

# The challenges of fisheries arrangements: **the demands of African coastal communities**

Report of the event hosted by MEPs Caroline Roose and Catherine Chabaud at the European Parliament on 30 May 2023 with the transcriptions of the interventions by 5 African artisanal fishers



June 2023



**The full delegation of African small-scale fishers at the event in the European Parliament.** From left to right: Dorcas Malogho, Nancy Onginjo, Raissa Madou, Harouna Lebaye, Antónia Djaló, Catherine Chabaud, Caroline Roose, Gaoussou Gueye, Ahmed Gamal, Lalaina Rakotoinavo, Judex Rampaul.

On 30 May 2023, MEPs Caroline Roose (Greens/EFA) and Catherine Chabaud (Renew) 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 coastal communities in 5 different African countries. 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: A Call to Action from small-scale fisheries in the context of ocean conservation

By Antónia Djaló, fish-processor from Guinea-Bissau, Vice-president of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Organisations (CAOPA).

Dear participants, I've been working in the small-scale fishing sector in Guinea Bissau for over thirty years, and I'm here representing the Confédération Africaine des Organisations Professionnelles de Pêche Artisanale, or CAOPA.

CAOPA currently brings together men and women from 27 African countries who are professionals in small-scale maritime and inland fishing. We give a voice to the women

and men of small-scale fisheries in West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, North Africa and the Indian Ocean.

For over ten years, we have joined forces to ensure that our sector is recognised for its true worth by our decision-makers. Little by little, our work is giving our communities and our women the confidence to assert their rights and opportunities, in social, economic and cultural terms, and as managers of coastal ecosystems.

In 2022, to mark the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries, together

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**Antónia Adama Djaló, Vicepresident of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Organisations**

with other small-scale fishing organisations from Central, South and North America, Europe and Asia, we launched the Artisanal Fishers Call to Action.

Despite our efforts, all too often our decision-makers and their partners fail to act and ignore our needs. On paper, our governments and the international community are on our side, and we thank them for that. But in their actions, too often they favour the interests of sectors that promise a lot of short-term financial returns, such as

industrial fishing, mining and gas exploitation, and coastal tourism. This threatens the future of our communities.

The time for words is over. Climate change is already knocking on our doors and, more than ever, we need strong and urgent action to enable our communities to face up to the difficulties and to give our children and our sector a future.

In our call for action, we are first asking that access to resources for artisanal fishers are guaranteed and protected. When no more fish are landed, it's the women who go home empty-handed, and it's our most vulnerable citizens who will be left with an empty stomach.

We are calling for action to improve women's living and working conditions. Because when women suffer, so do their families and the whole community.

We are calling for greater transparency in fisheries management. Every day we see more and more Chinese, Korean, Russian and European industrial fishing boats in our waters. Licences are being issued in droves at a time when our resources are dwindling. We want to know why this is happening. The public has a right to know who is fishing in our

waters and under what conditions. We need this information if we are to play an informed part in the decisions that affect us.

We are also calling for small-scale fishing to be protected from other sectors of the so-called 'blue economy'. Because when industrial fishing reigns, it's our husbands and sons who lose their nets, and sometimes their lives, in collisions. When luxury hotels take over our land, it's the women who are evicted. When oil farms encroach on small-scale fishing areas, when fishmeal factories take over our fish, it's women who are the victims.

The European Union maintains privileged relations with African countries in the fisheries sector, notably through sustainable fisheries partnership agreements and international development aid partnerships. Together with my colleagues from Senegal, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius and Guinea-Bissau, we spent a week discussing the challenges of fisheries relations between the European Union and African countries. We have come to the European Parliament to share our views and discuss with you our proposals for the European Union to contribute to the future of African coastal communities.

## "To protect SSF access to resources, the EU needs to be stricter with the non-discrimination clause"

By Raissa Madou, fish-processor from Côte d'Ivoire, secretary general of the Union Nationale des Sociétés Coopératives des Mareyeuses et Actrices de la Filière Halieutique de Côte d'Ivoire (UNSCOMAFHAT-CI).

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to share with you our priorities for securing access to fisheries resources for small-scale fishers, in line with the

Sustainable Development Goal 14.b.

We are delighted that, since the last reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2012, the European Union's policy in fisheries agreements is to not negotiate access to zones where small-scale fishers operate, in order to give them exclusive access to the inshore fishing zone. This measure must be extended

to all foreign fleets. Fisheries agreements contain a non-discrimination clause, which commits the partner country to applying to all foreign fleets the measures applying to European fleets, including in terms of zoning. But in practice, this is not implemented. Boats from other countries do not respect our

fishing zone. Our fishermen suffer from the incursions of trawlers in coastal areas. If the EU really wants to help protect small-scale fishers' access to resources, it will be important to be stricter about compliance with this non-discrimination clause.

