

INITIAL COMMENTS ON THE ZERO DRAFT OF THE OUTCOME DOCUMENT

The Importance of Artisanal Fisheries for Rio+20

24th February 2012

INTRODUCTION:

We, the undersigned **organizations working with artisanal fishworkers and their communities**, are well aware that humanity's future depends upon the sustainability of the aquatic environment; and that the sustainable use of aquatic resources largely depends upon their stewardship by artisanal and small-scale fishworkers. In this connection, a major flaw in the Rio+20 Zero Draft in addressing Oceans and Seas is the lack of attention given to the communities who depend on fisheries resources for their livelihoods and food security, and the lack of recognition given to their current and potential role in conserving aquatic resources and managing their sustainable use. There is still time to correct these flaws, before the next "*informal-informal negotiations*" and intersessional meetings in March. We thank you in advance for taking our views into account and endorsing them.

In our view there are two serious omissions in the Zero Draft: not only does it fail to acknowledge the important contribution of artisanal fisheries to achieving sustainable development; it also fails to highlight that the impact of the environmental crisis in and on fisheries, caused by unsustainable development and destructive practices, disproportionately affects women, increasing their workloads and household food insecurity. This needs to be rectified.

BACKGROUND:

Over 100 million people are directly engaged, full or part time in fisheries activities, at least 50% percent of whom are women. However the real figure is thought to be closer to 200 million fishworkers, because official statistics underestimate the number of people engaged, particularly women whose work is often unpaid, unrecognized and unrecorded.

90% of those who depend on fisheries for their livelihoods are engaged in the artisanal sector, and 90% are from developing countries. In addition the artisanal sector contributes over 50% of the fish eaten directly by humans.

Artisanal fishery activities and productive systems tend to be small in scale, locally based, diverse in scope, low in impact, energy efficient, and labour intensive. With notable exceptions, catches tend to be low-volume but high in nutritional, social and economic value, destined for local, regional and international human consumption markets, and supporting livelihoods and local social and economic activities.

Inappropriate policies and misconceived approaches to fisheries management and conservation have skewed fisheries development policy towards production and increased earnings from the sector, at the expense of the social and environmental dimensions. As a result, all over the world fishery ecosystems are being over-exploited and damaged by fishing practices that are both intensive and destructive, whilst the social and economic conditions in communities dependent on fisheries remain poor and many basic human rights are not secured. Such a short term approach, where modernization is seen essentially in terms of improved economic performance, has failed to deliver sustainable and equitable fisheries. The Zero Draft should aim to correct this state of affairs as part of its endeavour to promote green economies.

PROPOSAL:

We urge delegates **to include a specific reference to artisanal fisheries in the Zero Draft** and the need to defend and strengthen their productive systems. This should recognize the important contribution of artisanal fisheries to local development, food security and food sovereignty, and to the preservation of aquatic ecosystems, as highlighted in the Monaco Message of November 2011.

Our proposal is consistent with **Paragraph 22** of the Zero Draft whereby States “*commit to improving governance and capacity at all levels – global, regional, national and local – to promote integrated decision making, to fill the implementation gap and promote coherence across institutions*” and with **Paragraph 78** where: “*we stress the importance of the conservation, sustainable management and equitable sharing of marine and ocean resources.*”

Ensuring an equitable distribution of the benefits from aquatic resources requires that the economic, social and cultural rights of communities dependent on fisheries are recognized, including participation of artisanal fishworkers in the decision making processes that affect them, that appropriate measures are taken to give communities reliant on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture secure access to fisheries resources, land, food and work, and that support is provided for the processing and marketing of their products. To this end, UNCSD 2012 should support the development and implementation of international guidelines for securing small-scale fisheries.

Affirmative action is also required towards ensuring that coastal and inland communities that depend on small scale and artisanal fishing participate on an equitable basis in decision taking processes that affect their livelihoods, with priority accorded to customary access of small scale fishing communities. Action is also required to defend the legitimate rights of small scale fishery activities against IUU activities and the grabbing of coastal lands by real estate speculators, tourism, industrial aquaculture and other destructive activities.

Finally, we call on States **to create the necessary space for artisanal fishing communities and their representatives to participate as one of the major groups with a distinct identity in Rio de Janeiro at the Conference to mark 20th anniversary of UNCSD.**

UNDERSIGNED ORGANIZATIONS:

Name of Organization	Contact Details	Rio+20 Submission
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