



## **STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR COMBATING ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING**

### Key Messages:

- The Regional Economic Communities should have greater role in any regional MCS arrangement ; the initiatives should be within the administrative frameworks of the RECs since they have the political mandate for regional policies and their governance
- The Regional Fisheries Bodies should have the technical oversight role of the implementation of MCS activities, e.g. Regional fisheries patrols, maintaining regional vessel registers, IUU black list, supervising regional observer programmes etc.
- Regional cooperation on MCS tools (e.g. Regional Observer programme, Regional vessel registers etc), including their implementation strategy, should be within the framework of the overall cooperation agreement (e.g. MOU) between the RECs and the specialized fisheries institutions (the RFBs) for regional fisheries management and development. The AU-led African Fisheries Reform Mechanism could provide a vehicle to facilitate for coordination and cooperation
- A single recognized regional institutional framework for MCS would be cost effective rather than diverse fragmented initiatives in any one region. The recognized regional institution should be underscored by harmonization of laws and regulations in member states.
- A clear funding and sustainable financial strategy of any regional MCS initiative should be developed and endorsed at the RECs level outlining commitments and responsibilities of member states
- Capacity building strategy in all aspects of MCS, e.g. communication, navigation, boarding and inspection procedures, prosecution etc should underpin any regional MCS cooperation programme.

### Background

This policy brief is a synthesis of the findings of the scoping missions conducted by AU-IBAR under the EU funded project 'Strengthening institutional capacity to enhance governance of the fisheries sector in Africa'. The overall objective of these scoping missions was to establish the status of regional initiatives for cooperation on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) for effectively and sustainably combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The mission visited and conducted interviews with the following organizations: the Sub Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) in Dakar, Senegal; the SRFC Surveillance Operation Control Unit (SOCU) in Banjul, The Gambia; the Secretariat of the Fisheries Committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), Accra, Ghana; the MESA Project based in Accra, Ghana; the Regional Fisheries Commission for Gulf of Guinea (COREP), Libreville, Gabon; the Command of Multinational Centre for Coordination (CMC), Douala, Cameroon; the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Gaborone, Botswana; the Executive of the Stop-Illegal-Fishing (SIF), Gaborone, Gabon; the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Port Louis, Mauritius.

Fostering regional collaborating for combating IUU is a key expected outcome of the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS). This need for regional cooperation was underscored by the one of key recommendations of the first conference of African ministers for fisheries and aquaculture (CAMFA) in 2010 which noted that single states may well reform their fisheries policies and

governance, yet remain vulnerable to the activities of their neighbours and therefore recommended that Member States, RECs and RFBs strengthen MCS and foster regional cooperation to curb IUU fishing.

## **Introduction**

Africa is adjacent to some of the most productive large marine ecosystems in the world; the Agulhas Current LME and the Somali Current LME (ASLME); the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME); the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME); the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME); the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystems (MSLME). African LMEs possess significant marine biodiversity and habitats that provide the coastal countries with some of the world's most productive fishing grounds. Many of the fish resources are transboundary in nature, shared resources and targets of exploitation most often through IUU fishing by national and distant water fleets. An effective MCS is considered the best hope of preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing and is recognized as one of the important instruments of good governance in fisheries management both in areas under national jurisdiction and the high seas.

## **Rationale**

IUU fishing remains one of the major significant threats to sustainable fisheries in Africa. Currently IUU fishing causes a huge loss in billions of dollars of annual economic benefits for Africa and negatively affects the livelihoods of people who depend on fisheries in many of African coastal countries. The IUU fishing contributes to unsustainable impacts on target, non-target species as well as the surrounding ecosystems with consequences of reducing productivity, biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. These consequences have implications for food and nutritional security, employment and income particularly for coastal communities in Africa that are heavily dependent on fish as a source of animal protein and livelihoods.

