

FISHERIES

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PIRACY: FAO, Puntland President launch Somali fishermen database

Bossaso, Somalia - The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Puntland authorities launched the first database for Somali fishermen in decades aimed at improving management of fisheries in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. In the last 12 months, over 3800 fishermen, over 50 percent of Puntland's estimated 6,500 fishermen, have been registered using a biometrics system that uniquely identifies individuals by their fingerprints background and physical features. The project has been funded under the New York Anti-piracy Trust Fund.

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Towards sustainable tuna resources in Somalia

Mogadishu-Victoria Mahé - Facilitated by FAO, Somalia has become the latest nation to join the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), an intergovernmental fisheries management body mandated to manage the tuna and tuna like species of the Indian Ocean and its associated impacted ecosystem. The Horn of Africa nation, with one of the longest coastal lines joins global IOTC membership with over 30 nations to promote cooperation among members with a view to ensuring, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilization of stocks covered by the organization and encouraging sustainable development of fisheries based on such stocks.

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With a surge in piracy attacks on the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden in 2009, fishermen have since been largely impeded from accessing much of the seas due international anti-piracy activities. It is hoped that the fisheries database will be used by different stakeholders on land and at sea to allow fisher folks to better access certain areas and for general identification purposes.

The launch of the database was carried out on an EU Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Operation Atalanta warship FS Siroco presided over by Puntland's President Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, EU's Envoy Michele Cervone d'Uso, Luca Alinovi, FAO's Country Representative to Somalia, several European ambassadors and Navy representatives. In embarking on this initiative, FAO aims to improve livelihoods in Somalia's fishing communities

"This country has the longest coast in continental Africa and is one of the richest in fisheries resources; that is why I am pleased today that we, by developing this database, are helping Somali fishermen get back into business at sea with few hindrances," said FAO head Luca Alinovi.

EUNAVFOR French Warship Siroco has carried out several 'Friendly Approaches' to fishing vessels in the Gulf of Aden in addition to patrols in the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.

"For long these (Indian Ocean and the Gulf

of Aden) have been considered failed seas, however with this database, we now see the first step towards making them manageable seas," said EU Envoy Michele Cervone. Puntland's President Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali said the database would help anti-piracy forces differentiate between pirates and fishermen at sea.

"Not everyone at sea is a pirate and not everyone at sea is a fisherman that is why this database that will help us to distinguish pirates from fishermen is important for all of us," said President Abdiweli. Jorge Torrens, the FAO project manager said: "through this fisheries database, information related to the fishermen, fish stocks, size, communities dependent of fisheries will go a long way

in establishing better management measures that ensure the sustainability of the system and hopefully improve counter piracy activities."

Piracy has reached its lowest levels in six years, 264 attacks recorded worldwide in 2013 representing a 40% drop since Somali piracy peaked in 2011, according to the latest statistics from the International Maritime Bureau. According to IMB data the fall in Somalia-based attacks off East Africa was the main reason for the drop in worldwide incidents with no successful attack in the last 20 months. Since the start of the Somali civil war and the subsequent collapse of the state in 1991, the country's 3,330 km (2,000 miles) of coastline- the longest in



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The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization facilitated Somalia's admission into the IOTC through its mandate to develop and protect the world's fisheries resources. FAO's Assistant Director-General for the Africa region, Bukar Tijani hailed the move as a milestone.

"Admission of Somalia into the IOTC is a great step in ensuring sustainability of tuna species in the Indian Ocean but also a bold step to completely eliminate piracy which has plagued ocean since 2009," said Bukar.

Joining IOTC was an important step for Somalia which, among others, will enable Somalia to benefit from foreign tuna fleets operating under license in its EEZ, to develop its own fishing fleet in the future and contribute to the sustainability of the tuna resources. In addition, IOTC is in the process of developing a quota allocation criteria, and becoming a member ensures that Somalia will be included in future discussions on this important issue..

"This is also a special occasion for us all, as the IOTC this year, celebrates its 18th year since coming into force with a new member's acceptance to join, last May - the Federal Republic of Somalia. We are grateful to FAO and the Seychelles for their role in this very positive development", said Indian Ocean Tuna Commission's Executive Secretary, Mr. Rondolph Payet. During a recent session, the IOTC discussed its pertinent issues including piracy off the coast of Somalia. Despite a drop in pirate attacks in 2012, commercial and fishing vessels in the western Indian Ocean remain under a real threat. The IOTC Commission continues to be deeply concerned by the acts of piracy, on merchant shipping and legitimate fishing activities in the western part of the IOTC area of competence subject to international laws and regulations and where their activities are monitored by IOTC members in accordance with its management measures.

