



West Africa Task Force
Working together to stop illegal fishing



RECORD OF THE 3RD WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE MEETING

Cotonou, Benin
24 – 26 October 2016





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1. Introduction and opening

1.1 Introduction

West Africa is endowed with abundant fisheries resources which provide key nutrition to coastal populations, and support employment for more than three million people. It also provides revenue to governments through taxes, royalties and other fees collected through licences and fisheries access agreements. However, this valuable resource is under threat due to various political, economic and environmental factors, including illegal fishing. Numerous cases of illegal fishing activities are reported annually off the coast of West African States, making this region a hot spot for illegal fishing operators.

National efforts by West African countries to strengthen their fisheries management systems have resulted in improved monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) of some fisheries. However, many of the regions commercial fish species are migratory as are the national and foreign fishing operators that target them, therefore sustainably and effectively tackling illegal fishing requires a regional approach. In many cases, the national capacity to identify, track, gather evidence and mount enforcement and prosecution actions against illegal fishing operators is limited, and requires support.

In response to these issues, the *Fisheries Intelligence and MCS support in West Africa* project was developed to support regional cooperation and information sharing, with three years of Norwegian Development Agency (Norad) funding. The initiative is a collaboration between the six Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) countries to form a Task Force (TF), and a Technical Team (TT) which includes Trygg Mat Tracking (TMT), Stop Illegal Fishing (SIF) and Nordenfjeldske Development Services (NFDS). The West Africa Task Force (WATF) as it is known aims to 'contribute to more effective governance of regional fisheries resources in West Africa through a reduction of illegal fishing'.



THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE AIMS TO 'CONTRIBUTE TO MORE EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE OF REGIONAL FISHERIES RESOURCES IN WEST AFRICA THROUGH A REDUCTION OF ILLEGAL FISHING'.

The WATF held its first Task Force Meeting (TF1) in April 2015 in Accra, Ghana and the second TF Meeting (TF2) in April 2016 also in Accra. The first year of the TF - 2015 - was the pilot-phase during which Ministers and relevant authorities were sensitized leading up to the official endorsement of the TF at the eighth FCWC Ministers Conference in December 2015. To date significant progress has been made, including a regional communications platform made operational, TF Terms of Reference (ToR) developed, National Working Groups (NWGs) established in some countries and training provided, and regional training was conducted. Most importantly TF Members and the technical team are actively engaged in joint information-sharing through the communication platform, a first in the region that has facilitated numerous events of intelligence sharing and enforcement cooperation in respect to fisheries compliance.

Benin hosted the third TF Meeting (TF3) in Cotonou from the 24th – 26th October 2016. The meeting was attended by representatives of the six FCWC countries: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo, the FCWC Secretariat, and the TT, together with observers representing the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the INTERPOL Fisheries Crime Working Group (represented by the Government of Norway) and INTERPOL.

1.2 Opening session

The FCWC Secretary General, Mr Dedi Seraphin began by welcoming participants. He thanked the government of Norway and the experts of the TT for their support. Explaining that the need to protect marine resources was one of the main reasons behind the establishment of the FCWC, Mr Dedi urged participants to strengthen internal collaboration and with other organisations, in line with the outcomes from the recent African Union (AU) Extraordinary Summit on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa held in Lomé, Togo on the 15th October 2016.

Mr Duncan Copeland, TT, gave a brief update on the TF activities and highlighted the basis for and objectives of the WATF. He noted that following a pilot-phase, and the endorsement of the ToR in 2015, the WATF has now almost completed its first official year. In this year, the TF has established a communication platform, cooperated regionally and nationally, held a TF meeting and regional training, held national workshops in five Member countries and most significantly seen action taken against illegal fishing in the region.

The Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Benin, Honourable Delphin O. Koudande, formally opened the meeting. The Minister welcomed attendees, stating that the TF is improving governance and sustainability in the region. Noting how illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing destroys habitats, he applauded the WATF initiative and highlighted the need for collective action and the implementation of national and regional frameworks. The Minister encouraged the TF to continue their cooperation and declared the meeting open.

Mr Dedi then introduced Ms Sandy Davies, TT, who presented the agenda for comments and adoption.

2. National activities

This session, facilitated by Mr Dedi, allowed Members to present their national progress, situation, experiences and challenges in combatting IUU fishing:

2.1 Benin

Mr Bernard Tossi presented an overview and made several requests to the TT, including; for the training of inspectors to do inspection on board fishing vessels and reefers, for assistance reviewing the legal framework and drafting legal instruments, in particular with respect to tuna vessels, assistance towards ratification of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) and membership of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). He reported that Benin founded a NWG in May 2016 and held training in June 2016, and a working session on October 10th, and noted that their NWG includes representatives of the Navy, Maritime Police, Maritime Department, Port authority and National NCB. The NWG facilitates collaboration between different agencies and reduces the bottlenecks in communication, and thus the inter-agency cooperation and communication has become easier. He closed by stating that a request by his Ministry for ratification of the PSMA was recently sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and they are meeting experts from Foreign Affairs soon to present the rationale for ratification.

DISCUSSION:

Responding to a request for clarification, representatives from Benin stated that they are yet to engage in procedures for reintegration into ICCAT, but that the NWG has identified this as an objective. The Benin Government requires clear identification of the benefits before approving membership so clear arguments must be made for both ratification of the PSMA and ICCAT reintegration. Elaborating on the specific actions and activities carried out, Benin noted that communication can now go directly between the Director of Fisheries and the Navy and that the Navy now receives the list of fishing vessels that have been licensed. They are awaiting a decision to carry out joint patrols.



