



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

Leveraging human rights and gender equity to achieve SDG14

1 July 2022, 14:30-15:45, Side event room 1, Altice Arena

Organized by: The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), Women in Ocean Science and The Commonwealth Blue Charter

Background on the event

The roundtable discussed the human rights and gender equity dimension of fisheries and aquaculture governance, and discussed strategies to enhance sustainability of the sector, while simultaneously enhancing the development and dignity of fishing-dependent communities. The session aspired to unite the UN's SDG 5 and SDG 14 for a discussion that places human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment at the forefront of a healthy ocean, by looking at the fundamental role of women in the protection and longevity of marine ecosystems and their natural capital.

Key Issues discussed

- Small-scale fisheries play a pivotal role in fighting hunger and poverty, especially in low income and food deficit countries. Four out of ten people in the sector are women who face obstacles to enjoy their human rights in the fisheries sector on equal terms with men and boys.
- Women in the fisheries sector have an important role, especially in post-harvest activities but also as fishers. This was emphasized and exemplified by two women leaders from Fiji and Cote d'Ivoire, stressing that the visibility, inclusion and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes in fisheries is needed and can lead to immense positive changes to ensure food security and poverty eradication
- Women in ocean science also remain underrepresented, particularly in decision-making positions. The [Gender Equity in Ocean Science report](#) supported by Canada calls for better opportunities in ocean science for women in order to achieve sustainable ocean governance
- To date stakeholders involved in the fisheries sector do not apply a human rights lens. International human rights standards, the [UN SDGs](#) and the [UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights](#) are instruments for States and companies to apply a human rights based approach and to promote, protect and respect human rights in the fisheries and

aquaculture sectors. A number of [tools, guidance and reports by the DIHR](#) document and can support actors in applying human rights in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

- The recent WTO agreement to ban harmful fisheries subsidies is a huge achievement. However, more is to be done to curb overfishing and prevent that fisheries subsidies negatively impact human rights, particularly of small scale fishers, as discussed in [this paper](#)
- Besides women, another group disproportionately affected in the equitable management of ocean resources are indigenous communities, including the Mapuche community in Chile, that has seen changes in their lives and livelihoods due to the arrival of the salmon industry
- The Lafkenche Law, which creates Marine & Coastal Areas for Indigenous Peoples ([ECMPO](#) in Spanish), gives indigenous coastal communities the right to maintain their traditions and customs and protect the ecosystem while allowing other actors to operate in the area
- Fighting poverty with a focus on human rights and gender equality needs to ensure respect for the environment and climate. Climate change effects, overfishing, environmental degradation and pollution are threatening our freshwater- and marine ecosystems and the resources on which our small-scale fisheries depend on.

Key recommendations for action

- Gender equity should be ensured in decision-making processes in fisheries. Creation of leadership and mentorship opportunities, capacity building, and collection of gender-disaggregated data in the fisheries sector is pivotal, from small scale fishing, fish processing to all issues related to fisheries management.
- International and regional human rights treaties and national laws as well as non-binding instruments exist to ensure that the rights of all people are protected, promoted and respected. In line with such obligations, States and companies should ensure that the rights of those working in all phases of the fisheries and aquaculture value chains or those that are affected by the sectors are safeguarded, in particular the rights of women and Indigenous Peoples.
- Traditional and local coastal economies should be developed and protected alongside global economic development in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. These should co-exist harmoniously, utilizing traditional knowledge of indigenous coastal communities and promoting and advancing cultural interaction.



The session was opened by Helen Ågren (Sweden's Ambassador for the Ocean). Roundtable speakers included: Liisa Peramaki, Director of the ocean Decade Office at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Sille Stidsen, Director Human Rights and Development, Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), Lavinia, district leader in fisheries from Fiji and Micheline, fish processor from Cote d'Ivoire, and was concluded by Patricio Colivoro, Werken (traditional Mapuche leader) from Chile. David Lymer, Senior Policy Specialist for Water and Oceans at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) closed the session. The session was moderated by Nicole Franz, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)