

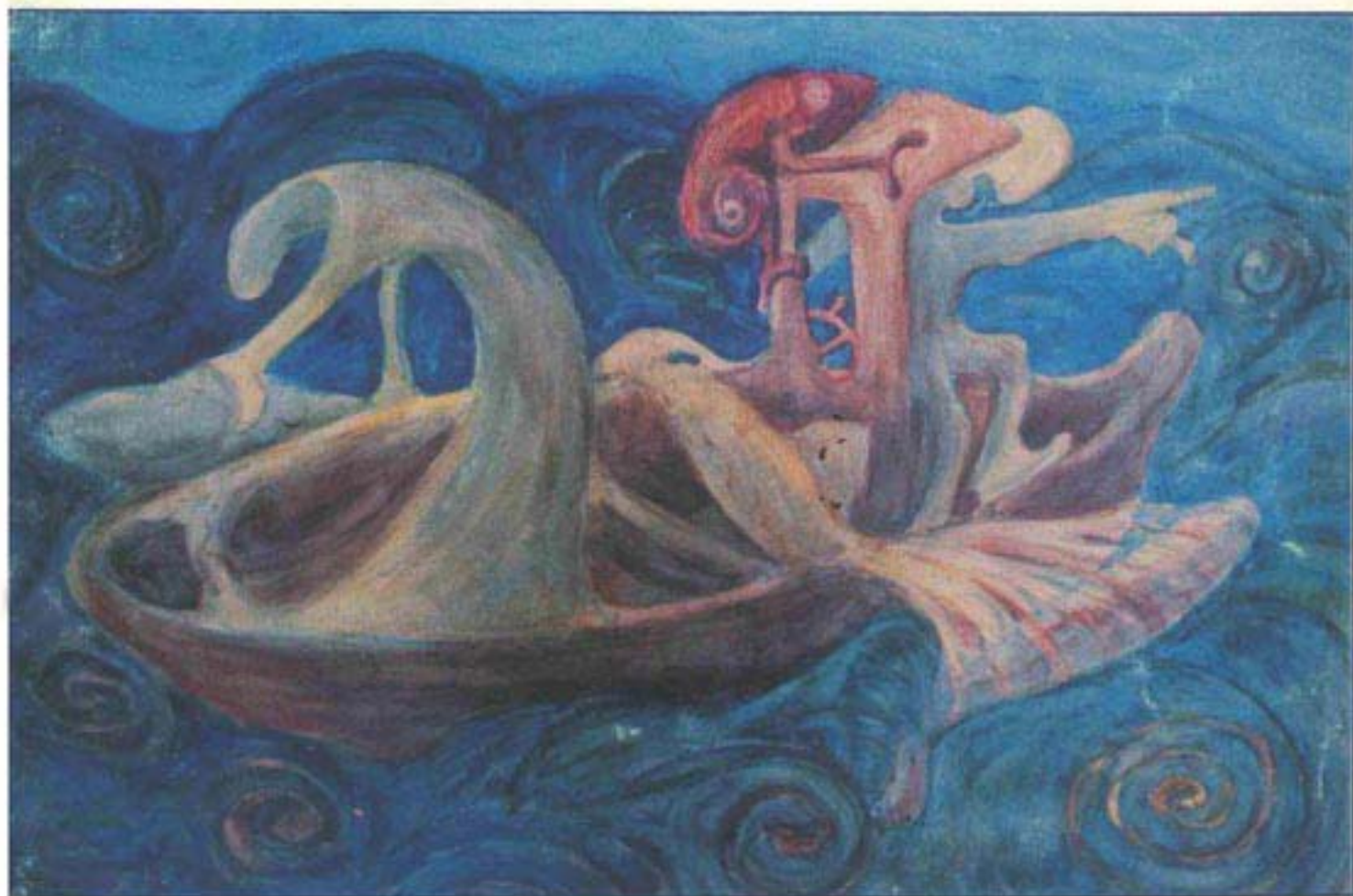
No. 12

April 1995

SAMUDRA

REPORT

INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS



FOCUS ON CANADA-EU FISH WARS
MADAGASCAR FISHWORKERS
UN CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING STOCKS
AQUACULTURE IN INDIA
ILOs IN NORWAY
GRASS-ROOTS INITIATIVE
NETWORKING
• NEWS ROUND-UP

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Comment

After the sound and fury

Who in the world of fisheries could have ignored all the sound and fury generated by the recent fish war between Canada and Spain the passion, the venom, the rhetoric, the drama? Certainly not SAMUDRA. To reflect, as objectively and topically as possible, the many dimensions of the issue, this edition contains five articles that focus on the 'Turbot War, putting forward differing points of view from Canada (including one from the Minister of Fisheries), Spain and the UK.

Readers, understandably enough, might wonder why a South-based Report should devote so much space to a conflict over fish stocks in the far North between two rich industrialized countries like Canada and Spain. The answer lies in the simple fact that fisheries problems cannot be viewed in isolation. Fisheries crises in one part of the world are a threat to fish stocks and artisanal fishing communities anywhere else in the world. This truth has only become more apparent with each successive crisis.

The enormously excessive global fishing capacity and the increasing technological sophistication in harvesting and processing methods have shrunk the world's oceans into one large lake, so to say, placing fishing grounds around the world under the threat of predatory and unsustainable fishing practices. The huge subsidies in the industrialized countries combined with a dangerous clause in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea that total allowable catch in excess of a country's capacity to fish would be made accessible to other states ensure that the powers that those vessels have to deplete stocks will be efficiently transferred to underdeveloped parts of the world. These resources, unfortunately, fall mainly within the jurisdiction of the countries of the South.

Given the compulsions of global capital, market forces are clearly incapable of any 'affirmative action' against 'inelastic' stocks under pressure of collapse. To maximize return on investment, the large fishing vessels of the world, left to themselves, will only rake and sift the sea columns for all commercially valuable species, ravaging one fish stock after another.

Fishworkers in Africa, Asia and Latin America are already concerned about a plethora of fisheries agreements and joint ventures that are being entered into, especially with the European Union. Given the very meagre and often erroneous data on fish stocks, the poor understanding of prey-predator relationships, and the impact of fishery-dependent and independent factors, as well as the almost non-existent monitoring, control and surveillance mechanisms, the potential impact of these agreements and joint ventures can be devastating for the artisanal fishing communities.

As Monica Justo from Galicia points out in her article elsewhere in this issue, the writing on the wall is very clear: there is no more 'freedom' of the high seas and distant-water fishing nations should start training their fishworkers to meaningfully adapt to a new way of life which would imply taking up non-fishery related activities. By the same token, coastal states can not now continue to pile the blame on distant-water fishing states whenever there is a crisis within the 200-mile zone.

In the 'turbot war', this seems to be the time of a ceasefire. The fisticuffs are over, the jingoism looks jaded, the TV crews have left. Only one important question remains: will the coastal states now rise to the occasion and show the world that ocean resources are far safer in their hands?



Scars of labour

**Ill-treated aboard foreign shipping vessels,
Malagasy fishermen are organizing to fight back**

Madagascar's fisheries resources are estimated at 500,000 tonnes, of which 320,000 tonnes come from the marine sector. Production from both sea and fresh-water sources barely touches 100,000 tonnes. Potentially, the catch could easily triple.

In the artisanal sector, 42,556 persons are engaged in fishing, while 3,500 work in industrial fishing. These sectors produce 84,426 tonnes and 12,277 tonnes respectively each year. In monetary terms, production has risen to 188 billion FMG, a value addition of 173 billion FMG, which represents 4.8 per cent of the national GDP.

Exports of fisheries products have brought in 68 billion FMG. Since the collapse in the price of traditional raw materials like coffee and clove, fish products are quickly and profitably substituting them on the world markets.

Realizing the increasing importance of this sector, government officers are organizing meetings and seminars, as well as signing agreements and treaties. However, this is being done by excluding fishermen, those who are truly affected.

Shrimp fishing dominates the industrial fishing, which also includes tuna fishing and aquaculture at an experimental level.

Shrimp production is entirely tuned towards exports and this sector is on the way to becoming the main source of foreign exchange for Madagascar.

Shrimp fishing is dominated by foreign companies, Malagasy companies being controlled by the majority equity of Japanese, French, Indian and Pakistani companies. The crew of the boats are mixed (Malagasy and expatriates).

Sometimes, they are entirely Malagasy, as, for example, on the boats of Refrigepeche.

In July 1992, Madagascar renewed the fishing agreements with the EU, which authorize ships of the EU to fish in Malagasy territorial waters. The first accords were signed with Japan in 1971. The EU accords started only in 1986, with an agreement which since then has been renewed every three years, the last ending its term in 1995. The financial component of the accord amounts to 1.35 million ECU—payable in three parts—for a catch volume of 9,000 tonnes per year of tuna.

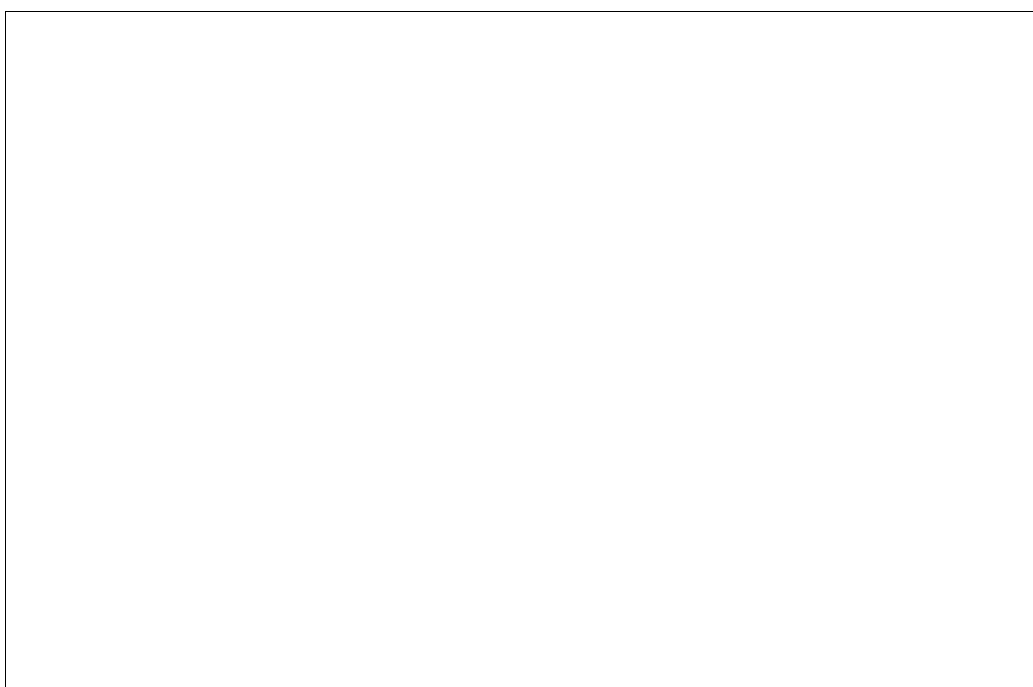
The fishing zone is located beyond two nautical miles, but the Malagasy port has neither the qualitative nor quantitative means to ensure compliance with this measure. The residents on the coast have often protested against big ships fishing close to the coastline and spreading nauseating odours from the refuse and catch thrown on to the coast.

“Other than economic waste, these disposals cause degradation of the beaches and lead to protests by coastal residents and traditional fishermen”, recognizes an official ministerial document on fishing.

Royalty payments

The annual catch volume of 9,000 tonnes involves the payment of royalties. This measure is applied with great difficulty. Fishing companies employ several collection ships and the practice of transfer of catch at sea is quite current. Only ships, which disembark at the Malagasy port, declare the quantity of their catch.

Only if the Malagasy government has the real political will to ensure that it is respected does this measure make sense.



In Madagascar today, overfishing no longer constitutes a mere risk—it is a reality. Since the means of control can never be efficient, the depletion of resources is patent.

The creation of a scientific research programme to improve knowledge on migratory species is inscribed in the protocol of the accord with the EU. The EU contributes up to 375,000 ECUs to this effort.

However, since the agreements were signed, the royalties have never been used for the development of fisheries. The benefits from this new accord are quite meagre, compared to the products and the profits the ships get from Malagasy waters.

It should be emphasized that the fishing licences of 1989 should bring 2.13 billion FMG (US \$1.3 million). However, the amount actually received is 245.5 million FMG. The difference is because there was no transfer carried out under the heads 'Financial Compensation' and 'Scientific Programme', as the ministerial document on fishing once again states. Obviously, the Malagasy side has trouble getting these accords respected.

Further, study results remain classified and their diffusion is especially restricted by the deficiencies in the means of communication. For the 50,000 artisanal

fishermen, the effects of the accord are practically nil. The veritable question remains: for whom is the protocol of agreement meant?

Apart from the ships of the EU, the Malagasy waters are attracting more and more foreign fleets. The new arrivals are eight South African ships and an equal number of Spanish ships, as well as Indonesian and Taiwanese ships.

As a result of being unable to implement a national policy for fisheries development the Malagasy government is adopting the easy solution of giving fishing licences to foreign vessels. The purely commercial character of the accord and the need for foreign exchange force a level of secrecy.

From 11 to 12 June 1992, the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Resources organized a round table conference with funding agencies on the programme of development of fisheries and aquaculture. Up to 95 per cent of the funding, evaluated at US\$10 million, was accepted.

Promise of funding

Among the projects, which received promise of funding, is the pilot project of the FAO, for which the fishing project is the implementation agency. During this meeting, the Japanese Embassy gave an order to allocate Japanese funds for the

east coast component of the pilot project. Notwithstanding the official declaration of the suspension of the implementation of accords with Taiwan, the presence of the Taiwanese delegation among the funding agencies was very noticeable.

In the area of tuna fishing, under the framework of the Indian Ocean Commission, a regional Tuna Project has been set up to promote tuna exploitation in each member country, namely, Comoro Islands, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Reunion Islands and Seychelles. For the east coast, the pilot project is sought to be associated with the implementation of the devices for fish aggregation.

In collaboration with the Japanese Institute of Research of Marine Resources (JAMARC), a study of tuna migration in the Indian Ocean has been started. The project to establish an organization of tuna-producing countries—owners of the resources—initiated by the Seychelles, will allow the adoption of a common strategy for migratory tuna resources. The processing company, Fish and Cold of the Indian Ocean at Artsirana, will preserve and treat 50,000 tonnes per year of tuna.

The Malagasy Maritime Code has been in effect since June 1960, the time of independence. Chapter III on fishermen deals with the maritime appointment contract. This anachronistic text enables shipowners to skirt the law, with economic crises and unemployment aiding brazen violations. Two specific and recent cases at Mahajanga and Toamasina corroborate this. It seems all the more unsolvable, given the dubious role of the maritime administration.

In the Mahajanga case, each company has a maiming agency in charge of recruiting the navigation personnel. The agency executes a promise or bond of embarkation, which enables the maritime district authorities to obtain the professional passbook of the fisherman.

But, in reality, because of galloping unemployment, vacancies are expensive and the manning captain only takes on the fishermen in return for high amounts. On several occasions, officers of Mahajanga had to advance money to the fishermen to

bribe the captain to be able to work. The officers had little choice, faced with the need to feed corruption to enable the fisherman to work to feed his family after a long period of unemployment.

To measure the extent of such havoc, it is enough to refer to the reconstitution in June 1991 of the association IVIA (Iray Vatsy Iray Aina). The seamen and fishermen in difficulty, thinking that IVIA would be a trade union, became members en masse—372 in 1991, of whom 80 per cent were unemployed. In order not to disappoint the expectation of these people, IVIA organized itself as an agency for maritime employment. The seamen and fishermen themselves took the decision to reserve the first boats, which would arrive, for those who were long unemployed.

Different committees (for training, information, finance and social/health) were set up so that the fishermen felt useful and had responsibilities. Strengthened by this dynamism and solidarity, they found boarding on different ships. Better still, the company KALETA even refused the offers of boarding of the maritime district agencies to admit only the list of fishermen proposed. This can also be explained by the neutrality of the authorities, the company being assured of taking on fishermen who were not indebted to the recruitment agents.

Since 1990, the Mauritius company, Sea Falcon, has operated in Mahajanga. On the one hand, it recruited Malagasy fishermen on presentation of their identity cards, without either a contract or written document, to work on the Mauritian shelf.

Mother-boats

On the other hand, two of its mother-boats, *Star Hope* and *Faki*, equipped with motors or Doris launches, fished in Malagasy waters. The entire production was destined for export.

Mistreated and reduced to a clandestine status, the Malagasy fishermen were at the mercy of the company. During stopovers in Mauritius, they were holed up on the boats and drinking water, electricity and food rationed or cut off. Compared to their Mauritian counterparts, they were

underpaid. Worse, some of the pay-slips of the Malagasy officers indicate flagrant swindling of the company—deduction of exorbitant social expenses, while the fishermen did not receive any social security. The only recourse for the Malagasy fishermen was repatriation as soon as possible to Madagascar.

The seamen and fishermen from the Mahajanga region mobilized to try and break this logic. According to a February 1992 report of the Apostolate of the Sea, “What is well known movement, which arose on the occasion of the Gasikara affair and which thereafter developed.”

Sudden awareness was expressed concerning the need for an urgent increase of salaries, taking into account the present cost of living. Protests also arose about the conditions of employment on

certain points not adhered to in the Maritime Code. There was also a very strong call to re-work and update the Code, especially on social security matters, with clarifications on appointment contracts, rate of remuneration, overtime, rest and leave, etc.

There were also strikes by the navigation crew of CMN (Malagasy Navigation Company) and, in end June 1991, by the fishermen of Refrigepeche East. At the same time, there was a strike by port workers of Tamatave.

In January 1992, just before departing for fishing, 900 seamen of Somapeche struck work to obtain increase in salaries. Following this urgent action, the basic salary of an ordinary sailor rose from 38,250 FMG (107 French Franc) to 70,000 FMG (194 French Franc), an 84 per cent increase.

In the Sea Falcon case at Toamasina, around 300 seamen, 200 of whom were

Malagasy fishermen, were recruited by the Mauritian company for its four ships at Toamasina.

