I. Introduction

1. A national workshop is being organized towards developing an implementation plan of India’s 2017 National Policy on Marine Fisheries (NPMF) in light of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). Supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and organized by International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), the workshop will be held in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, from 19 to 21 July, 2019. Key CSO/NGO fishery stakeholders from the coastal states and union territories will attend the Workshop. The action points developed at the Workshop, with special emphasis on the vulnerable and marginalized groups, will be presented to the Government of India in New Delhi in September, 2019.

II. 2017 National Policy on Marine Fisheries, India

2. The NPMF was developed through a consultative process involving several stakeholders, including the representatives of fishers and fishworkers, to improve the socio-economic conditions of fishing communities and to ensure the sustainability of marine fishery resources. The NPMF acknowledges that fishers will be at its core. The Policy strives to maintain the small-scale character of Indian marine fisheries in India’s maritime zones, and to provide legislative support to the tenure rights of traditional fishers. It envisions providing guidance to coordinate and manage marine fisheries until 2027.

3. Towards the above, NPMF identifies the management of marine fisheries (including co-management); the development of post-harvest and trade; the protection of the marine environment; improving safety at sea; adapting to climate change and extreme weather events; promoting marine spatial planning and regional cooperation; and improving governance as important issues to be addressed in all maritime zones of India through cooperation and collaboration at all levels. It is to be achieved through combining traditional knowledge and science and through consultation and participation involving all relevant stakeholders, and authorities at various levels, adhering to principles of sustainability and equity. It also draws attention to the social dimension of sustainable fisheries such as enhancing the welfare of fishing communities; the promotion of gender equity in fisheries; and improving the working conditions of fishers and migrant workers.

4. In making fisheries more sustainable, the NPMF recognizes not only the role of binding international instruments such as the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, but also that of non-binding international
instruments such as the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) and the 2014 SSF Guidelines. NPMF seeks to implement the SSF Guidelines and recognizes the importance of a human rights-based approach.

III. 2014 SSF Guidelines

5. The 2014 SSF Guidelines—endorsed by the Thirty-first Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in June 2014—complement the Code. These Guidelines highlight the need to adopt inclusive and integrated ecosystem approaches in the fisheries sector and holistic development of fishing communities, especially in relation to small-scale fisheries management and development. Several elements of the NPMF are in consonance with the SSF Guidelines. The consensus principles of the SSF Guidelines and guidance on addressing small-scale fisheries can be of great value in developing an implementation plan for the NPMF.

IV. Objectives of the Workshop

- Develop long-term and short-term action points for the implementation plan of NPMF, with special emphasis on the vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- Integrate elements of the SSF Guidelines into the implementation plan of NPMF within the framework of a human rights-based approach; and
- Empower fishers and fishworkers, and their organizations by building capacities and raising awareness in the context of the implementation of the NPMF and the SSF Guidelines.

V. Expected Outcome

6. The Workshop will come up with long-term and short-term action points in light of the SSF Guidelines and other relevant national and international instruments and processes from a CSO/NGO perspective toward developing an implementation plan for NPMF from 2020 to 2027. It will be presented to the Government of India in New Delhi in September, 2019.

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