



# Organising Globally to Fight Exploitation in Fisheries and Aquaculture

Oslo, Norway  
23-24.11.2015



International  
Meeting  
of Fishing Industry  
and Aquaculture  
Workers' Unions

# INTRODUCTION

*A meeting of IUF affiliates which represent workers in **aquaculture, seafood and fish processing** was held on November 24–25, 2015 in Oslo, Norway. It was organised following a **decision of the IUF 27th Congress** (Geneva, May 15–18, 2012) to consolidate the international union organisation of workers in major fisheries companies, building union strength and strategy across the entire fisheries supply chain.*

*The objective of this meeting, which was organised with the support of **Norwegian Food Workers Union (NNN)**, was to discuss ideas and plans for how the IUF should develop this international organisation in the sector with an emphasis on the major TNCs.*

*Today about 200 million people work directly or indirectly for fish and seafood companies along the value chain. 58 million people are employed directly in fisheries and aquaculture. However, the industry, which is among the fastest growing in the global economy, **provides almost only poorly-paid jobs in hazardous working conditions. It has a terrible record of human rights abuses, and there is massive use of child and forced labour.***

*Low unionisation rate is **the** key factor behind this appalling situation – which we shall overcome one day. The meeting in Oslo was about **HOW** to do this.*

# PROGRAMME

**Monday, NOVEMBER 23**

**Session I 09.00 – 10.45**

**GLOBAL TRENDS IN AQUACULTURE AND FISH INDUSTRY. State of economy, state of the unions**

**Fish workers movement in Norway**

*Jan-Egil Pedersen, NNN*

**Fish workers movement: time to grow global**

*Kirill Buketov, IUF*

**Global fish, seafood and aquaculture. What it is now, what it is going to be?**

*Uwe Barg, FAO*

**Session II 11.15 – 13.00**

**FISH WORKERS ORGANISING. WHAT FOR? HOW? Regional reports: Europe**

*Moderator Estelle Brentnall, EFFAT*

**Development of the union-management relations in the fish canning sector (ANFACO).**

**Spain country report**

*Sebastian Serena, FITAG-UGT*

**Employment, collective bargaining and the quality of industrial relations in European fisheries and aquaculture. Presentation of EC/union research**

*Sara Palazzoli, CGIL FLAI, Italy*

**Social, economic and employment impact of the European Fish Policy and union response**

*Jesus Gallo Cuesta, FEAGRA CCOO, Spain*

**Fight for wage increase in the salmon sector and fish processing industry in Norway**

*Ann Solveig Sorensen, NNN, Norway*

*Written Country reports: Belgium (Joint report of IUF affiliates), Spain (SMC-UGT), Russia (IUF EECA team)*

**Session III 14.00 – 15.45**

**FISH WORKERS ORGANISING. WHAT FOR? HOW? Regional reports: Africa, Latin America / Caribbean, Asia Pacific**

*Moderator Anne-Berit Aker Hansen*

**Workers and unions in the African fish industry: Main challenges, examples of organising**

*Omara Amuko, IUF Africa*

**Fish industry and fish workers organizing in Ghana**

*Richard Becless, GAWU, Ghana*

**Latin America: Union struggle in global fishing companies**

*Alexis Cancino, CONTRAPESH, Chile*

**Stand Up for the rights of fish workers**

*Neville Donaldson, Etu, New Zealand*

**Citra Mina: how long does it take to win against tuna barons? Worker Safe campaign**

*Herbert Demos, SENTRO, Philippines*

**Fishery people and their communities: The day-by-day struggle for rights and dignity**

*Poguri Chennaiah, APVVU, India*

**Session IV 16.15 – 18.00****WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES FOR UNION ORGANISING IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY? WHAT ARE THE WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM?**

*Moderator Kirill Buketov, IUF*

**Organising in fisheries and aquaculture: trade union approach to health and safety**

*Peter Hurst, IUF*

**IUU fishing and the rights of fishworkers**

*Fabrizio de Pascale, UILA, Italy*

**Tuesday, NOVEMBER 24****Session V 9.00 – 10.45****CONSOLIDATION OF THE SECTOR AND TRADE UNION RESPONSES TO THE GROWTH OF CORPORATE POWER**