The company proceeded to enroll candidates whose antecedents had been disfavoured. This was brought to light by the fishermen of Mahajanga through

- televised communications
- agreement between associations, trade unions, maritime administration and owners
- written contracts countersigned by the maritime administration between fishermen and owners, a first for the Malagasy fishermen

- drawing up a basic list for every loading of seamen and fishermen, to be put up at the maritime district and to be reviewed and signed regularly by the seamen and fishermen's organizations.

There was also a very strong call to rework and update the Maritime Code, especially on social security matters, with clarifications on appointment contracts, remuneration, overtime, rest and leave...

The shipowner asked a Malagasy lawyer to draw up contracts for the categories of persons to be on the ship. That was a

manoeuvre to avoid Mauritian conditions and to seek refuge behind a contract under Malagasy legislation, particularly with regard to remunerations.

Approximately 260 seamen and fishermen effectively boarded and the four ships returned on 23 June 1992.

Different mandate

It is not the Sea Apostolate's mandate to encourage or stop fishermen and seamen from embarking on ships. The organization's role is limited to negotiating written conditions, which give maritime workers a choice.

But the operation was too quick for the different parties to be able to pretend to have mastered it. Clearly, the following unstated and shadowy areas will be

exploited by the shipowner to swindle the fishermen:

- the real catch not allowed to surpass the price limit of 250 FMG/kg.
- 45 to 90 days at sea, when the fishermen had in fact embarked between 13 to 55 days
- 10 kg. of fish offered free after arrival reduced to five kg.

Information meetings were held by the fishermen on their return. This first wave of embarkment was blotched with irregularities, which the fishermen did not fail to denounce in their reports transmitted at different instances.

Dozens of persons not enrolled on the basic list and never having been at sea were appointed. The complicity of the owner and the district authorities was denounced by seafarers' organizations.

It was the subject of meetings held at the district. An extract from a letter dated 6 August 1992 from the Apostolate of the Sea of Mahajanga sheds more light on this subject: "They took on new persons to complete their staff because 17 fishermen were sacked for sabotage and threatening Mauritian seamen with knives. These 17 persons were unable to stand their seasickness, they were incapable of fishing, and among them were a butcher and a vegetable seller, who had never set foot on a boat".

The fishermen were constrained to live in intolerable living conditions—no spoons, no sheets, bug- and cockroach-infested rooms, bad food, mouldy cigarettes, inappropriate work clothes. Work and security conditions were precarious—no safety life jacket, no sails or life-saving-flares.

On board, the contracted oyster fisherman often becomes the refrigerator boy or sailor asked to paint the boat, while fishermen are made oyster-catchers without receiving corresponding salaries. The fishermen feel cheated in the weighing of fish, which they were not authorized to assist in. Sometimes, salaries are deferred by several days


instead of being paid immediately on disembarkment.

The maritime workers' organizations set up a common committee comprising trade unions, namely, AMUMATO (Friendly Society of Seamen and Occasional Workers) and STMCM (Trade Union of Christian Malagasy Maritime Workers), and associations, namely, FIRASANKINA NO HERY and FIRAM (Fikambanan'ny Tanora Mpanjono)

Unfortunately, the solidarity displayed by the people of Toamasina was used by the company to weaken the movement. Embarkment was made exclusively for Mahajanga fishermen (with a mass delivered by the Apostolate of this locality on board!). The company blamed the fishermen's organizations for successive delays in embarkment, disowning its own responsibility.

Associations in the pay of the owner were also formed and, through radio and TV communiques, they declared themselves to be the only representatives of seamen and fishermen. There has also been falsification of contracts already signed between the owner and fishermen's organizations. But the fishermen of Toamasina held off from June to November 1992—nearly five months without work. The first embarkment on the basis of the new contract started only on 8 November.

Need for recovery

Madagascar is going through a turning point in its general policies. Though a sure prognosis is not possible, it is certain that the poverty of the Malagasy people will only worsen. Therefore, there is an absolute necessity for a national economic recovery and for external aid. 

This article by Jean-Baptiste Rakotoniaina of the Fisheries Project Toamasina, Madagascar, was translated by Malavika Shivakumar

Women in fisheries

No women, no sustainable fisheries

To ignore the role of women in fisheries is to brush aside their potential to strengthen the sector

Oh, lady, how sad my life is, nowadays I can hardly afford to eat...

In the fishing town of El Bellote, this is how they begin telling the life story of Rosa, mother of 11 children. El Bellote is situated on the edge of the Mecoacan Lagoon, in the humid tropics of Tabasco State in Mexico. The main fishery is for oysters, which, along with other species caught in the coastal strip, used to be sufficient to provide the basic food and subsistence needs of the local population.

But, since the arrival of 'development', things have changed. During the decade of the 1960s, Mexico entered the era of the petroleum boom the 'black gold' became the force driving national development. The daily export of oil from Puerto de Dos Bocas in Tabasco was 437,000 barrels.

The construction of infrastructure transformed the environment, damaging marine fauna and flora. There were frequent oil spillages and accidents, which caused fishery production to fall. In 1992, a crisis occurred in Mecoacan, when oyster mortality reached 70 to 80 per cent of the total production. This is but one example repeated with different actors but with similar consequences, along the entire coastline of our country.

The environmental impact on the quantity and quality of artisanal fish catches in Mexico has become a central problem for coastal dwellers. To this phenomenon has been added a fierce competition for resources, due to the increase, in the number of producers and the proliferation of small boats. Thus, pollution and overexploitation are the two principal causes of the fall in income of coastal fishermen. The deterioration in the quality of life of families dependent

on fishing for their livelihoods has affected the entire community and is changing relationships between men and women. Women have developed multiple survival strategies to compensate for the fall in production.

Women increasingly go fishing with their husbands, brothers or fathers, an active role, which was previously almost exclusively a man's. More women are also working as traders, filleters in salting and drying, in packing and de-shelling.

Nowadays, it is common for women to enter the job market as cooks, workers in fish and shellfish restaurants, as housemaids or in small enterprises. Others have entered the 'non-formal economy', as street or door-to-door saleswomen, doing stitching and maquila (assembly work).

Women's contribution to household income in cash or kind has not diminished their traditional roles. Looking after the children, cleaning the house, cooking and other domestic duties are now supplemented by other work. This is not very different from the fate of women in other sectors who perform a double role. Work commitments of Third World women have become so great as to force them to 'work round the clock'.

Household routine

However, in the case of fishing, there are some differences. For example, the routine and hours of catching fish determine the daily pattern of household activities. Many fishermen leave for fishing at night. If their wives work during the day, there is little or no opportunity for family life.

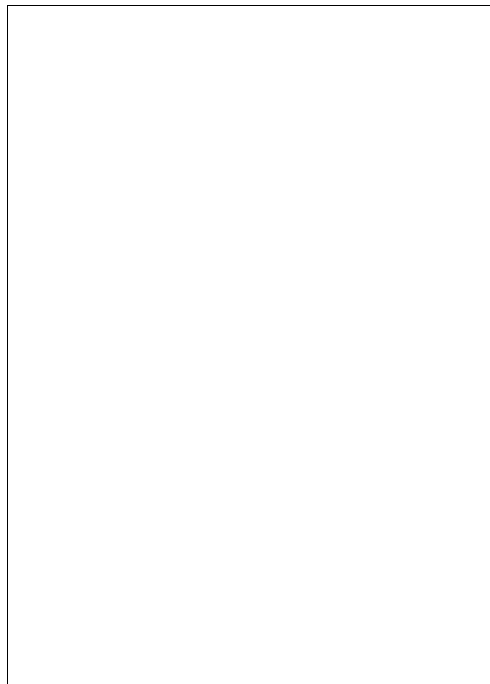
Another issue is that fish is highly perishable and fisherfolk have few places for storage, and also lack facilities to

preserve the quality of their products. Unless the fish is sold immediately, they lose the opportunity to get the best prices from the middlemen waiting on the beach.

Thus, it is common that women are found selling fish in the community or in the regional markets, immediately after the men have landed. These jobs oblige the women to leave their children alone, or put their eldest daughters-often still girls-in charge of the household. The consequences are not only economic and physical, but also emotional and psychological.

There are also other factors intrinsically associated with the environment, which have repercussions on the quality of life in coastal communities, particularly for women. For example, some health problems have got worse. It is common for the so-called poverty-related diseases like stomach and respiratory infections, cholera, malnutrition, etc. to be found more in communities with environmental problems, such as pollution of water bodies, lack of health services and atmospheric pollution (especially in areas of petroleum industries).

New diseases are evidently appearing. For example, a medical study in the Tabasco region found an increase in leukaemia. In the northern border area, babies are born with anencephalia, possibly associated with the presence of toxic



substances. The lack of research linking health with environmental problems makes it difficult to decidedly establish the causes of such diseases. But these growing health problems affect women more, as they are the ones traditionally responsible for the sick.

Once communities 'enter the market' women also find less access to the sustainable use of natural resources. They also lose options to produce food in family gardens or to raise domestic animals. So too in many other aspects which, in the end, result in a deteriorating standard of living for coastal families. All of these issues have hardly been considered in the debate on environmental problems, which ignores the impact on different sectors of the population.

Evidently, there is a need to design policies, which address and alleviate the situation. In Mexico, as in many other countries, coastal fisheries are low on the list of government priorities, despite being an important source of food for many people and low-cost protein for those with scarce resources.

Traditionally subordinate

This marginalization is far worse for women, due to the traditionally subordinate role that society bestows on them. Even traditional fishermen's organization like co-operatives, unions and other organized groups, do not provide space or a voice for women.

Apart from an in-depth analysis of the situation of women in fishing communities, what is more important is to promote them as social actors with the potential to improve their family situation, their communities, the fishery and their country. It will be difficult to have sustainable fisheries without the participation of women. ♣

This piece is by Hilda Salazar Ramirez, an environmental activist who works with the fishermen's union in Mexico

Shrimp culture

Up in arms

The women of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh decide to oppose the newfound craze for shrimp culture

Reports are mixed on the prospects for shrimp culture in India. On the one hand, government agencies describe in glorious terms the lucrative earnings from shrimp culture. On the other, there are reports by concerned environmentalists and village folk on the detrimental effects of the recently introduced shrimp culture in the southern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

In September 1994, a few Gandhians and many village folk in Thanjavur district were arrested in the quiet of the night, because the small farmers were on the warpath, resisting the conversion of rich paddy lands into prawn farms. They were protesting because prawn culture would lead to the salination of food lands, fresh water would be overused and eventually contaminated, and because prawn culture would not result in any food or work for agricultural labourers.

Protests have been numerous in Andhra Pradesh. According to a newspaper report, over 5,000 acres of *perumboku* (revenue land) have been given to big landlords for shrimp farms. In a state where the power of the landlords is still strong and where the elected representatives of the people, including government ministers, do not bat an eyelid in flouting laws, the people have been so intimidated in the past that they are often afraid to react.

Yet, in Kanapathipalam in Nagaluppalopadu Mandal in Prakasam district, where the local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) is constructing a pipeline and jetty to pump seawater to the shrimp farms at a price, the local people violently opposed him and damaged the initial stonework for the project. Before the fishermen could

get the support of their new federation, the MLA had convinced the local village leaders—the *kapposto* allow him to proceed with the construction of the jetty. The MLA could also overcome the objections of the forest authorities who opposed the jetty that illegally intruded into the coastal forest.

There are several such cases where other elected representatives are in the process of not only constructing a massively expensive distillery—in a state where women have vehemently agitated against the distilling of *arrack*, the local brew—but also converting over 300 acres of low-lying land into shrimp farms.

In early October 1994, there was an outbreak of cholera in a village of Andhra Pradesh called Gundayapalam. This arose from the water in the wells getting contaminated by excessive pumping of ground water for the shrimp farms, and also because of the indiscriminate release of polluted water from the shrimp farms into open streams.

Although some fisher people have opposed the selling of village lands to the shrimp farmers, in Rajupalam Chinnapattupalam, for instance, other fishing communities have been lured by the lucrative prices that investors are willing to pay for the land. This is backed by the fact that coastal fishermen have been facing decreasing returns from fishing due to the encroachment of trawlers.

Seed collection

With the construction of shrimp farms but no hatcheries in operation as yet, natural seed collection has become the main occupation of the fishing community, all the way from Machilipatnam to Nellore in Andhra Pradesh. Fine-mesh nets are fixed

in the sea and the collection from the net sorted out on the shore. Large quantities migrating inland in search of manual work, as they could no longer survive on only the shrimp fry are retained, the coast.

Interestingly, the price for fry also varies. It has dropped from Rs 2 to half a rupee per fry of monodon and to a tenth of a rupee for indicus fry. With the recent fall in exports due to the plague scare in India, there is no market for the fry. Fishermen and women have to just sit back and await better days, having sold their outboard motors or finding that their catches do not help them break even in their daily sustenance.

Realizing they have to take things into their own hands, large groups of women from the fishing community have recently come together to decide they will neither collect the shrimp fry nor work on the shrimp farms. At the village level, these women have organized themselves into Mahila Samajams (Women's Societies), supported by a voluntary organization called SNIRD based in Ongole. At a recent local meeting, many women leaders spoke articulately on the problems caused by the shrimp farms and their own shortsightedness in collecting fry. They said they need to protect the sea resources for their children, that it would increase their burden if their well-water got polluted and they were forced to go

farther to collect water. They mourned the fact that some coastal people are migrating inland in search of manual work, as they could no longer survive on the coast.

These women plan to take the issue up with the authorities at the district level. But, unfortunately, the officials have their hands tied. Many months have passed since the Department of Fisheries drew up an 'Environmental Bill' on a code for aquaculture. This bill is wilfully not being tabled in the state legislature because the local politicians are buying time to first establish their infrastructure to build up an open case. If and when the bill gets passed, the damage would have already been done.

No movement

Unfortunately, there is no fishworkers' movement in Andhra Pradesh. Though there are numerous NGOs working in the coastal parts of the state, in the absence of a fishworkers' movement, no real resistance can be built up. ❧

This report is by Nailni Nayak
co-ordinator of the Women in
Fisheries programme of ICSF

Displaced fishermen

A damn fine effort

A unique bottom-up attempt to rehabilitate reservoir fishermen of the Burgi dam area in India promises to succeed in the face of problems

Close to Jabalpur in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh is the Burgi Dam, the first dam to come up in the massive—and, by now, internationally known—Narmada project which envisages the construction of 30 dams or so. The Burgi Dam is very large, about 5km. long, with a massive reservoir stretching to around 75 km. and cutting through three districts of the state.

As one of the early dams, it pre-dates the movement against the Narmada project led by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), which first took roots in the western part of the state. The Burgi Dam thus came up without much fanfare or protest.

The construction work on the dam began in 1974. By 1986, 40 per cent capacity was achieved and by around 1990, the dam was completed. According to a survey done then, 162 villages would be submerged by the waters of the reservoir.

The people to be affected—in the early 1980s the population around the reservoir area was basically tribal—were given some cash compensation by the government. This was assessed at very low rates of around Es 300 to 500 per acre since, at that time there was hardly a market for land, which could, therefore, be bought dirt cheap.

As a result, many of the Gond tribals of the area who owned large tracts of land and were living comfortably as peasants and farmers, were suddenly deprived of their land. They could no longer do any agriculture.

The little money they got as compensation was quickly spent and these displaced people—approximately 100,000, mostly from the backward

castes—continued to stay nearby, as the dam had not yet come up. Many had migrated to the city to live in slums, doing menial jobs like pulling rickshaws. Most of those who remained lived on the fringes of the reservoir—technically, illegal occupation of forest land.

When the dam did finally come up and submerged all the 162 villages in the area, these people were suddenly left high and dry. They had no one to help them. Only around 1992 did the NBA become really active and organize those ousted and take up the initiative to seek genuine rehabilitation, as opposed to earlier half-hearted and misplaced government efforts. Large groups of people were mobilized to fight for rehabilitation through direct action like rallies and pickets.

All the money officially spent until then on rehabilitation had only gone into infrastructure which the people never asked for, like a school building in an area where nobody lives. There are even buildings set up in the name of rehabilitation which are now under the dam. With the 'Save Narmada' campaign gaining prominence, the government was totally exposed on the question of rehabilitation, having done virtually nothing.

Genuine interest

At that time, the state of Madhya Pradesh was ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party. In 1994, when the Congress (I) party came back to power, the new chief minister, Digvijay Singh, seemed to be more open on these issues and genuinely interested in solving problems, even though his proclamations appeared a bit too populist. He actually spent a day in the affected area, listening to the grievances of the distressed people. He now seems willing

to go out of the way to ensure some kind of rehabilitation measure. Therefore, on paper, at least, the government of Madhya Pradesh appears really committed to these displaced people.

The challenge now is to get the various government departments involved to come together and coordinate their activities towards this end. Though there are not many traditional fishermen in the area, some fishing was being done in the river before the reservoir came up. Once it was built, the rights to fish in the reservoir were auctioned off annually to contractors, as in many other Indian states.

These contractors procure the fish—mainly *rohu*, *catla* and *mrigal*, the three principal Indian carps—from whoever fishes in the reservoir and market them mainly in the fresh-water fish market of Howrah in Calcutta.

A few years back, the NBA organized around 54 co-operatives of tribal fishermen who have been fishing for the last two to three years in the Burgi Dam reservoir and selling their catch to the contractors. These contractors also provided some inputs, the price for which would be deducted from the value of the catch of the fishermen.

When the new government took over in Madhya Pradesh, it announced that if a

federation for all the co-operatives was formed, it would give the entire reservoir on lease to the federation for fishing. This was the first concrete rehabilitation measure. In that sense, it was a great success for the NBA.

