

WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

SIXTEENTH SESSION

Guadeloupe, 20-24 June 2016

REGIONAL COLLABORATION IN ADDRESSING IUU FISHING

Background

The Commission's functions and responsibilities include, under Article 6 of the WECAFC Statutes, to:

- (b) assist its members in implementing relevant international fisheries instruments, in particular the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related International Plans of Action; and
- (i) "provide advice on monitoring, control and surveillance, and to promote cooperation on these matters, including joint activities, especially as regards issues of a regional or subregional nature".

Resolutions

Following presentation at WECAFC 15 of Working Document WECAFC/XV/2014/9 on "Regional collaboration in addressing IUU fishing"¹, the session adopted two Resolutions:

- Resolution WECAFC/15/2014/9 "on the implementation of the Port state Measures Agreement and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on flag State performance in the region" and
- Resolution WECAFC/15/2014/6 "on region-wide support to the implementation of the CRFM, Castries, St Lucia, (2010) Declaration on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing"

RWG IUU fishing

WECAFC 15 also established a Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing (RWG-IUU), which TORs can be found in WECAFC/XVI/2016/15 "Draft Terms of Reference of the (joint) Working Groups". The RWG-IUU did not meet as yet, but the CRFM and WECAFC Secretariats together developed a proposal for a small project. The USA/NOAA kindly agreed to finance the proposal for "Support to the Caribbean Regional Working Group on Illegal Unreported and Unregulated fishing (RWG-IUU)". The 1st meeting of this RWG-IUU is scheduled to take place in September/ October 2016.

¹ <http://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/wecafc/15thsess/9e.pdf>

Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA)

In the intersessional period the WECAFC members and secretariat have been actively following-up on the PSMA following the FAO/WECAFC Workshop on Implementing the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 24–28 March 2014). The secretariat prepared letters to the members, assisting chief fisheries officers and directors in the internal governmental decision making process on PSMA ratification. Moreover the Secretariat prepared cost-benefit analyses for implementation of the PSMA for 7 member states as well as an Issue brief on “Combating IUU fishing in the Caribbean through policy and legislation”. Training in support of implementation of the PSMA was delivered in Saint Kitts and Nevis and Guyana.

To date (June 2016) the following 12 WECAFC members have ratified or acceded to the PSMA:

Barbados, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, the European Union (as a member organization), Guinea, Grenada, Guyana, Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and the United States of America. This important agreement entered into force on 5 June 2016.

Efforts to generate awareness and build capacity for implementation of the PSMA by the WECAFC members are continuing. Various projects from FAO and the PEW Charitable Trusts are supporting these activities at national level in WECAC member states. Also the US Dept. of State and North East Atlantic Fishery Commission (NEAFC) are providing support to members in the region on this subject.

Regional vessel register

The Secretariat and Executive Committee also developed in 2015 a project in support of “Establishing a Regional Fishing Vessel Register in the Western Central Atlantic”. This project, which got preliminary approval from the European Union DG Mare, aims to build capacity among the WECAFC membership for implementing the FAO Standard Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels (small vessels) and Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI) (for larger vessels) and to prepare the basis for the establishment of a Regional Fishing Vessel Register. The outputs and activities foreseen are:

OUTPUT 1. National and (sub-) regional capacity strengthened for Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels (small vessels) and application of the Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI) (for larger vessels).

Activity 1.1: Development of training and capacity building materials for marking and identification of fishing vessels; promoting harmonization at regional level.

Activity 1.2: Organization of a 3-day regional training workshop on fishing vessel marking, identification and registration.

Activity 1.3: Preparation of a workshop report in the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report series in English for dissemination to the WECAFC membership.

OUTPUT 2. Foundations for a Regional Fishing Vessel Register in the Western Central Atlantic established

Activity 2.1: Development of minimum standard data and information to be collected and maintained at national level about fishing vessels (national records) and what should be made available (eventually) to a Regional Fishing Vessel Register.

Activity 2.2: A pilot operational platform for a Regional Fishing Vessel Register configured and tested with selected datasets.

Activity 2.3: Development of draft fishing vessel data and information sharing policies for

(sub-)regional level, building on the OSPESCA functional example.

Activity 2.4: A draft recommendation for formal establishment of a Regional Fishing Vessel Register in the Western Central Atlantic prepared for review and endorsement by WECAFC 17.

This project will start in the 2nd semester of 2016 and the regional capacity building workshop is scheduled to be held in October –November 2016. The capacity building and preparatory work for a regional fishing vessel register will be important contributions to combating IUU fishing in the region.

Regional Plan of Action against IUU fishing (RPOA-IUU)

In 2017 the WECAFC, CRFM and OSPESCA secretariats plan to work with the members on the preparation of an RPOA-IUU. The CLME+ project has agreed to support the organization of a meeting of the RWG –IUU to prepare an RPOA. The CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP) aims, amongst others, to “Establish and/or enhance the capacity of the regional, sub-regional and national fisheries institutions to develop and implement harmonized management and conservation measures, with special focus on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) and Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS)” (Action 2.5B). The RPOA-IUU will help those WECAFC member states that don’t have a National Plan of Action against IUU fishing (NPOA-IUU) as yet, to develop one and have coherent approaches and more effective harmonized actions against IUU fishing. It is foreseen to submit the RPOA-IUU for review and adoption to WECAFC 17. Assistance to member states to prepare and implement their NPOA’s will be provided on request by FAO and partner agencies and projects.