*Introduction and group work. Moderator Neville Donaldson, Etu*

**Uniting fish and fishing workers across supply chain: IUF-ITF organising programme**

*Nichola Smith, ITF, Jon Whitlow ITF, Johnny Hansen SjomannsForbundet, Norway*

**Who profits? Top 100 corporations in the sector and first union battles experience**

*Kirill Buketov, IUF*

**What do we need to build to confront the corporations effectively?**

*Group work*

**Session VI 11.15 – 13.00****INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND PROGRAMS – ILO & FAO. What is and what should be there for the fish workers?**

*Moderator Omara Amuko, IUF*

**Supporting ILO's global decent work agenda in fisheries and aquaculture**

*Eleonora Dandrea, FAO*

**ILO and the development of national and international plans to tackle worst forms of exploitation in fishing industry**

*Jean-Marie Kagabo, ILO Global Action Programme for Fisheries*

**ILO and fish workers**

*Brandt Wagner, ILO Sectoral Policies Department*

**Session VII** 14.00 – 15.45

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN FISH/SEAFOOD INDUSTRY. “Blue sky vision”**

*Moderator Kirill Buketov, IUF*

**Reports of the eight working groups,  
established by country or region or common language**

**Discussion on priority tasks**

**Reports:**

*Omara Amuko (Africa)*

*Huseyin Anapali (Turkey)*

*Conny Demonie (Belgium)*

*Neville Donaldson (Asia-Pacific)*

*Manuel Souto (Spanish Language group)*

*Silvano Giangiacomi (Italy)*

*Jarle Wilhelmsen (Nordic)*

*Kirill Buketov (IUF-ITF program)*

**Session VIII** 16.15 – 18.00

**BUILDING INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN FISH/SEAFOOD INDUSTRY. Action Points**

*Moderator Jan-Egil Pedersen, NNN*

**Summary of the two days, action points and resolutions**

## MEETING REPORT

A meeting of IUF affiliates representing workers in aquaculture, seafood and fish processing was held on November 23–24, 2015 in Oslo, Norway. It was held following a decision by the IUF 27th Congress (Geneva, May 15–18, 2012) to consolidate the international union organisation of workers in major fisheries companies, building union strength and strategy across the entire fisheries supply chain.

The meeting was hosted by the Norwegian Food Workers' Union (NNN) and attended by 47 participants from 17 countries. The International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) sent representatives from its Fisheries Section, and experts from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) also joined as guests.



## Session I

## GLOBAL TRENDS IN AQUACULTURE AND FISH INDUSTRY: State of economy, state of the unions

The meeting was opened by Jan-Egil Pedersen, President of the Norwegian Food Workers' Union (NNN). He stressed the importance of the fisheries industry for Norway and globally, and welcomed to Oslo this first IUF international meeting to formulate a plan of action to unite the workers of the global seafood industry.

Kirill Buketov of the IUF Secretariat thanked the NNN for its support. He noted the recent media exposures on human rights abuses and appalling working conditions in the seafood sector, and reported on current organising campaigns of seafood workers, in particular in Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Indonesia. He stressed the importance of producing a joint IUF-ITF organising programme, and said the main objective of the meeting was to bring seafood workers to the frontline of the struggle for justice, rights and respect.

Uwe Barg of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) presented some latest statistics on the industry today:

- About 200 million people work directly or indirectly in fish and seafood growing (aquaculture) and production along the value chain;
- 58 million people are employed directly in fisheries and aquaculture.
- The livelihoods of 880 million people depend on the sector;
- Growth in employment in fisheries and aquaculture is higher than in traditional agriculture, and higher than the world population growth, and world fisheries production is expected to expand.

The structure of employment in the industry is changing since the vast majority of commercial stocks have been overfished. Marine resources are limited, and the capacity of the world fishing fleet is already over that limit. So the current trend is to reduce the number of vessels and people employed on the sea, while aquaculture is rapidly growing and creating more jobs for fish farming and processing workers.

- In 2014, aquaculture production supplied 50% all fish caught and farmed globally for human consumption;
- Capture fishing produces 93 million tonnes per annum, of which 81 million tonnes come from marine and 12 million tonnes from freshwater;
- In comparison, aquaculture produces 97 million tonnes per annum, of which 70 million tonnes are fish and 27 million tonnes are aquatic plants.
- Fish and seafood is the most traded food commodity worldwide: more than 80 per cent is sold on the international market, with a value chain worth US\$ 818 billion in 2008.