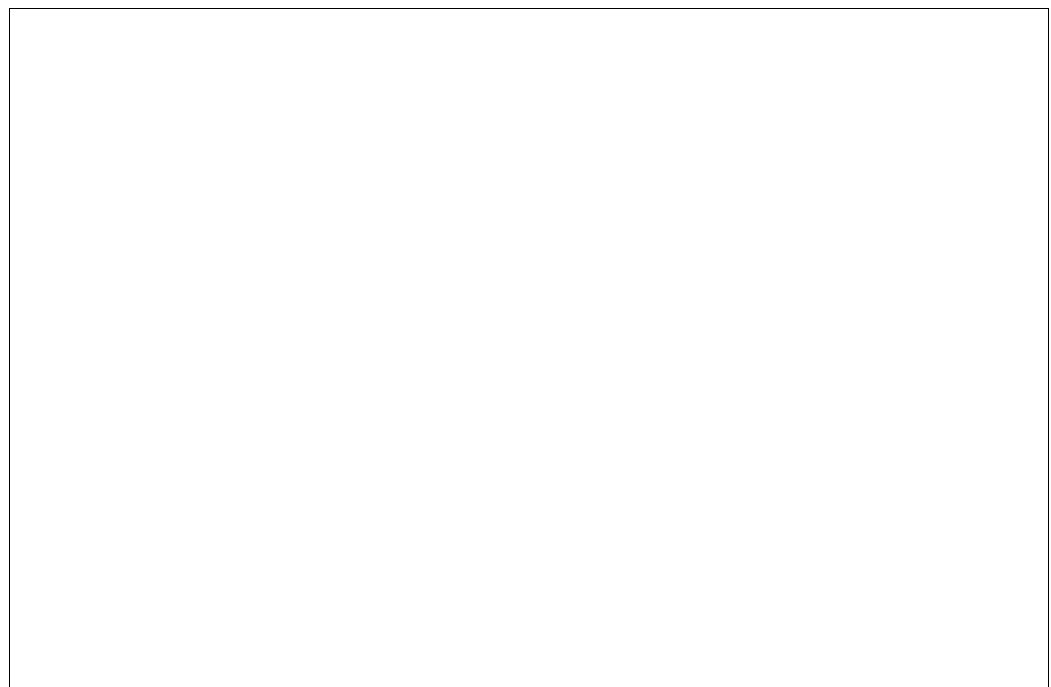
The NBA was given the mandate to form the federation. Called the Burgi Dam Oustees' Fisheries Co-operative Federation, it was registered under the Co-operative Act last year, with its office at Jabalpur. It actually commenced operation in October 1994.

As a venture by a co-operative organization of reservoir fishermen marketing their catch in a distant market, the effort of the Burgi Dam federation may be a first and unique exercise.

Great challenge

Nonetheless, the NBA faces a huge challenge because now it has to take over the entire organization of production and marketing. The members of the co-operatives of the federation are those oustees who were fishing in the reservoir.

Though carps are the main species caught, one group of fishermen of the area used to catch much smaller quantities of another traditional species not stocked. (The reservoir is stocked by the Madhya Pradesh Fisheries Corporation, which gets a royalty from the contractors for each kilogramme of fish caught). When the



federation was formed, the status of this group was unclear at first. But the federation has since incorporated them.

The 54 co-operatives now have around 600 boats—each capable of taking two persons for fishing—and also another 200 dugouts. Today, around 2,000 families of the area are in fishing. This represents not more than 20 per cent of the total population needing rehabilitation.

If more equipment and inputs are provided, a larger section could be rehabilitated.

There seems to be adequate fish resources in the reservoir and, if stocking is done well, the reservoir can support more fishermen.

On the question of rehabilitating the remaining population, the government appointed a committee and put it in the charge of a key person involved in the struggle of those ousted from their land by the Narmada project. The government's thinking appears to be to force the NBA activists to come up with solutions by throwing the issues back at them and handing over the responsibility to them.

Yet the government does not see it fit to provide adequate administrative back-up.

Despite being initially unclear about the marketing aspects of this new venture and burdened by a host of limitations, the people who organized the Burgi Dam federation have done a remarkable job.

They have taken over the system earlier run by the contractors, retaining the same landing centres and labour (for loading, unloading and cutting fish).

Further, they have set up a small central depot near Jabalpur, which receives the

vehicles hired to procure fish. They purchase large quantities of ice daily and then dispatch the catch to the Howrah market in three insulated vehicles, hired from Andhra Pradesh at a monthly rate of Rs 30,000. Each vehicle makes about four trips to Howrah each month.

The organizers faced several problems, as they had to formulate the entire logistics from scratch. Ice plants, for instance, would demand higher prices, refusing to supply at the rates given to the contractors.

The merchants who lost the contract to market the fish from the reservoir were keen that the federation should not succeed. They hoped that whatever trouble they could initially create would ensure the collapse of the federation.

But clearly, they had not bargained for the federation members' fortitude and perseverance. This ultimately whittled down the organized opposition from the merchants. At present, only a certain amount of illegal sale of fish seems to be taking place.

Small local market

There is a small local market—around 15 to 20 per cent of the total catch from the reservoir—for which most of the fish probably comes illegally from the members of the federation themselves.

The total catch reported by the federation for the six-month period from October 1994 to March 1995 was 405 tonnes. The peak season seems to be from October to January, with *rohu* being the most productive species.

The main problem that remains for these co-operatives is a lack of infrastructure. They now depend entirely on hired vehicles and ice supplies from outside sources.

During the lean season, for instance, the quantities of fish caught were so low that it was not economical to retain all the

The government's thinking appears to be to force the NBA activists to come up with solutions by throwing the issues back at them and handing over the responsibility to them. Yet the government does not see it fit to provide adequate administrative back-up.

hired vehicles. So the insulated vans were sent back and the federation hoped to survive by supplying only the local market.

However, they had not really developed a marketing system. Though they were able to offer a lower price of Rs 26 per kg., as against Rs 40 prevailing in the local market, the offtake was limited. To overcome the demand problem, the federation is now thinking of venturing to nearby markets like Nagpur.

Had it owned the vehicles, the situation would have been different. The federation now plans to build its own infrastructure on commercial terms as it now feels confident of raising and repaying loans.

Apart from the lack of infrastructure, there are organizational difficulties in managing the substantial workforce. In handling the fish, for example, around 100 persons work directly from nine landing centres in the only nine villages accessible by rudimentary roads (many of the other villages can be reached only by boat).

The federation is also hamstrung by the absence of professional management. It now depends on the committed cadre of the NBA to run the system.

But business decisions, as well as key organizational decisions, are taken by

Jayant Varma, a journalist, the editor of a local paper, who took leave from his job to organize the people on behalf of the NBA. He works closely with the board of elected representatives of the federation.

The entire system also revolves around a couple of competent retired officials from the government co-operative and fisheries departments. They look after some of the routine aspects of administration. Further, there are fishermen leaders among these oustees who take care of the procurement activities.

In fact, the president of the federation, Rajesh Tiwari, camps in Howrah to ensure that the entire catch is sold and the price reported is actually recovered. All these key persons work in an honorary capacity.

No political interference

Although there is currently no interference from political parties—especially since the government at the highest level has handed over the rehabilitation work to the NBA local bodies like the corporation are lukewarm about the efforts of the federation. Fortunately, they do not interfere blatantly or create outright trouble.

Technically, since the federation—received working capital loans and subsidies from the government, the state can, if it really wants to, impose its own management on the federation via

the co-operative department. It can thus take over the whole system at any time and kill the initiative of the NBA.

Faced with such a possibility, one wonders how the NBA and the persons involved will manage to strengthen the organization, bring in professional managers and still retain its autonomy, now that it is actually working, geared up, and has already posted profits of about Rs 60 million in the last six months.

Another problem is likely to crop up soon. From next year onwards, the federation, not the government fisheries corporation, is supposed to do the stocking of fish in the reservoir. In that case, the question of payment of royalty will have to be reviewed.

The members of the federation have yet to apply their minds to these issues, busy as they are in running the difficult marketing operations.

At present, they are, in a way, trapped in the system. The government has thrown them a challenge and so, success is now also a matter of prestige.

It would also be worthwhile to get a development NGO involved to pay for the services of a professional who could be seconded to the federation to streamline systems and implement projects. That would make the federation reasonably viable in the long term.

This report is by V. Vivekanandan, Chief Executive of the South Indian Fishermen Federation (SIFFS), Trivandrum, who recently visited the Burgi Dam area

Before the beer, some sober thinking

For the participants at the Halifax workshop on networking for sustainable fisheries, it was more work than fun

Between 10 and 12 August 1994, a fine blend of fishworkers from the North and South, as well as a number of environmentalists and social activists, met at Halifax, Canada. Most were members of the Oceans Caucus but there were also outside participants. The occasion was a workshop on sustainable fisheries conducted by ECO-PEI, with help from the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), the Ecology Action Centre and the Environment and Development Coalition. The meeting rooms were provided by the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, whose staff was unfailingly helpful. On the whole, the meet turned out to be a great success.

Each day began with informal conversations over coffee. This set the tone for the entire meet, which was characterized by avid talk and lots of good humour. Most people had such a cheerful time swapping fish stories that it was often difficult to get them to sit down for presentations. To their credit, though, all the speakers kept to the duration allotted for their presentations, and all scheduled events began on time.

Thanks to the energetic troupe of volunteer interpreters, we heard about the conditions of fisheries in Chile, Senegal and India. The expositions were compelling, and the similarity of problems in fisheries worldwide became very obvious. After the first day's formal programme ended, participants viewed videos on fisheries in Canada and overseas, including some historical footage from the 1940s. The inaugural day was capped with a South American supper.

On day two, the first presentation was by Chief Kerry Prosper of Afton, Nova Scotia, who spoke of the history of fishing

by the Mik'maw people and their current struggle to establish their fishing rights. Prosper's calm and measured explanation of the aboriginal perspective was very powerful and provoked thoughtful discussion. His talk was followed by a slide show by Margo Hearne of British Columbia, who included information on the efforts of the Haida fishers in her family and community to gain access to fisheries and management rights on the west coast.

Over the rest of the day, Ray Rogers provided a thorough and provocative analysis of the crisis in the east coast fisheries, while Peter Hennebury of Lord's Cove, Newfoundland, spoke from his heart of the impact of the collapse of northern cod stocks on coastal communities.

By the end of the formal presentations, the workshop participants, primed with information and moved by the testimony of fishworkers from so many different cultures and circumstances, worked together with a sense of urgency to identify common problems and suggest practical actions to help save the world's fisheries and coastal communities. The participants' labour was captured on audio tapes and will be used as inputs to a written 'Practical Action Plan for Sustainable Fisheries'.

Working overtime

The working group was forced into overtime. We had to scramble out the door to make it to Sambro for our scheduled tour of Sambro Fisheries, followed by dinner at the local restaurant. The fish plant tour was of great interest not only to our Southern guests but also to those environmental and social activists who had not previously experienced a working fishing enterprise at such close quarters.



For everyone, it was a real treat to finally get out of doors beside the sea. Supper featured absolutely fresh fish, cooked to perfection and served with liberal doses of Nova Scotia hospitality!

Friday was spent discussing the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. A background paper on the Law of the Sea and Agenda 21 was provided for the information of all participants, to provide a context for the discussions.

To start off, Sebastian Mathew of ICSF and Irene Novaczek of Oceans Caucus, who had attended previous sessions of the UN Conference, reviewed its history and progress. Judith Swan, a legal expert on fisheries matters and the representative of the Ambassador of the Canadian delegation to the Conference, brought us up to date on the inter-sessional negotiations that had taken place since March.

Her reading of a revised version of part of the negotiating text had a dramatic—even traumatic—effect on many workshop participants. The gulf between the dry technical text of the proposed Convention on high-seas fisheries and our sense of urgency regarding the ocean's ecosystems and coastal communities was painfully obvious.

For many listeners, it seemed that the UN negotiators had completely forgotten the fish and the human lives and livelihoods at stake. Judith Swan was interrupted and further review of the technical document abandoned in favour of a discussion on the rightful mission and mandate for delegates being sent to the UN. The debate, which carried through lunch and into the afternoon, re-visited the material presented by the various speakers. It resulted in the drafting of a joint statement of concern from the workshop participants. The statement was later welcomed by other NGO participants at the UN and was published in full in the NGO journal, EW.

No more cares

While a working group re-drafted the text of the joint statement, others enjoyed videos and slide shows. After another fine supper, and a final look at the draft text, we cleared the tables, broke out the beer, turned up the music and happily danced our cares away. ♪

This report is by Irene Novaczek of Oceans Caucus, Prince Edward Island, Canada

No way to transfer fish quotas

By experimenting with different forms of quotas for its cod fishery, Norway is ignoring the lessons of other countries

The existence of stocks of Arctic cod forms the basis of the settlements in the northern part of Norway. The end of the 1980s saw a sharp decline in these stocks due to extensive trawling. This led to heated debates in the country on responsible fishing and the future structure of the fishing fleet.

As part of the debate, the government proposed to introduce individual transferable quotas (ITQs) in the fishery. These sought to ensure an 'optimal allocation of resources' in the context of the overcapacity of the fishing fleet resulting from the decline in stocks. ITQs were meant to eliminate the need for detailed management of the fishery, leaving it to the market and the industry to allocate fishing rights—a sort of 'stock market' for fishing quotas, with certain restrictions to safeguard the smallest boats and ensure regional distribution.

The government held up Iceland and New Zealand to showcase the advantages of ITQs. It was claimed that the numbers of fishermen were reduced and where fishing rights tended to get concentrated in a few hands, limits were set on the transfer of quotas from one fleet or region.

The Norwegian fishing industry's reactions to the concept of ITQs were diverse. The trawl owners argued that the restrictions would inhibit the proper functioning of the system. "We need bigger markets and fewer restrictions on the transfer of quotas between the fleet groups," said Audun Marak, secretary general of the trawl owners' union.

Environmentalists and the small-scale fleet reacted in the opposite fashion. "Privatization of fishing rights will only allocate them to the capital intensive fleet," said Bente Aasjerd, spokesperson

for the Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature. The organization also warned that a quota which is sold is legally protected by the constitution. If, at a later stage, the government wishes to cut quotas, it might have to buy them back from boatowners in order to execute the necessary regulations. Einar Hepsoe, the leader of the fishermen's union, called the proposed set-up a "tragedy for the coast".

The coastal people can not accept the idea that someone should own the fish in the ocean. Fish was a common resource and the fishermen fished on behalf of the community as a whole, and not as owners of the resource. This fact has been an important part of Norwegian culture.

The debate spotlighted certain events in Norway's history, like the 'Trollfjord battle' of 1989, when a steamboat had set up a net, closing the mouth to the narrow Trollfjord in Lofoten. This infuriated the hundreds of fishermen outside the area of the net. They attacked the steamer whose crew retaliated with jets of steam from the boat's engine. But the fishermen managed to break through.

That incident led to the banning of purse-seining in Norwegian cod fisheries. The Trollfjord battle became a symbol of the common rights to fish resources.

Idea abandoned

The pressure on the Labour Party government against ITQs grew and during the election campaign in the fall of 1991, the idea was abandoned. The experiences of other countries suggest that this may have been a wise step. Iceland, which was the Norwegian government's prime example, has seen a drastic rise in its trawler fleet and a drop in fish resources. The ITQ system makes it more tempting to fish in the high seas, where the quotas are

'free'. The Icelandic trawler fleet is now fishing Norwegian Arctic cod beyond Norway's 200-mile EEZ.

This has been strongly opposed by the Icelandic coastal fishermen too, not only for moral reasons but also because money made from high-seas fishing is used to buy up quotas from a coastal fleet in economic difficulty. ITQs thus favour the big, mobile fleet and forms yet another threat to the small-scale fleet.

When the ITQs were stopped, the Norwegian government settled for a system of boat-quotas. Depending on its size, each boat gets a certain quota. This closure of the commons has led to severe problems in recruiting for the coastal fleet. People used to enter fishing by starting out with a small boat, fishing in the evenings or on weekends and holidays, to first get a feel of the skill.

But now that fishing rights are given only to registered vessels, this option is unavailable. Very few youngsters can afford to buy a vessel with fishing rights, which is much more expensive than one without a quota.

In a way, the system still is one of transferable quotas. The only difference is that quotas from several vessels can not be now bought and acquired for a single large vessel nor can one person own many vessels.


Now that this system has been in operation for a few years, its weaknesses have become clear. It takes away from the coastal communities the control over the transfer of their own knowledge.

Today, the skills needed to become a fisherman must be 'bought' from the school system. It is much more difficult to start up as a coastal fisherman since you must put up with three years of expenses at 'school', in addition to the annual expenses on boat and gear.

The new system also threatens society in another way. In small communities, people combined fishing with farming or other skills like plumbing or electrical work. When fishing is closed, many of them move out to bigger regional centres. The communities they leave behind end

up having to pay more for the services of these other skills. The municipality also loses tax that these craftsmen would have otherwise paid.

Traditionally, local fishing grounds in Norway have been managed by the community as a whole. When this system breaks down, the small fisherfolk no longer have a voice and the management is left to larger coastal vessels like the Danish seiners.

Open access to fish resources is the backbone of Norwegian coastal culture. Limits must therefore be set on the capitalization and the efficiency of fishing fleets. Only this will ensure flexibility for the community at large and not just power for the rich few. 

This article is by Gunnar Album of the Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature, Leines, Norway

Bad custodian of the sea

The rush by the government of India to grant licences for joint ventures to fish in the country's deep seas is laden with danger

As strikes go, this one was particularly memorable. On 23 and 24 November 1994, the marine fishing industry of India, spread across nine maritime states and covering a coastline of over 7,500 km. came to a virtual standstill.

During these two days, nearly one million persons struck work. They stayed away from their work at sea, in processing plants and markets. This was a symbolic act of protest against government policies permitting joint ventures almost free access to the fish in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

In India, this is an industry dominated largely by motivations of livelihood and subsistence. What happened on these two days, therefore, was no mean achievement. Importantly, a great many fish consumers—estimated at nearly 300 million—also consciously chose a fish-free diet on those days.

The credit for the success of the strike goes to the National Fisheries Action Committee Against Joint Ventures (NFACAJV), spearheaded by the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), which is the federation of small-scale, artisanal fishworkers' unions of the various maritime states in India.