Tracking IUU fishing vessels

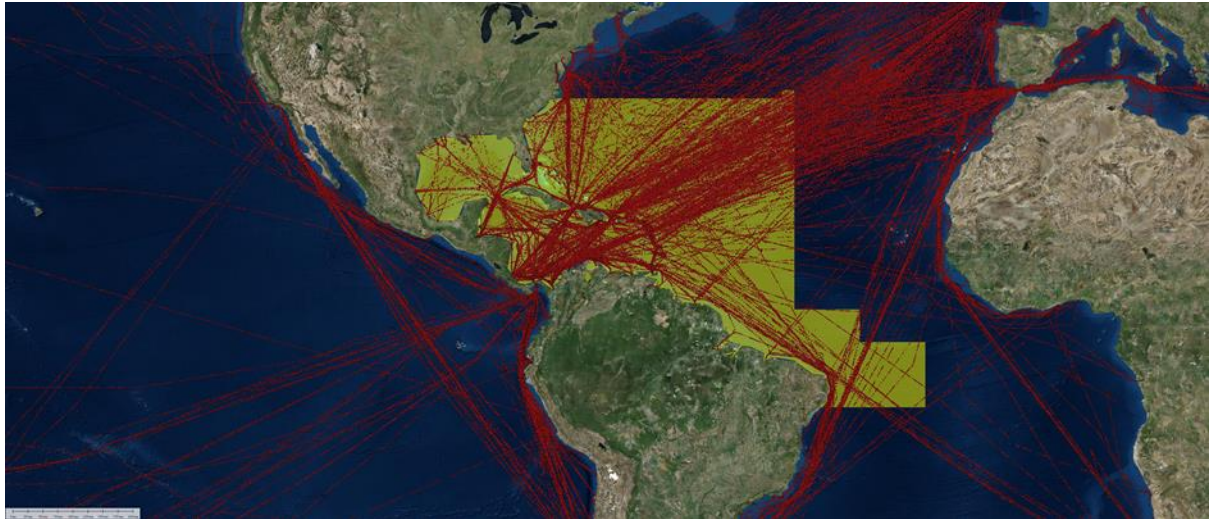
The WECAFC Secretariat has been in touch with TM Tracking² and Stop Illegal Fishing³ (SIF) to find out if with the currently available information any IUU vessels could be identified as fishing in the WECAFC region. TM Tracking is working closely with many RFMOs to maintain and update a combined IUU fishing vessels list, which is available at: <http://www.iuu-vessels.org/iuu>

Information recorded on the combined IUU vessel list comprises the vessel’s name and name history, flag and flag history, International Maritime Organization (IMO) number (where available), international radio call sign (IRCS) and call sign history, owner(s) and operator(s) information (where available), technical details (e.g. vessel type and tonnage), the IUU vessel listing RFMOs, and dates and reasons for IUU vessel listing and delisting.

TM Tracking made an initial search and extracted track information on all vessels found in the WECAFC area from 01 January - 25 May 2016; about 27, 000 in total. Use was made of Automatic Identification System (AIS) info only.

² <http://www.tm-tracking.org/>

³ <http://www.stopillegalfishing.com/>



Of the total number of vessels, roughly 2200 were found to be relevant to include in the further process. The 2200 vessels consisted of fishing vessels and refrigerated cargo vessels - but also smaller type of vessels such as sailing vessels, as these in some, though few cases are known to be misrepresented on AIS, in reality being fishing vessels. The initial research focused on foreign flagged fishing vessels indicated being active in the island states, and fishing vessel indicated being active on the high seas, dropping into the outskirts of the EEZs of member countries. Due to the limited time available it was however impossible to do a complete analysis of the tracks and detect IUU activities. More time and efforts would be required to analyze the tracking information and match these with information from flag, port and coastal states.

If the WECAFC members consider it worthwhile to collaborate with the Secretariat on the detection of IUU fishing activities, then the initial activities undertaken in collaboration with TM Tracking, SIF and maybe also with the PEW Eyes on the Seas⁴ could be expanded relatively easily.

Learning from other regions

There are a number of lessons to be learned from recent developments to combat IUU fishing in other regions. An example is the work being undertaken under the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), which established a task force called Fish-I Africa⁵. FISH-i Africa is a Task Force that enables authorities to identify and act against large-scale illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. Through regional cooperation, dedicated data analysis and technical expertise the Task Force tries to stop illegal catch getting to the market, and to prevent criminal fishers to continue their lucrative business.

Another interesting example from the same region is provided by a case study from Guinea and Sierra Leone on "Community Surveillance to protect small-scale fisheries⁶". In this case the two countries tried to stop the damaging effects of illegal fishing by foreign trawlers through local community actions. These pilots are successful and are being replicated now.

⁴ <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/multimedia/video/2015/project-eyes-on-the-seas>

⁵ <http://www.fish-i-africa.org/>

⁶ http://www.stopillegalfishing.com/doc/sif_cs5.pdf

Various case studies in Africa have shown that there is a range of simple and low-cost measures available that can help reduce opportunities for IUU fishers and increase the chances of prosecuting offenders, such as:

- Flag, coastal and port states should require that owners of vessels of >100 GT obtain IMO numbers for their vessels.
- Publish regional vessel license and registration lists and information on IUU fishing cases.
- Establish coherent catch traceability schemes in collaboration with the market states (e.g. EU and USA) that ensure market access for legally caught fish only.
- PSMA and Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance implementation.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR THE COMMISSION

1. The Commission is invited to note the increase in number of members that have ratified or acceded to the PSMA in the intersessional period.
2. The Commission is invited to discuss the activities and projects listed above and members are encouraged to inform each other of the latest developments to combat IUU fishing in the region.
3. The Commission is invited to consider WECAFC entering into a formal collaboration with TM Tracking, to participate in the IUU fishing vessel list and carry out further research on IUU fishing activities in the region.