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Strengthening cooperation and capacity to stop illegal fishing and to build sustainable blue growth in the SADC region

Fisheries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, including marine and inland capture fisheries, generate a variety of benefits towards nutrition and food security, livelihoods, employment, national revenue, exports and foreign currency. However, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which is estimated to cost the SADC region around USD 400 million/year threatens the health of fish stocks, distorts markets, undermines governance, and undermines the wellbeing and livelihoods of coastal communities.

IUU fishing is one of the main causes of overfishing and a barrier to achieving sustainable management of fish stocks in the SADC region. Overfishing is causing economic losses to SADC countries with overfished stocks being less productive and contributing less to the socio-economy of the region. In cases where stocks collapse, the effect can be devastating for coastal communities that depend on them for nutrition and livelihoods.

IUU fishing in the SADC region is seen as a low risk, high reward activity by the perpetrators, this is partially due to the low levels of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) and enforcement. Illegal fishing benefits the illegal operators in a variety of ways, including the non-payment or underpayment of taxes and fees, and through lower operational costs achieved by disregarding regulatory standards. While conversely, for the legal fishers and operators these create unfair disadvantages due to the higher cost of complying to legal requirements including payment of taxes and fees.

IUU fishing is taking place across the SADC region, in:

- Coastal fisheries dynamite fishing, use of nets with small mesh size, and fishing in critical/prohibited/protected habitats are common, resulting in damage to valuable marine habitats and biodiversity, which are essential for ecosystem functioning (e.g. by providing coastal protection and nursery grounds for fish stocks) and for the wellbeing of coastal communities;
- Offshore fisheries: violation of fishing zones and underreporting of catches are common, while document and vessel fraud, modern day slavery and other illegal business practices also occur, all resulting in not only damage to the fish stocks but also contributing to transnational organised crime; and

- Inland fisheries: the use of unsustainable fishing gear and the lack of reporting of catching are serious challenges, while informal cross-border trade is used to circumvent customs and tax controls, denying governments of revenue.

While ignorance of rules and regulations causes illegal fishing that can be addressed by awareness and sensitisation, more serious and organised illegal activities require a more systematic and cooperative region-wide response. An example of this can be seen through the work of the FISH-i Africa Task Force, whose joint investigations, by eight countries,

SADC regional cooperation in MCS

To secure long-term productivity and sustainability of fish stocks in the SADC region, such as tuna, swordfish, hake or Nile perch, as well as improve conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, a regionally coordinated MCS effort is essential to develop compliant fishing operations.

Efforts to stop illegal fishing in the SADC region have been historically driven by national MCS activities that are often hindered by a lack of human, institutional, monetary and infrastructure capacity, and a lack of systematic cooperation between agencies. However, since the turn of the century efforts, have been ongoing to change this situation and to create a more coherent and cooperative approach to tackling IUU fishing in the region.

Major political steps towards this include:

- In 2001 SADC Heads of State endorsed the SADC Protocol on Fisheries with the objective to promote responsible and sustainable use of the living resources and aquatic ecosystems in order to improve food security, alleviate poverty, safeguard livelihoods and generate economic opportunities for the region. For this purpose, the Protocol, includes the need for SADC States to share fisheries information, establish a mechanism for the registration of international and national fishing vessels and to cooperate on the monitoring and control efforts related to the exploitation of shared aquatic resources.
- The 2008 SADC Ministers of Marine Fisheries Statement of Commitment to Combat IUU Fishing is at the heart of the SADC countries efforts to strengthen their MCS systems and to support regional coordination, through the development of a regional MCS strategy and the set-up of a

into illegal fishing in the Western Indian Ocean have provided evidence about illegal activity in the industrial fisheries sector. The evidence shows that systematic, organised and deliberate illegal fishing and associated crimes are committed, including document forgery, corruption, human trafficking and vessel identity fraud. 80% of the illegal operators in addition to violating fisheries legislation also violated rules in respect to vessel safety, pollution, labour and national and maritime security such as fishing vessels being used as a cover for smuggling of illicit cargo (drugs, arms, wildlife).



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MCS centre to effectively enable regional coordination to combat IUU fishing in SADC waters.