Furthermore, how can the EU have access only to surplus when we have no data on the overall fishing effort in our waters? What's more, neither by-catches nor catches for bait, made up of species targeted by small-scale fishing, are counted. This needs to be rectified.

More and more boats are forming joint ventures companies with nationals of our countries, and fly the local flag. But make no mistake. These boats are still controlled by foreign companies. Mostly Chinese, but also Russian or European. These boats sometimes enter areas reserved for small-scale fishing.

The European Union is promoting the creation of joint ventures in its fishing agreements. We are calling for a regulatory framework to be established for joint ventures, applicable to all vessels of foreign origin, which ensures that joint ventures operate transparently, do not compete with small-scale fishing, and contribute to the development objectives of the country concerned. In recent years, we have observed that, through fisheries agreements, the

European Union is increasingly supporting the establishment of marine protected areas. This phenomenon will undoubtedly increase with the implementation of the 30x30 initiative. These protected areas are important for conserving biodiversity, and for supporting coastal communities that depend on fishing. It is essential that the social and economic costs of setting up a protected area are taken into account, and that coastal communities are involved in the management of these areas.

When it supports marine protected areas, the European Union must ensure that the establishment of these conservation tools is transparent, sensitive to gender issues, and with the informed participation of coastal communities.

Finally, I must mention one fishing technique that is a potential danger for small-scale fishing: drifting FADs. When they drift towards the artisanal fishing zone, they attract all the fish, not just tuna, which are then caught by industrial fishing, to the detriment of the artisanal fishers. These FADs can also destroy the environment, such as coral reefs, and the engines of artisanal boats. A compensation fund should be set up in the agreements for this damage to the environment and to small-scale fishing.



**Raissa Nadège Leka Madou, Secretary General of the Union Nationale des Sociétés Coopératives des Mareyeuses et Actrices de la Filière Halieutique de Côte d'Ivoire (UNSCOMAFHAT-CI).**

## European tuna vessel landings to make sure fish reaches the poorest at a price they can afford

By **Ahmed Gamal**, fisher in Madagascar

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm a small-scale fisherman from Madagascar. As in all African countries, it is small-scale fishing that feeds the population by landing fish for local consumption. Unfortunately, our means don't allow us to supply the population sufficiently.

In Madagascar, fish consumption is very low, at 4.26 kg per person per year. By comparison, in Mauritius, one person consumes 20 kg of fish per year, and 60 kg per year per person in the Seychelles. We also lack the means to preserve fish, such as the cold chain, and the fish often reaches the

consumer in poor condition, which can make people sick.

Yet Madagascar's waters are rich in fish. But, as in many African countries, the fish caught by foreign boats is destined for export. This is also the case for the tuna caught by European boats fishing under the Fisheries



Agreement. We would like European tuna boats to unload tuna by catches in Madagascar, which could then be sold locally at a price people can afford.

In other African countries, such as in Mauritania, the landing of 2% of small pelagic catches for the local population has helped to improve fish

supplies and food security. Through the fisheries agreement, Madagascar and the EU should also give attention to supporting infrastructure for the conservation of fish from small-scale fisheries, to enable small-scale fishermen to offer local consumers abundant, good-quality fish.

**Ahmed Muktar Hamad Gamal**, fisherman in Madagascar, advocacy officer for the MIHARI network of locally managed marine areas in Madagascar;

## Publication of information to better inform fisheries stakeholders and avoid misunderstandings

By Nancy Onginjo, fisherwoman in The Seychelles, chair of the Seychelles Fishermen and Boat Owners Organisation, (SFBOA).

The topic I want to address has been a priority for all of us for a long time, and that is transparency. Our countries' fishing agreements with the European Union are clearly at the top in terms of transparency. Both the texts of the EU agreement and that of the fisheries agreement evaluations are accessible.

On the other hand a large number of access agreements with other foreign countries or companies have remain confidential, and these agreements can have a substantial impact on small-scale fisheries and national food security. In fact, in many countries, basic information on how many industrial vessels are licensed, what quantities of fish they are allowed to catch and how much they pay, is kept confidential or obscured from the general public.

Therefore it's of public interest that the texts of all fishing arrangements, whether they are bilateral agreements, joint ventures or chartering, are made

public. In my country, The Seychelles, the fact that we joined the Fisheries Transparency initiative – the FiTI-, has helped improve the standards of publication of information.

However, we see that even if the texts of the EU fishing agreements with African countries are available, they are not in a format that the public and fishing communities can understand. It would thus be crucial/important for the EU and our countries to actively share the contents of these agreements with the public, working with the press or having dedicated meetings with stakeholders. This would help clarify a number of misunderstandings regarding the various aspects of the agreement, including access conditions and sectoral support.

I want to stress that for us, transparency regarding fisheries agreements is not an end in itself. It is an ingredient to enable informed participation of stakeholders in the management of fishing activities in Africa.