Ironically enough, the NFACAJV was actually a consortium of strange bedfellows—traditional enemies, so to speak. Owners of the small mechanized trawlers, along with operators of export processing facilities, joined the artisanal fishermen in this protest.

The first two groups have traditionally been at loggerheads with the artisanal fishermen, especially during the monsoon months, over the question of regulating

the operations of shrimp trawlers. All along the coastline, their clashes have led to grave law-and-order problems.

But, on this occasion, they drowned their differences and stood side by side to confront a bigger, common foe—the newly arriving, larger fishing vessels from foreign waters, who have been given a 'blank cheque' to the fishery resources of India.

As part of the post-1992 liberal economic policies of the government of India, monitored by the IMF-World Bank, the country's EEZ has been opened up to joint ventures between foreign and Indian companies. The economic rationale is that since these ventures are 100 per cent export-oriented, they will augment the foreign exchange earnings on the current account.

To date, about 170 licences, involving around 800 vessels, are said to have been issued. It is not known how many have actually begun operations. After the strike call by the NFACAJV, the authorities became very tight-lipped on this matter. However, considering that the move to allow such joint ventures was taken at the country's highest political decision-making level, there seems to be little chance of an easy reversal of commitments.

However, in such a hostile environment, a few of the foreign enterprises who have received licences may fight shy of actual investments on joint ventures.

Political compulsions

At the political level, joint ventures are made out to be a *fait accompli*. But, given the state of the resources in the waters of India and its brief history of deep-sea fishing using large fishing vessels, it is

worth pondering over the impact of these new joint ventures on the country's fish economy. Estimating the living marine wealth of the country has not been a major preoccupation of its fishery scientists.

The estimates being officially quoted with biblical authority today are based on an article by three scientists, which appeared in 1977 in a nonprofessional publication. According to this, the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) of the 2.02 million sq. km. Indian EEZ was placed at 4.47 million tonnes.

Of this, 2.26 million tonnes (50 per cent) was located in the inshore zone, between the coast and the 50 m. isobath.

New estimates of 1988, however, placed the MSY at only 3.921 million tonnes but indicate the potential in the inshore zone to be 2.28 million tonnes (58 per cent) and in the offshore zone (50 to over 500 in.) at 1.641 million tonnes.

Such estimates of relative abundance are, however, no substitute for knowledge about their spatial and seasonal concentrations. On the whole, the resources have a rather low density. This makes them mostly unsuited to large-scale commercial exploitation. Considering the area of these zones and their MSYs, the density of the fishery

resource per sq. km. is about 70 per cent higher in the inshore zone (11 tonnes) than the offshore (6.5 tonnes). Based on these official resource estimates and informed industry sources, the market value of the unexploited resources in the offshore zone—theoretically, the realm of operations of joint ventures—were also recently calculated.

As much as 48 per cent of the resource (0.54 million tonnes) is valued as 'low' (i.e. between US \$500-1000 per tonne) and 38 per cent (0.43 million tonnes) as 'very low' (i.e. below US \$500 per tonne). The real commercial resources—those assessed at over US \$1,000 per tonne—account for 0.164 million tonnes. Of this, 60 per cent are on the west coast.

Big business' involvement in Indian fishing is not really new. There was a phase when the Indian subsidiaries of well-known multinational corporations like Unilever and Union Carbide made forays into the sea. This phase did not last very long.

Too many regulations

One reason was the labyrinth of regulations in the country's erstwhile industrial licensing policies. The other was the organized opposition to 'big, bad, MNC' capital by 'small, nationalist' capital. This played an important role in curbing and finally phasing out the involvement of big business in Indian fishing.

Having achieved this, ventures by national capital, encouraged by the liberalization of the early 1980s, and with the backing of specialized credit agencies, began to dominate the scene. Post-1985, there was a rush into 'deep-sea fishing', with chartered vessels and newly purchased boats. The number of deep-sea fishing vessels in India rose from 68 in 1984 to 180 in 1991, taking the accumulated horsepower rating up from 28,700 HP to 81,200 HP.

All efforts were concentrated in the Bay of Bengal to harvest shrimp. In five years, most of the 180 vessels were totting up heavy losses. The credit institutions found themselves saddled with large white elephants at sea.

An FAO study for the Association of Indian Fishery Industries and the government of India examined what was needed to salvage and rehabilitate the fishery, and redeploy and upgrade the fleet. This study extensively analyzed the resources from biological and economic perspectives. It also comprehensively reviewed the history and problems faced by the existing deep-sea fishing fleet.

The study asserted that the critical situation did "not reside in the technologies applied, which are appropriate, nor in the shrimp market, which is still strong", but rather on six other reasons:

- competition from small-scale mechanized fishing boats
- over-capacity of the deep-sea fleet in the main shrimp fishery
- lack of attractive markets for the by-catch
- absence of commercially valuable alternative fish resources (other than shrimp)
- dearth of professional managers for the fleet
- poor stamina of the sea-going and shore personnel

What was needed, the report concluded, was to redeploy the existing fleet by

diversifying its activities and equipping it with better on-board technologies like winches, hydraulic long-line drums, etc. For this, managers, skippers and crew should be trained and motivated. The study foresaw some problems in adopting this approach, particularly "recent policies of the development of industrial fisheries in India, which rely excessively on foreign input and interference".

Given this status of offshore fishery resources and the history of deep-sea fishing in India after 1985, why should new foreign investors and their Indian counterparts vie for joint venture licences? Part of the answer lies in the present situation in global fisheries.

Global marine fish catch has stagnated around 85 million tonnes since 1989. According to FAO statistics, between 1970 and 1990, in nine of the areas for monitoring global marine catch, there has been a visible downward trend.

FAO estimates that the annual operating costs of the entire global fishing fleet in 1989 came to US \$22 billion—greater than total revenue, with no account being taken of capital costs.

Distant-water fishing vessels the world over are in particularly bad shape. Their capacities were built up with massive state subsidies which promoted easy entry. Unfortunately, once built, a fishing vessel has a fairly long economic life but precious little other use, except as scrap metal. For the owners, therefore, redeployment to other less exploited fishing areas is the only solution to remain in business.

Russian vessels

Moreover, much of the large distant-water fleet of the erstwhile Soviet Union is up for sale for a song. These vessels are, on average, very large. Many of them were basically constructed for the total onboard processing of any living sea resource. Consequently, second-hand vessels for new joint ventures—which is what the foreign partner brings in as contribution—are available much cheaper than ever before.

These vessels are ecologically inappropriate for multi-species tropical

waters. Further, more often than not, they are far beyond the required specifications. These issues, however, do not bother the investor.

Given that the Indian Ocean is one of the least exploited oceans (though the least productive too), there is a general movement towards this region by distant-water fishing vessels in search of a fresh lease of life.

Thus, the liberal Indian offer seems to have come at the right time. All the tabs have been taken out of earlier norms for joint ventures.

The state has made the Indian EEZ one huge 'open-access regime' and the resource is up for grabs. In such a regime, there are no 'property rights'—it is 'possession' that is proof of property.

Hence, the scramble to get in quickly before too many join the fray. The rush is really not for any particular variety of commercially valuable fish.

It is for any fish resource which can be harvested quickly in order to grab a profit on the investment made in the joint ventures. The Indian government, on its part, has dangled every bait to attract foreign investment:

- subsidized fuel (cheaper than what the traditional fisherman

pays for his kerosene to run his outboard motor)

- 100 per cent export, with permission to trans-ship at sea, ensuring no check on the nature or quantum of the resource taken or the level of discards
- no compulsions to dock in an Indian port during operations (no forward linkages into the economy)
- permission to use any foreign port as base of operation for fishing in Indian EEZ (encouragement to involve in activities other than fishing, which may jeopardize national security)

Implications

What is likely to happen if those who have been awarded licences actually come to fish? The majority of these have been given for operations along the west coast of India. In quality and value terms, the potential resources in the offshore (beyond 50 m. isobath) of this region are the greatest in the Indian EEZ. Over 75 per cent of the resources considered commercially valuable and over half the resources regarded as 'low' and 'very low' are found here. The inshore sea of the west coast, particularly off the states of Goa, Karnataka and Kerala, are the most productive in the Indian EEZ.

However, this is also the region with the highest density of fishermen. They are also among the most skilled, fishing in small-scale vessels in waters far beyond the 50 m. isobath. Today, these fishermen are also the most militant and well-organized. They have provided the NFACAJV the main impetus to oppose the joint ventures. Thus, we have here the right recipe for bitter conflict.

A day before the national fish strike, the government proudly announced that the conflict potential would be reduced by a 'corridor' at sea, to be enforced by the coast guard. This plan only further reveals the total lack of understanding of policy-makers of socio-economic and ecological realities.

The compulsion for quick profits, along with the unchangeable nature of the resource distribution at sea, will combine to ruin the fishery resource. In a tropical sea ecosystem, the species interactions are highly complex and little studied. Even if the joint-venture vessels fish in the real 'deep sea', their impact on the rest of the ecosystem and the resource is bound to be damaging.

Many of the species are 'straddling stocks', which move in and out of the inshore, offshore and the deep sea at different points in their life-cycle. Consequently, just because resources are harvested in the offshore waters there is no guarantee that the valuable resource base in the inshore zone will be safe. Scientific knowledge and understanding of this subject is still limited. This lacuna warrants a more precautionary approach to the management of the fishery. Adding more investment into these waters—and indiscriminately at that—is far from desirable.

During the week of the strike, one joint-venture vessel (originally from the erstwhile USSR) called at the port of Cochin in Kerala. Its catch was composed 2,000 tonnes of large perches and snappers—the mainstay of the hook-and-line fishermen in the southern parts of Kerala and among the most relished varieties in local markets.

If joint ventures take hold, the prospects of less fish for local consumption are a

foregone conclusion. But urban consumers need not be dismayed. An advertisement appearing in a national newspaper at about the same time as the strike assures urban Indian fish eaters, who buy their fish from cold storages, that "Norwegian fish will be flying into India", as though to compensate for the loss of domestic perches to the joint ventures!

This honour of being able to eat Norwegian fish is also the flip side of the new liberalization policy which permits easy imports into India. The ruin of resources and the exploitation of workers on board the fishing vessels go hand in hand, particularly if the enterprise's aim is to get away with quick profits.

The majority of the crew and the deck hands on these new joint ventures are not likely to be Indian fishworkers. They will most likely be composed of the 'traditional' crew of such deep-sea vessels—Filipinos, Thais, Taiwanese, Mauritians and a few Indians.

Evidence suggests that the recruitment practices, employment terms and working conditions of these workers leave much to be desired. The implementation of relevant ILO conventions pertaining to fishermen is often flouted by asserting that the type of fishing vessels used takes them out of the purview of these conventions.

Redeployment

Such an open-door policy for joint ventures has globally proven to benefit only a handful of financiers and merchants. It promotes global redeployment at the cost of national redeployment. It thus fails to create independent and genuine national fisheries enterprises. Available evidence points to the fact that very few of the Indian counterparts in the newly licensed joint ventures have any demonstrated history of involvement in the fishing industry. Very few of them reportedly even belong to the Association of Indian Fishery Industries.

India is a country with a rich maritime fishing tradition. It has a highly skilled and enterprising fishing community along the whole coastline and a demonstrated national technological

capacity to make its own hardware for every sector of the fishing industry.

Allowing joint ventures free play is the surest way of sounding the death-knell of the national industry. A careful and selective choice of joint-venture collaborations, where the nature of investment made is based on national priorities and needs, by investors with a good track record, is what is needed. To achieve this, there should be an 'umbrella' body which represents the interests of all the stakeholders in the fishery, including the consumers. Such a body must guide and monitor joint-venture operations towards the larger social good, without depriving the genuine investors adequate and sustainable returns.

In a natural resource, when no explicit property right is defined within a country's territory, we regard the state to be its 'custodian', on behalf of present and future generations. In the context of the living resources of the Indian EEZ, at stake is more than just the 'benefit' of earning foreign exchange or the 'cost' of ruin of the resource. Today, in India, we are confronted with a situation where the artisanal fishworkers, the small mechanized boat operators and a section of the deep-sea fishing operators with some past involvement in fishing, are all up in arms against the present joint-venture policy of the government.

It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that this new policy is led and fuelled by motivations and considerations obviously designed to favour a few but wrapped in the packaging of liberalization and free-market ideology, today being touted as the only path left to solve our problems.

Inter-generational heritage

To permit this new policy on joint ventures in fisheries to proceed is tantamount to allowing a handful of bureaucrats and politicians to usurp the custodianship role of the state and trade this inter-generational heritage of our marine resources to parties who are openly interested only in short-run profits. This is an affront on civil society at large. It must be opposed. ❧

A slightly different version of this article by John Kurien, a social scientist and Associate Fellow at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, appeared earlier in the Economic and Political Weekly, Bombay

The poor, lonely, homely turbot

As the whale world of fisheries watches with great interest, Canada and the EU continue to glower at each other across the fish battle lines

Poor, lonely, homely turbot—this is how Canada's Minister of Fisheries, Brian Tobin, described one of the last commercially exploitable groundfish stocks left on the once-rich Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

With their slimy skin and bulging eyes delicately arranged at art angle atop their heads, turbot are undoubtedly homely. They must also be as lonely as any fish can get, with the northern cod and other historical friends and relations now so greatly depleted.

But, in fact, the homely turbot has never been a prized commodity. The only reason for its current popularity is because fishers have little else to harvest. The pattern of 'pulse overfishing' targeting species down the food chain and into deeper waters is part of the tragedy of the ongoing crisis in world fisheries.

The piteous turbot may also be lonely for their own kind. Whether or not the stock is actually strong enough to withstand any further exploitation is one of the unanswered questions. Certainly, the data collected by Canadian fisheries scientists over the past few years shows a precipitous decline in turbot biomass all over the traditional fishing grounds, which lie mostly within Canada's 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) limit and extend from the Grand Banks north to Davis' Strait.

Particularly disturbing is the fact that the remaining fish include very few of reproductive size. Turbot are very slow-growing, long-living fish, and the disappearance of spawning biomass means that recovery will be very slow.

One does not have to look far for a possible reason for declining stocks inside

Canada's EEZ. Although Canadian fishers have not exploited turbot heavily themselves, there is a recent history of joint-venture fishing, with Russian factory trawlers operating inside Canadian waters, in collaboration with a Canadian processing company. These boats did what mobile gear does best—they targeted the spawning aggregations of turbot in deep waters off Baffin Island, and they fished with brutal efficiency.

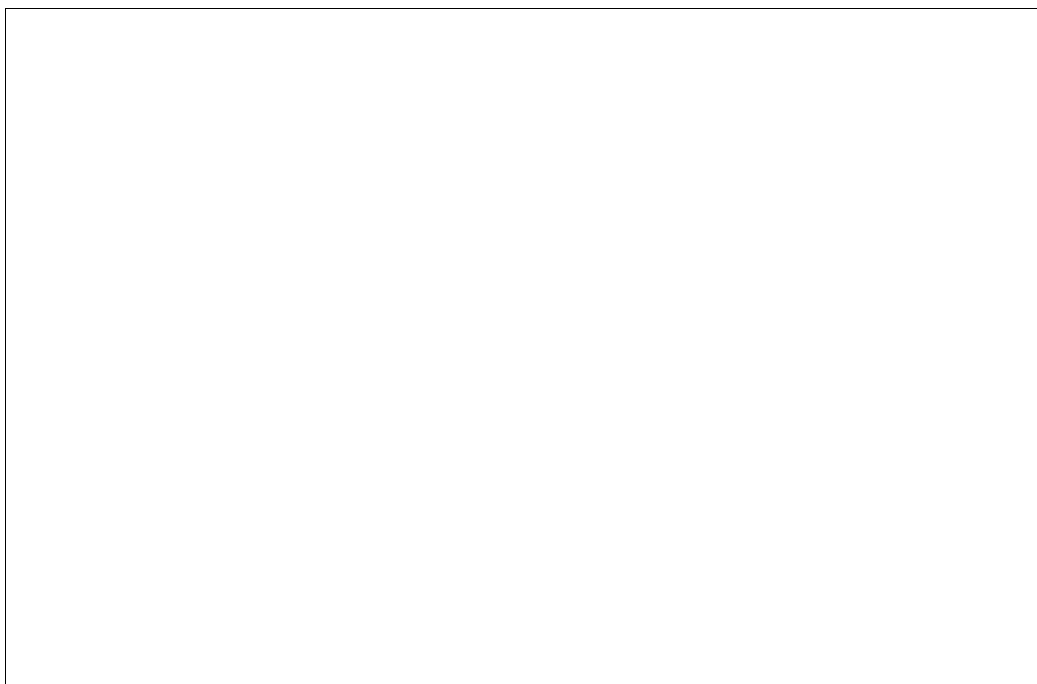
However, there is also evidence that indicates that the fish have not simply been fished out. An alternate hypothesis is that, in response to recent changes in ocean water temperatures, they have migrated east and south in search of warmer, deep-slope water—a migration that has taken many of them beyond Canada's EEZ to the nose of the Grand Banks.

This migration, if it did occur, would have taken them out of the reach of the technology used by Canadian fishing vessels and into the deep-water trawls of the Spanish fishing fleet (operating, in some cases, below 1,000 m. depth).

Until 1980, the existence of turbot in deep-slope waters had not been investigated and the high-seas turbot fishery was unregulated. Once the Spanish fleet came in search of unexploited stocks in the late 1980s, however, the estimated catch rose from 7,600 tonnes in 1989 to over 45,000 tonnes in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Small-mesh trawls

By 1994, the retorted catch was close to 60,000 tonnes. At the same time, Canadian research vessels observing the high-seas fishery documented declines in fish size and the increasing use of small-mesh trawl nets.



The Spanish fleet, which has recently returned to the Grand Banks after being expelled from Namibian waters, is desperate for fish to support their coastal communities in Galicia, which are suffering greatly from the worldwide downturn in fisheries.

This fleet uses very destructive bottom-dragging technology, combined with sophisticated fish-finding abilities and skilled crew.

The Spanish also have a long record of arrests and disputes related to non-compliance with management and conservation measures in a variety of jurisdictions.

