

Latin America and the Caribbean - Stronger Together

EDF at [4WSFC](#)

Uniting science, community and politics

Within the framework of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 (AIPAA 2022) declared by the Organization of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the 4th World Congress of Small-Scale Fisheries ([WSFC](#)) in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in the city of Mérida, Mexico from 25 to 27 October with the motto ***Stronger Together: Rebuilding sustainable resources and viable communities***. This congress is one of 5 events held in Asia, Europe, North America, and soon Africa.

Latin America and the Caribbean represents about 7% of world catches with a volume of more than 14 million tons, generating thousands of jobs and playing a fundamental role in health, food and nutrition, the eradication of poverty, culture, and the well-being of thousands of communities. However, many of these fisheries face great threats such as illegal fishing, overfishing, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

The Congress represented an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences and to link different actors in small-scale fishing, from academics, scientists, fishermen and women to professionals, decision makers, non-governmental and governmental organizations to share, discuss, propose solutions to the challenges they face and envision joint actions towards sustainable fisheries and prosperous communities resilient to climate change.

The 4WSFC LAC regional congress was organized around six main themes, taking into consideration the interrelationships between the environmental, social, cultural, governance and economic components associated with artisanal fisheries. The sessions were through presentations and discussions, with topics related to capacity building and assets, communities and voices, socio-ecological resilience, socio-economic viability, transdisciplinary knowledge, and value chain.

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) had a valuable contribution to the congress, facilitating the participation of different partners and local actors from Belize, Mexico, Cuba, Peru and Chile. Leaders of artisanal fisheries were able to participate from presenting their experiences in fisheries management adaptive to climate change, monitoring their fisheries with the use of technology, the use of different fisheries management tools such as [FISHE](#), to sharing their experiences in capacity building and knowledge through learning networks for artisanal fishing as a multi-stakeholder strategy for the sustainability of the fishing sector.

EDF and its partners participated in three plenary sessions on capacity building, socio-ecological resilience, and value chains in addition to four panels on Collaborative Development of Climate Change Resilient Multispecies Fisheries Management in the Caribbean and Latin America, Learning Networks for Artisanal Fisheries: Connecting Science and Conservation with Communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, Advisory Committees on Mexico, and the grouper management plan in Yucatan.

The voices of the fishermen about their inclusion

The 4WSFC LAC Congress, as part of a series of congresses in different regions of the world, was planned to be held in English. Hundreds of participants from the countries of Mexico, Cuba, Belize, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Brazil and others had traveled to attend the long-awaited congress and were surprised that the presentations were mostly in English with limited interpretation.

Julio Chamorro, an islander born in the Juan Fernández Archipelago off the coast of Chile, marked a milestone in Congress by taking the floor and saying, "I came to learn and I feel that I am losing a lot of the information because we do not understand." The majority of attendees were Spanish speakers and, after extensive discussion, the primary language for presentations and sessions were switched to Spanish.

Overview of EDF's involvement at the 4WSFC

For EDF, the congress meant a great opportunity to contribute to the objectives of the International Year of Fisheries and Aquaculture, contributing to the [pillars of IYAF 2022](#) through the exchange and dialogue of experiences, challenges and solutions , strengthening the capacities of artisanal fisheries actors, promoting spaces for them to be heard for public policy proposals,

In order to strengthen the management and governance of artisanal fisheries in Latin America and the Caribbean, EDF facilitated the participation of fishermen leaders from Chile and Peru who shared their experiences and challenges in their fisheries as well as the participation of researchers and professionals from Belize, Cuba and Mexico who shared the participatory processes of fisheries management resilient to climate change.

EDF participated in two plenary sessions on **strengthening capacities and assets** ([Panel 2: Institutional responses to strengthen the capacities and assets of small-scale fishing communities](#)) and on **strengthening socio-ecological resilience**.

Additionally, **two artisanal fishing leaders invited from EDF** participated in the **Plenary on strengthening the Value Chain**, with **Zoila Bustamante** from Chile and **Carlos Chapilliquen** from Peru as part of the panelists from the fishing and aquaculture sector.

Zoila Bustamante Cárdenas is president of the National Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen of Chile, the most representative organization at the national level in the field of

Fishing CONAPACH, and president of the Latin American Union of Artisanal Fisheries. Carlos Chapilliquen is president of the Fishermen's Guild from Cabo Blanco in the Piura region of Peru. He has been president of the union for 10 years and manages different projects within the artisanal fishing sector.

Likewise, EDF co-hosted the **opening cocktail of the Sabor Marino event** through which it connected with chefs and suppliers. There were opening remarks by Nadia Olivares from EDF Mexico and Zoila Bustamante, bringing together fishermen and representatives from different countries in the region (Mexico, Chile, Peru, Cuba and Belize), who shared their personal stories of their experience in artisanal fishing and the importance of fishing for food security and nutrition.

Carlos Chapilliquén Panta, fisherman leader of the Cabo Blanco Cove in Peru shares his experience in the Congress

For Carlos Chapilliquén the Congress was “very important for us fishermen because many of us came together and from many countries. It taught us that together we can move forward with our fisheries; we see the problem is not only in Peru but global and this is unfortunate because the species of fish that we have are running out and we can't do anything. I believe this is a team effort where we have to get together with all the scientists and political classes of our countries to be able to move this sector forward since we provide fish to the tables of our beloved Peru.”

“I learned from the experiences that were shared from Mexico, such as conservation areas, something very important that we should replicate in Peru. Here in Peru we don't have conservation areas, so we see that every day fishing is absent and it becomes more difficult for us to carry out our fishing. Our government should support us more since Cabo Blanco is a blessed area with natural fishing banks, but state policy has to be involved to help us care for and conserve our resources and marine ecosystems. We hope that the Peruvian government can take action on the matter and can help us work more on conservation areas. Chile fills us with joy and satisfaction to see their work, they have many conservation areas and protected marine areas that help them to repopulate their areas with fishing. However, the work we do here to conserve our areas is very little. We have trawlers that prey on our sea, and unfriendly piqueras such as bottom net curtains that scare away fishing. We must replicate the work done in Mexico with conservation areas and Chile with marine protected areas. I think that this will help us move forward with our artisanal fishery.”

Events such as the 4WSFC bring together producers and representatives of fishing communities, government institutions, civil society organizations, financial institutions, academia, and other stakeholders interested in strengthening and promoting the sustainability and resilience of artisanal fisheries. IYAFA 2022 and parallel activities such as these are a great opportunity to call attention to the need to implement public policies for the artisanal fishing sector in the region. During this meeting, the important contributions to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Organization were



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emphasized, where artisanal fishing, well managed and regulated through co-management, contributes to a great multitude of these objectives.