Since the last Common Fisheries Policy reform, our participation to

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fishing agreements negotiation has improved. Small-scale fishing and civil society organisations are increasingly consulted by the EU, both in carrying out of the fishing agreements evaluations and during agreements negotiations.

For the future however, we would like to see these stakeholder consultations become more systematic, and also for us to be around the table during the joint committee meetings that examine the implementation of fisheries agreements.

For transparency to work in favour of artisanal fisheries, it is not only about publishing information, it's also about gathering data on artisanal

fisheries. A major challenge facing our sector is the lack of reliable informations on its contribution to livelihoods.

Often credible information on the small-scale sector is simply not being collated. For example, very little is documented regarding the work of the women in the sector. Statistics on the artisanal sector, its catches, its contribution to the national economy and to the food security, is scarce.

Through its fisheries partnerships, the EU should provide increased support to data collection on the small scale sector. We need to increase the visibility of small scale fisheries to showcase its importance.

## Stakeholders must be involved in identifying priorities, implementing and evaluating sectoral support

By Harouna Lebaye, fisher in Mauritania, Fédération libre de pêche artisanale (FLPA)

One aspect of fisheries agreements that is of great importance to small-scale fishing is sectoral support. But there are shortcomings, firstly in terms of transparency, but also in terms of implementation.

We do not know what is being done with the money from sectoral support, or whether the actions supported are effective. No representative of small-scale fishers or civil society is involved in the planning of these activities, nor in the way they are implemented, and even less in their evaluation. The actions supported by sectoral support are not identifiable. They are often presented as the initiative of local politicians, without the EU's name being mentioned.

Under these conditions, don't be surprised if African public opinion does not always have a good opinion of the European Union as a partner in the

fisheries sector. We see our fish being caught by European fleets, but we get no benefit in return. On the other hand, the support provided by other countries, such as China, which are not always concerned about sustainability, is clearly visible to everyone.

It is absolutely essential that detailed information on what is done with the money from sectoral support for fisheries agreements is made available to the public, and that stakeholders are involved in identifying, implementing and evaluating these actions if they are to be effective and benefit our populations. It is also a question of credibility for the European Union, which must be able to demonstrate that the money of European citizens intended to support sustainable fishing is well spent.

With regard to the use of sectoral support, it is important to ensure that part of these funds is used to support small-scale fishing, the development of which is a declared priority for many

**"It is a question of credibility for the European Union, which must be able to demonstrate that the money of European citizens intended to support sustainable fishing is well spent."**

African countries. Practical measures can be taken to help artisanal fishermen, such as training pirogue captains in safety at sea, or supporting co-management initiatives such as participatory surveillance.

It is also important, through the sectoral support, to encourage the consumption of fish by local people. Given that it is often women who bring the fish to the consumer, sectoral support should focus heavily on supporting women's activities.

Women are present at all stages of the artisanal fishing value chain in Africa. But their work is not recognised, their contribution, particularly to innovation, is not valued, and their working and living conditions are disastrous.

EU sectoral support, in conjunction with development funds, could contribute to investments in services and infrastructure that improve the living conditions of women and their families, such as access to drinking water, electricity, sewage system, sanitary facilities at processing sites, improved ovens and solar refrigerators. The condition for this to work remains

that these small-scale fishers and women should not be faced with an emptying sea. This is the case today in West Africa with our small pelagic fish that continue to be devoured by the fishmeal industry. We are grateful to the European Union for relaying the concerns of our populations and our fishermen about the dangers posed by the industrial production of fish oil and fishmeal from these small pelagics. The attention given, in the sectoral support for the Mauritania agreement, to actions to use small pelagics for human consumption rather than fishmeal is to be welcomed.

Here too, European policies need to be consistent. Today, it still takes 5 kg of small pelagics to make one kilo of fishmeal, which is often used to feed farmed fish that will later be eaten by Europeans. If Europe does not stop the entry onto its market of these fish, raised with the fishmeal produced from our small pelagics, then the European Union, like China, Norway and Turkey, will deprive the women who process artisanal fish of their livelihood, and starve the people of West Africa.



**Harouna Lebaye**, fisher in Mauritania, Fédération Libre de pêche artisanale (FLPA).

**Cover photos:** A fisher in Sanyang (The Gambia), and a woman fish processor in Kafountine (Senegal), by Agence Mediaprod.

**Back cover photo:** Nancy Onginjo (The Seychelles), Raissa Madou (Côte d'Ivoire), Gaoussou Gueye (Senegal), Antónia Djaló (Guinea Bissau), Harouna Lebaye (Mauritania) and Ahmed Gamal (Madagascar) at the entrance of the European Parliament, by Sara Fröcklin/SSNC.

"When it supports marine protected areas, the European Union must ensure that the establishment of these conservation tools is transparent, sensitive to gender issues, and with the informed participation of coastal communities. "

Raissa Madou, fish processor from Côte d'Ivoire