2.2 Côte d'Ivoire

Lieutenant Bina Fofana gave an update on the activities of Côte d'Ivoire, stating that although a NWG is yet to be established, in the new fisheries law that came into effect in July 2016 (Law No. 2016-554) institutional mechanisms for cooperation are provided for with provisions made for funding programmes. He explained that the new law provides general principles for sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture and sector development based on international laws, establishment of a certification regime, strengthening of law enforcement and a review of by-laws. A structure for the NWG has been agreed with seats assigned to various agencies, however a ministerial order is required to convene this, and this has not yet happened. He noted that there is a need for legal assistance to help with the development of regulations to support the law. The capacity of the personnel and equipment in the monitoring centre were described and that a patrol vessel has been acquired.

DISCUSSION:

Responding to a question about how patrol vessel operations will be run and financed, especially after the current agreement with the European Union (EU) has lapsed, Côte d'Ivoire clarified that the patrol vessel will be used to inspect vessels at anchor in Abidjan. Resources to do this have been obtained from the EU, it was noted that cooperation with the Navy enables fisheries inspectors to conduct inspections at sea. Côte d'Ivoire is optimistic that the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) will be renewed but will put contingencies in place to manage the vessel should this not happen.

Responding to comments about the absence of a NWG in their country, Côte d'Ivoire informed the TF that the delay in setting up a NWG is the result of administrative challenges, in part due to the promulgation of the new fisheries law, as well as staff turnover. It was noted that the monitoring centre is almost functional, with one of the hindrances being the clarification of disputed maritime borders. A concern was raised about the reassignment of key staff to the WATF process, and following discussions it was suggested to include at least two people from each agency in the work of the Task Force.

2.3 Ghana

Mr Godfrey Baidoo-Tsibu noted that the Fisheries Enforcement Unit was in place prior to the WATF and that they had been working as an interagency group. He stated that Ghana ratified the PSMA in August 2016, and shares its license list with the WATF, encouraging all TF members to do so regularly. He described the judicial training recently carried out in Ghana, in an effort to increase their prosecution capacity. Since TF2, a staff member from the Fisheries Monitoring Centre (FMC) in Accra had travelled to Liberia to assist successfully with training of Liberian staff. Ghana's National Fisheries Management Plan for 2015 – 2019 includes provision(s) for a closed season for trawling in the month of November, and another closed season is planned for February to March. This regulation aims to reduce fishing capacity operating in the EEZ, and he noted that monitoring will need to be improved to ensure that the closed season is observed. The anticipated activities for the rest of 2016 were also provided.

DISCUSSION:

Ghana's neighbouring countries noted that most artisanal fishermen in the region originate from Ghana and questioned how the closed season might affect them and if having a closed season only for the Ghanaian EEZ would be effective. The TF requested information on how the closed season will be implemented and were advised that there has been extensive consultation with stakeholders, including industry and artisanal fishermen. They clarified that the intention is to start with a one month pilot period which could be extended to two or three months in future. They will implement a vessel monitoring system (VMS), conduct at sea patrols, and facilitate observer missions on board vessels fishing in other EEZs during the closed season. The Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) and West Africa Regional Fisheries Project (WARFP) will provide support to implement the closed season. Nigeria announced that they are also considering implementing a closed season in order to improve catch levels. The FCWC Secretariat observed that discussion of this sort is one of the benefits of countries convening at TF meetings. The Secretariat suggested the TF considers a regional decision on this, and that this could be addressed as a topic at the next Ministerial Conference.

2.4 Liberia

Mr Ahmed Sherif described Liberia's activities since the last TF meeting, including holding monthly stakeholder meetings to review reports on fishing activities and foreign vessels that have entered Liberian waters, and to familiarise themselves with operational procedures of different agencies. Supported by the WATF TT, Liberia held a capacity building workshop on vessel tracking systems that included a bi-lateral exchange with the Ghanaian Fisheries Department and have also held two NWG meetings. Mr Sherif noted that the WATF activities have led to improved exchange of MCS information between TF members and between national agencies.

DISCUSSION:

Responding to a request for clarification, Liberia explained that now the Port Authority routinely supplies information about vessels using port facilities to the Bureau of National Fisheries (BNF). TF members enquired what was being done to combat the Liberian flag being used as a flag of convenience, they responded that efforts to address this issue in collaboration with the Liberia Maritime Authority are underway. A technical committee has been created to solve this issue, and they will inform the WATF on developments. Responding to a request for an update on the YEUN HORNG NO. 2 case, Liberia stated that they communicated with the coastal State Sierra Leone and flag State Taiwan. Sierra Leone has been unresponsive. Taiwan responded that they have called the vessel back to port for investigation, however, the vessel remained fishing on the high seas after it was allegedly recalled. A follow-up communication was made to Taiwan, who reported that the vessel had experienced engine problems and was awaiting assistance. The YEUN HORNG NO. 2 did eventually begin return journey to Taiwan.



2.5 Nigeria

Ms Bola Kupolati presented on the activities of Nigeria since TF2, including intelligence sharing, developing inter-agency cooperation, intelligence gathering and capacity building. Ms Kupolati described the ways that TF activities are benefitting Nigerian MCS efforts, stating that the sharing of license information with the Navy has resulted in the arrests of three vessels, the awareness of IUU fishing has significantly improved amongst other agencies, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) have been developed for the Nigerian Navy regarding the boarding of fishing vessels. Further, Nigerian fisheries authorities have convened a meeting with trawler owners to discuss a request from the Navy that all Nigerian fishing vessels above 100 GT carry an automatic identification system (AIS) and VMS.