The first conference of African Ministers for fisheries and aquaculture in 2010 expressed concern over the magnitude of (IUU) fishing in Africa and its adverse consequences on both the economies of Member States and the fisheries stocks and thus recommended that Member States, RECs and RFBs strengthen MCS and foster regional cooperation to curb IUU fishing. In 2014, the African Ministers reaffirmed commitment to strengthen the MCS capacity including implementation of port states measures, flag state measures and related instruments in order to combat IUU fishing

The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, the blueprint for the region's fisheries development, recognizes that IUU fishing results from the open access character of capture fisheries, inadequate or weak national governance for the management of transboundary resources and ecosystems, institutional weaknesses, and insufficient financial investments opportunities. As such, the PFRS underscores the importance of promoting effective and sustainable regional MCS systems in all regions of the continent. Regional cooperation in MCS is crucial to effective fisheries management, particularly for shared stocks. Some of the mechanisms that underpin successful for bilateral, sub-regional and regional cooperation on MCS include joint agreement on the exchange of information and data, harmonized legislation, implementation of flag and port State control agreements, and implementation of combined measures to address IUU fishing. There are however also challenges and areas of constraint. These include: the issue of the security of sensitive data, political differences between participating states, as well as differences in the economic situations of member States. This is particularly important when devising cost sharing arrangements to support the implementation of a regional MCS system.

## OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL INITIATIVES FOR MCS WEST AFRICA

### North Western Africa

#### ***The Sub Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) - The Surveillance Operational Control Unit (SOCU)***

SRFC in North Western Africa is a Regional Fisheries Body (RFB) constituted in 1985 by seven member states (Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, The Gambia, Guinea and Sierra Leone) is based in Dakar, Senegal. The institution established the Surveillance Operational Control Unit (SOCU) in 1994 under a host agreement with the Government of the Gambia, signed in 2001. Under the overall mandate of SRFC, the main objective of the SOCU is to, strengthen capacity of member states for effective MCS systems, plan and conduct air and sea fisheries surveillance operations in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of the seven member states SOCU has an established Communication Unit which works directly with MCS national structures in the seven SRFC member states.

### The West Central Africa

#### ***The Fisheries Committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC)***

FCWC is constituted by six member states (Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria) and has a mandate from member states to facilitate regional cooperation in fisheries management and has a strategic plan which envisages regional cooperation in fighting against IUU. There is however no established regional MCS system in the FCWC region. There is a political commitment by the 6-member states to establish an MCS centre but as yet there is no formal operational linkage between the national MCS systems of the six member States and the Secretariat of FCWC.

#### ***ECOWAS Coastal & Marine Resources Management Project - Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) Programme at University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.***

The MESA is a Pan-African Program of the African Union Commission which seeks to address the challenge of using Earth Observation data to help decision makers effectively manages the environment and its resources. The objective of the project is to increase the information management, decision-making and planning capacity of ECOWAS institutions that are mandated for coastal and marine management, by enhancing access to and utilization of relevant Earth Observation (EO) data. The MESA project is EU funded.

### CENTRAL AFRICA

#### ***The Regional Fisheries Commission for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP)***

The COREP is an intergovernmental organization that was created by the Convention for the regional development of fisheries in the Gulf of Guinea, signed on 21 June 1984 in Libreville, Gabon. COREP has seven (7) states with five (5) Member States (Cameroon, Congo, DR Congo, Gabon and Sao Tome & Principe) and two Observer States (Angola and Equatorial Guinea). The Convention of the COREP and its Strategic Action Plan mandated the COREP Executive Secretariat to address issues of MCS to combat IUU fishing in the area covered by this regional organization. The institution presently does not have a regional structure for coordinating MCS systems in the region.

Presently the Centre for Multinational Coordination (CMC), a naval outfit affiliated to ECCAS, has the operational mandate to conduct fisheries patrols within Zone D of the COREP member states EEZs. Zone D consists of the EEZs of Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea-Equatorial and Sao Tome & Principe. CMC came into being on 6 May 2009 in Yaoundé Cameroon, when the Defence Ministers of Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea-Equatorial and Sao Tome & Principe, in Yaoundé, Cameroon, signed a Technical Agreement establishing CMC as the agency responsible for securing their common maritime zones (Zone D).