Their motivation is a vigorous domestic market which happily consumes fish of any size—even very small, non-reproductive fish. Therein lies the basis of the dispute between Canada and the European Union.

Due to clear evidence of declining biomass, condition and size of turbot in the traditional fishing areas, the Canadian government slashed quotas for domestic fishers and lobbied the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to introduce quotas for turbot.

In a meeting in February 1995, NAFO members agreed to a total allowable catch

of 27,000 tonnes, with only 3,400 tonnes being apportioned to the EU, whose boats took 60,000 tonnes in 1994.

The EU promptly contested this allocation, awarding themselves 18,630 tonnes instead. Their fleet continued to fish hard, at a rate which would have exceeded the total allowable catch very quickly.

Concerned with the depletion of straddling stocks of cod and other fish which had migrated to warmer deep waters in recent years, the government of Canada in 1994 exempted itself from the authority of the world court with regard to fisheries and amended a domestic law called the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

This amendment unilaterally gave the government the right to board, inspect and, if necessary, seize any stateless or flag-of-convenience vessel fishing in contravention of NAFO conservation measures in the NAFO fishing areas beyond 200 miles.

Vessel arrested

Under this new law, Canada arrested the *Cristina Logos*, a Portuguese-Canadian vessel which became temporarily stateless while fishing outside of 200 miles. The *Cristina Logos*' hold bore cartons of tiny fish labelled x, xx and xxx small—clear evidence of a fishery directed at baby fish. The net on board had several layers of small-meshed liners.

Canadian authorities monitoring the activities of Spanish vessels fishing turbot outside of 200 miles became increasingly concerned through January, February and March of 1995. The rate at which biomass was being caught indicated to scientists that the boats must be using very small-mesh nets, because Canadian boats with legal-size nets could not catch enough fish to cover their operating expenses.

However, under existing international law, there was no recourse beyond requesting Spain to monitor and enforce NAFO rules on their vessels. The request was made, but no action was taken by EU authorities.

In March, Canada amended the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act once more, granting themselves authority to board and, if necessary, arrest not just flag-of-convenience vessels but also Spanish and Portuguese vessels deemed to be fishing in contravention of NAFO agreements. Actions specifically allowed under the amended CFPA included the cutting of trawl warps and boarding of vessels.

The stage was now set for a fish war.

On 9 March, after issuing warnings to the Spanish vessels fishing on the Grand Banks, Canadian fisheries officers closed in on the vessel *Estai* and asked leave to board the vessel in order to arrest it for illegal fishing practices.

This vessel had been noted in 1993, when the Canadian authorities asked the EU to investigate the *Estai* for fishing species under moratorium. The investigation was never pursued.

As the Canadian fisheries officers attempted to board the *Estai*, the crew cut the warps on their nets, letting it fall to the ocean floor, and then, after casting off the ropes, steamed away into the fog.

The Canadian boat pursued the *Estai* for several hours, while other Spanish vessels attempted to run interference. The *Estai* stopped and was boarded after Canadian officers fired four bursts of gunfire over her bow. The vessel was escorted to the port of St. Johns, the captain arrested, and

an investigation launched. Investigators found duplicate fishing logs which were significantly different.

In the logs being kept for NAFO, catches of turbot were over-reported for 1994 and under-reported for 1995. Catches of by-catch species under moratorium, particularly American plaice, were also under-reported, compared to the captain's private log. Inspection of the holds revealed tonnes of immature turbot and plaice. The *Estai's* net was retrieved and found to be illegal in mesh size, with an even smaller mesh liner in the cod end.

For the government of Canada, the timing was opportune. With Canadian boats tied up, Canadian fishworkers were demanding action to curb overfishing of stocks that represent their only hope for a future fishery.

Focusing attention on foreign fishing vessels distracted Canadians from the thorny issues of the use and abuse of technologies in their own fisheries, past and future, and the problems of deciding who would benefit from allocations in any future fishery—corporations or communities.

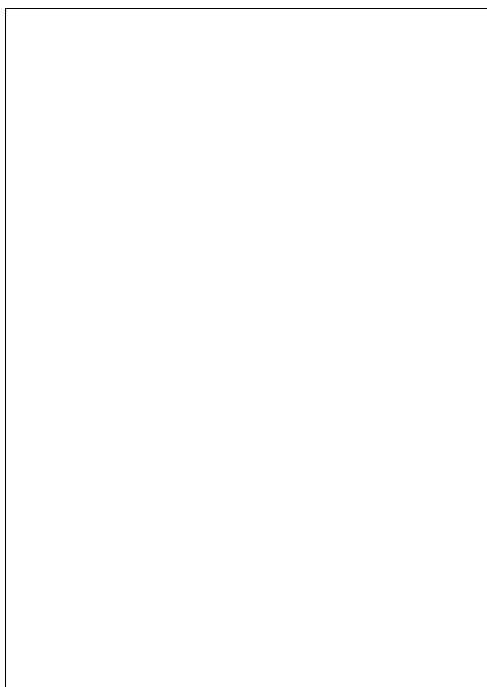
The rest of Canada was also in the mood for a diversion. After a brutal deficit-slashing budget and with the separatist referendum looming in Quebec, finding an external enemy was a standard political manoeuvre.

Further, there was the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks scheduled for the end of March to mid-April—the perfect media opportunity.

Masterful media event

Fisheries Minister Brian Tobin brought all these together masterfully in a media event in New York Harbour on 28 March. Three busloads of reporters were given a ferry ride across the harbour to a barge upon which was a crane holding up the *Estai's* net.

There, to explain how the net worked, were two young fisheries officers who had escorted the exhibit down from Newfoundland. The net was artfully arranged to frame the view of the UN



buildings in the background. In addition to measuring the mesh size with NAFO-approved calipers, the officers displayed tiny turbot and plaice taken from the hold of the Spanish boat.

Then Minister Tobin made his impassioned speech to save the lonely, homely turbot—part of which he referred to as a planetary treasure and an essential component of the protein needed to feed the world's people. As a consciousness-raising effort, the New York media event was terrific. In terms of the UN Conference, however, it was not so positive, as wrangling between Canada and the EU dominated comments on the floor at a time when delegates needed to concentrate on co-operation.

Most disheartening of all was the evidence that the Canadian delegation was not going to follow through on their Minister's dedication to conservation.

In a discussion on the practical application of the precautionary approach in fisheries management, Canada argued that this section of the convention should not be mandatory because, although they were, of course, committed to a precautionary approach, the poor developing nations could not afford it. Therefore, it should not be mandatory for any nation. Suddenly, preserving fish for the common good of all people on the planet was off the

agenda, just as suddenly as it had surfaced. This reflects the true agenda of Canada's current government—deficit reduction at any cost. In the recent national budget, aid to developing countries and north-south NGO project assistance were both slashed.

At the time of writing, Canada and the EU have not come to any agreement. The Spanish boats are still dragging tiny turbot off the deep ocean floor, even though nobody knows whether the year's total allowable catch for turbot has been caught or not. According to the new agreement, these boats must now carry an independent observer who will report to NAFO any violations of their fisheries management policy—for instance, the use of illegal small-mesh nets or the by-catch of endangered stocks. The fleet will also be under surveillance by satellite.

We are waiting to see whether the Canada-EU agreement will be implemented and enforced, and whether there will be the political will in the EU to prosecute any of their vessels that may be reported by the observers to be violators.

More importantly, have these measures been put in place in time to save the turbot from commercial extinction? And what will be Canada's future policy on the exploitation of spawning biomass by joint-venture or domestic dragnets operating inside the 200-mile limit?

Conflicting needs

Unless the UN Conference on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks makes a rapid and major forward movement, we can only expect more fish wars to erupt, as stocks continue to decline and governments wrestle with the conflicting needs of long-term conservation and immediate economic returns. 3

This article is by Irene Novaczek of the Oceans Caucus, Canada

The beginning of the end

Canada may have become the Guardian Angel of the Atlantic, but the losers in the fight over halibut can only be the Galician fisherfolk

The slashing of halibut quotas in the waters of Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) is yet another nail in the coffin for the long-distance fleet of Galicia, hit by the worst fishery crisis since the 1980s.

In March 1994, Canada unilaterally declared a law which, in violation of international maritime rights, empowers them to inspect and arrest foreign fishermen in international waters, under the guise of marine conservation. The Canadian threat to Galician and Portuguese boats began from that time. Galician crews working in the NAFO area denounced this law that very year. This was the first part of the strategy planned by the government of Ottawa to expel the European fleet from the area adjoining the Grand Banks.

The NAFO meeting in Halifax last September rewarded Canadian pressure with two victories. Not only did this international organization for fisheries development fail to denounce the law to extend the EEZ, but NAFO went on to reduce the total halibut quota to 27,000 tonnes, thereby limiting access to European fishing boats.

Existing data on the halibut fishery in this region suggests the need for caution in exploiting this species. Hence, NAFO decided to impose, for the first time, a TAC (total allowable catch) limit. The scientific committee of the organization recommended limiting catches to 40,000 tonnes. However, Ottawa fought to get this reduced to 27,000 tonnes. There followed a very close voting in which Cuba's support proved decisive.

Under pressure from the fisheries sector and the governments of Galicia and Spain, the EU, which did not initially oppose the

TAC of 27,000 tonnes, objected to the final allocation of quotas, which allowed 56 boats—Galician and Portuguese—to catch 3,400 tonnes of halibut for 1995, and fixed an overall quota of 18,630 tonnes for its fleet. The NAFO agreement incorporates a clause by which members can raise objections on quota allocations. In response, Canada applied a moratorium throughout the entire fishing ground, which the EU did not accept.

The tension and threats finally spilled over to the fishing grounds. On 9 March, Canadian patrol boats, violating international law, chased, fired on and captured the Vigo fishing boat *Estai*, accusing it of illegal fishing in international waters regulated by NAFO.

In Galicia, the response was one of complete indignation. The community came out in force against this arrest, and 100,000 people demonstrated in Vigo in support of the fishing fleet and demanded the unconditional release of the boat and its captain.

Contravention

In the meantime, the day after the arrest of the boat, the EU negotiated a new quota allocation with Canada, the nation which had contravened international regulations and rights. The negotiations continued while the fishing fleet remained powerless against new attacks from the Canadian navy, also in international waters, which included cutting the trawl cables, endangering sailors' lives.

The results were exactly what one would expect from negotiations carried out under armed threat. Canada doubled its halibut quotas and vigorously maintained the extension of its 200-mile zone, promising not to arrest any more European boats, and the EU reduced its

fishing opportunities by a quarter. The terms and conditions of the conditions under which the agreement was negotiated have created a growing mistrust of the EU within the Galician fishery sector.

Firmly, and supported by arguments of conservation rejected by Greenpeace, Canada began a campaign to discredit the European fleet, accusing it of committing repeated infringements. The Canadian authorities forgot to report to their countrymen the violation of a rational agreement on fishery resources within their own waters. They used this 'crusade against foreigners' to momentarily resolve their internal political problems, the demands for independence and the need to satisfy their 40,000 unemployed fishermen. The Canadian government presented itself to the world as the Guardian Angel of the Atlantic.

The Canadian campaign of self-promotion was even well received within the EU. It was chiefly England and Ireland who openly supported the Canadian position during the conflict and the negotiations, thus breaking the principle of unity within the EU and creating a breach across the defence of Spanish and Portuguese interests.

Until this year, boats from Galicia and Portugal fishing in the north-west

Atlantic have caught, on average, 62,000 tonnes of halibut annually. Of this, 43,000 tonnes came from the Galician fleet. The 1995 fishing quotas for these fleets have been cut to 11,000 tonnes by the bilateral agreement. This was accepted by Spain but rejected by Galicia and not ratified by Portugal, the other EU country affected.

Today there are 38 Galician freezer trawlers with 1,250 crew members working in this fishery, where the 180 or so boats which used to operate in the Namibian waters have relocated after the moratorium in 1990.

The halibut fishery indirectly generates around 9,000 land-based jobs, which range from storage and marketing to the manufacture of nets, fishing gears, boatyards, and rope making. The combined catching and processing sectors of the halibut fishery generate a total of 20 billion pesetas annually.

Worsening crisis

With the quota cuts, revenue loss will be as high as 18 billion pesetas, according to the estimates of boatowners. They fear that the economic crisis will only worsen, with a greater loss of market for halibut in Europe, including Italy and France, and foreign markets like Japan. These cuts will make redundant two-thirds of the existing crew members and some 7,000 shore workers. The entire fishery employs around 30,000 people, almost four per cent

of the active workforce. The overall socio-economic impact of reduced catches in every fishing ground worked by the Galician fleet is far more serious.

Over half the Galician population—three million people—live along the coast. Fishing and fishery-related activities like processing and shellfish extraction make up the economic fabric of the coastal communities. Every seagoing job indirectly generates four more shore-based jobs. The fishery accounts for more than 6.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product.

The region of Morrazo, next to Vigo, along with others farther from Vigo, like La Guardia and Ribeira, are among the areas worst hit by the agreement between the EU and Canada. Half the active workforces here live off the sea, mainly working on the long-distance fleet. Unemployment and poverty will convert these fishing communities into social dustbins.

Apart from the grave socio-economic consequences and the implications of having accepted the outcome of negotiations under threat of violence, the halibut war also underlines the inability of international organizations to manage fisheries. NAFO still has not called a joint meeting to address the serious problem which has arisen in the waters for which it is responsible.

The member states of the organization, except Poland, have preferred that Canada and the EU reach a bilateral solution, instead of negotiating a joint resolution to the conflict.

Ever since its foundation, NAFO has witnessed an increasing degradation of the resources under its management, until it has had to impose moratoriums on fishing some species due to stock collapses.

NAFO, like other bodies which regulate fishery zones, legally protects signatories who do not fulfill agreements on quotas and other conservation measures. To this limited management capacity is added the lack of political will of the fishing powers. But one cannot continue to merely play at management.

The FAO statistics are quite clear on the situation of exploitation, overexploitation and decline of this planet's fishing grounds. There are no industrial fishing fleets which abide by the rules, and Galicia, as the leading fishing power of Europe, has to take its share of the responsibility too.

Namibia, Boston, the Malvinas, Morocco and Argentina are all destinations for the Galician fleet. The reduction in the number of boats is a necessity imposed by the current state of the stocks and the increasing development of the fishery sectors of coastal nations in the Third World.

Long recession

For almost two decades, Galician fishery activities have suffered from an uninterrupted recession. In spite of an annual loss of thousands of direct and indirect jobs, the fishery sector is still not recognized as one needing rationalization. Boatowners have been systematically subsidized by the EU to scrap and export their boats. However, for the crew, there are no alternatives to early retirement or unemployment.

The role of unions and governments is to put in place measures to train and redeploy sailors in other activities, to encourage the development of businesses and co-operatives, in short, to guarantee the workers' rights to a source of work.

Until now, it has been easier to pay boatowners to decommission their boats or redeploy them to other fishing grounds. But now there are no free seas left. For the Galician fleet, the halibut war marks the beginning of the end. ❧

This article, by Monica Justo, from the fishing port of Vigo Province of Galicia in north-west Spain, has been translated by Brian O'Riordan

The turbot war

Beyond quotas and mesh size

Though Newfoundlanders may have wanted tougher measures in the Canada-EU skirmish, the real message in the 'turbot wars' is a much larger one

The recent dispute between Canada and the European Union over Greenland halibut (turbot) quotas on the Green Banks has drawn widespread international attention to the tragedy that has befallen fishing communities on Canada's Atlantic coast.

The high-stakes, high-profile dispute dominated European and Canadian newscasts and newspapers for weeks and attracted a great deal of attention elsewhere in the world as well.

Now that the dispute has been resolved, the tens of thousands of Atlantic Canadians who have been displaced by the crisis in our groundfish resources will be watching closely to see if this dispute will mark a real turning point in our struggle to rebuild our fishing society.

Nearly 40,000 Atlantic Canadians have been affected by the closure of 14 principal groundfish stocks on the Atlantic coast. Approximately 30,000 of the affected workers live in the province of Newfoundland, which has a total employed workforce of just over 200,000.

To understand the significance of the turbot dispute, it is necessary to comprehend the nature of Newfoundland society. Two years from now, we will be commemorating the 500th anniversary of the discovery by European settlers of Newfoundland, Canada's most easterly province, which today has a population of about 577,000, scattered in 700 communities over 17,500 km. of coastline.

It was the tremendous abundance of fish off Newfoundland's coast that attracted settlement in the first place. For centuries, the fishery has been our main employer and the mainstay of most of our coastal

communities. This has made all the more devastating the impact of the disastrous decline in key groundfish stocks.

As recently as 1988, quotas for the major groundfish stocks fished by Newfoundlanders—cod, flounder, turbot, redfish and others—were slightly over 500,000 tonnes. By 1994, these had dropped below 45,000 tonnes—a decline of over 90 per cent in just six years.

The prognosis for the future of these stocks is not encouraging. A total of fourteen stocks are under moratorium, including the stock that was historically Canada's largest, the so-called Northern Cod stock, which for centuries supported a fishery ranging between 200,000 and 300,000 tonnes annually, all of which was fished with fixed gear until the advent of the distant-water factory-freezer trawler fleet from Europe in the 1950s.

On 2 July 1992, when Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans closed the Northern Cod stock for two years (later extended by five more years), the effect on our province was overwhelming. The economic impact was partially offset by a government compensation programme for the affected fish harvesters and processing workers.

Centuries old

But the greater impact arose from the abrupt halt to centuries of activity that had been passed on from generation to generation. As one fisherman put it in an interview shortly after he was put out of work by the moratorium, "If I'm not a fisherman, what am I?"

Since then, the situation has worsened, as more fisheries have been closed in a desperate attempt to let the stocks recover from all-time low levels. Dozens of fish

plants were closed and hundreds of large and small vessels decommissioned or just left tied to the wharf. For many years, fixed-gear fishermen have been warning about the decline in our stocks.

