

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE ACTING DIRECTOR AU-IBAR, DR NICK NWANKPA
DELIVERED BY MR PHILIPPE OUEDRAOGO**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GABONESE CHAPTER OF AFRICAN WOMEN FISH
PROCESSORS AND TRADERS NETWORK (AWFISHNET)**

27-28 septembre 2021 *Via zoom*

Representative of the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food security

Representative from the Ministry Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food security

President of AWFISHNET

Representative of ECCAS

Representative of COREP

Representatives of the Development and Technical partners

Representatives of women across the country

Distinguished ladies and gentleman

I bring you warm greetings from the Acting Director of AU-IBAR, Dr Nick Nwankpa who for unavoidable reason cannot be with us this morning. It is therefore with a great sense of humility to represent him at this very important national meeting to establish a chapter of AWFISHNET. The Acting Director sends his deep sense of gratitude to His Excellency, the Honourable Minister Biendi Maganga-Moussavo for accepting the call from AU-IBAR to support women in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Women play significant role in the post-catch activities of the fisheries and aquaculture value chain, with 92% employed in the post-harvest activities (processing mainly). The role of women in the fisheries and aquaculture is crucial to food security in ensuring the distribution and availability of fish supplies to households. Women make significant contribution to food security, livelihoods and household incomes in the sector however their contributions are often not sufficiently recognised or adequately considered.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, In recognition of the important role of women and youth as non-state actor, the Hon. Ministers at the 2014 Joint Conference of African Ministers for Agriculture, Rural Development, fisheries and aquaculture recognized this marginalization and

1. Requested ***Member States to promote empowerment schemes for enhancing the roles of women and youth in fisheries and aquaculture development activities including trade, marketing and production'***
2. Requested ***African Union, RECs and Member States to harness the opportunities for small and medium enterprise development by expanding domestic markets for fish, including growing urban demand. The Ministers additionally also urged the AU, RECs and Member States to strengthen the capacity of fish stakeholders along the value chain.***
3. Urge AU, RECs and Member States to facilitate the participation of non-state actors in fisheries and aquaculture decisions making processes

In executing its mandate, AU-IBAR is guided by the PFRS and recently adopted Africa Blue Economy Strategy.

1. PFRS identified the development of women and youth as a policy objective aimed at promoting the inclusion of knowledge-based gender and youth considerations in national policies, laws and plans.
2. The Agenda 2063, aspires ***for African woman to be fully empowered in all spheres, with equal social, political and economic rights.***
4. The Malabo Declaration committed to supporting and facilitating participation of **women and youth in gainful and attractive agri-business opportunities as a poverty reduction strategy.**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, AU-IBAR responded to this calls and facilitated the establishment of the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFishNET) in 2017, with the main objective to contribute to improving the welfare, working conditions and income of women in the fisheries sector (and especially women in the post-harvest sector) within the member states of the African Union.

It is with a great appreciation to recognize all the accomplishments of AWFISHNET since its inception. AU-IBAR has been a strong partner of AWFISHNET and has since supported two meetings of the bureau members in 2018 (Dar es salaam, Tanzania) and 2019 (Abidjan, Ivory Coast). Furthermore selected members of AWFISHNET have been trained in Aquaculture Value Chain and Business Development. AU-IBAR has developed an online platform for AWFISHNET members to interact as a community of practice.

I urge the upcoming President of the national chapter to ensure that her members are part of this online platform for enhanced communication and information sharing among members at continental level. We believe these activities will enhance visibility of AWFISHNET members and create an environment to access investment and trade opportunities at national, regional and continental level.

Through the implementation of Fisheries Governance project phase two (FishGov 2) funded by EU we are supporting ten countries to establish their national chapters of AWFISHNET, Gabon being one of them.

We implore partners present today to support the implementation of the keys agenda of the national chapter of AWFISHNET in order to support welfare of women fish processors and traders as well as enhancing intra-regional fish trade through trade corridors.

However, we apologize for not being physically present to mark our full commitment. Nevertheless, we assure you that the AU-BIRA will continue to provide support to this national section.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, in concluding, on behalf of the Director AU-IBAR, I would like to congratulate People and Government of Gabon for their commitment towards supporting recommendations of our Heads of States and Government and for agreeing to host this important meeting.

I wish you all very interactive discussions and to thank you for your kind attention.