



Statement calling for attention to enhancing and developing mechanisms for effective engagement of fisherfolk and other stakeholders in regional fisheries governance

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) and the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) thank Member States and the Secretariat for the opportunity to participate in this technical meeting of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) held on March 25-26, 2019 in Barbados on the process for strengthening regional fisheries governance.

We appreciate the call made by Antigua and Barbuda during this meeting for attention to co-management given that this is a central part of policy and practice in the CARICOM region.

We recognise and commend existing commitments, policies and practice of Member States for effective engagement of fisherfolk and other stakeholders in fisheries governance and management, including through:

- international commitments of Member States, including to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the FAO Small Scale Fisheries Guidelines;
- regional policies that support participatory approaches, such as the CARICOM Common Fisheries Policy;
- existing sub-regional and regional processes to engage fisherfolk and other stakeholders, such as the involvement of the CNFO in the Fisheries Forum of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and implementation of the CLME+ Strategic Action Plan via the Civil Society Strategic Action Plan (C-SAP);
- national policies, plans and practices that facilitate and support meaningful involvement of fisherfolk and other stakeholders as partners in decision-making and stewardship of fisheries resources, including co-management of coastal and marine resources; and
- use of local knowledge within the scientific information which drives management decisions.

We note that mechanisms exist for engagement of non-state actors in regional and international fisheries governance processes, including in Regional Fisheries Management Bodies, and research has been conducted and recommendations developed regarding stakeholder participation. We can learn from these. However, we note the possibility to enhance our ambition in developing meaningful mechanisms, appreciating that participatory approaches need to be deeply embedded in addressing the complexity of fisheries governance and impacts on local livelihoods and economies in this region.

We further note the expertise, experience and commitment of CANARI in collaborating with and supporting governments and inter-governmental agencies with developing policies, plans and governance processes and building capacity for effective engagement of stakeholders in natural resource governance and management in the Caribbean islands.

We are concerned that the farther away fishers are from decisions made, the greater the negative impacts are on small scale fisheries and livelihoods of fishers and their communities. We emphasise that management measures must be in context and should not use a "one size fits all" approach.

We would therefore like to recommend, and indeed urge, that **the current WECAFC process towards strengthening regional collaboration includes specific attention to enhancement and development of mechanisms for effective engagement of fisherfolk and other stakeholders.**

We note that such mechanisms would include encouragement of, support for and facilitation of:

- effective participation as observers in regional decision-making meetings;
- effective participation in scientific and technical committees and working groups;
- participation in national delegations;
- capacity building, including via preparatory meetings and cross-regional exchanges, to facilitate effective engagement and voice;
- national dialogue and engagement to facilitate effective input into regional decision-making processes.

CNFO and CANARI stand willing to work in partnership with Member States to facilitate discussion and develop recommendations on mechanisms for effective engagement of fisherfolk and other stakeholders as preparation the 17th WECAFC meeting and discussions beyond this towards strengthening regional collaboration.

Joint Statement by CANARI and CNFO made at the Special Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) held March 25-26, 2019 in Barbados