



*African Confederation of Professional Organizations of Artisanal Fisheries*

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## **CAOPA declaration on support for artisanal fisheries**

*(Point 8 Supporting Artisanal and Small-scale Fisheries)*

Document supporting small-scale and artisanal [fisheries](http://www.fao.org/3/ne712en/ne712en.pdf)<http://www.fao.org/3/ne712en/ne712en.pdf>

While the value of artisanal fisheries is increasingly evident, as shown by the FAO's work on The Contribution of Artisanal Fisheries to Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup>, its future is currently uncertain, particularly in Africa.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to combat it are a source of hardship and suffering for men and women working in African artisanal fisheries. From fishers to fish processors and traders, all those involved in the artisanal fisheries value chain are affected by this crisis, which will have a long-term impact on our sector. More than ever, in this time of crisis, the right decisions must be taken to support the sustainable development of artisanal fisheries in Africa.

For many governments, the **recovery of economies after the pandemic will be achieved through the promotion of blue economy**. For CAOPA, the promotion of a blue economy in Africa must prioritize human rights. Given the importance of fisheries for food security and the fight against poverty in our countries, the priority of promoting a blue economy must be to contribute to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Artisanal Fisheries through transparent, participatory and gender-sensitive national and regional action plans.

However, there is a great risk that some governments may want to revive the economy by continuing to give priority to polluting industries on the grounds that they generate significant short-term economic gains, such as offshore oil and gas exploitation, coastal industrial aquaculture and mass tourism. These sectors can have negative impacts on the life of artisanal

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<sup>1</sup>Illuminating hidden harvests: The contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development <https://www.worldfishcenter.org/content/illuminating-hidden-harvests-contribution-small-scale-fisheries-sustainable-development>

fishing communities, the most vulnerable in this competitive environment. The development of these sectors often displaces artisanal fishing communities and reduces or eliminates their access to and control over natural resources.

It is therefore imperative that countries recognize the inevitable conflicts and vulnerabilities that Blue Growth/Economy produces, and that they organize a discussion among all stakeholders on how these conflicts can be addressed.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis offer us the opportunity to radically rethink coastal development in Africa and globally, creating an enabling environment for sustainable artisanal fisheries through the implementation of FAO Guidelines.

This process must not be jeopardized by the promotion of a blue economy based on the expansion of polluting sectors, to the detriment of the development of sustainable artisanal fisheries, such as offshore oil and gas, intensive aquaculture and mass tourism.