Major trends in the global seafood trade are:

- A loss of confidence in public control authorities;
- Concerns about the sustainability of the resources;
- Vertical integration and consolidation of the companies in the sector;
- Globalisation of production, processing and trade;
- Supermarketisation — the increasing role of retailers;
- The use of Corporate Social Responsibility to protect corporate reputation.

The UN FAO has a number of regulatory mechanisms for the sector, developed

through the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and its two sub-committees on fish trade and aquaculture. Their primary task is to respond to the growing concern over the use of resources using the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. However, some FAO documents also include strong social causes based on a human rights approach, for example the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (which cover almost 90% of all fishers). Similar binding or voluntary regulatory mechanisms could be developed for commercial fishing and aquaculture but do not yet exist.

In the past, the FAO helped to facilitate the establishment of intergovernmental fisheries organisations at regional level to help regulate catch quotas, and these are becoming platforms where other matters of environmental and social concern can be raised.



### Sessions II and III

## FISH WORKERS ORGANISING. WHAT FOR? HOW? Regional reports

This session opened with a report from **Europe**, introduced by Estelle Brentnall of the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT-IUF). She said that some 150,000 workers are employed in the fisheries/seafood sector in Europe today.

**Spain:** Sebastian Serena, of the FITAG-UGT union reported that the industry employs 18,500 fish-processing workers there, of whom 80% are women, many with low education level. It is found all along the Spanish coast but primarily on the north. The industry turnover is worth 4 billion Euros and it is one of the most important for the Spanish economy. Since 2009, the number of companies has decreased from 750 to 667, while the number of workers has increased and, in spite of the general economic crisis, seafood production has stayed at the same level. The industry is consolidating itself: companies with fewer than 50 workers either disappear or merge into bigger ones. The number of fishing vessels under the Spanish flag is also growing. The Spanish food workers' unions have negotiated two national agreements – one for the seafood canning/processing sector and another for the frozen seafood sector.

The recently signed IUF-ITF Protocol with the canning/processing industry (ANFACO-SEC-OPESCA) allows unions to address industry member companies which are working in other countries. The Spanish Government is committed to maintaining the fishing/seafood sector in the country and, in order to be competitive, it is lobbying the EU Commission to secure trade agreements which take into account human rights and equal pay and working conditions for workers in countries of the Global South.



Jesus Gallo Cuesta of the FEAGRA-CCOO union continued the report on Spain by focusing on the social, economic and employment impact of the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). He said it is difficult to see and measure the social benefits of the CFP. **The unions undertook a study on the development of the anchovies' sector** from 2000 to 2014. This showed a 35% reduction in employment. Casual employment is growing and employment contracts are changing in favour of the companies' interests. EU funds are used to assist women to find alternative sources of employment to fish processing.

**Belgium:** Alain Degald of the ACV-CSC union described the industry in his country, where only three seafood processing plants remain in operation on the North Sea coast. The number of fishing boats is also decreasing, and many Belgian fishing workers now work on Dutch vessels instead. For those who still work in the sector, the working conditions are relatively good, and the union has working relations with management at all the plants.

**Italy:** Sara Palazzoli of the CGIL-FLAI union presented the results of EU-funded **research on employment, collective bargaining and the quality of industrial relations** in fisheries and aquaculture in 6 countries. The report shows that, due to the hard and dangerous nature of the job, workers ought to leave fishing at the age of 45-50 years, but retirement age is 62-67 according to national legislation and the younger generation is no longer attracted to the sector. The research also shows a low level of income in aquaculture and fish processing compared to other sectors.

**Norway:** Anne Solveig of the NNN union described the many challenges for the workers in the Norwegian fish industry – social dumping, and breaches of OSHE standards as well as the working environment legislation,

including longer working hours, and low quality accommodation and wages. Most workers in the industry are migrants and employers are charging them for meals and accommodation. **In 2015, the NNN was prepared to strike for a wage rise in the salmon industry,** but employers gave in at the last minute.

**Africa:** Omara Amuko, IUF Team Africa, introduced an overview of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the continent. He pointed out its dynamic growth owing to many national programmes to expand own-catch fishing and seafood production, as well as regional programmes under the auspices of the African Union, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). However, the sector is poorly regulated, national laws and international standards are not enforced. This leads to a struggle between producers for resources, water grabbing, etc.

