

Joint Statement

Participation of local communities is crucial for marine conservation

Brussels, Stockholm, 26 January 2021

Summary In this joint statement on the occasion of the 34th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries and with regard to point 11.1 of the agenda "Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across fisheries and aquaculture", SSNC and CFFA stress that local participation for conservation is crucial to biodiversity, and suggest four points to improve the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) for marine conservation.

We welcome the effort to mainstream biodiversity across fisheries and aquaculture at species and ecosystem level with regard to relevant institutions and conventions, such as the UN Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as the potential implications of such processes for fisheries and aquaculture.

In May 2019, the UN Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) global assessment was released. The assessment is framed around major international agreements such as the UN CBD, the Paris Agreement of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

A hallmark component of the Report is its systematic cross-chapter and cross-scale attention to Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) and issues concerning Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs).

Further, it is estimated that nearly a quarter of the Earth's surface and vast ocean areas are managed by IPLCs, and these areas hold much of the Earth's biodiversity, as well as carbon storage. **Local participation in conservation is therefore key to improve biodiversity outcomes.** The failure of CBD and national legislation to recognize IPLCs role in the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity has thus been a major missed opportunity.

The IPBES report further states *“the positive contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities to sustainability can be facilitated through national recognition of land tenure, access and resource rights in accordance with national legislation, the application of free, prior and informed consent, and improved collaboration, fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use, and co-management arrangements with local communities.”*

It also encourages countries to implement the FAO Voluntary Guidelines to Secure Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (VG-SSF) as this instrument incorporates both environmental, climate, human rights, gender equality and equity principles.

We would therefore like to stress a few points to consider:

- Support member States towards **the full and effective implementation of the VG-SSF**. This instrument offers some useful guidance for holistic conservation that builds upon human rights, and should thus be part of the solution towards fulfilling environmental, climate and social goals.
- Support member States and organizations in **identifying marine/coastal areas already managed and protected by Indigenous peoples and local communities** (such as Locally Managed Marine Areas, LMMAs), and ensure such areas are **formally recognized** in monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms. In addition, IPLCs own initiatives for the establishment of new LMMAs should be supported.
- Support member States to ensure **appropriate technology transfer** that can assist collective actions and community-based monitoring information systems.
- Support member States in building capacity towards greater policy coherence and collaboration at national and State level.

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