

AOS International Fishing Committee

Ad Hoc Commission on Fishing

Rome, December 4-6, 2003

Conclusions and recommendations

Following a resolution, which was unanimously approved during the XXI AOS Congress in Rio de Janeiro last year, the President of the PCMI with a letter dated June 12, 2003 called for a meeting of an "Ad Hoc Commission on fishing" in Rome from December 4-6, 2003.

The following persons composed the Ad Hoc Commission:

Fr. Bruno Ciceri, Chairman - AOS National Director, Taiwan, AOS Regional Coordinator for East-South-East Asia

Fr. Sinclair Oubre, AOS Port Chaplain, Port Arthur, Texas, USA

Fr. Pierre Gillet, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), Belgium

Mr. Brandt Wagner, International Labor Office Geneva, Switzerland

Mr. Felix Randrianasoavina, AOS National Director, Madagascar

Mr. Jeremy Turner, Chief, Fishing Technology Service, FAO, Rome

Fr. Jacques Harel, AOS, PCMI, Rome

Mrs. Antonella Farina, AOS, PCMI, Rome

In his welcoming address, Cardinal Hamao welcomed all the participants and said that *"we are here to respond in a concrete way to what has been asked by fishermen and chaplains of what AOS can do in a context of pastoral responsibility which excludes no aspect that touches the integrity and dignity of the human being created in the image of God."* He added that we are here to fulfill the mandate of AOS which is the promotion of the spiritual, social and practical well-being of fishermen and their families in collaboration with other Churches, ecclesial communities, agencies and NGO's.

The discussion started with Fr. Bruno Ciceri putting forth the following questions:

What is AOS fishing for: what will be the AOS specific contribution to improve the spiritual and material life of fishermen and fisher folks?

How is AOS going to fish: what kind of structures or institutions should be set up to answer to the needs of fishers and fisher folks?

Who are the fishermen: what should be the composition of the committee and means of financial support for this effort?

During the meeting, information was shared and a global vision of the situation of the fishing industry in all its different aspects emerged:

1. While the vast majority of fishermen are small scale, artisanal, traditional fishermen, from the 1950's to the 1980's, great emphasis was placed on increasing fish production, and most mandatory controls were directed towards the industrial sector, i.e.: the large vessels. Recently, the emphasis has shifted from fisheries

development and production, to an emphasis on fisheries management as addressed in the *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*. Given that the small-scale sector harvests are 50% of the global food fish production, the significance of this sub-sector has received increased recognition and attention from ILO and FAO.

2. The AOS is concerned with the welfare of fishers. The Commission acknowledged that sustainability of fisheries was a prerequisite for the very existence and welfare of fishing communities, and that good sustainable environmental policies were essential. The Commission thus recognized the significance of empowerment and the value of organizing fishermen's associations to ensure access to and control over fish resources.
3. It was observed that advancement of the technical and socio-economic issues of fishermen must be complemented by pastoral care and empowerment of the fisher folk. Achievements in these would be limited in the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the causal factors of poverty and of the real contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty reduction.
4. Many fishermen, particularly artisanal and self-employed fishermen, do not always have a sufficiently strong voice in the making of laws and regulations governing fisheries management and their conditions of work. Past experience shows that whenever fishers are not part of decision-making processes they would not abide by them. Unless fishermen become organized they cannot be part of the process of making laws and regulations and influencing national policy.
5. Women play a vital role in fishing communities they should be given recognition and support.

From this discussion, suggestions were made on how the AOS could contribute to improve the quality of life of fisher and fisher folks:

1. The priority of AOS is to improve the life of fishers and their families, not by transfer and development of technology, which is not its specific role but through the education and empowerment of its local and national leaders and the development of pastoral program.
2. The Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants will continue to promote fishermen's welfare and dignity in conjunction with the Holy See's status as a permanent observer in the UN agencies and other international organizations.
3. The action of this new Committee, through the normal AOS structures, will attempt to emphasize complementarity and collaboration with U.N. agencies, NGO's, unions and other Churches and ecclesial communities.
4. AOS must be in solidarity with fishing organizations, providing moral support, encouragement and proclaiming the dignity and professionalism that is inherent to

the life of fishermen This should be done without usurping the primary responsibility of fishermen themselves and their organizations.

5. Governments have crucial role, their decisions considerably affect the lives of fishing communities. AOS can sensitize the different national governments "*as to the importance of artisanal and small-scale fisheries to develop standards which will ensure decent and productive work for fishermen's employment, income and food security*"(*FAO Code of conduct for responsible fisheries, 6.18*). AOS must find ways through its normal existing structures to encourage national governments to take an active role in ILO/IMO/FAO meetings.
6. Local and national AOS organizations can be of assistance to the ILO during its drafting process of new fishermen's conventions, by sharing information, and by encouraging their respective national governments to ratify these new conventions.

After further discussion a unanimous consensus was reach on the following recommendations, to be submitted to the PCMI for evaluation, approval and implementation.