- In August 2017, the SADC Council of Ministers approved a SADC Charter, which provides the legal framework for establishment and operationalisation of an institution that will coordinate MCS in the SADC region, paving the ground for the establishment of the SADC Regional MCS Coordination Centre (Regional MCSCC). SADC Ministers for Environment and Natural Resources, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Tourism, in November 2017, committed to signing the Charter and approved the establishment of the Interim Project Management Unit (IPMU) to advance the operationalisation of the Regional Centre.

The Regional MCSCC will provide services to the SADC States and cooperating partners, likely including:

- A regional fishing vessel register and a monitoring system;
- A regional fisheries MCS information portal, including fisheries MCS data and information sharing services;
- Regional fisheries surveillance and observer coordination services;
- Fisheries law enforcement and legal support services;
- Port State measures implementation support services; and
- National MCS capacity support services.

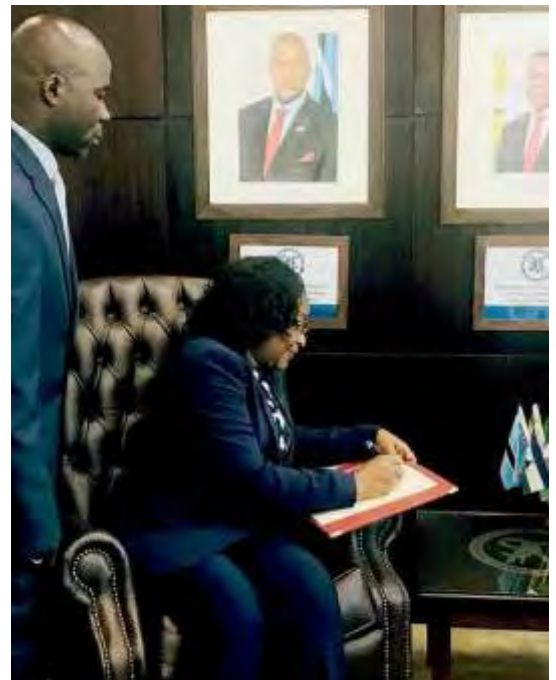
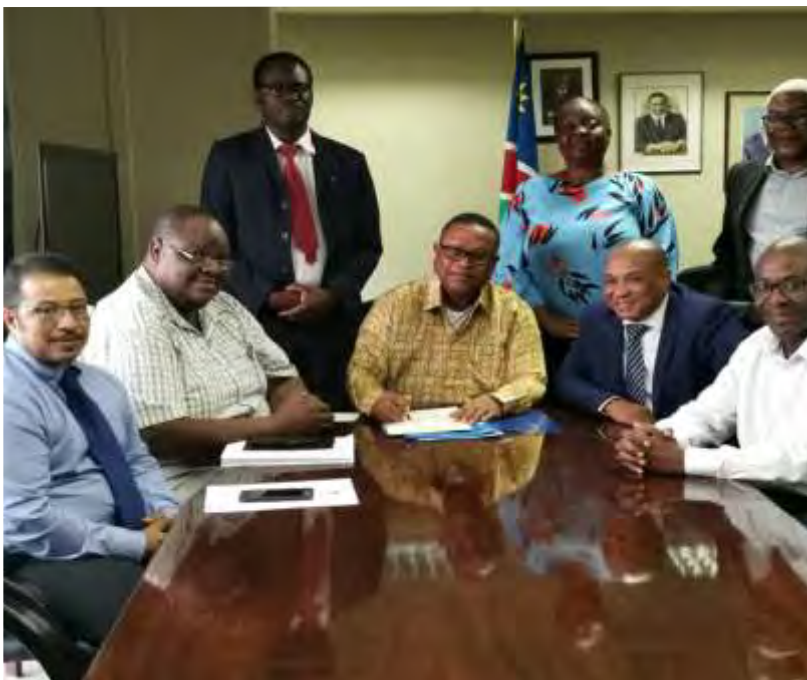
Current status of implementation of the SADC Charter and the MCSCC

Following approval of the Charter for the establishment of the SADC MCSCC, and building on the commitment and leadership that the Southern African region has demonstrated in fighting IUU fishing, the following progress to operationalise the Centre has taken place:

- Eight of the sixteen SADC Member States have signed the Charter, Angola, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. At least two thirds (eleven) of the SADC Member States need to sign the Charter for it to enter into force.
- Two more SADC Member States, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe, have indicated their readiness to sign the Charter..
- Since January 2019, the Mozambican government, which is hosting the Centre, has assigned staff to the IPMU, which in collaboration with the SADC IUU Task

Force has recently finalised the detailed Roadmap for operationalising the Regional MCSCC over the next three years.

