

Barra de Colorado Statement, by the Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen of Costa Rica

We, small-scale artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen, members of the Network of Responsible Fishing Areas & Marine Territories of Life, from 23 coastal and marine communities of Costa Rica, have gathered in the community of Barra del Colorado, in the province of Limón, on the 17th and 18th of February 2025. This meeting was made possible thanks to the support of CoopeSoliDar R.L. and the Towards IPOS (for International Platform for Ocean Sustainability). Representatives from the University of Costa Rica (UCR), Université Côte d'Azur, UTN, SINAC-MINAE, INCOPESCA and the Ministry of Foreign Relations also participated in this meeting.

This initiative is framed according to the Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG-14), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and the FAO Guidelines for Small-Scale Fisheries Sustainability, in the context of food security and poverty reduction.

On this historic occasion, we addressed for the first time the issue of traditional knowledge, science and the generation of public policies related to our territories and activities. In this framework, the Network of Marine Areas of Responsible Fisheries states the following:

1. Recognition and Visibility

We demand the formal recognition of the Network of Responsible Fishing Marine Areas and Marine Territories of Life as a legitimate entity that unites artisanal small-scale fishermen and fisherwomen across the country. We call for the provision of the necessary visibility to ensure that our voices are heard, as we are confronted to development and conservation models that impact our territories without considering our participation or our realities.

2. Connection to the Ocean

We ask for the recognition of our deep and intrinsic connection to the sea, which is essential not only for our food security but also for ocean conservation and our well-being. This bond must be valued as a necessary way of life that for the sustainability of marine ecosystems and the survival of our communities.

3. Rights and Participation

We demand to be recognized as rights-holders, and not only as providers of data and information without the due acknowledgment. We call for our active participation in every decision affecting our fishing areas. Furthermore, we call for the conduction of biological, social, and economic assessments before any decisions impacting our activities are made. These assessments require prior, free, and informed consent from our organizations.

4. Co-Management of Research

We demand to be co-managers of research that affects us, based on principles of shared responsibility, mutual collaboration, and respect. This approach must ensure our primary role in processes that lead to both the improvement of our quality of life and the conservation of marine ecosystems.

5. Respect for Traditional Knowledge

We call for the recognition and respect of the traditional knowledge of people from fishing communities, by developing, together with our communities, protocols and procedures to ensure the respect of the wisdom of sea peoples, including Indigenous peoples, people from local communities, and Afro-descendant groups.

6. Recognition of Knowledge Diversity

We demand the full recognition and valorisation of the knowledge of the ocean and its resources brought by women and youth within our communities. Similarly, we call for our specific needs to be considered, ensuring meaningful and substantive changes in our lives and in the governance of our territories.

7. Dissemination of the Information

It is essential that findings generated through research and investigation processes be returned to our communities. This information must serve as a foundation for developing actions and strategies that enable us to move towards the sustainability of our fishing territories.

8. Establishment of Formal Participation and Governance Spaces to take up the actions and lessons learned from previous participatory processes with different institutions.

We recognize dialogue as a powerful tool for addressing the complex realities we face. Therefore, we urgently call for the establishment of formal participation mechanisms, such as decision-making spaces that could serve as models for other regions where artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen manage our fishing territories in a shared way.

9. Representation at the UN Oceans Conference.

Finally, we ask that our voices and experiences are heard at the next UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France. In this way, the initiative Towards IPOS and other international fora could benefit from our recommendations and guarantee equity in the generation of knowledge from small-scale artisanal fisheries will be ensured.

Drafted at Barra del Colorado, 18 February 2025.