Authorities participated in the maritime security conference, the FishCRIME Symposium, and WATF regional training. Nigeria shared its experience, explaining that its regulation requires that all reefers obtain a fishing license from Nigeria and submit an expected time of arrival two weeks before calling into port. Nigeria also noted that their Maritime Authority (NIMASA) is not involved in registering reefers, as they are not flagged by Nigeria; only inshore fishing vessels or trawlers are flagged. The need to commence registration of small-scale fishing vessels was noted, particularly as they cooperate with larger trawlers via transshipment at sea. IUU fishing by small-scale vessels is an issue and registration would make vessel owners traceable. She concluded by informing the TF that discussion around ratification of the PSMA is ongoing and the hope is that Nigeria will ratify soon.

DISCUSSION:

In relation to one case, Nigeria explained that the vessels' AIS signals indicated movement similar to fishing activity but they were not licensed, it later was discovered that the vessels were once fishing vessels but are now oil platform supply vessels that should have their AIS reassigned by Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) to reflect their new function. Responding to a request for clarification on what type of small vessels are involved in transshipment with trawlers, it was explained that officers on board the trawlers sell fish to the canoes, who in turn sell this catch in market or offload it on shore. Two vessels have previously been arrested for illegal activities in relation to canoes, and the registration of canoes in future will facilitate pursuing this type of case. The FCWC Secretariat observed that collaboration between artisanal vessels and trawlers is an issue throughout the region, suggesting that this is another element of transshipment that could be considered alongside the reefer strategy. The Secretariat highlighted the need to consider how to address this issue, for example, through the registration of small-scale fishing vessels as proposed by Nigeria or through the introduction of transponders as currently being trialled by Ghana.

2.6 Togo

Ms Kebenzikato A.B. Yvette-Marthe described the composition of Togo's NWG which is made of The High Council of the Sea, The Prefecture Maritime, Maritime Affairs, Veterinary Department, Navy, the Maritime Brigade, Port Authority and fisher community before detailing the activities that have occurred since TF2. The activities included the suspension of issuance of licenses to foreign vessels, the deregistration of IUU listed vessels and foreign-owned vessels, the inspection of fishing vessels that dock at Lomé Port, inspection of reefers offloading fish at Lomé Port and the systematic registration of artisanal fishing canoes by the Maritime Department. Operational challenges include insufficient capacity, the need for a procedural manual for inspections, and the need to increase the number of patrols.

The recently reviewed law on fisheries and aquaculture was passed in September 2016 but the fisheries authorities are experiencing challenges enforcing certain aspects of it. The new law includes updated deterrent measures and considers fisheries management measures at the regional and international level. She noted that there is a need for enforcement actions to test the provisions of the new law, and for this support will be required. In October 2016 Togo hosted the AU Extraordinary Summit on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa, during which IUU fishing was discussed. Togolese accession to PSMA occurred in July 2016 and technical capacity building has led to strengthened interagency collaboration to support implementation. Details about the recent case of the F/V YELE were shared and information on the impending construction of a new fisheries port.

DISCUSSION:

Information on the deterrent penalties in the new fisheries law include for several types of offences, each with its own specific sanction or fine. Fines now go up to CFA 1 billion, whereas under the old law the maximum sanction was CFA 50 million. Togo clarified that an important aspect of the law is that it is designed to enable Togo to sign up to and adhere to international agreements. The FCWC Secretariat observed that a number of new fisheries laws have been passed in the region, noting that this presents an opportunity for harmonisation. The Secretariat requested that new laws be shared with the TF. A TF member expressed surprise that the F/V YELE was inspected, and then required to leave Togolese waters, and questioned why no sanction was provided, it was clarified that the violations by this vessel did not take place in Togolese waters, the vessel was simply present in port there. It was also noted that the incident took place before the new law was promulgated. The TT commended the Togo Maritime Authority for being very quick to share information about vessels claiming to be Togolese flagged but have been deflagged or were never registered. This cooperation has enabled the TT to share this information with authorities prosecuting illegal fishing in other parts of the world.



3. Technical Team presentations

3.1 Review of West Africa Task Force activities to date

Mr Copeland from the TT gave a review of the WATF's activities, focusing on the two main outcomes and nine requests to the TT that came out of TF2 that had resulted in activities including: personnel exchange between TF members, capacity needs assessments, engagement of other agencies through NWGs, finalisation of the legal review, development of a communications plan and development of a draft strategy for reefer control. The activity of the TF's information sharing platform was reviewed, including changes in the representatives from countries and an overview of the types of information requests, responses received, and material and outputs shared.

Activity on the platform has led to operational actions and compliance results, including strengthened due diligence for licensing and flagging; vessel inspections and identification of irregularities; detection of unlicensed fishing activity; identification of challenges around reefer controls; placing countries on standby in response to possible arrival of suspect vessels; identification and sharing of information on IUU-listed vessels; vessel arrests and fines. All of this has contributed to improved compliance and strengthened the ability of the region and individual countries to tackle IUU fishing. The status of the TF Toolbox, a collection of practical resources that assists countries to strengthen MCS activities and address illegal fishing, were presented with options to strengthen the Toolbox in 2017.

DISCUSSION:

It was noted that there is a need for WATF as a group to own the Toolbox and to share their national and regional versions of documents and procedures already developed, so that the Toolbox would be a way for TF members to share their own materials and to receive feedback on these. Noting that there are relevant personnel in TF member countries not on the information sharing platform, the TF were encouraged to download and distribute material amongst their colleagues. Responding to a comment on intelligence reports (Intreps), the TT clarified that they are used for sharing information when compliance issues have been identified.



3.2 Communications review

Ms Davies from the TT gave an overview of communications activities of the FCWC Secretariat and the WATF. WATF promotional materials have been redeveloped to link more strongly with the FCWC to develop a stronger identity and foster allegiance for the TF, and increase recognition by other agencies. Banners, flyers and manuals have been produced, branded and shared with the TF, and the work of the WATF has been portrayed on a range of international websites and that of FCWC. The possible next steps of the TF were presented in a view to: improving the effectiveness of the work of the TF, ensuring the sustainability of the TF activities and mechanisms, providing positive feedback on the work of the WATF and FCWC, and how to share experiences and lessons about the work of the TF and FCWC.