In 2015, Team Africa carried out a survey to identify affiliates with membership in the sector. They found several sectoral collective agreements for fisheries, including OHS and maternity rights, concluded by GAWU in **Ghana**, GAPWUZ in **Zimbabwe**, and the Tanzanian Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers (TUICO) in **Tanzania**. In May 2015, the IUF Africa Regional Secretary and Team Africa proposed establishing an African fisheries union network to link together the unions representing both small fishers and commercial production workers.

**Richard Becless of the Ghana Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU)** said that his union represents 55,000 members, including many fishers, fish farming and fish processing workers. The seafood sector provides jobs to more than 20,000 workers in processing and marketing, mostly women.

**Latin America:** Alexis Cancino of the CONTRAPECH union in **Chile** presented a report on the situation in his country, where overfish-

ing is now recognised as a major problem, and many kinds of marine fauna are affected, such as sardines and anchovies. The whole industry, including the workforce, is now paying for the overfishing. This crisis has led to a decrease from 40,000 to 12,000 jobs in the sector and an increase in precarious contracts. New fisheries legislation which the Government has been trying to bring in would criminalise 90% of people involved in fishing and has been strongly criticised by the trade unions.

The issue of food safety manifested itself recently in the farmed salmon sector. A virus damaged the industry and resulted in Chile losing its world leadership in salmon production to Norway. Again, the Government is trying to resolve the problem at the expense of the workers, for example, suggesting restrictions on strike action during the salmon fishing season.

**Asia-Pacific:** Neville Donaldson greeted the participants on behalf of the newly-established Union Et "Stand tall" in **New Zealand**, which represents land-based processing workers.

In the 1970s, the 6th largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) was established around New Zealand. The massive abuse of workers' rights and destructive fishing practices by foreign charter vessels in the NZ EEZ have been repeatedly exposed. The predecessor of Et initiated a national petition calling for better protection for all workers employed in the NZ EEZ, including the application of NZ employment and health and safety laws. This, in conjunction with an accident when a Korean fishing boat sank because of an excessively heavy net, led to a ministerial enquiry which made several recommendations. This in turn led the NZ Government to bring in new regulations which will take effect on May 1, 2016. These require observers on all deep sea trawlers, that all NZ employment

and health and safety laws must apply in the NZ EEZ, and all vessels fishing there must be NZ-flagged vessels.

**Herbert Demos of the SENTRO** union federation in the **Philippines** reported on the outcomes of the two-year campaign for justice for Citra Mina workers in the city of General Santos. The company is the second largest exporter of tuna from the Philippines. In 2014, it dismissed a large group of workers who had formed a union. Besides these human rights violations, the company was also accused of inadequate OSH protection safeguards and of IUU (illegal, unreported, unregulated) fishing in Indonesian waters. The workers who were dismissed for unionisation have continued fight, with the support of local communities as well as IUF and ITF members around the world, for more than two years. Their basic demands remain the same – reinstatement, back wages and union recognition.

The campaign has changed the political landscape in the city. The Citra Mina Workers' Union, with the help of SENTRO and IUF, has dragged a very powerful company into an investigation by the Philippines Congress. The Government is now set to issue a new Departmental Order to govern the fishing industry in the country. The campaign also provided an opportunity for other tuna and fish workers to expose the massive contractualisation of employment through the 'Cabo' subcontracting system. The Government has now confirmed the legal status of the union, and the workers are committed to winning this struggle. It will be a **turning point for the 200,000 workers** who are dependent on fishing in General Santos city, Philippines.

As **Poguri Chennaiah of the APVVU** union in India said, the 8,000 km coastline of **India** provides a livelihood to numerous coastal populations. In general, people living on the coast are affected by illiteracy and poverty,

and there is widespread child labour. The APVVU represents various categories of workers – including 'traditional' motor-based small boat fishers, inland fish workers, aquacultural fish workers, and fish processing workers. However, the overwhelming majority of workers are not organised and are not allowed to be organised.

Fisher people have to struggle every day to protect their land and waters from commercial activities, which pollute the environment and destroy the fish stocks. At the suggestion of APVVU, the participants of the meeting expressed in a special Resolution their outrage at the arrest of 25 union activists protesting against the construction of a coal-based power plant in Nellore District (see page 17).



#### Session IV

### WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO UNION ORGANISING IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY? WHAT ARE THE WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM?

