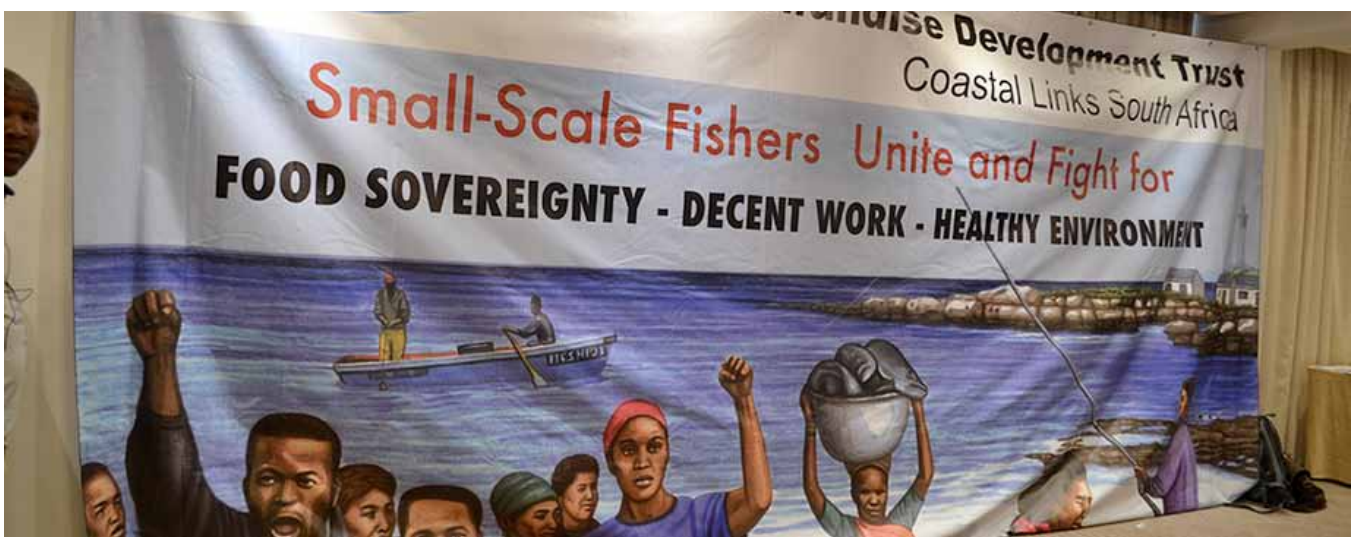


# SOUTH AFRICA

## 6th. General Assembly of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

The 6th. General Assembly was held in at the Fountain Hotel in the City Centre of Cape Town, South Africa. It was hosted by the Masifundise and Coastal Links South Africa. The General Assembly was attended by 134 participants from 26 countries. The delegates gathered for 5 days to discuss the past, the present and the future of the WFFP.



*“UPHOLD our human and fishing rights as fisherfolk of the world, protect our livelihoods, pursue social justice for fishing communities, preserve and promote the culture of fishing communities worldwide, affirm water as the source of all life and commit ourselves to sustain fisheries and all aquatic resources for present and future generations of the world”.*

With these words, fisherfolk movements from around the world formed the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) on November 21, 1997 in India. Since then, WFFP has grown hugely in strength and stature and today it represents 44 fisherfolk movements from 31 countries.

### The 6th General Assembly and its decisions

Two key themes received particular attention:

- Ocean Grabbing - the process whereby elites

take control of resources at the expense of poor communities (a definition and detailed description has been published by Masi-fundise together with other institutions and with support of the Lighthouse Foundation in a brochure that can be downloaded in English and Spanish), and

- the International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries (SSF guidelines) Fisheries, endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries in June 2014.

Associate Professor Seth Macinko from University of Rhode Island, gave a sobering opening address underlining how the unprecedented push for privatisation of fisheries can undermine the livelihoods of small-scale fishers worldwide; how the proponents of such privatisation policies increasingly adopts the human-rights language of social movements; and what WFFP

should be particularly aware of when using the SSF guidelines.

The South African National Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr. Senzeni Sokwana, made a key closing address at the last day of the General Assembly, in which he confirmed South Africa's commitment towards the implementation of the SSF guidelines.



The General Assembly noted that the overarching goals of the SSF guidelines are to:

- enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries, including inland fisheries, to food security and nutrition;
- to support the progressive realization of the right to food;
- and to empower small-scale fishing communities to participate in decision making, to enjoy their human rights and to assume responsibilities for sustainable use of fishery resources;
- and to obtain social and economic justice.

The General Assembly therefore decided to:

1. Strengthening the cooperation between the WFFP and FAO.
2. Strengthening work of WFFP and WFFP members in regards to the SSF guidelines. The General Assembly also noted that Ocean Grabbing in its many forms is an alarming threat to small-scale fishers all over the world. The

General Assembly therefore also decided to:

3. Strengthen the capacity of the WFFP, its communication and cooperation with allies at the global level.
4. Strengthen capacity, consciousness, activities and alliances of WFFP members at the national level. Furthermore, the assembly noted that the threats to small-scale fisheries all over the world and the importance of the SSF Guidelines also have to be addressed and applies to the continental level. The as-

sembly therefore decided to:

5. enhance communication, information sharing and campaign work; and to strengthen the focus on indigenous peoples.

#### [What is ocean grabbing?](#)

Today we are witnessing a major process of enclosure of the world's oceans and fisheries resources, including marine, coastal and inland fisheries. Ocean grabbing is occurring mainly through policies, laws, and practices that are (re)defining and (re)allocating access, use and control of fisheries resources away from small-scale fishers and their communities, and often with little concern for the adverse environmental consequences.

The term 'ocean grabbing' aims to cast new light on important processes and dynamics that are negatively affecting the people and communities whose way of life, cultural identity and livelihoods depend on their involvement in

small-scale fishing and closely related activities. Small-scale fishers and fishing communities in both the Global South and the Global North are increasingly threatened and confronted by powerful forces that are dramatically reshaping existing access rights regimes and production models in fisheries. This process is leading not only to the dwindling of control by small-scale fishers over these resources, but also in many cases to their ecological destruction and very disappearance.



Despite a growing spotlight on this general phenomenon, the story of fisheries remains seriously overlooked and largely neglected in academic and activist circles as well as in the news media. Yet ocean grabbing in its various forms

is undermining the rights and aspirations of millions of people depending on inland and marine small-scale fisheries across the globe. The urgent need to give increased and focused attention to ocean grabbing is illustrated by Olivier de Schutter, the former UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food, who in an address to the UN General Assembly stressed that “‘Ocean-grabbing’ – in the shape of shady access agreements that harm small-scale fishers [...] and the diversion of resources away from local populations – can be as serious a threat as ‘land-grabbing’.” ([worldfishers.org/resources-2/reports-and-articles/](http://worldfishers.org/resources-2/reports-and-articles/))

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