DISCUSSION:

Côte d'Ivoire requested that relevant WATF documents be made available on the FCWC website, following approval by TF members.

3.3 Vessel analysis

Côte d'Ivoire requested that relevant WATF documents be made available on the FCWC website, following approval by TF members.

3.3.1 Overview of vessel movements and characteristics in the WATF region

Mr Copeland discussed the importance of analysing the information received on vessel movements to assess what activities the vessels are engaging in, he showed examples of movement tracks of a longliner, a trawler, a purse seiner and a reefer and explained the background analysis that goes into identifying vessel types. He emphasized that this information needs to be layered with other information to identify high-risk activities. The sharing of license lists by TF countries enables the TT to provide intelligence about vessels that may be engaged in unlicensed fishing. Giving examples he provided figures for the number of fishing vessels tracked operating in each TF EEZ, and the number of those with a known license and those with uncertain license status. He noted that vessel tracking information is useful but must be cross-checked against other sources, and described the significant background research that goes into the generation of Intreps and other alerts.

3.3.2 Photo analysis

Ms Partridge presented on the importance of photo analysis and how it can be used to combat vessel identity fraud. She pointed out the things to look for when analysing photos, and gave examples of cases where photo analysis was used. Ms Partridge concluded by encouraging participants to take a lot of photos, as these may be useful in future investigations.

3.3.3 IMO numbers

Mr Copeland explained that IMO numbers are the international unique identification system developed by the UN International Maritime Association for commercial and fishing vessels. The numbers are assigned by IHS Fairplay, and one number stays with a vessel for life, regardless of name or flag changes. He clarified which vessels are eligible, and described the benefits of IMO numbers, which include: they reduce the risk of flagging or licensing a vessel with a history of illegal activity by enabling background checks, they create operational transparency, IMO numbers are mandatory for many RFMOs, and they contribute to the FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels. Discussing next steps, Mr Copeland informed the TF that the TT has cooperation partnership in place with IHS Fairplay, with the objective being to simplify the IMO application process for flag States, and that the guidelines and informational materials were being developed and would be circulated soon. Technical support could then be provided to this process. He suggested that the FCWC region could be the first to have all member State flagged vessels carrying IMO numbers.

DISCUSSION:

Togo emphasized the importance of taking good pictures, as this aided in their identification of the F/V RAY posing as the F/V YELE. TF members observed that capacity building is needed to improve the gathering and analysis of evidence, as this will lead to enforcement actions and sufficient fines. TF members discussed the option of IMO numbers becoming a licensing prerequisite. This is already being done in Nigeria and TF members were informed that Measure 53 of the FCWC Regional Plan of Action to combat IUU fishing (FCWC RPOA-IUU) states there is an obligation to include IMO numbers in fishing licenses. Nigeria highlighted that they were soon to hold a meeting in cooperation with the Nigeria Maritime Authority with all commercial fishing vessel operators to sensitise and engage them in this process.

3.4 Reefer review

Mr Copeland gave a follow up presentation from the TF2 meeting on strengthening reefer controls, describing the risks that reefers pose to MCS efforts, noting that the WATF region, as a major importer and exporter of fish, is vulnerable to transshipment issues. An overview of the reefer movements in the region and ports most frequented was provided highlighting that vessels deviating from the most efficient routes should be scrutinized. Giving examples of risk behaviours, it was noted that although there may be legitimate reasons why a vessel might stop at sea, these can also be used as cover for transshipment activity.

3.5 Case analysis

Mr Copeland and Ms Partridge presented an analysis of the cases relating to the WATF, emphasizing the importance of reviewing and highlighting the key issues. Looking at the cases of the Sierra Leone flagged F/V YELE, the Chinese owned F/V JU YUAN 1 and the Taiwan-flagged longliner F/V YEUN HORNG NO. 2, the characteristics of each case, the actions taken by the TF, and conclusions from each case were examined. The WATF had provided new intelligence on the identity and whereabouts of an IUU listed fishing vessel, denied port services to an IUU listed fishing vessel, convicted two vessels for breach of Côte d'Ivoire fisheries legislation, and identified a vessel fishing illegally in a WATF EEZ.

DISCUSSION:

Togo noted the legal gap that prevented them from arresting and fining the F/V YELE, as the violations were not in its waters. It was noted that many of the cases not just fisheries law but also laws that come under the mandate of other departments, and that the inter-agency cooperation at the national level under the Task Force was therefore crucial. It was noted that reefers were not the only transshipment challenge, and that transshipment to small scale vessels also needed attention. Ghana encouraged and congratulated the TF, noting how much can be achieved through cooperation and without sophisticated input. The TT supported Ghana's statement, emphasizing the positives and the lessons learned.

3.6 Legal review

Ms Davies presented an overview of the legal review, which explores the legal frameworks of FCWC member countries on fisheries. The objective was to assess the state of domestication of the FCWC legal framework into national legislation, and to test how robust national legal frameworks are regarding illegal fishing. The methodology of the study and the documents consulted, the proposed next steps, including; implementation of the national action plans, identification of next steps for the WATF at regional level, and determining the needs of the countries were presented. The report contains the ten most common violations that are encountered, and how these are addressed by each national fisheries law.

The most common violations were identified through a discussion held at national working group workshops and regional trainings, which also identified which are applicable in each country. The report found, amongst other things, that all Countries had good provisions for vessels fishing without a license; all countries sanction illegal transshipment except for Côte d'Ivoire; all countries except Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia have specific provisions sanctioning the trade in illegal fish; and all countries sanction the targeting of unauthorised species.

