

# CSO PERSPECTIVES ON THE FISHERIES SUBSIDIES AGREEMENT

“We have deep concerns about the WTO subsidy negotiations. These negotiations have unfolded without any meaningful opportunity for small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples to participate. The WTO does not pay due consideration to human rights, and cultural and social development. Its free trade agenda has enriched transnational corporations and facilitated the further concentration of ownership of territories and natural resources in the hands powerful corporations. Furthermore, the procedures of the WTO are not carried out in a participatory, democratic way on par with the Committee on Fisheries (COFI).

We, small-scale and artisanal fishers and Indigenous Peoples, therefore call upon the COFI members to bring back the negotiations on fisheries subsidies to the COFI to ensure IUU fishing is addressed in a democratic manner, and where we have an opportunity to contribute to negotiations.”

**- The World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), La Via Campesina (LVC), as members of the Fisheries Group of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), and representing millions of small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples from coastal and inland regions worldwide.**

The recently agreed FSA remains fundamentally flawed and in favour of those countries with large capacity for subsidising and reporting. Its failure to target those most historically responsible for overfishing is ensuring that the burdens of the agreement are being carried by those least responsible. The minimalist SDT only offers a brief peace-clause which fails the mandate of the SDG. Finally, the lack of real commitments on technical assistance and capacity building represents a failure to ensure that developing countries and LDCs are able to meet the burdens of this text, instead we will see resources being diverted from elsewhere. This text fails the mandate and it is urged to not be ratified.

**- Pacific Network on Globalisation, Pacific Island Countries**

“The agreement reached on fisheries subsidies at MC12 does not deliver on the UN mandate to make appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries. The agreement which is supposed to be aimed at saving the ocean does not at all target the big-industrialized fleets that comprise an overcapacity and undertake overfishing and it violates country's sovereign rights under the UNCLOS- Law of the Seas.

The rules on harmful subsidies that the UN SDG 14.6 asked the WTO to make, does not mandate for the reporting requirements and management issues that were included in the WTO-text. It is the responsibility of the UN treaties and institutions to assess sustainability of fisheries management. The MC12 suggestion where countries can report on their fisheries management to the WTO to be able to keep subsidizing only helps the big fleet interests. This approach positions the WTO in the realm of fishery management which is out of place, and it hinders those countries who do not have the capacity to report from subsidizing their fishery sector which is highly unfair and not in accordance with the mandate.”

#### **- Handelskampanjen, Norway**

“It is not only that the current agreement is riddled with confusion and inconsistencies, the interface between the current agreement and the forthcoming comprehensive agreement that will include additional rules on overcapacity and overfishing suffers from a massive lack of clarity and consistency, therefore making both processes vulnerable. Paragraph 4 of the Ministerial Decision gives the mandate to negotiate the comprehensive agreement. However, according to Article 12 of the current agreement, the agreement will terminate by four years after its entry into force (unless otherwise decided by the WTO General Council) if the comprehensive agreement is not reached by then. Therefore, the comprehensive agreement may take years to negotiate and may never even be reached, while developing countries and LDCs may be stuck with the incomplete and unjust rules of the current agreement if extended by the GC. In addition, it is clear that there will be another long battle to ensure that the comprehensive agreement delivers on effective and appropriate S&DT as well as stronger disciplines on those who subsidise most and are industrial fishing nations. Given the situation, developing countries and LDCs should wait before ratifying the current agreement until an equitable comprehensive agreement is reached that can really deliver on the mandate of SDG 14.6”.

#### **- Third World Network**