Peter Hurst, health and safety expert, defined various subsectors of the global fish and seafood industry, pointing out that agriculture, in which aquaculture is generally included, and capture fishing are two of the four most dangerous sectors in terms of fatal accidents, serious injuries and occupational disease (the other two are mining and construction). Unions should apply a unified approach to all segments of the seafood value chain, he said, since many safety and health issues are similar in aquaculture production and fish and seafood processing. Trade union organising can be driven around OHS issues along the supply chain, based on preventing and reducing the numbers of fatal accidents, serious injuries, and cases of occupational disease.

Fabrizio de Pascale of the UILA union in Italy introduced the results of a **study undertaken by the fisheries section of his union** (UILA Pesca) on IUU (illegal, unreported, unregulated) fishing and its relation to the rights of fishworkers in international law. The study is based on the understanding that there is a strong link between the management of marine resources and the rights and duties of fisher folk whose livelihoods are dependent on these resources. It emphasises that, if we do not address the issue of illegal work, no legislation will ever eradicate IUU fishing and that it is necessary to extend the concept of IUU fishing to include the violation of internationally recognised labour standards alongside the violation of conservation and management measures.

The authors of the study also showed the im-

portant innovative role that regional fisheries organisations can have. Participating in these organisations is an opportunity to advocate for more and better jobs and growth. In some of these regional organisations, NGOs also participate, including environmental organisations.



### Session V

## CONSOLIDATION OF THE SECTOR AND TRADE UNION RESPONSES TO THE GROWTH OF CORPORATE POWER

### Introduction and group work

Nichola Smith and Jon Whitlow from the Maritime Section of the ITF based in London, UK, and Johnny Hansen of the SjomannsForbundet union in Norway, presented the ITF priorities on defending fishers' rights at sea and the role of the joint ITF/IUF Fisheries Programme: **'From Catcher to Counter'**.

This strategic partnership aims to bring together IUF and ITF unions, organising teams, ITF port inspectors, and the necessary resources in various countries to advance the growth and strength of workers' organisations, both on the fishing vessels and on the ground. It is our response to the difficult nature of the industry. For example, fishing vessels often do not dock in the ports where the ITF has ship inspectors. So, to have access to these workplaces, we need to be more flexible and creative in our approach. Also, since many companies own both the boats and the seafood production facilities, the need for cooperation between IUF and ITF is obvious. The first country where the joint programme has delivered results is Papua New Guinea: there 6,000 new members were recruited in fish processing plants and on the fishing boats to establish a single union.

Kirill Buketov, IUF, highlighted the rapid consolidation of the sector, with some very ambitious companies trying to dominate the global market. Local companies, originally run by local crab, tuna or shrimp barons, now operate internationally and introduce their bad practices and rules into their global-level operations. So, today in the 21st century, we are dealing with widespread illegal, often criminal, labour practices including forced

labour and slavery, not to mention massive precarisation, the absence of safety standards or social protection, and a huge mortality rate. All this is based on aggressive anti-union policies by these companies.

US crab company, Phillips Seafood, can be taken as an example. It employs 18,000 workers around the world in Asia, Venezuela, and Mexico. The company 'innovated' contracting in and mass firing of workers by SMS. Another of its innovations is so-called 'Mini-plants' (or "Mini-Hell" in the workers' words), which are often private houses in villages set up by local producers to extract the crab meat. Workers employed in these Mini-plants are deprived of all employment rights, as labour standards are not applied there.

Because of the level of corporate consolidation, our ability to influence the dominant companies very much depends on union strength in their countries of origin. More than half of the top 100 companies in the seafood sector originate from the USA, Norway, Spain, Japan and Thailand. For example, Thai Union, notorious for its labour rights abuses, is trying to become Seafood Company Number One; it already has production facilities in the USA, France, UK, Germany, and Africa. International coordination will be needed among unions in all these countries to confront Thai Union labour practices.



## Session VI

### **INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND PROGRAMMES — ILO & FAO. What is and what should be there for the fish workers?**

Eleonora D'Andrea, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department Policy, Economics and Institutions (FIPI), presented the initiatives taken by the **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** on decent work in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The FAO increasingly recognises the need to improve working conditions and well-being of food producers and food workers as part of its global strategy to reduce poverty in rural areas, she said. As well as having practical projects, such as the improvement of occupational health and safety for women fish processors in West Africa, these issues are included in its regulatory mechanisms:

- The **FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries** includes specific articles on such issues as the training and competency of fishers, application of health and safety standards, and the repatriation of fishers to their home country;
- The **FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication** has a dedicated chapter on social development, employment and decent work.