The recommendations of the report were presented: sanctions should be harmonised and common offences defined at the FCWC level, harsher sanctions are required when vessel owners do not communicate information directly to fisheries administrations, provisions that sanction the trade in illegally caught fish should be reinforced, harmonisation is required for monetary sanctions, administrative sanctions can be used to facilitate imposition of sanctions by the fisheries administration outside of the judicial process, where appropriate, and that, fisheries administrations could be granted the power to compound certain offences through out of court settlement procedures.

DISCUSSION:

Ghana expressed concern about activities of the artisanal fleet and the ability of legal frameworks to deal with this, noting that this area deserves particular focus. They highlighted the need to distinguish between industrial and artisanal vessels but address both, as some canoes can be larger than trawlers and they are also involved with industrial vessels through transshipment.

Following discussion on various aspects of the legal review, it was recommended that all countries take time to thoroughly review the document, identify legal loopholes that require action, and make recommendations for ways to strengthen their national laws. It was noted that the report should be circulated to all relevant agencies of each country's National Working Group to build awareness and get further input. The TT stated that the final document will be shared via the information sharing platform and posted on the FCWC website.

3.7 Identification of national needs and ways forward

Based on the Legal Study, the national needs of the WATF members have been identified through capacity needs assessment discussions, trainings and also through meetings at various levels. Mr Dedi presented on the identified needs, which are summarised below:

- All countries wished to have training on the types of violations commonly encountered, securing of evidence, the existing fines and legal framework for dealing with offences. The need to include other agencies was identified.
- Countries that have developed a National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (NPOA-IUU) requested assistance to implement their plan. Countries with no NPOA requested assistance to develop one, including through mobilisation of partners and financial resources.
- Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo have just passed new fisheries laws and will require assistance to develop regulations and test cases to implement the laws.
- Countries expressed a need to harmonise the licensing scheme within the sub-region.
- The PSMA is viewed as a way to strengthen national legal frameworks, and countries expressed a need for support to ratify, or for countries that have already done so, support to enforce it.

DISCUSSION:

Clarifying that all countries will be provided technical support as was possible under the Norad support, the TT reiterated the need for individual countries to clearly identify their needs, so that the partners are able to provide assistance. The TT noted that for the areas not covered by the Norad project, they would endeavour to identify other partners for implementation.



4. Observer session

This was the first occasion that observers attended a TF meeting, the aim being to build close cooperation between relevant groups working to tackle illegal fishing in the region to avoid duplication of efforts and strengthen efforts through collaboration. The presentations of the observers are summarized below.

4.1 Introduction of FAOLEX in support of the legal review activities

Ms Alessandra Tomassi, consultant to the FAO, presented the FAOLEX system. She explained that FAOLEX is a comprehensive and up-to-date legislative and policy database, one of the world's largest electronic collection of national laws, regulations and policies on food, agriculture and renewable natural resources. FAOLEX is a tool that can improve the ability of countries to access and share key information regarding legal frameworks. Under Article XI of the FAO Constitution, members are required to send their relevant legal text to FAO, enabling FAOLEX to provide a useful and up to date source of information. A demonstration of the use of FAOLEX was given and countries were encouraged to develop a procedure to ensure that new legislation is shared with FAOLEX. The possibility of creating a sub-set of the database containing only documents relating to FCWC countries was discussed, this could reside on the FCWC website or within FAOLEX, and use the layout of the FAOLEX country profile pages.

DISCUSSION:

Responding to a request for clarification, it was confirmed that communication between the countries and FAO is usually done through the FAO representative at the Ministry responsible for Fisheries. It was noted however that for many countries no-one proactively sends material so the FAOLEX team has had to search for information. An updated version of FAOLEX will be rolled out soon which should be more user friendly, but it may also be beneficial to have a sub-database which allows quick access to FCWC country documents, and this can be tailored to suit users' needs.



4.2 Regional session of the INTERPOL Fisheries Crime Working Group

Mr Tor Glistrup, representing the Government of Norway on the INTERPOL Fisheries Crime Working Group, gave a demonstration of the Vessels of Interest portal, a website portal currently in the pilot phase, accessible to all who work in the FCWG intelligence project. He noted that there is potential to add functionalities but the basic functions need to be tested before further investment. Currently, using the portal, there is the ability to overlay EEZ boundaries and link to TMT's combined IUU fishing list, amongst other sources of information. The mandate of the FCWG was described as based on the general aim to share information and create intelligence on crimes relating to IUU fishing. Using an example, he showed the complexity of IUU fishing cases, and commented on the scale of IUU fishing in West Africa. Describing that part of Project 2 in the FCWG Workplan is to identify risk operators conducting transshipment in West Africa, he stated that Norway has developed a national system for assessment of transshipment, and can provide support to countries in a similar vein. He suggested that the work be carried out in three phases; the first being analysis of reefer movements, the second being a review of laws and licenses in West African countries regarding transshipment, and the third being investigations and operations based on nomination of risk vessels and operators, which would be supported by FCWG and Project Scale. He asked the TF to consider the proposal and decide if they wished to cooperate at country or regional level, including with the possible support of the Technical Team.

4.3 INTERPOL

Praising the level of efforts and achievements already demonstrated by WATF in the fight against illegal fishing, Mr Mario Alcaide, INTERPOL, congratulated the TF on their achievements thus far. He played a short video that provided an overview on the work of INTERPOL's Project Scale and then went on to describe the different types of INTERPOL notices. Mr Alcaide used the cases of the F/V KUNLUN/ASIAN WARRIOR and the F/V HUA LI 8 to highlight the complexity of IUU cases and show the importance of cooperation. He reiterated earlier comments stating the importance of sharing license lists and other information. He also noted the strong need for countries to identify and train fisheries analysts in each country, and that countries should do their best to ensure that these personnel stayed long term in these roles, so that expertise could be developed and these individuals could in turn train other national personnel. He highlighted the opportunity for cooperation with the WATF and the TT, starting with an analysts training planned for 2017 in Lyon, France at INTERPOL headquarters.