- Support to strengthen and assist the IPMU and its staff to develop mechanisms for the MCSCC was secured through funding from the German Government starting 2019. This is implemented with support from WWF.
- The SADC IUU Task Force, together with Kenya and Somalia (members of the FISH-i Africa Task Force) recommended to the SADC Ministers to incorporate the FISH-i Africa Task Force mechanisms into the Centre, which the Ministers approved during their meeting in June 2019 in Windhoek, Namibia. The cooperation and information sharing between these countries has provided proof of concept for regional cooperation to stop IUU fishing, based on a successful network with established tools and expertise that will enable the MCSCC to make rapid progress.
- The SADC Secretariat is developing a strategy for cooperation with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), as well as the inclusion of, Kenya and Somalia as cooperating partners in the activities of the Centre, as well as exploring possible cooperative mechanism with the East Africa Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).
- On entry into force of the Charter, funding has been secured from the World Bank to support the construction of the Centre in Maputo, Mozambique, and this currently requires two-thirds of SADC Member States to sign the Charter. The African Development Bank has also committed to support operations of the Centre once the Charter enters into force.



Expected benefits from the Regional MCSCC

The Regional MCSCC will support States to fulfil their aspirations and commitments towards fisheries and related targets, these include:

- Globally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set the priority actions required for sustainable development, target 14.4 calls for an end to IUU fishing and destructive fishing practices by 2020, and this priority is reflected as an objective of the Regional MCSCC. For the fisheries sector in particular there are a range of international legally binding instruments that directly or indirectly aim to stop IUU fishing and these include: the 1982 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea; the 1993 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Compliance Agreement; the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement; and the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA).
- Pan-Africa, the African Union (AU) through the 2014 Pan-African Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture identify conservation and sustainable resource use as a key policy objective. A key outcome expected to lead to this objective is: effective and sustainable regional MCS systems operating in all regions through, inter alia, (a) developing and strengthening the institutional framework for MCS for both marine and inland fisheries for combating IUU fishing, (b) improving regional cooperation and collaboration for sustainable fisheries management, (c) developing and sharing registers of authorised fishing and illegal fishing vessels and (d) enhancing capacities and establishing mechanisms including cost-effective and sustainable financial, arrangements for effective regional cooperation in MCS and enforcement.
- Regionally, many SADC States are members of various regional fisheries bodies (RFBs) that cooperate for shared marine and inland waters, these include those with an advisory mandate like the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC); and those with a management mandate, known as regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs). There are five key RFMOs important to the SADC region and they include the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT);

the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC); the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO); the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO) and the South Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA). These regional bodies adopt fisheries conservation and management measures (CMMs) that are binding on their members and that require robust MCS to ensure monitoring of the CMMs implementation. Other regional bodies of importance include the Benguela Current Convention (BCC), which is a large marine ecosystem (LME) and the Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA), which is a lake based organization (LBO). The recently adopted Minimum Terms and Conditions (MTCs) for fishing access in the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) area of competence recognises the existence of MCSCC as fundamental to achieving the goal of combating IUU fishing and improving fisheries governance in the sub-region.

The Regional MCSCC will assist the SADC region, in providing a sustainable and secure future for its citizens by contributing to sustainable fisheries, which in turn will contribute towards:

- Sustainable communities - fish provides a primary source of protein and essential nutrients in human diets and makes a significant contribution to the nutrition and food security in SADC countries. Safeguarding fisheries resources will create resilience to deal with the anticipated population growth and impacts of climate change, and ensure not only nutritional benefits but also provide employment for millions of people with many of those employed, particularly in the processing and marketing sector being women.
- Sustainable ecosystems - fishing not only removes the targeted species from the ecosystem but it can also affect non-targeted species, including endangered, threatened and protected species such as vulnerable marine mammals, birds, shark and ray species. Complying to CMMs is a key aspect of not only stopping illegal fishing, but ensuring oversight of pollution, destruction of habitats and removal of non-targeted species.
- Sustainable economies - developing stronger blue economies is key to many SADC countries and this relies on a compliant fisheries sector and a secure maritime domain. The Regional MCSCC will play an important role in delivering these and encouraging greater investment and development in the fisheries sector. Removing the uncertainty and poor business environment that corruption and other criminal activity create, will result in a level playing field for legal and sustainable blue growth.

