negotiation a priority.

Since we don't know what is in the draft of the new protocol, we can only comment on what we have heard, and also on our past experience. So far the only information that has transpired is that the financial contribution by the EU has increased from Euro 8.5 million in the previous protocol to Euro 9.7 million annually in the new one. At least part of this amount will be allocated to the sectoral support, and if it's like the last protocol, one objective may be the support of the local fisheries.

In the last protocol, there have been problems with implementation of the sectoral support. For example, new processing unit that was built 5 years ago with over 200 thousands euro but is still empty because of the deficiencies in the conception and material used, which were of the cheapest quality meaning many standards were not met.

The local fishers are also facing specific difficulties due to the depletion

of resources. They are spending longer time at sea in order to make their operations viable, so they are seeing a downgrading of the quality of the fish they catch, since they work for the fresh fish market. They are working harder but earning less. Many fishers have borrowed money from banks and stand to lose their homes as they cannot honour repayments. This issue should be discussed in the framework of the sectoral support, to see how the situation can be improved through appropriate support enabling the fish to keep its qualities.

To contribute to address this depletion of resources, we hope that every aspect of sustainability is reflected in the new protocol. Given the alarming state of yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean, we particularly hope that the new protocol contains measurable actions to further reduce the fishing effort, especially the reduction of FADs and supply vessels, in line with the IOTC Interim Plan for rebuilding the Yellowfin stocks.

Nowadays, in the IOC area, 50% of tuna catches are landed by small scale fisheries. Tuna is now a key resource for inshore fisheries. In view of the modernization of our small scale fishing fleets, the proportion of tuna in our landings is bound to increase, given the willingness of our countries to limit the fishing effort on demersal resources, and development aspirations of our domestic fishing industry.

It is therefore up to our countries to manage this shared resource to guarantee the future of our sector, especially in the context of the current Seychelles –EU SFPAs negotiations.

We certainly hope that the aspirations of both the peoples of Seychelles and of Europe to ensure the future of fishing communities in The Seychelles will be at the heart of the new SFPAs protocol.

