Credits: World Ocean Day/Franck Gazzola

# Ocean Action Panel 5:

## Fostering sustainable fisheries management including supporting small-scale fishers

*An extract of the Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs to Ocean Action Panels Concept Papers*

### About this Paper

This paper is an extract from the report of the Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs to Ocean Action Panels Concept Papers, which summarizes inputs received from stakeholders to a global online stakeholder consultation organized by UN DESA in connection with the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference which will be held from 9 June to 13 June in Nice, France.

The main Report can be found **here**, including links to all responses and all inputs to the ten Ocean Action Panels, as well as detailed background information and a summary.

This paper presents summaries of key messages for Ocean Action Panel 2: Increasing ocean-related scientific cooperation, knowledge, capacity building, marine technology, and education to strengthen the science-policy interface for ocean health.

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# Ocean Action Panel 5:

## Fostering sustainable fisheries management including supporting small-scale fishers

Under this topic, 217 contributions were received, and more detailed inputs are available here.

### Main Challenges

Stakeholders across various sectors identified significant challenges to achieving sustainable fisheries management, with a strong focus on difficulties related to economic barriers, governance, and representation of small-scale fishers. One prominent issue raised was the **lack of financial resources and access to markets** for small-scale fishers, limiting their ability to adopt sustainable practices and improve their livelihoods. The economic gap often forces these fishers into unsustainable practices to meet short-term needs, undermining long-term ocean health and resilience.

A primary concern identified by stakeholders is **inadequate involvement of small-scale fishers** in decision-making processes. In many regions, industrial fishing operations dominate fisheries management, leaving small-scale fishers marginalized despite their crucial role in food security and marine stewardship.

*"Small-scale fisherwomen and fishermen have been absent in spaces where policies that affect their livelihoods, cultures, well-being, and rights are deliberated and decided."* (Village Farmers Initiative)

Another challenge was **overfishing** and the widespread use of unsustainable **destructive fishing practices** such as bottom trawling and high bycatch levels. Overfishing continues to deplete fish stocks, with industrial fishing disproportionately contributing to the degradation of marine ecosystems.

*"Without abundant and sustainable fish populations, the fisheries that depend on them will, inevitably and predictably, decline. Overexploitation of the seas is not an unintentional byproduct but a very deliberate and systematic approach that countries around the world have allowed to happen."* (Blue Marine Foundation)

## Partnership Spotlight

The Coastal Guardian Watchmen integrates traditional Indigenous knowledge with scientific monitoring to manage and protect coastal and marine resources. This initiative trains Indigenous youth in both traditional and modern conservation techniques, empowering them as stewards of their local marine environments. By combining cultural heritage with scientific methods, the program strengthens local capacity for sustainable management and contributes to both environmental conservation and cultural preservation. (Submitted by O'KANATA)

### Transformative Actions

Many respondents emphasized the need for community-based fisheries management that actively involves local fishers in decision-making processes as a transformative action. Co-management systems, where the government, local communities, and other stakeholders collaborate, were cited as highly effective in promoting sustainable practices and resource conservation.

*"A transformative action is to fully integrate the fishing community into every aspect of the fisheries management process. This includes involving community scientists and fishers in monitoring efforts, embracing co-management frameworks, and implementing community-based natural resource management strategies."* (Coral Reef Alliance)

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of expanding **financial services** for small-scale fisheries, such as encouraging **private-sector investment** and establishing a **Global Fund**. These services would help mitigate the financial risks associated with climate change and unpredictable weather patterns, allowing fishers to invest in more sustainable practices. Stakeholders mentioned that the creation of a global fund managed by international bodies like the FAO, specifically dedicated to small-scale fishers, could provide financial support, capacity-building opportunities, and technical assistance.

*"One transformative action that needs to happen is the redirection of subsidies from industrial fisheries towards supporting small-scale fishers, particularly in the Global South. Governments and international bodies should prioritize funding and capacity-building for small-scale fisheries to ensure they can sustainably manage marine resources."* (Greenpeace International)

Many stakeholders advocated for stronger legal frameworks to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and a reform of unsustainable fishing practices. They argue that enhanced regulatory measures, alongside improved enforcement mechanisms, would help safeguard improved enforcement mechanisms, would help safeguard marine ecosystems and ensure sustainable fisheries management. The consultation also includes voices calling for a **ban on destructive fishing practices** such as bottom trawling and deep-sea mining, emphasizing these activities cause irreversible damage to ocean ecosystems.

*"The most transformative thing nations can do is deliver on their promises to end overfishing, particularly through banning practices like bottom trawling that have devastating effects on marine ecosystems."* (Blue Marine Foundation)

## Partnership Spotlight

Since 2020, The PescaData Initiative has facilitated peer-to-peer learning among small-scale fishers in Latin America by allowing them to share bottom-up solutions to local challenges via a mobile app. Currently, over 2,500 users have shared more than 150 solutions, with 84% contributing directly to SDG 14 by creating community marine reserves, launching citizen science monitoring initiatives, and conducting ocean cleanups. The initiative also supports SDGs 5, 8, and 13, empowering local and indigenous communities to implement and scale locally appropriate actions to foster sustainable fisheries. (Submitted by Comunidad y Biodiversidad)

**Innovative technologies** such as satellite monitoring and electronic reporting systems for traceability were proposed by stakeholders as ways to enhance transparency and enforce sustainable fishing practices. These systems would provide more accurate tracking of fishing activities, helping authorities enforce regulations and protect marine resources.

*"Utilizing advanced technologies like satellite monitoring, electronic reporting, and blockchain for traceability... would significantly contribute to the conservation of marine biodiversity and sustainable fisheries."* (Saudi Green Building Forum)


Figure 11: Keywords associated with Ocean Action Panel 5: "Fostering sustainable fisheries management including supporting small-scale fishers" according to stakeholders.
Source: UN DESA

Credits: World Ocean Day, Andrea Marandino