

Do Not Destroy in the Name of Development

Do Not Kill in the Name of Conservation

National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) calls to protect the marine and coastal natural resources and the livelihood of millions of small and traditional fisher people dependent on those resources.

India is a signatory to the international Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), is hosting the 11th Conference of Parties (COP) at Hyderabad and is going to Chair the COP for the next couple of years. But for all the show put up by the Government of India to project itself as protector of biodiversity and natural resources, the lesson learnt by the small and traditional coastal fishing communities at the cost of their lives and livelihoods testifies to the opposite.

Around 40 nuclear power plants, hundreds of coal fired power plants, industries including the most polluting ones like petro chemicals and petroleum industries (PCPIRs), ports, oil and other mining, large scale tourism, cities and townships are being allowed to come up on the coast. The coastal waters of the country is being devastated by over and destructive fishing through thousands of bottom-trawlers and mechanized fishing boats topped by large foreign fishing vessels allowed to fish in Indian waters under letter of permit (LoP) scheme. The present legal or statutory provisions to contain this onslaught on coastal ecology and biodiversity, in themselves mostly weak and grossly inadequate, are being rampantly violated with the connivance of the government. The coast and the coastal waters are being offered to big business for plunder.

The plunder and destruction of coastal natural resources is having its most devastating effect on small and traditional coastal fishing communities, who are by far the largest stakeholders and natural custodians of these resources. Widespread encroachments on the coastal land and waters as well as pollution coupled with over and destructive fishing are killing us.

The small and traditional coastal fishing communities are the forerunners in the struggle to protect the coast and coastal natural resources. They have fought and are fighting against nuclear power plants at Haripur, Jaitapur, Kobada and Koodankulam; against PCPIRs at Nayachar and Vishakapatnam-Kakinada; against coal fired power plants in Sompeta, Kakrapalli, Mundra; against ports, polluting industries and large tourism all over the coast; against over and destructive fishing by trawlers and foreign fishing vessels. The fisher people are daring arrests, tortures and even deaths by police firing. The historic 'National Campaign for Fishers' Rights', undertaken in 2008 by NFF covering more than 8,000 kilometers of the Indian coastal areas from Gujarat to West Bengal, was launched with the slogan '**Save Water, Save Coast, Save Coastal People**'.

As if to add insult to our injury the Government of India is coming up with a number of **Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs)** like the Sundarban Tiger Reserve and National Park, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park, Gahirmatha Marine Protected Area and Gulf of Mannar Marine Protected Area where they are imposing blanket bans on fishing irrespective of whether it is large or small, destructive or benign. Thus the small and traditional fishing communities, who cannot move further into the sea with their small crafts and gears and

who have been fighting to protect the coastal natural resources, have become the worst victims of this so called conservation measure. The poor fishing communities, earning their livelihood independently by fishing from ancestral times, have been turned into trespassers in their own lands and waters. They are being abused, assaulted, fined and jailed, their boats, nets and catch are being confiscated. Nowhere in these protected areas the fishing communities have been consulted, let alone compensated. Widespread impoverishment, destitution, physical and mental diseases, even suicides are the results of this draconian policy.

We accuse the Government of India of violating the three main objectives of the Convention on Biodiversity – **the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.** [Article 1of CBD]

We accuse the Government of India of violating the principle to **respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices.** [Article 8j of CBD]

We accuse the Government of India of violating the principle to **protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements.** [Article 10c of CBD]

We accuse the Government of India of violating the principle to **support local populations to develop and implement remedial action in degraded areas where biological diversity has been reduced.** [Article 10d of CBD]

We accuse the Government of India of violating the directive to **enhance and secure involvement of indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders and the agreed target to ensure full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities by 2008 in the governance of the protected areas.** [Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA)]

We appeal to the international community to support our struggle to protect the coastal and marine natural resources and biodiversity and to protect our traditional and customary rights to sustainable use of these resources for livelihood.

National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) demands:

- 1. Protect coastal and marine natural resources and biodiversity from encroachments, pollution and over and destructive fishing.**
- 2. Recognise and respect the small and traditional coastal fishing communities' right to sustainable fishing in coastal and marine waters including in the Marine and Coastal Protected Areas.**
- 3. Ensure the full and effective participation of the small and traditional coastal fishing communities in protecting and governing coastal and marine natural resources including in the Marine and Coastal Protected Areas.**