Though shellfish and some pelagic fisheries still exist, for generations the groundfish stocks have provided most of the employment in the Newfoundland fishery. Significantly, Canada's 200-mile EEZ does not encompass our total continental shelf. An accident of nature has given us a continental shelf which extends beyond 200 miles, and a number of our most important fish stocks straddle the 200-mile limit.

While Canadian fishermen and fish-plant workers were forced to absorb the cutbacks and closures outlined above, European vessels just beyond our 200-mile limit have actually increased their fishing effort. With callous disregard for quotas, mesh sizes and other fisheries management regulations, the Europeans have played a primary role in the destruction of our crucial stocks.

From 1988 to 1994, the Europeans had quotas totalling 164,400 tonnes from the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), the international body responsible for managing the area of Canada's continental shelf which lies beyond 200 miles. During that period, the

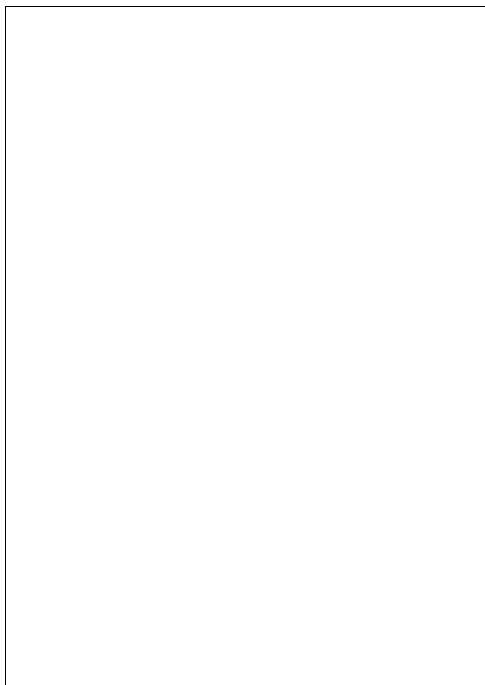
EU reported a catch of 851,600 tonnes. But, according to the estimate of Canadian enforcement authorities, the Europeans actually caught 1,362,600 tonnes. Even the catches they reported came to more than fivefold the quotas awarded to them by NAFO.

NAFO, unfortunately, has been a toothless tiger. It has only 10 per cent observer coverage, and that too by the flag state. There is no provision for real-time reporting and the enforcement regime is full of loopholes. That is why, in May 1994, the Parliament of Canada passed a law authorizing the federal government to designate classes of vessels against which it can take enforcement action beyond the 200-mile zone.

The government initially designated flag-of-convenience countries, outside the jurisdiction of NAFO. The designation of these countries and bilateral pressure on the various states by Canada effectively drove the flag-of-convenience vessels off the so-called 'nose and tail' of the Grand Banks, the key fishing areas just outside 200 miles.

Howls of protest

Effectively, this act and the accompanying regulations extended the boundaries of international law. The EU howled in protest. The reason soon became clear. Earlier this year, NAFO had set a total allowable catch.



This totalled 27,000 tonnes for the declining Greenland halibut stocks and the EU was awarded only 3,400 tonnes. The EU announced that it would take advantage of the ultimate loophole in the NAFO Convention, the so-called "Objection Procedure", which allows any NAFO member country to file a formal written objection to any quota and thereby choose not to be bound by it.

When this happened and the Europeans fished more than their quota, the government of Canada acted, arresting the Spanish trawler *Estai*. With that arrest, came the disclosure of dual logs on board the vessel, a high percentage of undersized fish, and the discovery of a hidden hold containing 25 tonnes of American plaice, a stock under moratorium. Canadian authorities also retrieved the *Estai's* net, which, to no one's surprise, carried undersized mesh containing an illegal liner or inner mesh.


This led to the protracted dispute that included a diplomatic war of words, Canadian patrol ships cutting the ropes of another Spanish trawler, protests and demonstrations on both sides of the Atlantic, and ultimately, a settlement, against which Spanish fishing interests are still protesting bitterly. The settlement of the turbot dispute gave the EU approximately three times as much Greenland halibut as they received under the original NAFO Convention. It includes

100 per cent observer coverage, 35 per cent satellite coverage, improved inspection, hailing and reporting of catches, and other measures intended to give the authorities the tools to enforce and police quotas, mesh sizes and other fisheries management regulations.

To be sure, the settlement is not ideal. Newfoundlanders would have preferred tougher enforcement measures which did not give any more fish to the Europeans. Having said that, we believe the new agreement is a major step in managing straddling fish stocks. We expect that there will be problems with the new regime and it will require further amendment and correction.

This agreement at least holds out a glimmer of hope for a fishing society whose future has looked very bleak for a long time. There is now some hope that the painful cutbacks we have had to endure, may not have been totally in vain. It has also been very encouraging to see the support that we have received, not only from across Canada, but from other countries, notably Great Britain.

During the course of this dispute, we have exposed to the international community an issue that is vital to our livelihoods. We believe the outcome pushes the whole debate on the management of straddling fish stocks and all fish stocks, in general, to a higher level. The message has to go out that fishing countries and fishing people are serious about conservation and enforcement.

The so-called 'turbot wars' always stood for more than mere turbot. They are about all straddling fish stocks in the northwest Atlantic. But they are really about the fishing crisis that has gripped the world fishing community. 

This article is by Earle McCurdy, president of the Fish, Food and Allied Workers (FFAW/CAW), which represents over 20,000 fish harvesters and processing workers in the province of Newfoundland and is affiliated with The Canadian Auto Workers Union

Flying the Canadian flag

The pro-Canada zest that recently swept through UK and Irish fishermen should not hide the fact of interdependence in fisheries

It was nationalism at its farcical peak. A feverish zest for Canada swept through British and Irish fishing communities, as the European Union's Fisheries Minister slogged it out with Canada over quota allocations on Newfoundland's Grand Banks. While the formal EU position condemned Canada for piracy on the high seas, the British press rejoiced in the defeat of the 'Spanish armada'.

Canada fervour reached dizzy heights when a Cornish fishing boat from Newlyn—the *Stereden Va Browas*—mistakenly arrested by French customs. It was flying the Canadian flag, and the local authorities assumed it was Canadian and landing fish in France illegally!

Overnight Canadian flags became a craze all over the UK. The first reported sightings of the distinctive red and white maple leaf insignia came from Newlyn in Cornwall. By Easter, Canadian flags were flying from masts in many British and Irish fishing ports. For several days, the Canadian High Commissioner was kept busy traversing the country, handing out Canadian flags and drumming up support for his country's cause. Britain, especially Cornwall, rapidly became the most favoured tourist spot for Canadians.

As the negotiations grew more heated and intractable, Spain demanded that sanctions be applied to Canada. The British Prime Minister, John Major, risked a diplomatic breach with Spain and a clash with the European Commission by speaking out forcefully in support of Canada. He strongly opposed trade sanctions on Canada, and asserted that long-standing Commonwealth ties were more important than obligations to another EU country. Cynics said that it was more an issue of concern over marginal

Tory seats and local elections which caused Major to be so outspoken.

Superficial analyses proclaimed a racist element, and that disenchantment with the EU was leading people to be nostalgic about Commonwealth ties. Spain charged Canada with organizing a smear campaign against it, and said it had been made a scapegoat for Canada's fisheries problems.

Whatever the reasons and circumstances which led to the strong support for Canada's cause in the UK, there is a long and bitter history to Hispano-Britannic fish disputes—most recently in the so-called tuna war in August 1994 (SAMUDRA No: 10 & 11, December 1994). UK fishermen have little faith in the enforcement of fishery regulations in Spanish ports, where, they claim, undersized fish and those beyond quota limits are landed with impunity.

They also feel that British fishing interests are being traded against other concessions, for example, in agriculture. They think that if the UK unilaterally declares a 200-mile exclusive fishing zone, nearly 80 per cent of the EU's fish stocks would belong to the UK. The 'Save British Fish Campaign' wants the UK to leave the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and thereby gain exclusive access to these fish stocks.

Similar situation

In many ways, Spain faces almost the same situation that the UK fishing industry faced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. When Spain joined the EU in 1986, it was subject to a restrictive list system of vessels which were allowed limited fishing opportunities in EU waters. These restrictions are to be reviewed prior to Spain's full integration in January 1996.

With Spain's entry into the EU in 1986, the European fishing capacity is said to have swelled by 75 per cent. Spain's fishing fleet is Europe's largest—17,000 vessels and 92,000 persons sailing them. It is often said that, due to its powerful fishing interests, Spain is the tail that wags European fishing policy.

UK fishermen are sore that the size of Spain's fishing fleet forces other European states to cut theirs to match the resources available. They feel Spain should have been asked to reduce its own fleet size before it was allowed to enter the CFP.

Although its access to EU waters is severely restricted, Spain has the capacity to catch four times its current allocated quotas. British fishermen feel threatened by this, especially since Spain is losing access to many of its traditional distant-water grounds.

As one of the world's largest consumers of fish—1.9 million tonnes annually, over thrice the rest of the EU—the Spanish also have a reputation for eating small, immature fish. This is something that particularly worries UK and Irish fishermen.

Rightly or wrongly, many British and Irish fishermen harbour a deep suspicion of Spanish fishing companies, regarding

them as disrespectful of the law. They also strongly identify with the Canadian charges against the Spanish vessel, *Estai*, this was particularly strong among the fishermen of Ireland, where, by end 1994, 24 of the 39 fishing boats detained in Irish waters were Spanish or UK-registered ('flags of convenience') Spanish boats.

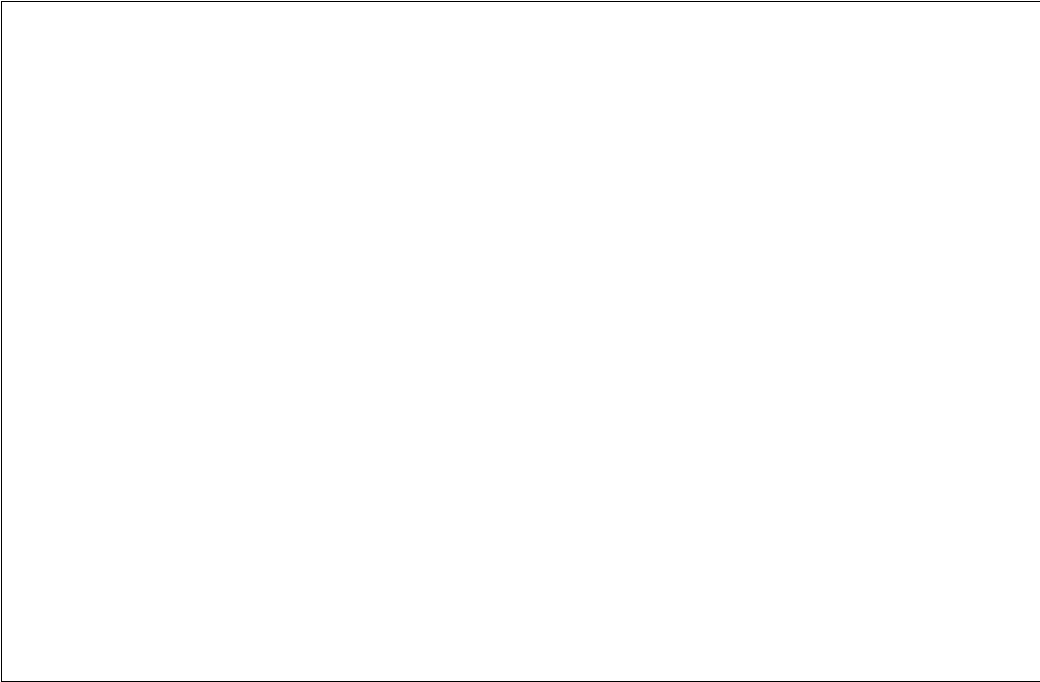
In December 1994, all 12 ministers of the EU met in Brussels to discuss, among other things, the terms of accession of Spain and a review of the restrictions applied on that country.

The council of fisheries ministers agreed to lift some of these and allow the Spanish limited entry to the waters of the so-called 'Irish Box' an area of protected (limited access) waters around Ireland. This caused an uproar in the UK and Ireland.

Fuelling concern

UK fishermen are also concerned that, over the next eight years, Spain will build a track record of fishing stocks to which they are denied access, thus allowing them to claim 'traditional rights' thereafter. Fuelling this concern is a recent deal between France and Spain in which the Spanish have traded 9,000 tonnes of anchovy quotas for cod, haddock, saithe, monk fish and hake. These are nominal amounts.

However, it now means that Spain can catch all these species in areas formerly




denied to it. It is claimed that Spain has been given an enhanced fishing opportunity 'through the back door.

With feelings running high and many Cornish and Irish boats now preparing for high-seas tuna fishing, a repeat of last year's violence seems inevitable.

Somehow, common ground must be found for fishermen from Spain and other EU nations to sit down and talk with one another. In the UK and Ireland, Spanish fishermen may appear villains, but without Spanish markets, many British fishing operations would simply not be viable.

Annual British fish exports to Spain are estimated at 137 million pounds sterling. Most of the tuna caught by Cornish fishermen is also sold in Spain.

There seems to be an important issue of interdependence: British fishermen need Spanish markets, and Spanish fishermen want access to 'British' fishing grounds. Surely the time has come to sit down together and negotiate. 

This article is by Brian O'Riordan of Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), UK

The turbot war

The fish need peace

Freedom to fish must now be circumscribed by international provisions to come up under the aegis of the UN

Apart from a handful of experts and the representatives of the governments directly involved, the world had barely taken note of the proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The Law of the Sea Convention, negotiated between 1973 and 1982, had finally come into force in the fall of 1994 and surely whatever had been left out was not worth worrying about.

And then, suddenly, just before the UN Conference could start its fifth session in March of this year, news agencies around the world reported that Canada's Mounties (Federal police) had boarded the Spanish fishing vessel, the *Estai*, on the high seas, arrested it and taken it to the port of St. John's, Newfoundland, where charges were laid against the vessel and its captain.

What could have prompted peace-loving, peace-keeping Canada to apparently violate the sacrosanct freedom of fishing on the high seas against its long-standing friend and NAFO ally, Spain?

It had long been known that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), even at its early stages of development, had ignored calls by countries such as Canada for a fisheries legal regime which would have granted coastal states exclusive rights to their offshore stocks throughout their range.

Instead, UNCLOS preferred a straightforward, if simplistic, all-encompassing limit of 200 miles. That this 200-mile limit brought great benefits to the world's coastal states is undeniable. But it left a gaping lacuna in so far as there existed in many areas of the oceans, such as the wide continental shelves off

Canada, fish stocks that lived and reproduced across the 200-mile line and other fish stocks whose long-range peregrinations bore no relevance to an arbitrary line on a map.

UNCLOS simply contained a perfunctory call for co-operation among states and thus the stage was set for eventual clashes between the coastal states that saw their resources inside 200 miles threatened by unregulated fishing outside and the distant-water fishing states (DWFS) who remained attached to the traditional unrestricted freedom of fishing on the high seas.

It is to fill this vacuum and prevent those clashes that the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks was convened but, unfortunately, not soon enough to be of use as regards the mounting tensions between Canada and the European Union (EU) over the Spanish fleet's fishing practices and the unavoidable consequent confrontation.

The immediate cause of the dispute was a matter of allocating quotas for Greenland halibut (turbot) to the EU out of an agreed Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 27,000 tonnes. When the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), a regional organization that regroups 15 countries, including Canada and the EU, allocated some 3,400 tonnes to the EU and a much larger share to Canada (over 16,000 tonnes), the EU then had recourse to NAFO's objection procedure, a legal device that meant that the NAFO allocation would not apply to them.

Unilateral

They further unilaterally allocated to themselves over 18,000 tonnes. Since everyone agreed that the TAC should

remain at 27,000 tonnes, it was obvious that the legal quotas when added to the EU's unilateral quotas would produce total catches greatly exceeding the TAC and further threatening the resource itself.

The two positions that could not be reconciled were based on a three-year old claim by the EU to a large portion of the stocks outside the 200-mile limit and on a Canadian claim based on 13 years (1977-89) of fishing for 75 to 80 per cent of the stock inside the 200-mile line.

The EU resort to the objection procedure was not without precedent. In the 1980s, interestingly enough, after Spain joined the EU, the Europeans had abandoned their traditional cooperation within NAFO and had taken, year after year, registering their objections to many of the quotas for stocks that straddled Canada's 200-mile limit, into areas that are called the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks. Those areas are the more sensitive as they correspond to the spawning grounds for most of the stocks.

Canada, at that time, was beginning to realize that its principal fish stocks—northern cod, redfish and American plaice—were declining. Recognizing its own shortcomings and responsibility, Canada established ever more restrictive conditions on its fishermen, eventually total moratoriums.

Meanwhile, the EU unilaterally set its own quotas and fished the same stocks very hard on the Nose and Tail. Stock after stock simply disappeared as commercial assets. Throughout that period, there was nothing Canada could do to counter EU objections. Freedom to fish according to one's wishes, irrespective of legally agreed decisions in NAFO, appeared to be the only law.

Given that background, Canada, in 1995, could simply not tolerate a repetition of the disastrous practices of the past and

strongly argued with the EU that their action, although legal in the strict narrow sense, amounted to total disregard and complete undermining of NAFO's endeavours to properly manage and safely conserve the resource.

The EU, refusing any negotiation on the substance of the dispute, went its merry way and established its unilateral quota. Canada was left with the alternative of either caving in and watching its last commercial stock disappear or standing firm on the grounds of necessity.

Canada stood firm!

Much has been made of the events that followed. Shots across the bow when the *Estai* refused to stop at first, boarding by an armed party which is the norm, anyway), the recovery of the net which the *Estai* discarded and which turned out to be undersize and included an even smaller liner, a catch consisting of mostly juvenile fish, fraudulent logbooks, also a hidden compartment with an excessive amount of by-catch, etc., etc.

It proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Spanish fishing fleet had been fishing for everything it could catch, in complete disregard of existing regulations and simple conservation standards. Previous observation and some NAFO inspections had already pointed out these violations to relevant authorities but the EU and Spain whose flag protected these vessels were either unwilling or unable to correct the situation.

