



FCWC

Fisheries Committee for
the West Central Gulf of Guinea



FCWC
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HARMONIZING CONDITIONS FOR ACCESS TO FISHERY RESOURCES

By harmonizing access conditions such as licence fees and regulations, flagging conditions, port access requirements, transshipment conditions and promoting region-wide mandatory requirements for the use of unique vessel identifiers and satellite tracking, the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) is contributing to the development of secure and sustainable fisheries and transparency in West Africa. This harmonisation will make fisheries easier to manage for fisheries management and enforcement agencies and more efficient for fishers and operators working in multiple countries of the FCWC region.



Recognizing the benefits to be gained by a coordinated approach to tackling the ongoing problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the region and to developing sustainable fisheries, the FCWC developed a Regional Plan of Action to combat IUU and a strategic document for its implementation. These documents identify the need to harmonize the conditions required before fishing vessels are granted access to the region's fishery resources.

This resulted in the adoption of The Convention on Minimum Requirements for Access to the Fishery Resources of the Area of the FCWC in 2013. It sets out minimum standards for fishing vessels before they are registered or granted fishing rights.

The Convention builds on the provisions of relevant international agreements, including the FAO's:

- 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- 2001 International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing.
- 2009 Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing.

It also recognizes the value of artisanal fishing to communities, and the dominance of the sector in terms of catches throughout the region.

WHY IS THE CONVENTION NECESSARY?

Reaching an agreement between FCWC Member States on the minimum requirements for access to fishery resources is an important step towards the successful management of the region's shared fish stocks. It promotes control over the vessels operating in the area – artisanal and industrial fishing vessels and support vessels such as reefers and service vessels.

Joint systems already in place or in development – the West Africa Task Force, the FCWC Regional Vessel Monitoring Centre (RVMC) and the FCWC Regional Record of Vessels – will be much easier to operate with harmonized minimum access requirements. The standardization of registration, licensing and operating requirements for fishing vessels facilitates MCS and makes tackling the on-going problem of IUU fishing less complicated.



WHAT DO FCWC MEMBER STATES NEED TO DO?

Each Member State has an obligation to:

- Cooperate closely with other Member States in the fight against IUU fishing.
- Keep a national list of registered and licensed fishing vessels.
- Ensure all vessels flying its flag comply with the provisions of the Convention and are not engaged in IUU fishing.
- Establish an effective port inspection system.
- Implement a satellite monitoring system for all registered and licensed fishing vessels.
- Collect and share data on fishing activities within their EEZ and by registered fishing vessels in other FCWC Member States.
- Consult with its artisanal fishers and all relevant stakeholders to incorporate this sector into a harmonised fisheries resources management system.
- Impose sanctions that are severe enough to deter IUU fishing.
- Ensure the provisions of international agreements are integrated in national legislations.

HARMONIZING TERMS AND CONDITIONS IN THE FCWC REGION

REGISTERING AND LICENSING OF FISHING VESSELS

PERMITTING ACCESS AND USE OF PORTS BY FISHING VESSELS

MONITORING OF FISHING ACTIVITY

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

- To strengthen the regional management of shared fish stocks.
- To stop the exploitation of loopholes and weaknesses in controls between States.

PRE-FLAGGING AND FISHING LICENCE DECISIONS

Risk criteria:

- Vessel identity, history and compliance record.
- Owners and operators' compliance history.

PORT STATE MEASURES FOR PORT ACCESS, USE AND INSPECTION DECISIONS

Risk criteria:

- Vessel identity, history and compliance record.
- Owners and operators' compliance history.
- Catch on board.

TARGETING OF MONITORING, INSPECTION AND SURVEILLANCE RESOURCES

Risk criteria:

- Target species and gears.
- Stock assessment status.
- Vessel movement and activity.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- To strengthen negotiations with distant water fishing nations.
- To standardize requirements to make it easier for operators to fulfil their obligations and follow the rules.

- Flag registration fees and conditions.
- Fishing licensing fees and conditions.
- Access agreements and arrangements.
- Inspection processes.

- Designation of ports.
- Requirements for use of ports.
- Procedures for advance request for entry to port (AREP).
- Procedures for inspection procedures and sampling strategies.

- Reporting of catch and effort data (fishing logbooks).
- Requirements for at-sea observers.
- Requirements for at-sea transshipment.
- Requirements for fishing gear.
- Inspection processes.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS

- To simplify rules and reporting requirements to increase compliance.
- To increase oversight through regional requirement for AIS and VMS.
- To facilitate joint operational activity to share resources and target needs.

- Vessel identifiers and characteristics.
- Vessel activity monitoring.
- Authorisations.
- Fines, sanctions and penalties.
- Requirements for maritime safety and labour standards.

- Vessel identifiers.
- Denial of port access or port services.
- Fines, sanctions and penalties.
- Requirements for maritime safety and labour standards.

- Discards.
- Bycatch.
- Restricted areas.
- Seasonal closures.
- Landing requirements.
- Crew requirements.

FCWC REGIONAL SYSTEMS AND MECHANISMS

- To support the pooling and sharing of information and data.
- To support MCS and management decision-making and prioritisation.

- Sharing information on registration and licence conditions.
- Training for negotiation of access agreements.
- Developing a strategy for harmonizing registration and licence conditions.
- Routine sharing of registration and licence lists between FCWC Member States.

- Raising awareness on the need for and benefits of strong port State measures.
- Supporting the implementation of port State measures.
- Providing tools and training to improve risk assessment and inspection processes.

- Delivering regional VMS.
- Strengthening procedures for the collection of scientific information.
- Development of Regional Strategy for Transshipment.

THE FISHERIES COMMITTEE OF THE WEST CENTRAL GULF OF GUINEA (FCWC)

WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2007 TO FACILITATE COOPERATION IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BETWEEN THE MEMBER COUNTRIES: BENIN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, GHANA, LIBERIA, NIGERIA AND TOGO. THE COUNTRIES HAVE SEVERAL SHARED FISH STOCKS AND IDENTIFIED A NEED FOR COOPERATION AND GUIDANCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THESE RESOURCES.



The Regional Fisheries Management Plan of 2018 highlighted several ongoing problems which need to be addressed – depletion of the region's major fish stocks, management systems that are still inadequate despite significant efforts that have been made in recent years, and the need to put a stop to overexploitation of resources and expansion of fishing capacity. Implementation of the Convention is an important step in tackling these concerns.

FCWC Member States will benefit from a harmonized system of granting access rights through:

- Improved ability to tackle IUU fishing through a regionally coordinated approach.
- Better management and sustainable use of the region's fisheries resources.
- Regulation of access to fisheries resources in the artisanal sector, harmonization of technical measures is particularly important for controlling fishers who migrate across borders.
- Harmonization of technical measures will promote the sustainable use of shared stocks and facilitate the development, adoption and implementation of shared stock management plans.



Source Material

- Convention on Minimum Requirements for Access to the Fishery Resources of the Area of the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC).
- FCWC Regional Fisheries Management Plan.



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