

LETTERS/ France

Dear Friends,
Many of us, from both the North and South, signed a common declaration that was carried in the last number of Yemaya. To be precise, this was as a result of discussions and contacts made in October 2000 at Loctudy, in

France, where women from coastal communities worldwide decided to work together.

It must be remembered that a large number of people have been working for a long time to establish a single body representing fishworkers, capable of applying sufficient pressure to influence decision-makers through their joint pressure and solidarity. It must also be recalled that the Forum called for parity between men and women at all levels and that you, you the women, took this forward. The split that arose at the end of that week in Loctudy, which gave birth to two Forums, must not make us lose sight of the important objectives that we worked on together in the same document.

The women, through their call for unity, have clearly shown how important it is to keep intact the richness of the human and cultural patrimony that was created through these meetings. There was an amazing resolve in all of us to move things forward; networks were established and above all, a solidarity between women to project into, and imagine, the future. We should not get weighed down with this feeling of failure but rather develop a vision that will not be lost in reports of impotence and bitterness.

For the well-being of our communities, we must strongly believe that those of us who wish to continue this exchange of experiences will find the strength to succeed. The pessimists will see the failure of a project to reunite delegates from 32 countries (what a wealth of humanity), as due to too much diversity in culture and technical practices. The optimists have observed that even if it was not possible to reach an arrangement or consensus, at least some awareness was raised. So let's be objective and optimistic.

If Loctudy gave birth to two Forums, nothing should get in the way of them joining forces to undertake collective action on the numerous points on which they agree. Bringing together the two Forums, even if that will take time, is not utopian. However, you, the women, did not need to wait long to understand that and to sign a common motion declaring that you will continue to work together. To this end, it will be useful if women can meet in the coming months. Through the means of Yemaya, we ask you to think about this and to make suggestions on such a future meeting.

Madame Danièle Le Sauce

(President of the Branche Française and Vice President of the World Forum of Fishharvesters and Fishworkers (WFF), e-mail: daniele.le.sauce@wanadoo.fr)