



NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SMALL SCALE FISHWORKERS

Media Release

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The **National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSF)**, representing small scale fish workers' organizations from 20 states and union territories of India held 2 days' Regional Meeting of the West Zone on 21st and 22nd July in Goa. 35 representatives from small scale fish workers' organizations of Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Goa participated in the Regional Meeting. They represented both marine and inland fisheries.

The Regional Meeting discussed and decided on important national, regional and state issues concerning the livelihood crisis of small scale fish workers and the fast deteriorating condition of the water bodies and fish resources. It also discussed with grave concern the climate crisis that is hitting the fishing communities in the worst manner.

The Regional Meeting also decided on steps to develop stronger organizations of small scale fishers, fish farmers and fish vendors in the states and thereby to strengthen the National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers.

The meeting resolved that –

1. The small scale fishing communities need recognition of their **inalienable Right to Water** which means their right to access the water bodies for sustainable fishing and fish farming and their right to protect the water bodies and fish resources from pollution, encroachment, diversion, over fishing and destructive fishing. The Right to Water thus relates to the fishing communities right to land and governance of activities detrimental to water and fish resources.
2. The small scale fishing communities **reject the Indian Marine Fisheries Bill 2021** prepared and published by the Department of Fisheries of the Government of India because –
 - it has been prepared without consultation with the small scale fishing communities;
 - it has defined trawlers, purse seiners and all kinds of mechanized large fishing boats responsible for over fishing and destructive fishing as small scale to trample the rights of the small scale fishers.
 - It has failed to ensure preferential access of the small scale fishers to marine fish resources over the large scale fishing entrepreneurs.
 - It has provided no space for small scale fishing communities to participate either in framing the rules and notifications or in the statutory bodies necessary to implement the IMFB 2021.
3. In the face of the climate crisis the small scale fishing communities demand **Climate Justice**. Which means making the capitalists and industrialists responsible for precipitating the climate crisis **pay for** the rehabilitation of the climate affected small scale fishing and other communities who are least responsible for but worst victims of the crisis. The small scale fishing communities demand **climate resilient habitat and livelihood opportunities**.
4. The **4 labour codes** enacted by the Parliament of India has very little relevance to the self-employed workers like small scale fishers, fish farmers, fish vendors and allied workers though the self-employed workers have also been included in the definition of worker. It is very important to **protect the natural resource base and the access of to the natural resources** to ensure livelihood of self-employed workers like small scale fishers and fish farmers.



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5. **Goa:** The scrapping of the proposed **Marina on Zuari river** has been a victory to the long struggle of the small scale fishing communities. The **Declaration of National Waterways in Goa** should also be scrapped. Immediate and effective steps are called for to **stop the unbridled and destructive tourism** which is polluting the waters and making it impossible to fish in the estuarine waters. The authorities must also take immediate and effective measures to **stop the illegal and destructive fishing by purse-seiners and trawlers** in the estuaries.
6. **Maharashtra:** The destruction of the mangroves and fish nurseries in Navi Mumbai and adjoining areas of Maharashtra by projects like **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust – Development of Terminal 4, Infrastructure Projects** by CIDCO and **allotment of CRZ-I Status areas** (Fishing Zones) to Developers and SEZ Projects by Reliance and JNPT and NMSEZ project (on 1250 Ha), **solid waste dumping** ground on mangrove lands in Thane creek must stop and the small scale fishing communities livelihood should be protected. The **inalienable right** of the small scale fishing communities to fish in the reservoir waters and sell their catch must be recognised. Instead of leasing out the fishing rights the small scale fishing communities living on the reservoir waters should be provided with **legally recognised permanent user right (Pani Patta)**.
7. **Rajasthan:** The reservoirs of Rajasthan are among the most productive fish resources of the country. But the tribal fishing communities have **no right on the reservoir fisheries** there. They can **only fish but cannot sell their catch**. All the catch has to be delivered to the contractor appointed by the department. They **cannot determine the species that are released** in the water and the department of fisheries **releases destructive species like Tilapia and Thai Magur** that destroys all other indigenous fish. The fishing communities must be given **right to fish and right to sell their catch**. The fishing communities must have the **right to decide on the maintenance of the reservoir fisheries including the determination of the fish species** to be released in the reservoirs.

The Regional Meeting constituted a Regional Coordination Committee to coordinate and lead the activities of the National Platform for Small Scale Fishing Communities in the West Zone of the country.

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