



**RISE UP**  
*a blue call to action*

## World Fisheries Day

**On World Fisheries Day, we urgently call on leaders engaged in International and UN negotiations to acknowledge, endorse and actively involve small-scale fishers and fish workers, Indigenous people and local communities within discussions and decisions aimed at restoring a healthy ocean and healthy inland waters.**

**Crucially, this must include establishing transparent and accountable mechanisms that ensure the inclusion and active participation of those groups in meetings, delegations, side-events and agreements as well as working to support their inclusion in the subsequent implementation of the agreements.**

Small-scale fisheries represent at least 40% of the world's fisheries production and 90% of the people working in fisheries-related activities. Small-scale fishing is a vital source of nutrition, employment and income for many of the world's coastal populations, with 45 million women relying on small scale fisheries for their subsistence and nearly 500 million people depending on small-scale fisheries for their livelihood. These livelihoods are now under serious threats from destructive industrial activities, including fishing, mining, oil and gas extraction, pollution, climate change and approaches to conservation incompatible with human rights. Not only are the ocean and all inland waters under siege, but so is the well-being of countless small-scale fishers, Indigenous people and local communities who depend on the ocean for their way of life.

Indigenous peoples, local communities, and small scale fishers play a crucial role in the collective governance, management, sustainable use and conservation of marine, coastal and inland water environments. Their traditional knowledge and embedded management practices are adapted to the social and ecological conditions they operate within and towards the protection of the aquatic resources that sustain their livelihoods and SSF using low-impact gear and practices are essential for marine conservation and to ensure next generation access to seafood. This extensive territories-based knowledge is an integral part of global efforts to achieve sustainable ocean and inland water management and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework approved at the CBD COP15 in 2022 specifies the right of Indigenous people and local communities to participate in an equitable and fair way and the need for free, prior and informed consent when policies, conservation or other actions will have impacts

in their territories and livelihoods. International Action and commitment are urgently required to now implement this commitment.

**Today, as we celebrate World Fisheries Day to highlight the importance of sustainable fish populations in the world, we call for the support of small-scale fisheries, Indigenous peoples and local communities and their equitable participation in the global decisions and agreements related to the marine resources important for their livelihoods and socio-cultural well-being, including the High-Level Event for Ocean Action in 2024 in Costa Rica, the FAO Committee on Fisheries 2024, the CBD COP16, the UN Climate COP29, and the UN Ocean Conference in 2025.**

We recognize the significant changes and strides the international agenda has achieved in promoting the conservation of our ocean and marine and freshwater resources over many years of tireless debates and agreements, several now needing urgent ratification. There is a pressing need to ensure that the global narrative is grounded in the local and national realities, also based on small-scale fisheries, indigenous, local, and traditional communities, extending the tremendous opportunity to drive substantive and transformative change for restoring health to the ocean and implement the recovery and protection measures agreed at international events.

We strongly advocate for the establishment of a dedicated Ocean Action Panel, with a focus on small-scale fisheries, at the UN Ocean Conference 2025 as recommended in the [Ocean & Climate Platform, UN Ocean Conference Civil society consultation report](#). This panel should build upon the [Call To Action from Small-Scale fishers](#) launched in Lisbon at the UN Ocean Conference 2022.

International ocean fora must recognize, protect and secure legitimate tenure rights to marine resources important for the livelihoods and sociocultural well-being of small-scale fishers, indigenous, local and traditional communities and include transparent and accountable mechanisms that guarantee the inclusion and active participation of those groups at the meetings, delegations, side-events. Additionally, efforts should be directed towards facilitating their active involvement in the subsequent implementation of these agreements.

**We stand ready to collaborate with world leaders and institutions to fulfill these requests, with the aim of safeguarding the ocean and inland waters, their invaluable resources, and the communities who rely upon them. Together, we can strive for a future where the ocean and freshwater are a source of equitable, sustainable, and shared prosperity for all.**

**RISE UP in support of RISE UP Small Scale Fishers Cluster  
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The endorsers of this letter comprise both RISE UP members and supporting organizations.



## **Signatories Names and Organizations:**

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