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African Nations to Use New Technology in Tightening Port Controls, Fighting Illegal Fishing With Big Data

Pilot Project Delivers New Vessel Tracking Technology and Analysis Where Limited Resources Hamper Detection and Enforcement Efforts

Dakar, Senegal - Four African nations and a regional fisheries organization are harnessing new technology to strengthen port controls and combat illegal fishing. The international nonprofits, Global Fishing Watch and Trygg Mat Tracking are partnering with Senegal, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea in a pilot project to provide authorities with satellite tracking data, analysis and training needed to assess a fishing vessel's recent operations and compliance risk. The collaboration will better position port authorities and fisheries officials to monitor the movements of fishing and carrier vessels, identify activity that may indicate an elevated risk of illegal behavior, and target inspections and enforcement where they are needed most.

*"Implementing strong port controls is the best and most effective opportunity to ensure that illegal catch has no market, and illegal fishing operators are cut off from their profits," said **Duncan Copeland, Executive Director of Trygg Mat Tracking.** "To do so requires the ability to make rapid risk assessments to inform the key decisions on whether to let a vessel into port, and where to target inspections. We are very pleased to be adding this new port control focus to our cooperation with Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea, towards building the tools, data, routines and capacity needed to effectively implement the Port State Measures Agreement in East and West Africa."*

Representatives from the four partner countries, West Africa's Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea, regional experts, Global Fishing Watch and Trygg Mat Tracking will convene the project's first steering committee meeting Nov. 9-10, 2021, hosted by the Senegal Fisheries Protection and Surveillance Directorate, in Senegal's coastal city of Saly. Attendees will discuss challenges and opportunities surrounding the implementation of the Agreement on Port State Measures—an initiative of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations designed to deter and prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing—and ways to use emerging technology to strengthen port controls. Illegal fishing in East and West Africa is a well documented challenge, involving vessels from all over the world. Ports are often the last checkpoint where fish can be clearly linked to the vessel that caught it, and they offer one of the best and most cost-effective opportunities to identify and deter illegal fishing.

*"We are pleased to offer support to Senegal, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea as they step forward to address Africa's serious problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing," said **Tony Long, Chief Executive***

Officer of Global Fishing Watch. *“African nations are aware of the grave threat illegal activity off their shores presents to their livelihoods and food security. Support for the landmark Agreement on Port State Measures has been promising and significant among the continent’s coastal States since the agreement came into force in 2016, and with easy-to-access technology and training to use it, African States can better defend their fisheries for generations to come.”*

Global Fishing Watch and Trygg Mat Tracking will introduce Vessel Viewer, a new fishing vessel history tool developed by the two organizations that provides information on a vessel’s identity, fishing activity, port visits and transshipments. This allows users to identify and cross-check relevant, absent or false information about a given vessel and its fishing operations to inform risk-based decision-making and operational planning.

In addition to the new vessel viewer tool, the pilot project includes the following areas of cooperation between the pilot countries, Global Fishing Watch and Trygg Mat Tracking:

- **Port risk assessment:** Review of port activity within partner countries to determine their risk for being an entry point for illegal seafood, based on analysis of data from automatic identification systems and other tracking information for fishing and carrier vessels. Authorities can use this analysis to decide which vessels present the highest risk and should be prioritized for inspections, helping to maximize limited resources.
- **Advanced request for entry to port (AREP):** For States to meet their obligations under the Agreement on Port State Measures, all foreign flagged fishing vessels seeking to enter port and offload catch must make the request 72 hours in advance and with it, make their voyage, vessel and activity details available to authorities. The pilot project will provide intelligence on vessels and their fishing operations which can be used by authorities to support their AREP procedures and make timely and sound decisions on whether to grant entry to port and where to target limited inspection capacities.
- **Capacity building and analysis:** Partner countries will receive training on Vessel Viewer, risk assessments and best practices for targeted port entry decision-making and inspection processes. They can request analysis on high-risk vessels and in cases where likely IUU fishing activity is identified, Global Fishing Watch and Trygg Mat Tracking will support investigations, through data and analysis, by authorities.

“As the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea looks to consolidate and extend the achievements of sub-regional cooperation in the fight against IUU fishing, and for maritime safety, we welcome the support of Global Fishing Watch and Trygg Mat Tracking in this pilot project to support our Member States Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire in implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement,” said **Seraphin Dedi, Secretary-General of the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea.** *“The success of this program will help the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea to adopt this methodology for harmonized fisheries and vessel inspections in ports of this region.”*

The pilot project is supported by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Oak Foundation and Norad.

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Media Contacts:

Global Fishing Watch Contact: media@globalfishingwatch.org

Trygg Mat Tracking Contact: info@tm-tracking.org

Note to the Editor:

Download associated photos and gifs here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17wvvrbvigbQTVRo7kMWLbMLNjit6fBV7?usp=sharing>

Global Fishing Watch is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing ocean governance through increased transparency of human activity at sea. By creating and publicly sharing map visualizations, data and analysis tools, we aim to enable scientific research and transform the way our ocean is managed. We believe human activity at sea should be public knowledge in order to safeguard the global ocean for the common good of all.

Trygg Mat Tracking (TMT) is a Norwegian nonprofit organization that provides national fisheries authorities and international organizations with fisheries intelligence, analysis, and capacity building, targeting a reduction of illegal fishing and broader improvements in ocean governance.

The Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) is an intergovernmental body established in 2007, with a secretariat hosted in Tema, Ghana. The FCWC facilitates cooperation in fisheries management between its member countries: Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria. The countries have several shared fish stocks and identified a need for cooperation and shared management of these resources. The FCWC Regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Centre provides a cost-effective mechanism to support operational cooperation, improve communication and build regional capacity to stop illegal fishing.