

Improving the understanding and regional awareness of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing occurring in small-scale/ artisanal fisheries and the impacts it has on ocean conservation, blue economies and communities in the Western Indian Ocean – Technical and policy recommendations

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Abstract

Despite a growing IUU fishing problem impacting artisanal/ small-scale fisheries in the WIO region, few actors have a comprehensive understanding of the scope and broader impacts of the problem. This paper calls for a regional plan of action to better understand and address IUU fishing by both small-scale fishers and industrial fishing vessels occurring within artisanal/ small-scale fisheries of the WIO region, with a particular emphasis on programs to improve information, raise awareness and devise strategies to curb those illegal activities. There is an urgent need for collective regional effort (in the form of long-term support to national Governments) prioritizing research, information sharing, capacity building and the strengthening of Monitoring Control & Surveillance (MCS) systems. An integrated and participatory approach to sustainable development and management of small-scale fisheries involving all stakeholders (resource users, academia, civil society, and Governments) is recommended.

- Achieve recognition and agreement by the Parties to the Nairobi Convention that IUU fishing conducted by both industrial fishing vessels and small-scale fishermen within artisanal/ small-scale fisheries is not only a fisheries issue, but also greatly undermines the ability to sustainably manage ocean and coastal resources. Therefore, it is relevant to be recognized as a threat and addressed by the Parties to the Nairobi Convention.
- IUU fishing should also be recognized as a threat toward achieving SDGs and blue economy initiatives at both a country and regional level, hindering potential benefits such as food security, sustainable livelihoods, and social protection through strengthened trade and improved economic performance.
- Develop a WIO regional plan of action by the Parties to the Nairobi Convention to address IUU fishing performed by both industrial fishing vessels and small-scale fishermen within artisanal/ small-scale fisheries and unlock the full potential of the blue economy in alignment with and in support of other regional efforts. The plan will include:
 - assistance and support to national Governments to elaborate legislation and regulations for small-scale fisheries.
 - improving research and information gathering to create awareness and sensitization of fisherfolks and policymakers on biodiversity and the sustainability of resources; and
 - the strengthening of local fisheries organizations and institutions for community-based and/or participatory management, or co-management and improving MCS in small-scale fisheries.
- Conduct a WIO regional threat assessment focusing on IUU fishing practices by both industrial fishing vessels and small-scale fishermen within artisanal/ small-scale fisheries.
- Mobilize actors' networks and establish a regional inter-sectoral IUU fishing expert panel.