

### In the Hands of the Fishers Workshop #7 Held in Fortaleza, Brazil

The Fishermen's Forum of Ceara, in partnership with the Terramar Institute, the Mangrove Action Project, RedManglar of Latin America and the Rede Brasil realized, from 25 to 29 May 2003, the Conference "Mangrove Wetlands and Shrimp Cultivation - In the Hands of the Fishermen", in which social organizations of the Brazilian coastal communities, non governmental organizations of Ceara and the national and international level, religious entities and institutions for the defense of human rights, scientists and people concerned about human rights and the protection to the coastal ecosystems - mainly the mangrove swamp ecosystem - participated.

The conference provided important reflections about the current situation of the mangrove wetland ecosystems in the State of Ceara, as well as in other Brazilian states and in Latin America, bearing in mind the enormous aggressions to the environment and to the populations that live in the coastal area, facing the recent expansion of the shrimp cultivation activity. This activity, due to its rapid expansion in Brazil, follows a similar path to the one experienced by Latin American and Asian countries: devastation of mangrove swamp areas, empty promises for employment and income generation, and expulsion of the local populations from their important source for survival - the mangrove wetland areas.

Members of several Latin-American organizations and specialists in the mangrove forest issues participated in the event - among them the director of the Mangrove Action Project, Alfredo Quarto, co-organizer of the event. Among the Brazilians, the participation of coastal communities of Ceara were outstanding, as well as the useful dialogue between the communities, other experiences in Brazil (Salinas de Margarida/BA and Penedos/RN) and reported cases of Ecuador, Colombia, Honduras and Guatemala.

It is important to point out that the seminar also discussed, together with the Bank of the Northeast (Banco do Nordeste), public financings for the shrimp cultivation activity in Brazil. At this opportunity, a case study about financing of the shrimp cultivation activity in Latin America by the World Bank was presented by FLACSO (Latin-American University of Social Sciences) representative, Elmer Lopez.

One of the highlights of the conference was the presentation of sustainable alternatives for the coastal communities, as well as the field trip to Jaguaribe, during which the state of the degradation of the mangrove swamps could be verified in that area, especially in Cumbe - a place where the activity grows within the mangrove forest wetland and continues expanding, bearing the risk of threatening the quality of water that supplies the whole city of Aracati.

As a result of the seminar "Mangrove Swamps and Shrimp Cultivation - In the Hands of the Fishermen", three initiatives should be underlined: 1) the creation of RedManglar - Brazil Initiative, a network for the defense of the coastal ecosystems and of community life, organized at the national and regional level; 2) a Motion to be presented to CONAMA (National Council for Environment) supporting the struggle of the community of Cural Velho/Acara for the protection of their living, working and surviving spaces - threatened by the development of shrimp cultivation activity there; and, 3) a document called DECLARATION OF FORTALEZA, in which, among others, an evaluation on the state of the art of the mangrove forest ecosystems in Brazil (above all in the Northeast) is requested, through an inventory of these areas and a detailed study about the growth of shrimp cultivation activity and its impacts. The seminar also demanded a moratorium on new shrimp cultivation activity, because of the serious threats posed by the industry to the mangrove forest ecosystem, considering the many services the mangroves provide, such as fish production (marine and estuarine) and the protection of the coastline.

Signatures:

Fishermen's Forum of Ceara  
Pastoral Council of Fishermen  
Caritas Brazil  
Network for the Atlantic Rainforest  
Redmanglar for the Defense of Coastal Ecosystems and Community Life  
Mangrove Action Project  
Fundecol (Ecuador)  
Asprocig (Colombia)  
Fishermen and Fisherwomen Colony Z21 (Fortim/CE)  
Geographers' Association of Brazil/Section Fortaleza  
PRODEMA/UFC  
Community Jardim (Aracati/CE)  
Fishermen Association of Curral Velho (Acara./CE)  
Project This Sea is Mine (Icapui,/CE)  
ONG Caicara (Icapui,/CE)  
Group the Progress of the Province of Ecuador  
ASPOAN (RN)  
FEDARPROBIM (Ecuador)  
CEAT (Sobral/CE)  
Community Encarnacao de Salinas da Margarida (BA)  
CODDEFFAGOLF (Honduras)  
Association of Seafood Collectors Promar (Equador)  
FUNDECOL (Ecuador)  
Terrazul Institute  
Participation Institute  
Forum for the Defense of the Coastal Zone of Ceara  
Forum for Environment of Ceara  
Federal Deputy Joao Alfredo  
Terramar Institute  
Tremembe Mission  
Fishermen Colony Z46 (Pendencias/RN)  
Ambiental Institute  
Engineers Trade Union of Ceara  
Community Association of Munda  
State School Maria de Arajo (Arana./CE)  
Fishermen Association of Arana (Acara./CE)  
Project Arana  
Alive and Green in Defense of Mangrove Swamps  
Community of Cumbe (Aracati/CE)  
Community Association of Balbino (Cascavel/CE)  
Association of Algae Producers of Flecheiras and Guajiru (Trairi/CE)  
Community Association of Flecheiras (Trairi/CE)  
Sea People School (Prainha do Canto Verde-Beberibe/CE)  
Community of Capim-Acu (Paraipaba/CE)