It remains to be discussed, however, whether similar guidelines can be created for industrial fisheries.

The FAO recognises the leading role of the ILO in promoting the decent work agenda and aims to support ILO efforts, she added.

Jean Marie Kagabo of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch of the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** described the ILO approach to the sector through its **GAPfish Promoting the Human**

### and Labour Rights of Fishers programme.

This is considering allowing separate mechanisms to apply in different countries – according to whether they are source states, flag states, coastal states, or market states where the fish is sold/consumed.

Straight after the IUF meeting, ILO GAPfish was holding an International Expert Meeting on Labour Exploitation in the Fishing Sector in the Atlantic Region. The background document for this meeting recognises that the fisheries sector, and indeed the global seafood value chain, include much more than sea fishing, such as aquaculture and seafood processing, where labour conditions may also be a critical issue. The paper also suggests that being specific on the terminology used is important for developing a strategic approach to the global seafood industry:

- “Fishing” refers to the capture of wild fish at sea; it is thus a narrow concept;
- “Fisheries” is used for the entire industry that involves caught wild fish, including processing;
- “Seafood”, “seafood sector” or “seafood value chain” refers to all fish and seafood production for consumption and animal feed, including that which comes from aquaculture breeding and harvesting.

Brandt Wagner of the Transport and Maritime Unit of the ILO Sectoral Policies Department described the process of achieving **ILO Convention C188 (2007) on Work in Fishing**, and now for getting States to ratify it. He stressed the importance of this global regulatory mechanism since, in this industry where ships and fishing vessels operate globally and have crews from around the world, there need to be special and adequate measures of protection. The Convention aims, for example, to establish “... *decent conditions of work with regard to: minimum requirements for work on board; conditions of service; accommodation and food; occu-*

*pational safety and health protection; medical care and social security...*” Adopted in 2007, it only had 6 ratifications by late 2015, and will only come into force after ratification by 10 States.

The ILO is helping States to undertake a comparison between C188 and their own national laws, regulations and other measures in order to reveal and fill the gaps. This has led to intensive tripartite discussions between governments, employers and trade unions in the sector. It is proving to be an opportunity to strengthen the voice of trade unions in determining the future regulation of labour conditions in the fishing sector, at least with respect to work on vessels.

It is also important for States to not only have in place laws and regulations implementing C188 but also to have an effective system of compliance and enforcement. The ILO, following tripartite discussions, had recently adopted Guidelines on flag State inspection of working and living conditions on board fishing vessels.



## Session VII

### THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE FISH/SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

In this session, the conference participants split into groups, by country, region or language, to discuss how to develop the international movement of fish and seafood workers. The groups then presented their ideas on what should be done:

#### Group «Africa»:

- Identify interested affiliates by analysing the responses to the IUF Africa Team survey on the working conditions in the industry; and present the report to the 2016 IUF African Regional Committee and Conference;
- Map the industry, its sectors and operating companies, especially the big TNCs operating on the continent;
- Identify specific problems that the workers have and discuss them at a regional workshop;
- Set up a sectoral working group to plan further actions and to participate in the global network.

#### Group «Belgium»:

- Get more publicity via the media to expose the scope of human rights violations in the sector, and bring pressure on the companies through potential image damage;
- Explore the potential for action at the Brussels SeaFood Expo;
- Check how transparent the market is and how labels can help in traceability;
- Discuss with members the advantages of winning union membership at fisheries in the country and how to develop this;
- Also discuss how to overcome the current structural divisions within the union between the transport, manufacturing, and

distribution sections; also how to overcome the divisions between part-time, casual, seasonal, and permanent workers; create a network and bring people together; create common demands and fight for them;

- Develop European Works Councils in this sector, which do not yet exist.

#### Group «Turkey»:

- Research and map the aquaculture industry in the country, which has only grown over the past 10 years;
- Get the TARIM-IS union, which currently only organises agricultural workers, to look at also organising in aquacultural enterprises, even though the present environment is not favorable for organising;

#### Group «Spain and Latin America»:

- Make sure that the companies in the sector do not benefit from public funding;
- Promote ILO C188;
- Develop a system of traceability that checks the origins and sources so as to control fish imports.

