

A CALL TO ACTION from small-scale fishers*

Fishers on the beach in Ghana. © Samuel Aboh



Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.b calls on states to **secure access to marine resources and markets for small-scale fisheries**.

Action is urgently required to address the following key challenges to ensure that small-scale fisheries are protected and restored, and that they **continue contributing to economies, health, culture and wellbeing**.

Governments must...

Urgently secure preferential access and co-manage 100% of coastal areas

SSF tenure rights and access to fishing resources must be protected; SSF women and men must participate effectively in the decisions that affect them.

Guarantee the participation of women and support their role in innovation

Women are present at all stages of SSF value chains and are the essential link in getting the fish to the consumers. But their work is unrecognised; their contribution, including to innovations, is not valued and their working and living conditions are dire.

Protect SSF from competing blue economy sectors

The negative impacts of more powerful sea and land-based sectors (offshore energy production, deep-sea mining, industrial fishing, tourism, fishmeal factories, logging) jeopardise the future of coastal communities. The precautionary approach and effective participation of SSF should guide any new ocean use.

Be transparent and accountable in fisheries management

Political will is needed to urgently reform fisheries policies and practices that will ensure healthy fishing communities and benefit national economies.

Build resilient communities to face climate change and offer prospects to youth

SSF are the first to suffer the impacts of climate change and other external shocks, and this affects their future. Fisheries governance must include access to social rights and guarantee decent fishery dependent livelihoods for youth.

Women and men in maritime and inland small-scale fishers (SSF) make a major contribution to livelihoods, food security, employment, and revenue, in contrast with their marginalisation in decision-making. Coastal fishing communities are the most numerous ocean users. To ensure healthy and resilient fishing communities, SSF require secure and preferential access to healthy oceans and ecosystems to effectively play their key roles as guardians of the ocean.

SSF demand that governments address the lack of science based, transparent, participative fisheries management and threats posed by pollution, competition for space and resources by other blue economy industries, and to invest in long-term resource management, ecosystems restoration and innovations introduced by women and men from fishing communities.

Now is the time to act

We call on governments to take the following actions by 2030.



Secure preferential access and co-manage 100% of coastal areas

- Grant small-scale fishers exclusive access rights to coastal fisheries, by closing inshore areas to industrial fishing and other industrial activity and by protecting title, tenure, access, and resource rights;
- Ensure free, prior and informed consent for any new ocean use or activity, including for conservation purposes and marine protected areas;
- Implement co-management systems for 100% of all coastal areas, by putting in place specific legal frameworks that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the authorities and fishers and by providing the appropriate support for fishers to engage (including for participatory surveillance, closed fishing seasons, etc); and
- Guarantee sufficient financial means in annual national budgets to support these co-management systems.



Guarantee the participation of women and support their role in innovation

- Empower women to actively organise themselves and engage with existing professional organisations and decision-making processes, including for fisheries management decisions;
- Prioritise investments in services such as access to potable water, electricity, drainage, sanitary facilities at processing sites; in infrastructures that improve women living conditions and those of their families, such as decent housing, day care centres near processing sites; and in training in the use of new technologies;
- Provide access to land and credit to support innovation in processing and marketing techniques (FTT ovens or solar fridges); support training to access new markets; and develop small-scale fish farming to complement raw materials supply; and
- Remove existing barriers to trade at national and regional levels, particularly stopping the harassment of women on processing sites, markets, along trade routes and at border controls.



Protect SSF from competing blue economy sectors

- Do not allow or support any new ocean use that may negatively impact ecosystems and the communities that depend on them for their livelihoods; and make sure that free, prior, informed consent is applied;
- Develop, with the utmost transparency and with the participation of affected coastal communities, mechanisms for (1) independent social and environmental impact assessments, (2) Consultation which allows for informed and active participation of affected fishing communities, (3) Conflict resolution between users of maritime spaces, and (4) Judicial and administrative grievance redress; and
- Demonstrate adequate provision in national budgets for enforcement of environmental regulation, including the implementation of international and regional laws and conventions, before any new ocean use is allowed.



Be transparent and accountable in fisheries management

- As SSF are neglected in official statistics, and particularly women, improve gender sensitive data collection and dissemination of information of the sector, so that their contributions to food security, livelihoods, sustainable use of the ocean are more visible;
- Due to a lack of information available, the inland fisheries sector is poorly recognised in national fisheries policies. There is a need to better document inland fisheries, its contributions and the challenges it faces, so that it can be recognised and supported at a national and international level;
- Publish, to the minimum standards of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FITI), all relevant information, including legislation, fishing authorisations, data on performance and the rationale for management regulations; and
- Make public all information about other ocean, coastal sea and land based industrial projects, including texts of authorisations, permits and approvals, and information on foreign aid projects and new forms of financing for ocean conservation, including blue bonds and debt-for-nature-swaps.



Build resilient communities to face climate change and offer prospects to youth

- Develop, with fishing communities, specific policies and plans for climate change adaptation and mitigation, including restorative measures to ensure healthy marine ecosystems, and measures for disaster risk reduction and emergency response;
- Support initiatives that improve the communities' resilience, particularly facing resource scarcity, helping them reduce post-harvest losses or developing supply alternatives, with the objective of offering long term decent livelihoods prospects to youth; and
- Ensure social rights for SSF, such as access to social security, health, education, safety at sea in a way that will improve the attractiveness of the sector for youth.



We call on Governments...

...and their partners to build resilient small-scale fishing communities by developing **national strategic plans** to implement these actions **by 2030**.



These plans must be **adequately funded and guided** by the FAO Guidelines to Secure Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries and other relevant regional policies.**

We will be monitoring the development and implementation of these plans of action and we call on supporting partner organisations and civil society to help us monitor progress.



www.ssfcalltoaction.org

The Signatories

All the signatories are national, regional and inter-regional organisations representing small-scale fisheries around the globe including from Africa, the Pacific, South and central America, and Europe. Please visit the website to see all signatories and civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supporting the call.



Support



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FOOTNOTES

*According to the FAO Voluntary Guidelines to Secure Small-scale Fisheries (VGSSF), small-scale fisheries encompass all activities along the value chain – pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest.

**The VGSSF were approved as an international instrument in June 2014. These guidelines were created as a result of a very long history of the struggles of small-scale fishworkers around the world appealing for greater recognition of their rights and their role in the fisheries sector of their countries. Other relevant regional policies: Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (AUC-NEPAD 2014) • The Noumea Strategy - A new song for coastal fisheries pathways to change (SPC 2015); The Framework for Scaling up Community Based Fisheries Management (SPC 2021) – for the Pacific Region.