



**Committee on Fisheries
Thirty-fourth Session
1-5 February 2021**

**Agenda Item 8:
Supporting Small-scale Artisanal Fisheries**

**Statement
International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)**

1. The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) welcomes the Agenda item COFI/2020/6 and the comprehensive Information Papers viz., COFI/2020/Inf.12, COFI/2020/Inf.12.1 and COFI/2020/Inf.12.2, particularly those sections reporting progress under the FAO Umbrella Programme for the Promotion and Application of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) and related developments. The range of activities undertaken since the establishment of the FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme in 2015—in partnership with governments, regional fisheries bodies, civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia—towards the implementation of the SSF Guidelines— is quite impressive and, we are happy to note, has significantly expanded in scope since the 33rd Session of COFI in 2018.
2. The initiatives under the FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme are welcome, and we particularly welcome the support extended to the establishment of regional platforms for non-State actors (NSAs) in Southern Africa as well as in Western Africa, and the ongoing effort to create a pan-African NSA platform and to link it up with the SSF Global Strategic Framework (SSF-GSF).
3. ICSF is also pleased to note that countries like Senegal and Tanzania are already developing national plans of action in a consultative and participatory manner, which is laudatory. ICSF is also pleased to hear about some Central American countries developing regional approaches to implementation, including with the participation of Indigenous Peoples, and about the small island developing States (SIDS) countries of the Pacific looking at how regional policies can complement the SSF Guidelines. These are welcome developments at the regional level.
4. As summarized in COFI/2020/Inf.12, the FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme has also supported several initiatives of ICSF in Africa, Asia and Latin America to demonstrate how the SSF Guidelines can be put to use at the national, subnational and local levels. These were in the realms of improving security of tenure of inland and coastal fishing communities; about integrating an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) into the co-management mechanisms of local fishing communities; on improving tenure security and ensuring decent work for the precarious migrant fishers; on benchmarking national fisheries legislation and policies against the SSF Guidelines; about mainstreaming gender and other elements of the SSF Guidelines into national fisheries policies; on reviewing the efficacy of cyclone warning systems for fishers at sea; and on assessing disaster response and preparedness of marine small-scale fishers, especially to

cyclones impacting their fishing operations at sea. ICSF also translated a summary of the SSF Guidelines into several local African languages, made films on how natural disasters impact small-scale fishing at sea; and produced, for FAO, several animated videos on various chapters of the SSF Guidelines. ICSF would like to take this opportunity to thank the FAO Fisheries Division for extending support to ICSF to undertake these activities.

5. The FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme, needless to say, is an eloquent testimony to the continued relevance of the SSF Guidelines in providing direction to the formulation of small-scale fisheries policies, strategies and legislation at the regional and national levels in many developing countries. It has the potential to be the engine to power the SSF-GSF mechanism. Although over 30 countries have so far benefited under the FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme, many small-scale fish-producing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, however, are yet to figure in it.

6. ICSF would urge this Committee: firstly, to enhance the FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme to benefit more countries and CSOs/NGOs, as well as to strengthen the SSF-GSF mechanism; secondly, to broaden the scope of the FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme to include initiatives to document how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development indicators measure, in a targeted manner, the social wellbeing and development of the vulnerable and marginalized in marine and inland fishing communities, including women; and thirdly, to encourage the FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme to assist monitoring and evaluation of all initiatives under the auspices of all actors, to help move towards an outcome-oriented approach, and to see if the objectives of the SSF Guidelines are indeed being realized in a progressive manner.

7. Last but by no means least, at a time when fishing communities are limping back to their fisheries after being devastated by Covid-19 and its attendant pandemic control measures, it is all the more pertinent to consider enhancing support through the FAO-SSF Umbrella Programme to help small-scale fishing communities to resume their fishing and fish-marketing operations in a sustainable and equitable manner.

27 January 2021

(For more information: www.icsf.net)