



## Press statement by the World Forum of Fisher Peoples in response to the Global Partnership for Oceans

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2013

In a compelling ‘Call on Governments’ by the *World Forum of Fisher Peoples* (WFFP) and the *World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers* (WFF), the organizations renounce the global push for the introduction of private property rights as a tool to manage the ocean’s fish resources. Instead, the organizations appeal governments to look towards a ‘human-rights based approach’.

With reference to experiences with privatization programs around the world – from Iceland to South Africa – the call explains how these programs lead to loss of livelihoods in the thousands, while benefiting a select few. As the call reads:

- *[...] these examples document how RBF [management program involving privatization] leads to de facto exclusion of small-scale fishers and the concentration of fishing rights with an elite minority. They provide evidence that RBF is incompatible with small-scale fishing, and is likely to result in the loss of traditional fishing management practices.*

Despite these adverse consequences of privatizing the oceans, a World Bank initiative under the name ‘Global Partnership for Oceans’ (GPO) is, according to the call, advocating for the widespread implementation of privatization programs around the world:

- *The GPO proposes Rights Based Fishing (RBF) as a ‘cure-all’ for the worlds’ fisheries.*

Aside from scolding this one-eyed approach to managing the world’s fisheries, the call abhors the exclusion of civil society throughout the process of developing the GPO and in this light questions the legitimacy of the whole project:

- *We, who represents millions of fisher people from all over the world, have not been invited nor involved in any preparatory processes of the GPO, and at the time the GPO declaration was drawn up, it was clear that the GPO promotes values and systems that contradict the fundamental value systems underpinning the vast majority of small-scale fisheries around the world.*



## Alternative Solutions

The call reminds governments of the rights of civil society to take part in decision making and stresses the importance of working together with WFFP and WFF – who represents millions of fisher people worldwide – in implementing fisheries policy rooted in a human-rights based approach:

- *The human rights-based approach to fisheries recognizes that development efforts in fisheries should contribute to securing the freedom, food sovereignty and dignity of all fisher people everywhere. [...] recognizing that the development of responsible and sustainable small-scale fisheries is possible only if the political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights of fisher people are addressed in an integrated manner.*

Naseegh Jaffer, Co-coordinator of the WFFP, said

- *We hope that the governments of the world will act upon this call so that it can herald a new and equitable fishery for our world.*
- *It is our collective responsibility to do so, he added.*

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