Operational and capacity development activities of the Regional MCSCC

Cooperation between national agencies and between neighbouring countries is at the heart of stopping illegal fishing.

The Regional MCSCC will provide a cost-effective mechanism to support this operational cooperation, and this will include:

- Monitoring of vessel movements, to provide oversight and a coordinated approach to tracking fishing and carrier vessel activity;
- Assessing risk associated with vessels, owners and operators, to enable targeting of enforcement resources;
- Gathering and analysis of information and intelligence, to enable oversight of activities and areas of non-compliance;
- Providing background reports, to facilitate risk assessment on vessels applying for licences to support decision making on granting of fishing licences;
- Recording fishing vessel information in a regional vessel registry or record, to include all registered and licensed vessels within the SADC region and cooperating partner waters, to provide a central repository for this information that would link to the FAO Global Record;
- Coordinating the sharing of assets, including patrol vessels, planes and observers, to increase efficiency and reduce costs;
- Coordinating cooperative actions, to increase the opportunities for regional action against perpetrators;

- Facilitating the sharing and cross checking of fisheries information, between members and partners, to include the inspection information and vessel photos towards the identification and prosecution of illegal operators; and
- Coordinating and collaborating with other regional entities and partners, to strengthen the region in tackling transnational organised crime and to play a role in global processes.

Capacity is essential to both national and regional activities to enhance MCS and is key to stopping illegal fishing. The Regional MCSCC will provide support nationally and opportunities regionally to strengthen SADC capacity for MCS, this will include:

- Sharing lessons and tools in MCS, between countries and also between fisheries, especially between coastal fisheries and inland fisheries providing opportunities to stop illegal fishing generally and particularly to disrupt transit routes for other illicit trade;
- Mentoring by MCSCC staff, will increase efficiency of national MCS through capacity building and support in operational work;
- Training to develop expertise, both through training workshops and field work and on-the-job training, including training of trainers, especially in the use of new technologies, standard operating procedures and bespoke tools developed to support MCS in the SADC region; and
- Providing technical capacity support, to check on the legality of operators, vessels and incidents through notifications on vessel movements.



Resources

SADC Protocol on Fisheries, 2001: www.sadc.int/documents-

SADC Statement of Commitment to Combat IUU fishing, 2008:
www.sadc-int/documents-

SADC, ACP and NFDS Africa, 2010, Guidelines for the establishment of the SADC Regional Fisheries Monitoring Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre. Technical Report (Ref. CU/PE1/MZ/10/010).

SADC, 2017, Charter establishing Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre

SADC and WWF, 2017, Financial Sustainability Plan and Finance Model for the Proposed SADC Regional Fisheries Monitoring Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre. Technical Report (Ref. 40001192).

WEBSITES:

SADC-Stop Illegal Fishing, A Southern African political commitment to stop illegal fishing: <https://stopillegalfishing.com>

Pircure/ Image acknowledgements

Pictures/images were supplied by SADC Secretariat, Stop Illegal Fishing (SIF) and WWF

About SADC

SADC's main objectives are to achieve development, peace and security, and economic growth, to alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration, built on democratic principles and equitable and sustainable development. Find out more at: www.sadc.int

About FISH-i Africa

It unites eight East African coastal countries along the Western Indian Ocean, an alliance which is showing that regional cooperation, coupled with dedicated analysis and technical expertise can stop illegal catch getting to market, and prevent illegal operators pursuing their lucrative business unhindered. FISH-i Africa is a Stop Illegal Fishing initiative and a Coordination Team made up of Stop Illegal Fishing, NFDS and TMT. Find out more at: www.stopillegalfishing.com and www.fish-i-africa.org

About WWF

WWF works to look after our natural resources - oceans, land and wildlife - so we can continue to benefit from food, water and a healthy climate. It is the world's leading independent conservation organization, which promotes building of a sustainable and equitable future. Find out more at: www.panda.org or www.wwf.org.mz

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