



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Parlamentarios para la Acción Global
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires
برلمانيون من أجل التحرك العالمي

Building Resilience in Small-Scale Fishing Communities in South Africa

Date: 15 June 2022

Time: 1:00PM – 2:00PM (SAST/South Africa) | 7:00AM – 8:00AM (EDT/New York)

Join Zoom meeting [here](#) | Meeting ID: 815 1985 2142 | Meeting passcode: 535452

I. Objective and Introduction to Partner Organizations

In light of the upcoming [UN Ocean Conference](#) in Lisbon, Portugal, from June 27th to July 1st, 2022, this meeting serves the overall purpose of discussing sustainable small-scale fisheries, economic and food security in South Africa. This meeting is following up on the discussions held at the Second Consultative Assembly of Parliamentarians for the Oceans (CAP-Oceans) organized by Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) and hosted by the Parliament of Belize in December 2021.

As a result of Covid-19 and necessary restrictions, small-scale fishers have struggled to adjust to the abrupt changes and constraints in operations. These effects were not uniform, in fact, small-scale fishing communities in some regions were more heavily impacted than others. Today's discussions will serve to bring focus to these often marginalized - yet extremely vital - communities, exploring concrete solutions for increased sustainability of small-scale fisheries.

PGA is the largest non-governmental, multi-party international network of individual legislators with over 1,100 members in 136 parliaments worldwide that informs and mobilizes parliamentarians to advocate for human rights and the Rule of Law, democracy, human security, sustainable development, non-discrimination, and gender equality. PGA is committed to the successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and protection of the oceans.

The Environmental Law Institute (ELI) is a non-partisan “think-and-do tank” focused on environmental law and policy, with particular expertise in ocean governance and small-scale fisheries issues. ELI fosters innovative, just, and practical solutions to enable decision-makers around the world to make environmental, economic, and social progress. Over its more than 50 years of existence, ELI has worked in over 90 countries, assessing laws and policies and identifying gaps, providing recommendations for action, drafting legislation, collaborating with partners, and engaging in consultations with governments, communities, and other stakeholders to assess needs, build capacity, and implement change.

II. Agenda

Building Resilience in Small-Scale Fishing Communities in South Africa

1:00 pm

Introductions and Welcoming Remarks

Chair: Hon. Thembeke Mchunu, MP (South Africa), Member of Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry & Fisheries, *PGA Member*

Dr. David Donat Cattin, Secretary-General, Parliamentarians for Global Action

1:15 pm **Protections for Small-Scale Fishing Communities during and after a Pandemic**

Dr. Xiao Recio-Blanco, Director, Ocean Program, Environmental Law Institute (ELI)

Sofia O'Connor, Staff Attorney, Ocean Program, ELI

1:35 pm **Discussion among all participating Members of Parliament**

Moderated by Hon. Thembeke Mchunu

1:55 pm **Conclusions and next steps**

Chair: Hon. Thembeke Mchunu, MP (South Africa), Member of Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry & Fisheries, *PGA Member*

III. Background

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) provide local communities with a vital source of protein and can be essential to individual and community livelihoods. Because of the social and economic importance of SSF it is necessary to protect access to the fisheries resources on which communities depend on through increased sustainability. SSF provide employment and nutrition to millions of coastal families and communities as well as generating income that contributes to national economies. Approximately half of those employed in SSF are women presenting opportunities for women's economic empowerment. However, SSF are not without their challenges. Rapid technological and societal change has affected traditional practices and jeopardized the small-scale fisher's access to fisheries resources. Decades of overexploitation of the marine environment threaten the ecosystems traditionally harvested by SSF.

South Africa's coastline stretches for 3623km, from its western border with Namibia at the mouth of the Orange River on the Atlantic coast, to the border with Mozambique on the Indian Ocean in the far north-east of the country. The coastline is surrounded by very different ocean systems, which converge at the African continent's base, providing a very unique marine and coastal socioecological environment.

Commercial fisheries on the western coastal shelf are highly productive, while species diversity on the east coast is significant, with both Endemic and Indo-Pacific species. Fisheries play an important role in South Africa. In total, the fishing industry employs an estimated 28,000 people in the primary sector, while more than 80,000 people are employed in down-an upstream fishery industry. The country has always been a net exporter despite having a low per-capita fish consumption (6.1kg in 2016). The fishing industry in SA has experienced major reform to benefit previously disadvantaged persons or groups since the country's democratic transition in 1994, with the principal instrument for this shift being the grant of new commercial long-term fishing rights (10-15 years on most sectors).

Small-scale fishers in South Africa have historically faced numerous challenges, with the fishing industry having developed in the face of discriminatory regulations. Only commercial and recreational fishers were recognized under the 1988 Marine Living Resources Act, making subsistence and small-scale fishing illegal while they continued to exploit resources. This has had a significant impact on the state of the fishery resources over time. The 2012 Small-Scale Fisheries Policy aims to correct historical inequalities and ensure that small-scale fishers are adequately accommodated and regulated. For the first time, fishing rights were distributed in groups rather than individually. The policy also aimed to encourage investment in community organizations that share responsibility for managing fisheries resources sustainably, and addressing the depletion of vital fisheries populations.

According to the National Development Plan 2030, several fundamental issues need to be resolved in the fishing industry. It is critical that fishing rights are commercially feasible and that they are not distributed in a way that jeopardizes compliance. Moreover, according to the plan, economic opportunities must be provided in order to support the livelihood of fishing communities. In June 2021 the Department of forestry, Fisheries and the Environment allocated 15% of the squid catch to the small-scale fisheries sector, marking a historic step forward in the development of the small-scale fishing sector. Prior to this judgement, squid was not among the species available to the 15 co-operative and 600 small-scale fishermen and women who work in the squid-harvesting zones of the Eastern Cape.

The term “co-management” is used in this context to mean that both government representatives and resource users participate in the decision-making and management of natural resources. The advantages of co-management include increased sustainability of a resource (due to the fact that management decisions are made by resource users, those who have best information about what is needed to sustain the resource in a healthy condition), increased compliance (due to the fact that resource users are involved in making of the rules, so they will make rules that they believe are needed), better enforcement (due to the fact that resource users can participate in monitoring and enforcement, and are best at recognizing cases of illegal fishing), and subsequently decreased overfishing. Co-management can be done through various arrangements, including through creation of community cooperatives. With regard to small-scale fishing, in South Africa, there is already legislation that allows small-scale fishing communities to register as cooperatives. However, to date, the number of cooperatives remains relatively low. With additional government support and targeted legislative changes, co-management could prosper and provide concrete benefits to small-scale fishing communities in South Africa.

For additional information, please contact:

Saarah Monawvil, Program Officer, Oceans and Climate Action Campaigns at saarah.monawvil@pgaction.org