DISCUSSION:

Clarifying possible confusion, INTERPOL informed that the FCWG is a working group of countries that are members of INTERPOL. The FCWG identifies projects to work on together to address illegal fishing, and this includes the project on transshipment in West Africa that has been discussed. Project Scale exists at the Secretary General of INTERPOL in Lyon and consists of INTERPOL staff who provide support to INTERPOL members to tackle illegal fishing.

INTERPOL is attending the WATF meeting to follow up on the meeting held in Abidjan in 2015, attended by all TF members, where a decision was made to work together, with the support of INTERPOL, to tackle illegal fishing with a focus on reefer activities in a project named Project Dolphin. An element of this project is the sharing of license lists. INTERPOL encouraged members to contact National Central Bureaus (NCBs) to discuss international cooperation in the framework of this project, and to identify a contact point for communications with INTERPOL. It was noted that while NCB offices in each country were generally located in police offices, NCBs existed to support all national agencies engaged in enforcement of national laws – including fisheries.

Noting that in some countries the NCB is a member of the NWG, the next step would be to begin analysis and cross-checking of information. INTERPOL stated they can provide training to assist countries with this and also provide support for an initial meeting to kick-start Project Dolphin in the countries.

The FCWG asked the TF to make a decision on how to proceed regarding their offer for support. The FCWG Secretariat observed that the ability to share certain information will vary by country dependent on the regulations, but they may decide to cooperate regionally on the basis of FCWC Conventions and the processes of the West Africa Task Force. The FCWG informed that if the decision is to participate, there is a need to agree on a timeframe. Responding to a question on financial support, the FCWG clarified that there is a budget in place for the proposed project, with contributions from the government of Norway and Project Scale. The budget is available to support meetings and work for staff in West Africa to contribute to the project.

5. Other presentations and discussions

5.1 FCWC 2016 Ministers Conference and communications needs

Mr Seraphin led discussions on the 2016 FCWC Ministers Conference, due to be held in Monrovia, Liberia from the 14th – 16th December. He stated that he had successful meetings with Liberian authorities in May 2016, and that the theme of the meeting will be *“Fish trade and value addition to fisheries for social and economic benefit of our population”*.

DISCUSSION:

Discussing communications, TF members suggested different activities to promote the FCWC at the regional level from January, as 2017 will mark its tenth anniversary. Nigeria, the next hosts of the Ministerial Conference, called for early preparation and awareness raising, recommending that the Secretariat start communications with Nigeria as soon as possible. Ghana suggested that plans to organise the tenth anniversary are discussed at the upcoming Ministerial Conference, and that the upcoming meeting should be widely publicised.

5.2 Mid-term review and planning activities for remaining project period

Reminding participants of the review, into which many of the attendees provided input, Mr Copeland explained that the review was a standard process required by the funder, Norad, and was conducted by independent consultants. The final report has been received and there has been an initial review meeting with Norad; final discussions of the review were to be held in the first week of November. Thanking the TF for their honest and constructive feedback he informed attendees that the overall feedback was very positive. Summarised recommendations from the review include the need to consolidate the effectiveness of the initiative, integrate TF decisions and requests into programming of project activities and to consider ownership, sustainability, the strengthening of MCS capacity and the promotion of the concept in other regions. It had also been strongly recommended that a Phase 2 of the project be developed.

The TT noted that a follow up meeting with Norad was scheduled, where the potential for a second phase would be discussed. The TT would keep the TF updated regarding the opportunity for a second phase of the project.

An outline of the activities to be included in the phase ending October 2017 was given.

It was noted that both for remaining activities in 2017, and for a potential second phase, that there was a need to clarify the areas of work that Norad can and cannot support so that the Task Force can be clear in its requests and recommendations to the TT.

These were provided as follows:

Norad is able to support:

- Task Force processes
- Inter-agency strengthening
- Cooperation / communication platform
- Capacity Building
- Exchanges
- Technical Team Support
- Provision and analysis of intelligence
- MCS Technical Support
- Legal support to cases
- Development of partnerships and cooperation, links to other regions/countries
- Possibly limited equipment

Norad is not able to support:

- Legal Review and Drafting
- Large equipment purchases or infrastructure
- MCS operations

It was noted that objective of the project and Norad was to complement other initiatives in the region, such as support provided by the World Bank, the EU and AfDB. The objective was to not duplicate efforts, but to technically and operationally build on legal and infrastructure support that was the focus of other funders.

DISCUSSION:

TF members encouraged more bi-lateral exchanges and capacity building. The TT noted that both Togo and Benin have identified inspection training as a need and noted the need to put together a prioritisation list for trainings that will be circulated after TF3. Togo further noted a need for capacity building of fisheries inspectors. The FCWC stated that the TF should revisit the idea of training judges initiated by Ghana, and expand on the training to the rest of the countries. Highlighting the need to identify elements of the TF that are going well and where more resources should be applied, the TT team stated that there will be a consultative process to develop plans and needs for the second phase, and that the priority for 2017 is national level work, as the majority of the requests are for activities and support at the country level.