#### Group «Italy»:

- Bring seafood and fish workers closer together by exploring precarious employment practices and fight against casual work in the sector;
- Promote C188 as decent work on fishing vessels is important for the offshore industry;
- Tackle social dumping by demanding transparency from companies in the sector about their operations in other countries; call them into discussion about how workers are treated in their global operations;
- Support IUF seafood processing members around the world;
- Encourage consumers to raise their voices against bad practices;

- IUF Secretariat to establish a platform for international coordination to develop a long-term strategy and plan of action to make the industry clean of human rights violations and socially responsible; to develop the concept of decent work in the whole seafood supply chain, and coordinate our demands from individual companies or a code of conduct for all companies.

#### Group «Asia and Pacific»:

- Continue to support the frontline Citra Mina campaign;
- Focus on organising in particular companies: in New Zealand, 60% of workers in two seafood corporations are organised; in Papua New Guinea, one union represents the workers of 7 companies; in the Philippines, the Citra Mina Workers campaign is expanding through Tuna Workers Solidarity to workers in all tuna companies; obstacles to organising include companies' hostility and the low level of literacy and strong fear of being blacklisted among seafood workers;
- Build international solidarity links to organise simultaneously in cross-national companies and benefit from each other's successes;

#### Group «Nordic countries»:

- Stick to the IUF slogan 'Organise, Fight and Win';
- Develop relations with the maritime workers' unions and join forces to attack the companies;
- Research who owns the fisheries companies and start engaging with them, to place them on the radar and demand traceability of their products;
- Establish an international working group within the IUF to develop practical activities and coordination of the unions in the sector.

#### Closing Session

### **BUILDING THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN FISH/SEAFOOD INDUSTRY: Summary conclusions and action points**

The final session was a wrap up of the presentations, debate and suggestions.

The meeting adopted two resolutions (see page 17) and mandated the IUF Secretariat to compile the main conclusions into a summary document, see below.





## TRADE UNION APPROACH TOWARDS THE GLOBAL SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

### Summary Conclusions of the International Meeting of Fishing Industry and Aquaculture Workers' Unions

#### Role of the industry and its contribution to feeding the planet

The meeting notes the fast growth of production, employment and population livelihood dependence on the fish and seafood industry, as well as the increasingly important role of seafood production in the world's global food system.

#### Shocking human rights situation and lack of Freedom of Association

The meeting notes high level of criminalization and the shocking abuse of workers in some segments of the fishing industry, including slavery and slavery-like practices, and the use of workers in illicit activities, including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The terrible human rights record of the sector is directly linked to the very low unionisation rate among the workers at all stages in aquaculture, fishing, fish processing and fish/seafood distribution.

Only workers themselves can change their situation for better, but the current system of labour relations and legislative base at national and international levels do not provide an opportunity for this.

#### Working conditions

At all stages of production we note the high level of casual and precarious, socially-unprotected jobs:

- The sector is dominated by a high proportion of migrant workers, exploited by employers who take advantage of these

workers' vulnerability;

- Women occupy a large proportion of precarious jobs in the fish processing industry in particular;
- Young people, including children, are also employed in the sector, and they require a special focus, given their vulnerability to severe and unacceptable exploitation such as forced and bonded labour;
- The fishing industry and aquaculture are two out of the four most dangerous sectors in terms of health and safety accidents and mortality rate.

#### “Save Our Souls”

Almost every day, the media exposes new facts about slavery and other unacceptable labour practices in the sector. Workers are calling for help and this SOS signal can no longer be ignored. Urgent measures must be taken by the employers, governments and relevant UN structures, including primarily the ILO and FAO, to change the situation, reduce criminality and create opportunities for the workers to implement their fundamental right to improve their own working and living conditions.

The obstacles to the unionisation of seafood workers should be carefully studied and radically removed. ILO Conventions 87 and 98 should be promoted to cover all sections of the seafood sector and guarantee that seafood workers not only have the right to form organisations of their own choice but are able to exercise this right. ILO Convention 188 on Work in Fishing should also be more actively promoted, and new international instruments developed to expand and strengthen the application of the basic principles of international human and labour rights in the whole seafood global value chain.

