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Fighting against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU):
Impacts and challenges for ACP countries

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The EC community system to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU

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Executive Summary

Background

IUU fishing constitutes a major threat to the sustainability of fish stocks and marine biodiversity. At the moment, 75% of the world's fish stocks are over-exploited or at least fully exploited, and it is precisely these species that are usually targeted by IUU operators. Despite the adoption of the FAO IUU IPOA in 2001, such practices are still flourishing and expanding.

The aim of the EC IUU Regulation is to ensure the sustainability of marine fisheries resources and improving the effectiveness of existing international legal and other obligations pertaining to their conservation and management by clamping down on IUU fishing.

The IUU Regulation

The IUU Regulation was adopted on 29 September 2008 and will enter into force on 1 January 2010. The Regulation is a transparent and non-discriminatory instrument applicable to all fishing vessels, under any flag, and which seeks to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, in all maritime waters, in as much as derived products are traded with the Community or Community nationals are involved in IUU fishing.

In order to ensure that no products derived from IUU fishing appear on the markets, the Regulation seeks to ensure full traceability of all fishery products traded with the Community, by means of a catch certification scheme. This scheme is an essential part of the IUU Regulation which will also improve and facilitate the control and compliance with conservation and management rules, in co-operation with third countries. It may also apply to exports of EC vessel catches, if the country of final destination requires a catch certificate.

The Regulation also comprises provisions on port state control, mutual assistance, a Community alert system, to place focus of verification activities towards situations at risk and share information with third countries, the identification of IUU vessels and non-co-operating third countries and the prohibition for EC nationals to support directly or indirectly IUU fishing under any flag, irrespective of the destination of the catches. In order to ensure effective enforcement, the Regulation also includes harmonised, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions for serious infringements.

DG MARE is currently drafting implementing rules to set up the technical provisions of the Regulation, planned for adoption in mid 2009, in parallel with the publication of an handbook to provide practical advices on the application of the Regulation to operators and authorities in EC and third countries.
IUU and ACP countries

Developing countries pay the highest price of IUU fishing and in particular coastal communities relying on fisheries for its livelihood.

DG MARE is committed to assist third countries (there among ACP States) in the fight against IUU fishing and the Regulation, which comprises provisions specifically designed for this purpose. DG MARE has already participated to two ACP meetings to the Regulation and answer questions. It has also met bilaterally with several ACP States.

In light of this commitment, DG MARE is organising and funding regional seminars for the benefit of authorities in developing countries. The first one took place in South Africa on 4-5 March for African countries under the Equator line, island countries in the Western part of the Indian Ocean and the Arabic peninsula. The second one was held in Colombia on 26-27 March for Latin America and the Caribbean. The third seminar will be held in Vietnam for Asian countries on 14-15 May and the forth seminar will be held in Cameroon on 11-12 June for Western and Northern African countries. DG MARE is also looking into the possibility of having a fifth seminar for the benefit of island countries in the Pacific.