

FCWC statement on Agenda item 9: Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1-5 February 2021

The Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), established in 2007 between the States of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo, welcomes the Working Document COFI/2020/7 from the FAO Secretariat on combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. While the FCWC Member States, are collaborating through an extensive programme of work to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, in respect to Targets 14.4 and 14.6 we are collaborating through our West Africa Task Force (WATF) on monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS).

The FCWC Members have focused considerable attention on combatting IUU fishing and in particular the issue of illegal transshipment in recent years. We therefore welcome the work and outcomes of the 2019-2020 FAO in-depth study on transshipment as an important step towards strengthening global management of transshipment in the fisheries sector.

We have identified at-sea transshipment as a major challenge in the sustainable management of fisheries resources, a key facilitator of illegal fishing and a means for illegally caught fish to enter the supply chain in our region. In response to this, ***the FCWC Strategy to combat illegal transshipment at sea was adopted in 2017***. The strategy recognises that transshipment at-sea is principally illegal within the FCWC region and that unauthorised at-sea transshipment occurs in various ways, involving industrial and small-scale fishing vessels and a wide range of diverse transport vessels.

Following the adoption of the strategy and during its implementation, we have been monitoring and researching transshipment to understand the wider perspective of transshipment and its impacts on the FCWC Region. The report under preparation is called, Transshipment: ***Issues and Responses in the FCWC Region***. Findings, demonstrate the complexity of transshipment and its impacts, ranging from compliance aspects for fishery legislation, implementation of RFMO conservation and management measures, facilitation of fishery crimes and social economic impacts on local fishing communities and government returns. The complexities in respect to overlaps between national authorities including fisheries, port, police and customs authorities has also been apparent and the resultant potential gaps in oversight that this can create.

Developing international guidelines for *inter alia*, definitions, authorisations, reporting and information sharing in respect to monitoring transshipment within the fishery sector will be a useful step towards improved global oversight. We also note that agreed guidelines will assist in implementation of the 2009 Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) especially in areas related to definitions, links between the small scale and industrial sectors and the need for interagency cooperation.

We invite COFI Members to view HERE, <https://fcwc-fish.org/resources/reports>, a summary of cases that demonstrate the great diversity in transshipment methods, different fisheries and fishery products involved and vessel types that impact the West Africa region. This summary is a preliminary report before the launch of our full report in March 2021 on Transshipment: ***Issues and Responses in the FCWC Region***.

Finally, the FCWC Member States support the need for the development of guidelines on the regulation, monitoring and control of transshipment operations and we look forward to participating in the process of their elaboration or a successful conclusion.

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