Somalia is expected to continue as an active member of the IOTC and will participate in programmed meetings, trainings and workshops initiated by

the Commission and will provide regular and detailed reports of national activities related to Indian Ocean tuna fisheries. Compliance with the existing Conservation and Management Measures is also an important requirement of membership, and is assessed annually. Activities are currently being initiated by FAO in Somalia, and other partners, to enable Somalia to strengthen capacity in this direction. In a bid to develop Somali fisheries, FAO is also working to build capacity of Somali fisheries through, training of fishermen and institutions, equipment distribution and advocacy.

The Commission recognised the severe impact of piracy acts on humanitarian, commercial and fishing vessels off the coast of Somalia and noted that the range of the attacks extended towards almost all of the western Indian Ocean, notably towards Kenya and Seychelles, with attacks being reported in their respective EEZ. IOTC members include Australia, Belize, China Peoples' Republic, Comoros, Eritrea, European Union, France, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sultanate of Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vanuatu and Yemen and has its Secretariat at Victoria Mahé, Seychelles.

The IOTC has the mandate to manage the tuna and tuna like species of the Indian Ocean and its associated impacted ecosystem. It takes binding conservation and management measures on its members. On the occasion of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States that will be held in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, FAO will renew its appeal to partners to pursue and commit to overseeing the sustainable exploitation of living marine resources, the protection of livelihoods of stakeholders involved in the fisheries sector, and the safeguarding of food security through the provision of fish and fishery-products for current and future generations.

More success stories in brief

FISHING GEAR FOR SOMALI FISHERMEN



Shortage of fishing gear and lack of trained manpower has contributed to underdevelopment and slow growth in the fishery industry in Somalia. To address this problem, FAO has moved to improve the fishing capacity of the coastal communities through distribution of fishing gear to the fishermen from the different fisheries associations along the Somali coast. Women occupied in the fishing industry were also aided with post-catch equipment. Appropriate and modern equipment has led to the lowering of the unit costs of harvesting, particularly as this equipment becomes more widespread

PUNTLAND FISHERIES GETS ICE PLANTS



In the last 24 months, FAO has constructed three major Ice plants in Puntland to increase the supply of the most demanded item in regard to preserving fish. For nearly two decades Somali fishing communities have faced major constraints including the absence of adequate physical and institutional infrastructure, inadequate landing facilities, ice plants and chill stores, and workshops for engine or boat repairs to serve the traditional fishery communities.

SOLAR FRIDGES BOOST PRESERVATION



The initiative, that saw 140 solar fridges distributed to female breadwinner households in south central Somalia, is aimed at helping fishing communities to earn more from one of Somalia's least tapped resources, the food-rich Indian Ocean. Somali fishermen face widespread losses and low income levels, despite increased production largely due to the fast perishability of fish. Provision of solar fridges can extend shelf life by a week, reducing post harvest losses and creating revenues for the beneficiaries.

UN Food Agencies in Somalia Promote Eating Fish to Fight Hunger



The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have joined forces with Somali authorities to encourage Somalis to eat more fish as a way to fight hunger in the Horn of Africa.

Despite Somalia's enormous marine resources, the country's fishing industry remains largely under-developed and its fisheries unexploited. This is partly due to decades of conflict and piracy on the high seas – but also because fish does not form part of the traditional Somali diet.

"The major aim of this campaign is to encourage thousands of displaced families living in and around Dolow to start including fish in their diets," said Luca Alinovi, the FAO representative in Somalia. "The Gedo region has two rivers, the Dawa and Jubba, yet the eating of fresh fish is nearly nonexistent."

Somalia has a 3,300-kilometer coastline – the longest in Africa – yet the people of Somalia eat very little seafood. The country's per capita fish consumption is 2.4 kilograms per year, one of the lowest in the world. The country is still emerging from a food security crisis following the drought and famine of 2011 that left many thousands dead.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Celebrating last year's World Food Day in the southern Somali town of Dolow, the two Rome-based food agencies reached out to thousands of displaced Somalis in the border town, encouraging them to embrace fish as part of a healthy diet.

"Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition" was the official theme of World Food Day last year, focused on improving understanding of problems and solutions in the drive to end hunger. FAO continues to develop Somalia's fisheries sector with training in sustainable fishing, fishing equipment, jetties and cold chains to support fish preservation, distribution and marketing.

"Making use of natural resources is vital in fighting hunger," said Stefano Porretti, the WFP representative in Somalia. "WFP works with coastal communities, providing training in fishing and in preservation of fish products. Increasing the consumption of fish in Somalia will strengthen the livelihood of fishermen and provide a more nutrient-rich diet for Somali households."

THE "FISH IS GOOD FOR YOU" CAMPAIGN

The campaign's messages are directed at female heads of households and young people with a goal of diversifying dietary habits biased against seafood. The "Fish is Good for You" campaign also focuses on the nutritional benefits of fresh fish. The campaign was first launched in the Puntland's coastal town of Bossaso and in the Somali capital, Mogadishu and Dolow in southern Somalia's Gedo region.



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