However, the regional fisheries body (COREP) has no formal linkage with CMC on matters pertaining to regional MCS. Equally so, COREP has no recognized role in the conduct of MCS within its member states and no established reporting lines. However, the CMC reports institutionally to the ECCAS under the 2009 Protocol.

## **SOUTHERN AFRICA**

### ***Southern African Development Community (SADC) MCS Initiative***

A key objective of the SADC Treaty is the sustainable use of natural resources and effective protection of the environment to improve the living standards of the people of the region as well as to foster regional integration. In support of the SADC Treaty, there is a Protocol on Fisheries ratified by SADC member states in 2001 in Blantyre, Malawi. The objective of this protocol is to promote responsible and sustainable use of the living aquatic resources and aquatic ecosystems of interest to State Parties. There is an in principle commitment that SADC Members will work towards establishment of an SADC Regional Fisheries MCS Coordinating Centre. This joint objective is set out in the SADC Statement of Commitment by SADC Ministers Responsible for Marine Fisheries on IUU fishing (2008). The proposed MCS coordinating centre is not yet established. However, Maputo, Mozambique has been identified as a possible location for the centre.

### ***Stop-Illegal Fishing (SIF)***

SIF was initially a working group on MCS under the NEPAD-PAF programme but has now progressed as a legal non-profit entity, based in Botswana and governed by a Board. The SIF is to service the pan African integration agenda, help with inter-governmental process, and facilitate cooperation among AU countries, RFMOs, RFBs etc. The SIF also conducts campaigns focusing on small-scale fisheries, including inland capture fisheries.

### ***An offshoot of SIF is Fish-I Africa. FISH-I Africa is a regional Task Force to stop illegal fishing in the Western Indian Ocean region.***

The initiative is a partnership between the seven coastal States (Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania). Stop Illegal Fishing coordinates it and NFDS (Nordenfjeldske Development Services) provides technical advice and input. NFDS is a consultancy with Norwegian roots and a long standing presence in Africa. The purpose of the project is to enable targeted enforcement actions against illegal fishing operators through the use of shared intelligence and information and coordinated analysis. The Fish-I initiative is a 'virtual' regional information and communication network and relies heavily on low-technology electronic means for sharing and disseminating information. There are plans to extend this initiative to cover FCWC region.

## **INDIAN OCEAN**

### ***Regional MCS Coordinating Unit***

The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is an intergovernmental organization created in 1982 in Port Louis (Mauritius) and institutionalized in 1984 by the Victoria Agreement (Seychelles). It brings together five countries in the Indian Ocean region: Comoros, France / Reunion, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles.

There is an administrative arrangement between the IOC and Member States to strengthen MCS for combating IUU fishing. There is currently no full MCS regional center. There is however a Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) located within the IOC Headquarters in Mauritius. It has membership from all IOC member states, and supports coordination of actions for combating IUU.

### **Salient Observations:**

- There is a clamour to foster regional cooperation for MCS in all the regions but the absence of institutional frameworks, endorsed by member states, is a major stumbling block that has to be overcome before there is consistent progress towards establishing regional cooperation in MCS
- Most of the established or ongoing regional MCS initiatives lack participation by their respective Regional Economic Communities or RECs. This is a serious constraint as the considerable financial and institutional support that RECs can provide is currently not yet available.
- There is duplication of initiatives within the same regions due to overlap of institutional mandates in MCS issues
- The lack in requisite capacity (human, logistics, institutional) is a critical constraining factor in all the regions
- The general absence of or non-operationalization (where they exist) of essential tools of MCS systems i.e. regional vessel register, comprehensive national observer programmes as well as regional fisheries observer programmes etc is a major impediment to regional effort



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