No more encounters

Apart from the clean cutting of the warp of another Spanish vessel, the *Pescamaro Uno*, no further physical contact took place on the high seas during the following five weeks, even though the north-west Atlantic Ocean in winter time is not to be compared for comfort to a Swiss lake. Fortunately, there were no accidents.

It proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Spanish fishing fleet had been fishing for everything it could catch, in complete disregard of existing regulations and simple conservation standards.

Canada and the EU eventually entered into serious negotiations and on 20 April 1995 signed an agreement which not only settles the quota allocation question (10,000 tonnes each for Canada and the EU) but, more importantly, establishes, as a pilot project, a scheme that will ensure the presence of an impartial observer on every EU or Canadian ship fishing on the high seas. Many other enforcement mechanisms are also provided for.

The lesson from all of this is quite clear—and leads us back to the UN Conference. With 70 per cent of the world fisheries resources being either fully or overexploited, coastal states' regimes must be reinforced and the lacuna that exists for straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks must be covered.

Freedom of fishing on the high seas, which, under UNCLOS, was already subject to the rights, duties and interests of coastal states, need not be abolished but it must be exercised according to binding, enforceable rules, as agreed by the international community as a whole or by regional or sub-regional fisheries management and conservation organizations.

And that is what one may optimistically predict is about to happen at the UN Conference.

At its recently concluded Fifth Session, the Chairman of the Conference, Ambassador Nandan of Fiji, produced a new revision of a draft agreement that reflects the views of the large majority of participating states and embodies provisions which will ensure that the end product will be a binding instrument, enforceable and subject to sound, practical settlement of dispute procedures. There will be a number of improved rules for the proper management and conservation of the resources, both inside and outside the 200-mile limit such as the precautionary approach, which will serve as useful tools for those responsible for the sustainable utilization of the resources.

Most importantly, the revised text now contains an article of enforcement (Article

21) which, for the first time, attempts to provide reasonable solutions for the kind of problems Canada was recently faced with, i.e. what does one do when agreed rules are disregarded and when the state responsible is unwilling or unable to act? A new text, in the first instance provides, under the umbrella of regional organizations or arrangements, for right of a member state to board and inspect the vessels of any other state whether or not the latter is a member of the regional organization.

Secondly, it recognizes that it is the right of the flag state to intervene and take appropriate action in respect of an alleged violation, but it goes further than existing international law by allowing the inspecting state to act by itself if the flag state does not choose to do so within three working days. At last, we will have the assurance that something will be done when it has to be done and it will no longer be necessary to resort to extraordinary and dangerous measures to solve problems.

Freedom with restraint

There will now be a sixth and last session of the Conference in July/August this year. Hopefully, by then, some of those distant-water fishing states that have so far been reluctant to renounce one iota of their cherished freedom will have come around to understanding that, given the state of world fisheries, that freedom must be exercised with some restraint. As indicated above, the rights of the flag states are not being denied; flag states are only being forced to exercise their rights properly.

Canada, which has been at the forefront of the UN efforts, can look forward to if establishment of new international provisions that will go a long way to enable it to protect and conserve the resources of the sea that are an integral part of its economy. 3

This position has been articulated by Brian Tobin, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada

Shame!

In the recent conflict with Canada, the government of Spain has dishonoured its fisherfolk, charges a women's association

The women's association of Rosa dos Ventos would like to make public its indignation and shame at the Spanish government's "dropping their pants" and grovelling before Canada in the recent dispute between the two countries over fishing for turbot off the Grand Banks.

This was just one more blow against our fishermen who, as always, pay the price for bad fisheries agreements, where the only interests which motivate our representatives are the fat salaries with which they line their pockets at the expense of our fishermen.

Once they have reached an agreement, they seem to say, "Now we can relax, after all the exhausting and endless work in the European Union."

But, in fact, while they pretended to negotiate, the agreement had already been reached.

Our government, as always, was all talk and no action.

The President of the Spanish government said on television that we ought to read the Portuguese press which defended the government's position on the agreement.

We now understand what Senor Gonzalez meant when he said that Portugal was displaying something our government never had—shame and a concern for maritime people.

Senor Almunia, as overbearing and absurd as ever, has been electioneering and campaigning with those who are opposed to the agreement. Rosa dos Ventos feels that he is aiming for a rapid promotion to the throne of the Minister of Fisheries.

The television image of Mrs Bonino toasting with champagne the 'historic' fisheries agreement will stay in our memories forever. As far as we are concerned, this toast had nothing to do with a good agreement. Instead, it was meant only to cheer the triumph of Canada.

This Association would known to the politicians were toasting their champagne, we had only like to make it that while they success' with water.

But, fortunately, in Galicia, water is abundant and, furthermore, it is pure and crystalline—just the opposite of the gentlemen of the government, whose attitude has cost the Spanish people their dignity. 3

This opinion has been expressed by the directors of Rosa dos Ventos, Spain

Fisheries vs. environment

Liberal economics not the answer

The social conditions of fishworkers are not easily placed on the agenda of industrial fisheries or liberal economics

There is a serious shortfall in information reaching fishing communities in France—and Europe, in general—about the debate over improved resource management to end the present fish stocks crisis.

At the recent UN sessions in New York and Rome (on high-seas fishing and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries), European fishermen were represented essentially by the high-seas fishing lobby and by para-public officials. This partly explains the information shortfall.

Moreover, the social conditions of fishworkers and their families, much aggravated by the crisis, are very inadequately addressed in Brussels, the headquarters of the EU. Although the interests of European fishworkers differ widely, the industrial fisheries lobby and the predominance of issues prescribed by laissez-faire liberal economics are really the main obstacles in any progress towards a more human fisheries policy in Europe.

As regards the use of the 'ecological weapon', it should be discussed with groups like Greenpeace what can be done to:

- promote an environment-development approach, with regard to support for sustainable fisheries—the FAO's Code for Responsible Fisheries could help here—combating pollution and other environmental degradation, etc; positive efforts by fishworkers' organizations should be highlighted
- respect the right of fishworkers' organizations to be represented and get more involved in resource

management and allied debates, including in Europe: how can the issues being discussed during the UN Conference in New York be seen to be meaningful by fishworkers' organizations?

- devise a clear strategy during the rest of the UN Conference with regard to how the EU/ACP fisheries agreements campaign is referred to. This requires inputs into the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements about the issues being discussed in New York and their relevance to fisheries agreements. Support for monitoring of long-distance fishing (in West Africa, South Asia, Klondike, etc) could be appropriate, as well as for setting up regional management schemes (for example, in West Africa), and the distinction should be made between European long-distance fisheries and local fishermen
- do research on the impacts of international trade on fishing effort and the marine environment: would this not show that a precautionary approach for the exploitation of a limited resource requires market regulation (thus countering simplistic liberal allegations that defending a local fishery is tantamount to protectionism)?

This addition to the earlier debate with Greenpeace (SAMUDRA No: 10 & 11, December 1994) comes from James Smith, Charge de Mission, Programme Mer, CCFD, Paris

A long way to go

To raise consciousness on women's problems is not an easy task, as a recent meeting in Spain found out

Women's associations from France, Portugal, Andalucia, the Basque country and Galicia met in Vigo, Spain on 25 and 30 April at an international meeting on the theme 'Support and Responsibility'.

The women resolved to implement an awareness-raising project for the wives of fishermen. They unanimously agreed on the need for more information on their rights and the necessity to raise awareness in society at large about their problems. But they realized that they needed considerable time to get the different participating countries to compile information for this project.

The discussions between fishermen and their wives on their aspirations as maritime professionals elicited different responses in different countries.

In France, the priority was to get better prices for their fish, while in other countries the women demanded superior working conditions, higher wages and safety at sea.


At the meeting, the women condemned the lack of collective action and, most of all, the fear of losing one's job because of protesting against the boatowners. They also expressed concern at the disenchantment and disillusionment spreading among the young people working at sea.

To help meet their aspirations, they relied mainly on women's associations in Galicia and Andalucia, and the Apostolate of the Sea in France. They have also set up unions in the Basque country.

Astonishingly, although a request for consultation was broadcast over the external service of Radio Spain, not a

single response was received from seagoing fishermen. The association Rosa dos Ventos draws attention to this negative attitude, which results not only from the fishermen's fears but also from the obstructive behaviour of their bosses and the captains, who are only concerned with being in the good books of the boatowners.

The wives of fishermen from the Basque country are working with their husbands to help overcome their disenchantment and disillusionment. They are also striving to establish labour laws and collective bargaining rights.

During the recent 'fish war' between Spain/EU and Canada, the women agreed to encourage reflection among fishermen on fishing grounds and the need to respect them. The international meeting at Vigo also expressed its support to the Spanish fishing fleet by participating in the demonstration held in Santiago de Compostela to protest the agreement with Canada. 

This piece is by Ana Roman Rodriguez of Rosa dos Ventos, Spain

Whose seas? Whose freedom?

The UN Conference has had several positive outcomes, but could have gone further in its recommendations

Supporting Dutch trading and fishing interests in the 17th Century, *Mare Liberum*, wrote Grotius. Little did he realize that his doctrine of the 'freedom of the seas' would eventually become the norm in international law for over three and a half centuries.

The principle of freedom of the seas, however, began to be dismantled with the Second World War. This process was almost complete when the Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) allowed for the creation of an exclusive economic zone of up to 200 nautical miles, under the jurisdiction of the coastal state.

Although the high seas, as per the Convention, were open to all states, the right to fish in the high seas was subject to the duty to co-operate in the conservation and management of living resources by all states concerned.

Several problems were perceived for high-seas fisheries, especially regarding straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. Straddling stocks refer to fish that move both within and beyond areas under national jurisdiction. The most well-known example is the Atlantic cod in Canada, which was sustainably harvested for hundreds of years, before getting devastated by 40 years of bottom trawling.

Highly migratory stocks are pelagic fish that migrate between areas under national jurisdiction. The most important example is various species of tuna.

The problems in high-seas fisheries spring essentially from unregulated fishing, overexploitation, excessive fleet size, re-flagging of vessels to evade

controls, use of non-selective gear, unreliable databases or lack of co-operation between states. These issues prompted the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to call for an inter-governmental conference under the auspices of the UN to promote effective implementation of the provisions of UNCLOS on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

The conference, called the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, has already held five gruelling sessions, from July 1993 to March-April 1995. The final session will be held at New York in July-August 1995. The Conference, in the words of Chairman Satya Nandan of Fiji, has achieved broad consensus on almost all its provisions and an Agreement is expected to be signed at the final session.

The draft Agreement, within the framework of rights and duties of states as specified in UNCLOS, attempts to further define and develop the duties of flag and non-flag states in the high seas.

Given the urgency expressed by several coastal states, the Conference has been concerned with developing effective and better management measures for the long-term conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

Interested parties

The major interested parties at this Conference are the coastal states and the distant-water fishing nations. The former group, which is the largest, is led by Canada and the latter, comprising the European Union (EU), Japan, China, Korea and Poland, is led by the EU. While the first wants greater control on high-seas fishing, the second group is quite averse to any

control on fishing activities by the non-flag states. According to the chairman's closing statement, the draft agreement creates three essential pillars.

First, it provides for principles and practices on which better management of stocks should be based. Second, it tries to create a mechanism to ensure that conservation and management measures adopted for the high seas are adhered to, complied with, and not undermined by those who fish in those areas. And third, it provides for peaceful settlement of disputes.

Towards the first end, the Agreement seeks non-conflicting conservation and management arrangements, based on a precautionary approach, both within and beyond the areas under national jurisdiction, by coastal states and distant-water fishing nations. It stresses the importance of collecting relevant data and information.

The principles and practices for better conservation and management also include the development and use of selective, environmentally safe and cost-effective fishing gear and techniques.

Additionally, they include the elimination of overfishing and excess fishing capacity, as well as the enforcement of conservation and management measures through effective monitoring, control and

surveillance mechanisms. The draft Agreement recognizes that better management of stocks is the responsibility of all states, irrespective of jurisdictional considerations. It, therefore, advocates the setting up of sub-regional and regional fisheries management organization or arrangements. For effective enforcement of management measures, the draft Agreement also makes provisions for action by non-flag states.

Further, the draft Agreement attempts to recognize the right to board and inspect vessels by non-flag states in support of sub-regionally and regionally or globally agreed conservation and management measures.

By giving enforcement powers to both flag and non-flag states, the Conference hopes to achieve better effectiveness - and compliance with these measures. The draft Agreement seeks to fundamentally tackle the issue of conservation and management of the living resources of the high seas. The Conference agreed, therefore, to adopt relevant provisions of the Convention for peaceful settlement of disputes under the draft Agreement.

First such negotiation

Significantly, this is the first major international treaty negotiation in fisheries after the world community realized that, contrary to past optimism, the marine fisheries resources are indeed

quite limited in quantity and vulnerable to excessive fishing pressure.

The draft Agreement does not leave anything to chance. Indeed, it shows a sense of urgency by firmly incorporating a realistic time frame for the implementation of conservation and management measures.

One salient aspect of the draft Agreement is the precautionary approach. The “absence of adequate scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures”, notes the draft. This is a major departure from current practices in fisheries management.

With new or exploratory fisheries, the draft prescribes conservative measures. According to this prescription, the further development of a fishery should be attempted only if data warrants it.

The draft also goes against the conventional principle of the traditional flag state—that on the high seas only flag states have jurisdiction over vessels. The draft Agreement grants enforcement power to non-flag states.

Although there is broad agreement on the problems of conservation and management, disagreement remains on possible enforcement measures by non-flag states. Japan, for example, has taken strong exception to the right to board and inspect vessels.

A balance is yet to be struck between the rights of the flag states and enforcement by non-flag states, should the flag state express reluctance or unwillingness to take action against their vessels for violating regionally agreed measures.

The draft Agreement also makes unprecedented provisions to exclude non-member states from fishing in areas of the high seas under regional and sub-regional entities.

In order to prevent non-members of sub-regional and regional fishery management organizations or arrangements from undermining management measures, the Agreement

forbids such states from allowing their vessels to operate in fisheries that are subject to conservation and management measures under this Agreement. In other words, only members of regional and sub-regional organizations and arrangements can allow their vessels to operate in areas under the jurisdiction of such organizational arrangements. This would also encourage states that do not have any sub-regional or regional fisheries organization, especially from the South, to think of establishing such mechanisms, irrespective of their fishing capabilities on the high seas.

Non-members with proven fishing capabilities on the high seas will have to continue their fishing activities in areas of the ocean that are not under any regional or sub-regional management authority.

All national and international NGOs who applied for accreditation to the Conference were granted permission to participate in all the sessions. The NGOs represented a variety of interests, from environment and fishworker to development and industry.

NGOs from both the North and the South worked together and showed a healthy understanding and greater concern for one another's perspectives and priorities.

The draft Agreement further allows NGOs opportunities to participate in meetings of sub-regional or regional fisheries management organizations or

arrangements as well as timely access to information from such bodies.

The fishworkers' organizations from the South can feel happy with the outcome of the Conference. Many of their concerns about protecting access to resources, laxity of flag state responsibility, over-capitalization and overfishing, non-selectivity of fishing gear and techniques have been addressed to some degree.

For instance, on the special requirements of developing states, the Agreement underscores "the need to avoid adverse impacts on and ensure access to fisheries by subsistence, small-scale, artisanal and women fishworkers as well as indigenous peoples in developing states" while establishing conservation and management measures for straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

The Article on General Principles also includes a new paragraph on "taking into account the interests of artisanal and subsistence fishers" while giving effect to the duty of the states to co-operate in accordance with the UNCLOS. It also includes the need to "promote the development and require the use of selective, environmentally safe and cost-effective fishing gear and techniques...

A new paragraph in Article 20 on international co-operation in enforcement could also help several coastal fishing communities dependent on highly migratory stocks like tuna. They could expect redressal for violations by flag state vessels who engage in unauthorized fishing within their national waters.

This paragraph makes it obligatory for the flag state to take action against such vessels at the request of the coastal state, and also to co-operate with the coastal state in taking appropriate enforcement action. The flag state may even have to authorize the coastal state to board and inspect such vessels on the high seas.

The General Principles of the draft Agreement advocate the elimination of overfishing and excess fishing capacity. These are important matters for artisanal fishworkers in the South, who are

concerned with the re-deployment of fishing vessels from the North to the South.

However, the draft Agreement does not call for the elimination of non-selective fishing gear and techniques. This is in spite of common knowledge about how bottom trawlers were responsible for the dramatic collapse of cod stocks in the Grand Banks.

Further, the draft does not make any mention of safety and working conditions on board fishing vessels. Attempts to include provisions to fix responsibility for this on the flag state were turned down by the Chair on the ground that these are precincts of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

The legitimisation of regulatory regimes by all stakeholders is important for the law to be effective. Making, or reiterating, provisions to protect workers' rights would greatly enable legitimacy of the regulatory framework for fishworkers. After all, they are indeed major stakeholders in any fishery of the world.❸

This analysis is by Sebastian Mathew, executive secretary of ICSF

The NGO statement

Several NGOs feel that they should not be denied access to the decision-making in the FAO process

A number of NGOs present would like to make a statement in addition to the report of the NGO/FAO Consultation. We would like to re-emphasize our strong disagreement with the view put forward by a few organizations that NGO access should be restricted. These organizations appear to be associated with, or represent, the interests of large vessel owners and other companies involved in the industrial sector of the fishing industry.

We would like to remind Ministers that the 1984 FAO Strategy Document stated "It is important to involve all groups concerned, including administrators, scientists, and fishermen in the process of formulating and implementing management measures."

Whether at the local, national or international level, we believe that NGOs dealing with fishworkers, environment, development, women, trade union and others need to be fully involved in the decision-making with respect to fisheries conservation and management, development, law, investment and aid.

We would also like to draw the attention of Ministers to our concerns regarding the state of the world's fisheries today. Most major fisheries are fully exploited, overexploited or depleted.

Approximately 17 to 39 million tonnes of fish are caught and discarded annually. The industrial fishing fleets of the world are grossly overcapitalized, heavily subsidized and fishing well beyond the limits of sustainability.