### **Need for an integrated seafood industry approach**

The meeting notes the dynamic development of integrated, horizontal, cross-sectoral and cross-border business operations, and the consolidation of power and resources in the hands of seafood multinational corporations which operate at all stages of fish and seafood value chain. At the end of this chain, it is the seafood/fish corporations and retailers which directly benefit from the miserable working and living conditions, including child and forced labour, in the sector. Brands and retail consumer outlets should be held responsible for the high level of crime in the sector, both on the sea and on the land. They should positively influence labour conditions in their supply chains.

It is important to consider the fishing, aquacultural, and fish and seafood processing and distribution sectors as a whole in order to ensure that workers in these sectors have good employment and working conditions, including respect for human rights and application of labour standards and laws. Workers in these sub-sectors face many common issues and similar labour and employment problems.

### **Organise, Fight, Win**

The meeting declares the commitment of IUF affiliates to work together and support the seafood workers' attempts to organise, fight for, and win their rights.

The IUF will build alliances to fight for a sustainable fishing industry, decent living and working conditions for all fishers and workers in the fish processing and distribution sectors, and will strengthen the partnership with the International Transport Workers' Federation and its affiliated unions.

The IUF International Secretariat will endeavor to foster cooperation and solidarity between IUF affiliates worldwide, and effec-

tively coordinate actions with the involvement of its European (EFFAT-IUF) and other regional organisations and offices. An international working group will be established to develop this coordinated action and to prepare for a seafood workers' section within the IUF.

The IUF will engage with the relevant UN agencies and other international organisations to demand the development of new mechanisms for improving the protection for seafood workers worldwide.

### **Seafood workers of the world, unite!**

The meeting salutes the fish workers in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea who are at the frontline of our battle for justice, and calls on workers of all nations to join the international movement for dignity and respect for seafood workers!

*24 November, 2015  
at Hotel Bristol, Oslo, Norway*



**RESOLUTION:****EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY TO THE CITRA MINA WORKERS' UNION**

We, the participants of the IUF International Meeting of Fishing Industry and Aquaculture Worker's Unions, wish to convey solidarity to the unfairly dismissed workers of the Citra Mina Group of Companies who have been deprived of their rights to decent and secured jobs for exercising their right to freedom of association as well as calling for the enforcement of their rights and privileges mandated by Philippine labor laws.

We understand that since November 2013 the workers continue their struggle for justice and dignity, and that they are faced uncertainty and their families have to endure the pains and consequences of being jobless and deprived of income for their basic needs.

Along this line, we therefore express our full support to the struggle of the members of Citra Mina Worker's union. We demand the company to reinstate the workers with full back wages and recognition of their union as the sole and exclusive bargaining agent of all the employees of Citra Mina. We also support the campaign of the union for a Worker Safe tuna industry anchored on sustainability, accountability and equity.

We know that the fight will be continued and we are committed to stay shoulder to shoulder with the workers at Citra Mina for as long as it will take to win.

*24 November, 2015  
at Hotel Bristol, Oslo, Norway*

**RESOLUTION:****IN SUPPORT OF THE ANDHRA PRADESH MATYAKARULA UNION NELLORE DISTRICT UNIT (MEMBER OF APVVU) & THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS**

The participants of the international meeting of Fishing Industry and Aquaculture workers' unions express their outrage by the arrest of 25 union activists protesting against construction of the coal based power plant in Nellore district.

About 25 coal based thermal power plants are planned for construction in SPSR Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh state of India. These units are expected to burn about 3 hundred thousand tonnes of coal per day generating huge quantities of fly ash, carbon dioxide and other harmful chemicals. All the proposed 25 plants will be established within 25 Kms in Chillakur and Muttukur coastal mandals (blocks) where large number of fisher folk, small farmers and agricultural workers (approximately 25000 population) are going to be displaced mercilessly. It is in this context, the farmers, agricultural workers and fisher folk have rejected the plans of land acquisition in Tamminipatnam and Mommadi villages.

We express our solidarity and concern about the rights and the people and ecological harmony in the area and demand:

1. Immediate termination of the project of building coal based thermal power plants in Nellore district until proper public hearing is carried out.
2. Stop the harassment of fisher people and trade union leaders.

*24 November, 2015  
at Hotel Bristol, Oslo, Norway*

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**The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) is an international federation of trade unions representing workers employed in agriculture and plantations; the preparation and manufacture of food and beverages; hotels, restaurants and catering services; all stages of tobacco processing. With a financial membership of 2,5 million the IUF is composed of 425 affiliated trade unions in 126 countries representing over 10 million workers in IUF sectors.**

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