6. Task Force outcomes, requests and recommendations

6.1 Outcomes of the Task Force

The TF agreed on the following outcomes, agreeing to:

- Continue to share lists of national and foreign industrial fishing vessels licensed to fish within the EEZ and external waters on a quarterly basis on the WATF communications platform Basecamp
- Incorporate mandatory IMO numbers for eligible vessels as a fishing licensing prerequisite in line with Measure 53 of the FCWC RPOA-IUU and the FAO Global Record Initiative
- Include the development of a national (and/or regional) closed season in the agenda for the FCWC Ministers Conference, and explore options for developing a regional closed season (already initiated in Ghana)
- Provide regular updates on vessels arrested or fined on communications platforms, e.g. on Basecamp
- Share approaches, training and sensitisation material on the management of small scale fishers, and countries to cooperate and work towards regional solutions
- Expand the WATF toolbox by sharing national examples of templates, documents, methodologies etc. as used by FCWC countries
- Conduct internal discussions and consultations on national needs for and through the NWGs, and make proposals in order to plan for and prioritize these needs in future TF activities
- Include NCBs in all NWGs, in order to strengthen links to INTERPOL
- Build links with Interpol Fisheries Crime Working Group Projects and Project Scale
- Enhance collaboration with FAOLEX and consider creation of a FCWC sub-database of legal material, based on FAOLEX – to be hosted on FAOLEX or the FCWC website
- Recognise the need to develop regulations and other instruments for implementation of national fisheries laws and the need for regional harmonisation.
- Discuss at the Ministers Conference the upcoming 10 year anniversary of FCWC, including a decision on by who and how this will be managed
- Publicise the 9th Ministerial Conference
- Plan with FCWC and Nigeria for the 10th FCWC Ministerial Conference in 2017
- Recognise that the current project phase ends in 2017 and support efforts to secure a second project phase

6.2 Requests from the Task Force to the Technical Team

The TF agreed to the following requests, for assistance from the WATF TT to:

6.2.1 Capacity building

- Develop a plan for training including support for national exchanges and inspector training
- Provide further capacity building support to NWGs personnel
- Build stronger cooperation and integration to be able to work with INTERPOL, and to work with the Fisheries Crime Working Group to identify specific cases and areas of interest for cooperation
- Include partners to support the training plan as appropriate

6.2.2 IMO numbers

- Provide guidelines and technical assistance for the uptake of IMO numbers by country registered and licensed fishing vessels and provide awareness material to support this process in the region

6.2.3 National Working Groups

- Assist in establishing a NWG in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria
- Continue to build on the NWGs in other countries

6.2.4 Small scale fisheries

- Research potential partners for funding and support for small-scale fisheries in MCS

6.2.5 Transshipment

- Consider the role of small-scale vessels that cooperate with industrial trawlers, by transshipment of catch
- Explore the option to expand the reefer strategy into a broader transshipment strategy

6.2.6 Communications

- Provide relevant documents from the WATF to be included on the FCWC website
- Produce communication and awareness material on the results and impact of the TF on fisheries management in the sub-region for wider distribution

6.2.7 Legal assistance

- Compile the latest fisheries legislation and make them available to TF via Basecamp and/or FAOLEX
- Assist in working towards PSMA ratification in Liberia, Benin and Nigeria
- Provide technical assistance for implementation of the PSMA
- Assist in the re-integration into ICCAT (Benin and Togo)
- Consider ways to share information from the legal review to a wider audience
- Based on the results of the Legal Review, identify areas where legal instruments can be harmonised across the region

6.2.8 Next phase of Norad funding

- Prepare a next phase for the project to support WATF if requested by Norad

6.3 Additional requests outside the scope of the WATF TT to:

- Provide assistance to review legal framework for IUU fishing and drafting of specific instruments (Togo, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire)
- Assist with the NPOA-IUU fishing development (Nigeria)
- Explore options to build on Ghana's experience delivering judiciary training

7. Closing remarks

Speaking on behalf of the TF members Ms Kupolati thanked Benin for their hospitality and the TT for their support, before handing over to Mr Hippolyte Houenou of Benin to close the meeting on behalf of the host country. Mr Houenou commended the TF members and observers for their hard work, and encouraged countries to continue working in a spirit of cooperation. He sent his well wishes to all participants on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, and declared the meeting officially closed.



8. Annexes

8.1 List of acronyms and abbreviations

AIS	Automatic Identification System	Norad	Norwegian Development Agency
AU	African Union	NPOA-IUU	National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
BNF	Bureau of National Fisheries	NWGs	National Working Groups
DPH	Fisheries Production Directorate (Benin)	PSMA	FAO Port State Measures Agreement
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone	RPOA-IUU	Regional Plan of Action to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices including Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
EU	European Union	SFPA	Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	SIF	Stop Illegal Fishing
FCWC	Fishery Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea	TF	Task Force
FCWG	INTERPOL Fisheries Crime Working Group	TF1	Task Force Meeting 1
FMC	Fisheries Monitoring Centre	TF2	Task Force Meeting 2
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas	TF3	Task Force Meeting 3
IMO	The International Maritime Organization	TMT	Trygg Mat Tracking
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (fishing)	ToR	Terms of Reference
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance	TT	Technical Team
NCB	National Crime Bureau	VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
NFDS	Nordenfjeldske Development Services	WARFP	West Africa Regional Fisheries Program
NIMASA	Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency	WATF	West Africa Task Force
		WIO	Western Indian Ocean

8.2 Workshop agenda

Monday 24 October 2016

08:30 to 09:00

REGISTRATION

09:00 to 09:45

OPENING SESSION

- Welcome by FCWC Secretariat – Secretary-General Seraphin Dedi
- Remarks from the Technical Team – D. Copeland
- Opening by Government of Benin
- Introduction of participants
- Group Photo

09:45 to 10:15

BREAK

10:15 to 10:30

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

- Agreement of agenda – Facilitator S. Davies

10:30 to 12:30

TASK FORCE PRESENTATIONS

- TF countries National MCS Activities since TF2 including implementation of the NWGs – TF countries

12:30 to 13:30

LUNCH

13:30 to 15:30

REVIEW OF WATF ACTIVITIES SINCE TF2 MEETING

- Review of the Initiative – D. Copeland
- Technical team report to the Task Force on TF2 recommendations – S.Davies and D.Copeland
- Overview of all activities – TMT
- Review of Basecamp activity – what has been shared, what can be improved – TMT
- Review of toolbox – what is there, what is planned, input from TF – TMT
- Profiling the work of the FCWC and WATF; review of communications activity and discussion of future opportunities – S.Davies

15:30 to 16:00

BREAK

16:00 to 17:00

REVIEW OF WATF ACTIVITIES SINCE TF2 MEETING (CONT.)