As nations and fleets continue to compete for declining stocks of fish, conflicts will only continue to rise. The recent seizure of a Spanish vessel by Canadian

authorities is only the latest in an ongoing series of clashes at sea.

Artisanal fishworkers, both men and women, are increasingly struggling to maintain or regain their traditional access to coastal resources, protect the environment and to sustainably manage their fisheries. In spite of the fact that artisanal fisheries supply at least half the world's supplies of fish for human consumption, they receive little support or protection.

Marine and coastal areas are being increasingly degraded by land-based sources of marine pollution and environmentally inappropriate coastal development. In particular, the environmental damage and socio-economic disruptions associated with intensive coastal aquaculture for high-value species such as prawns are issues of great concern to our organizations.

We believe that certain fundamental principles must apply to the conservation, management, development and trade in fisheries:

- Governments must recognize the rights and interests of artisanal, including subsistence, fishworkers and their communities as means of ensuring community stability, conservation and the protection of marine, coastal and inland waters
- Fishing must be conducted in a manner that is ecologically sound and socially just, respecting biological, ecosystem and cultural diversity and must be sustainable for both present and future generations

- Access to fisheries must recognize the needs of communities and be based on equitable principles and respect for the environment
- Fisheries must be managed from an ecosystem perspective and be based on a precautionary approach, including the use of more selective fishing techniques and practices
- The role of women in fisheries must be acknowledged, strengthened and reflected at all levels of decision-making
- The protection of the marine and coastal environments from the deleterious effects of any human activity must be made integral to fisheries conservation
- Finally, NGOs must be afforded the opportunity to participate at all levels of decision-making at the national, regional and international levels. At the international level, transparency and public participation should apply not only to NGO participation in the work of the FAO but to all relevant organizations, including international aid agencies and the multilateral development banks

The problems in fisheries throughout the world are serious and require urgent action. We believe that governments are aware of the problems of overfishing, excess fishing capacity, subsidies, by-catch, waste and discards, over-capitalization, the violation of the rights of fishworkers, the migration of northern fleets to southern countries' waters, the negative impacts of fisheries trade on nutrition, and the degradation of the marine and coastal environments.

What is needed now is the political will to translate concern into action and, through effective policies and public participation, implement fundamental fisheries reforms.

We strongly encourage Ministers to give due consideration to the concerns and the positions of the NGOs expressed in this

statement. With the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, states have a unique opportunity to further elaborate the obligations with respect to fisheries. The drafting of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks provide important opportunities to do so.

Though we believe that some progress has been made on both sets of negotiations, the basic concerns of our organizations and the principles outlined above have been far from fully taken into account. We urge the Ministers to take up these issues in these negotiations and in other relevant negotiations or treaty organizations such as the Biodiversity Convention, the UNEP Conference on land-based sources of marine pollution and other forums.

We conclude by stating that we believe NGOs have the right to participate at all levels of fisheries decision-making and we look forward to further consultation with the FAO and other relevant organizations and agencies at the national and international levels.

This statement was made at Rome on 15 March 1995 on behalf of the following organizations: Bigkis-Lakas (Phillippines), Comite Catholique Contre La Faim et Pour Le Development, Collectif National Des Pecheurs Artisansaux Du Senegal, Confederacion Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile, Greenpeace International, Intermediate Technology Development Group (UK), International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, International Council of Women, Women and Fisheries Network (Fiji) and World Wide Fund for Nature.

Fisheries management

The First World's big bluff

All the rhetoric about efficient global fisheries management hides the fact that the needs of the developing world are neglected

It is now widely recognized that fish stocks all over the world are already overexploited. But it is in the developing nations, whose burgeoning human populations most need food, that the issue is most extreme. It is here that all trophic levels are being targeted, to the extent that too many local people are reduced to receiving remnant biomass for their immediate sustenance.

Consider these indicators I have myself seen: a handful of tiny fish—the entire day's catch—for an artisanal fishing family, ultra-fine mesh nets heaped on the docks of fishing communities, a destitute family pushing a muslin scoop through the shallows, reports of Thai trawlers landing minute mackerel and anchovy suitable only for duck feed.

In such a situation, it is ostensibly to meet these needs that governments and the larger development agencies like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are most actively promoting fisheries development.

Small-scale grass roots initiatives at the local level directed at reducing post-harvest wastage and increasing equitable distribution might well succeed.

Yet, most typically, projects introduce industrialized fleets, supported by large-scale export-oriented infrastructure, to exploit the deep waters, supposedly beyond the capability of artisanal and small-scale local fishers. India's new deep-sea policy is just one recent example.

Frequently, the deep-water stocks are non-existent or insufficient. So the industrialized fleet encroaches on the already overexploited fisheries of the

local fleets. Shrimps often become the target species and the concomitant large by-catch has both direct and indirect impacts on the stocks exploited for food and livelihood by local fishers to the detriment of their communities.

For at least the last 15 years, the literature on fisheries development, reports and critiques by consultants, academics and practitioners of global repute—indeed, in some cases even the funding agencies own publication—shave attested to the failure of these processes to meet the nutritional and livelihood needs of the poorest.

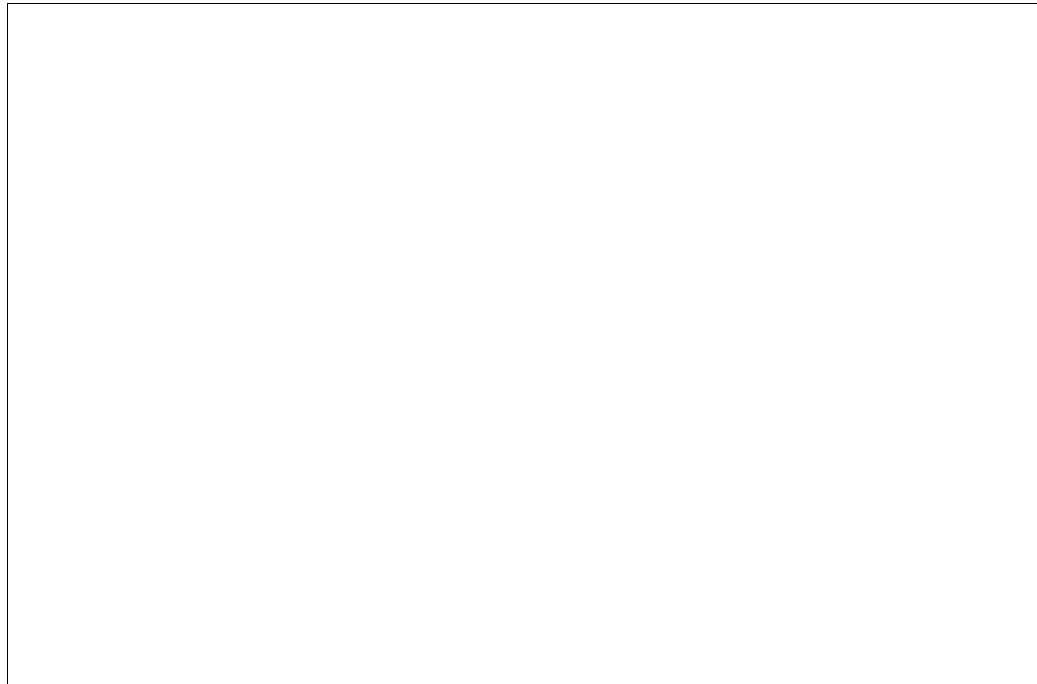
Yet, despite this and despite the growing awareness of the crisis in world fisheries, new fleets, ports and infrastructure are still being built. Bigger, more powerful more sophisticated vessels, with vastly increased fishing power and capacity, are still being designed, built and launched.

Specialist fisheries ports—in Ethiopia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan, to cite just some countries—are being constructed.

Large-scale infrastructure projects, such as canneries, processing plants or cold storages are planned or coming on-stream in Ghana, Bangladesh, Micronesia, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and elsewhere to facilitate export oriented growth. This is despite existing facilities in Thailand and Indonesia, for instance, operating well below capacity.

Overdevelopment

Such development aggravates the existing problems of overcapitalization, overcapacity and overfishing. Yet the governments and agencies responsible attribute this not to overdevelopment but to a problem of open access. The solution



they advocate is the privatization of capture fisheries.

Indeed, as a conditionality for fisheries assistance, the World Bank is promoting privatization, in the form of individual transferable quotas (ITQs), as practised by the New Zealand fisheries management.

Yet, in New Zealand, it is becoming increasingly apparent that this form of management only enables those with the greatest market power to gain control of the fisheries.

Now just three companies control more than 60 per cent of the quota and local fishers and communities have tended to lose their autonomy. The rapid trend toward collapse of orange roughy stocks demonstrates that ITQs are no more conservative than other forms of management.

Clearly, the persistence of fisheries development projects and programmes in the face of widespread failure shows that the real concern is not about redressing poverty and malnutrition in the developing nations nor is it really directed at conservation.

Indeed, the recent squandering of millions of dollars on a high-profile Annual General Meeting for the Asian Development Bank with its governors enjoying the luxury of limousines and

posh hotel accommodation in Auckland, demonstrates that poverty and malnutrition are the least of their concerns.

With global fish resources declining, fisheries development will no longer increase the catch significantly. Rather, it will shift its allocation and distribution.

The prime objective of fisheries development is therefore to facilitate the access to the resources by the beneficiaries of large-scale development, national business tycoons and transnational interests.

The stated objectives and calls for economic efficiency and privatization are merely a legitimization of this process. The beneficiaries will be the wealthier consumers of the US, Europe and Japan, while the poor of the developing nations still face increasing malnutrition and deprivation. ♣

This piece is by New Zealand-based environmental fisheries consultant Leith Duncan, who has recently completed a review of fisheries development literature for the Greenpeace International Fisheries Campaign

News Round-up

Wives talk

Several Women, most of them wives of fishermen from **Ireland**, the UK and the **Netherlands**, gathered at Plymouth on 16 December 1994 to discuss the future of fisheries and fishing communities in Europe. According to Cornelia Quist of the Netherlands, who took part in the workshop, the women criticized the narrow outlook of policy-makers who see only the economic aspects of fisheries, for getting that most fishing units are community-bound family enterprises. The women also decried the tendency to portray fishermen as enemies of the environment. Their efforts at more sustainable fishing practices have been thwarted by government policies, the women pointed out.

In the red

Government, in another part of the world, is propping up big business. The government of **Galicia, Spain** is thinking of subsidies to bail out Pescanova the huge Spanish fishing company, one of the world's top five fisheries TNCs. The

leading Spanish daily *El Pais* recently reported the company's financial trouble and how it is deep in debt, to the tune of US \$285 million. Pescanova has 140 fishing vessels in 1\joint ventures in 20 countries, such as Mozambique, Namibia, Australia, South Africa, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and France.

How to be heard

Transnational character of a different sort was evident in March at the first Atlantic Canada conference on women and fisheries, reports Chantal Abord-Hugon from **Prince Edward Island, Canada**.

Seventy participants, including women from the three maritime provinces of Canada and others from Labrador and the eastern US, shared their experiences on how to make women's voices heard in the world of fisheries.

At the end of gathering, most of the women realized how similar were the problems facing their sisters around the world. They felt they are not alone in facing social justice.

"In the long term", says Chantal, "coastal communities and fishworkers' organizations will be strengthened when women are more involved in decision-making and the building of community alternatives". The encounter was supported by the Cooper Institute and

OXFAM-Canada/Project Acadie.

...And be briefed

Another prominent institute, Panos, based in **London**, has just published a briefing paper called: 'Fish: a net loss for the poor'. It is part of a series meant to aid informed debate on issues of environment and development. Designed especially for the media, the briefing lists recent and forthcoming UN

conferences on fisheries and also highlights key facts on fisheries, in addition to suggesting local angles for fisheries stories.

Watery ranches

Angling to raise the total quantity of farmed fish production, the industry in **Australia** is fast turning to 'ranching'. Southern bluefin tuna, almost exclusively caught from the ocean until five years ago but now getting harder to find, are being ranched in south Australia to the annual value of over Aus \$50 million

Juvenile fish are caught in the world, put in pens, fed for four to nine months and harvested as huge, metre-long specimens. These fetch nearly Aus

\$1,500 each or Aus \$50,000 a tonne. The Japanese are the main buyers.

Salmon-friendly

Will American consumers buy the idea of salmon friendly dams? That is the hope of the National Marine Fisheries Service of the US. It recently issued two 'biological opinions' meant to protect badly depleted stocks of north-west Pacific salmon. The idea is to get the Columbia River hydroelectric power dams to generate less power as well as ensure greater protection of salmon habitat. Fisheries Service officials told reporters that this two-pronged effort would make the hydropower system more fish friendly. Three stocks of Snake River salmon are listed as endangered.

Fishy lyrics

Far from endangered are the songwriters of **Newfoundland** who,

true to the culture of Canada's poorest province, sing off their troubles. The collapse of the cod fishery has inspired then to come up with lyrics which talk of the social effects of the destruction of cod stocks.

Songs like 'Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary'S and 'The Fisherman'S Lament' help Newfoundlanders cope with the tragedy of the obliteration of a way of life that sustained the

province for centuries. Peter Narvaez, a folklorist and musician at Memorial University, says that for every artist who has put out his own song on a cassette, there could be eight or 10 more people who have made up their own songs and simply sing for their own pleasure or for the family and neighbours.

Fast in protest

No Pleasure came their way as fishermen in India agitated against the government's policy to encourage joint ventures in deep-sea fishing.

To pressure the government to rethink its priorities, Thomas Kocherry, convener of the National Fisheries Action Committee

Against Joint Ventures, went on a protest fast in Porbunder in the state of Gujarat.

The government has since invited the committee for talks. As a result, the activists announced that they were suspending their agitation but made it clear that it was only a temporary withdrawal, to give the government a chance to prove its commitment to the traditional artisanal sector.

Blockade blues

Commitment to fishermen in south **Lebanon** has come from the Lebanese government in the form of financial assistance to

help them recover from the economic losses due to the Israeli blockade of south Lebanon ports. Fishermen in Tyre, Sidon, Surfenda and other port cities have got this aid, the equivalent of US \$120 per single fisherman and US \$250 per married one. The month-old embargo imposed by Israeli naval units has forced over 1,800 fishermen to stop working.

Trying to agree

Working to ease tension between **Vietnam** and **Thailand** is a joint fisheries committee of the two south-east Asian countries which hopes to come out with a 'Common control system'. The Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister, Vu Khoan, said that Vietnam has agreed to end the violent attacks on Thai fishing vessels by armed Vietnamese boats.

Thai fishermen have often been arrested and badly treated for violating Vietnamese waters, especially around Vietnam's southern coast. Thailand has long asked Vietnam to abide by international norms when seizing vessels and arresting crew. Both countries have also agreed to launch a one-year joint survey of maritime resources by their fisheries departments and the South-east Asian Fisheries Development Centre.

Tidy 3-D

Catchy is the apt way to describe the cover of a slim new publication from the UNEP Environment Library. Titled 'The Impacts of Climates on Fisheries', the well-designed and readable book features a glossy cover of a shoal of coloured computer-generated images of fish. Held close to the eyes and then slowly moved away, the fish appear to float in space at different distances in a three-dimensional effect.

The book, whose text is written by Michael Glantz, makes an integrated assessment of the potential implications of climate change and variability on fisheries and on the societies that depend on them. Continuing the creativity displayed on its cover, the book introduces the catchy term, 'seacosystems', for the marine environment.

Victoria defiled

Environmental concerns prompted the Journalists Environmental Association of **Tanzania** (JET) and the London-based Panos Institute to join forces to enlarge the public debate on the problems facing Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh-water body in the world, shared by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Sewerage, industrial and agricultural wastes and siltation from massive clearance of forests have been polluting Lake Victoria's waters for a very long time.

The journalists spent a month researching the problems of the lake and writing reports based on their analyses. They finally presented

their findings to an audience of policymakers, representatives of the lakeshore communities, NGOs and others concerned about the future of Lake Victoria.

Helpful Survey

A recent survey from the OECD reviews the status of fisheries in the richer countries, reports Brian O'Riordan from the UK.

The review contains statistics and reports from member countries, including information on production, processing and marketing, and international trade. OECD comprises 21 coastal states, including 13 EU countries and major fish producers like the US, Japan, Iceland, Canada and Norway.

The review highlights the need to continue a policy to reduce fishing effort and notes that fishermen's income levels can be maintained only through structural adjustment.

Regarding effort reductions in member countries, the report notes that between 1985 and 1992, the number of powered boats in Norway dropped by 31 percent, in Denmark by 22 percent, in France by 44 percent, and in Spain by 26 percent. However, the OECD countries maintained their share of the catch with 15 million tonnes in 1992.

[The] vast surface [of Conception Bay] is completely covered with myriads of fishes...all actively engaged either in pursuing or in avoiding each other; the whales alternatively rising and plunging...; the cod-fish bounding above the waves, and reflecting the light of the moon from their silvery surface; the capelins hurrying away in immense shoals to seek refuge on the shore, where each retiring wave leaves countless multitudes skipping up in the sand.

— from **A History of Newfoundland** by Lewis Anspach, published in 1819



ICSF is an international NGO working on issues that concern fishworkers the world over. It is affiliated to the Economic and Social Council of the UN and is on ILO's Special List of Non-Governmental International Organizations. Registered in Geneva, ICSF has offices in Madras and Brussels. As a global network of community organizers, teachers, technicians, researchers and scientists, ICSF's activities encompass monitoring and research, exchange and training, campaigns and action programmes, and also communications. SAMUDRA REPORT invites contributions and responses. All correspondence should be addressed to ICSF's Madras office.

Published by
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Edited by
SAMUDRA Editorial

Designed by
Satish Babu

Illustrated by
James S. Jairaj

Cover from a painting by
sculptor-painter Alessandro Baronio of Rome

Photographs courtesy of
Brian O'Riordan, ICSF, James S. Jairaj
John Kurien, Irené Novaczek, Centro Josué de Castro

Additional news courtesy of
Fishnews, Greenpeace International

Printed at
Nagaraj and Company Pvt. Ltd., Madras