All the members of the Ad Hoc Commission agreed that is necessary to establish a permanent Committee on Fishing within the structure of the AOS. The members felt that through a permanent Committee, the AOS can better express its pastoral care and play a more important role in supporting and strengthening fishermen's organizations. This pastoral care should be exercised by building links between all those concerned with the improvement of the lives and conditions of work of fishermen and their families, by ensuring that the needs of all fishermen are addressed in relevant local, national and international forums.

NAME:

The Ad Hoc Commission suggests that the new committee be called: "*Committee for the pastoral care of fishers and their families*" or "*Committee for the pastoral care of fishing communities*" or "*Ad hoc AOS Committee on Fishing*" but any other suitable name will be acceptable. In order to avoid confusion with other organization "*Committee on fishing/fisheries*" should be left aside.

COMPOSITION:

The Ad Hoc Commission suggests that the new committee be composed of the:

1. Officer in charge of AOS (PCMI)
2. AOS Regional Coordinators (8)
3. One Observer from both FAO and ILO (2).

Experts and resource persons might be called whenever they are needed and also any other person co-opted by the PCMI .

SCHEDULE OF MEETING:

It was suggested that the first meeting of this committee be held back to back with the Annual AOS Regional Coordinator's meeting starting in 2004. The normal rhythm of the meeting will be annual, with the possibility to have extraordinary encounters.

FUNDING:

It was recommended that the budget of this committee be kept as low as possible. The name of several agencies such as ITF – Trust Fund, CCFD, Catholic Daughters of America, were mentioned as possible sources of funds to support the activities of the committee.

The Ad Hoc Commission proposes the following vision and mission statement for the future committee:

VISION:

A maritime world in which the rights of fishers and fisher folks are respected, guaranteed and promoted according to the Social Teaching of the Church and the regulations and conventions of international agencies members of United Nations, such as: ILO, FAO and others.

MISSION:

The committee would like to reach out and provide pastoral care to all fishers and fisher folks. While being respectful of local, national, cultural specificity, the AOS mission is directed towards people of all religion, race and ethnic background so that their spiritual and material welfare be addressed and their human and labor rights respected.

The following objectives are established to help fulfill the vision and mission statement of the future committee:

1. Provide spiritual assistance to fishers and fisher folks whenever possible, in forms of liturgical celebrations, catechetical instructions and the administration of sacraments.
2. Fishers and fisher folks should be considered integral part of the local Christian community and should be adequately represented in the parishes and diocesan structures.
3. Raise awareness of the situation of fishing communities throughout the Church and civil society.
4. Particular attention must be given to the families of fishermen. Women should be encouraged to start associations or groups that will offer moral, spiritual and material support to each other. Wherever applicable, special attention should be given to child labor situations. Generally for the promotion of children of fishermen, special programs such as scholarships or educational funds should be established.

5. In maritime countries, especially, seminaries and pastoral training should include regular formation program on maritime matters and apostolate.
6. Information, research and data collection are very important in assisting the committee to acquire a better understanding of the causal factors of poverty. Accurate and first hand knowledge will clarify the contribution of small-scale fishers to food security and poverty reduction and intervene directly on the root causes of poverty and bring improvement in the life and working conditions of fishers and fisher folks.
7. Linking and assisting those in fisheries to collaborate with other sectors, and coordinate their activities to ensure an inter-sectoral and interagency approach.
8. Networking among the different AOS members throughout the world must be encouraged, supported and strengthened.
9. Recognize, define and advocate the rights of fishers to decent living and working conditions and their rights to access to resources. Advocate for a balance, where appropriate in the allocation of resources between industrial and small-scale fisheries.
10. Assist in the development of fishers' organizational capacity, and introduce methods that facilitate their effective participation in policy-making decisions regarding the sector and their conditions of works.
11. Good governance is fundamental to improve the situation of fishing communities. Therefore advocacy for good governance, is to be encouraged especially towards a) inclusiveness (empowerment, decentralization) b) lawfulness (enforcement, legal reform) c) accountability (ensure that governments are answerable and accountable and open to challenge).
12. Ensuring that the concerns of all categories of fisheries be recognized and addressed in all international standards.

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

The following terms of reference are proposed to facilitate the good functioning and the accountability of the future committee:

Under the guidance of the PCMI and in collaboration with its maritime Sector, and taking into consideration the view of the AOS members expressed during the international/national/regional meetings, and in accordance with the objectives as set out by the Ad Hoc Commission and endorsed by the PCMI, the future committee will:

- Provide general and specific guidance to AOS in matters regarding the fishing sector.

- Promote and cooperate in all initiatives in favor of the fishing sector stressing inter-ecclesial and inter-sectoral collaboration through the normal channels of AOS structures.
- Identify, monitor and evaluate activities undertaken at regional and national level, and make recommendations when appropriate.
- Facilitate the exchange of information and networking between regions, particularly on effective strategies employed to achieve objectives.
- Report regularly (at least once a year) on its activities to the PCMI .

CONCLUSION:

All the participants of the Ad Hoc Commission are very grateful to the PCMI for its decision to convene this meeting and for the trust placed in them. While hoping that they have achieved the goals that were set out, they stated their willingness to continue supporting and cooperating with any future initiative in this sector.