Tuesday 25 October 2016

09:00 to 09:05

REVIEW OF DAY 1

09:05 to 10:30

VESSEL ANALYSIS

- Overview of vessel movements and characteristic in the WATF region – TMT
- Photo analysis with example cases – TMT
- IMO numbers – TMT

10:30 to 10:45

BREAK

10:45 to 11:45

REEFER REVIEW

- Review of Reefers and their operations – TMT
- Review and Discussion of the Regional Reefer Strategy – TMT

11.45 to 12.45	CASE ANALYSIS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary analysis of what we are learning / seeing from identified WATF cases (review of identified 2-3 cases broken down into their components processes and preliminary observations made) – TMT
12.45 to 13.30	LUNCH
13.30 to 14.30	LEGAL REVIEW
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of final report and recommendations – S. Davies Identification of national needs and ways forward – Seraphin Dedi
14.30 to 15.15	INTRODUCTION OF FAOLEX IN SUPPORT OF THE LEGAL REVIEW ACTIVITIES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training on the use of FAOLEX system online and explore links with FCWC website – FAO
15.15 to 15.30	BREAK
15.30 to 17.30	REGIONAL SESSION OF INTERPOL AND THE FISHERIES CRIME WORKING GROUP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpol and Norway
Wednesday 26 October 2016	
09:00 to 09:05	REVIEW OF DAY 2
09:05 to 10:30	FCWC 2016 MINISTERS CONFERENCE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WATF suggestions or proposition for Draft Agenda of the Ministers Conference – S. Davies Communications needs – S. Dedi
10:30 to 11:00	BREAK
11:00 to 12.45	PLANNING AND NEXT ACTIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of findings of the Norad mid-term review – TMT Planning activities in remaining project period Looking ahead
12.45 to 13.30	LUNCH
13.30 to 15.15	WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE SESSION – facilitated S. Davies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task Force discussion, recommendations and internal decisions
15.15 to 15.30	BREAK
15.30 to 17.20	West Africa Task Force Session cont.
17.20 to 17.30	Thanks and Close by the Government of Benin
19:00	WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE DINNER

8.3 Attendance list

BENIN

Honourable Delphin O. Koudande
Minister, Ministry of Agriculture Livestock
and Fisheries

Kasseau Herman Gangbazo
SPM, Ministry of Agriculture Livestock
and Fisheries
kasseau@yahoo.fr

Thierry Ahloumessou
DPH
thiehloum@gmail.com

Hercile Akpamoli
PAC/DC
Hercile2000@yahoo.fr

D. M. Nelly Lotsu
Naval Forces
nelly.lotsu@gmail.com

Sébastien Ahouandjogbe
DPH
sebastienahouandjogbe@gmail.com

Bernard Tossi
DPH
tossibernard@yahoo.fr

Hippolyte Houenou
DPH
azougoue@gmail.com

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Fofana Bina
DAP
binafof@yahoo.fr

Kouassi Bossian Nestor
DAP
kouassi.bossian@yahoo.fr

GHANA

Godfrey Baidoo-Tsibu
Head of MCS
godfreytsibu.gbt@gmail.com

Numorius Pengyeri
Deputy Director
npengyeri@yahoo.com

LIBERIA

Ahmed Sherif
Focal Point, Bureau of National Fisheries
ecinue2@gmail.com

William Boeh
Director of Fisheries,
Bureau of National Fisheries
williamboeh@gmail.com

NIGERIA

Bola A. Kupolati
Head of MCS
Kupolati 2402@yahoo.com

TOGO

Pikliwoe Katanga
Legal advisor
Pikliwoe-katanga@yahoo.fr

Marthe Kebenzikato
DPA
kebyvette@yahoo.fr

OBSERVERS

Alessandra Tomassi
FAO consultant
alessandra.tomassi@fao.org

Tor Glistrup
Fishcrime Working Group, INTERPOL
tor.glistrup@fiskeridir.no

Mario Alcaide
CIO, INTERPOL
m.alcaide@interpol.int



Dedi Nadjé Seraphin

Secretary General

sdedi.nadje@yahoo.fr

Bio Bata Joel

FCWC

biobata.joris@yahoo.fr

Doris Yao

Communications Officer

doris@fcwc-fish.org



Duncan Copeland

Chief Analyst

dcopeland@tm-tracking.org

Eleanor Partridge

Analyst

epartridge@tm-tracking.org

Viviane Koutob

West Africa Field Coordinator

vkoutob@tm-tracking.org



Sandy Davies

Coordination Team

sdavies@nfdi.info

Mark Ssemakula

Coordination Team

mssemakula@nfdi.info



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The West Africa Task Force brings together the six member countries of the FCWC – Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo – to tackle illegal fishing and fisheries crime. The Task Force is hosted by the FCWC and supported by a Technical Team that includes TMT, Stop Illegal Fishing and NFDS with funding from Norad. By actively cooperating, by sharing information and by establishing interagency working groups the West Africa Task Force are working together to stop illegal fishing.

For more information go to:

www.fcwc-fish.org

FCWC

4th floor of Fisheries Research Institute Building
Community II area
P.O. Box BT 62 Tema
Ghana
Tel: +233 (0) 303 20 53 23