



EP INTERGROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

HEARING

## PRESS RELEASE

*For immediate release*

### ***Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in West Africa: which impacts, which solutions?***

**Brussels, December 10th 2009:** The Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development hosted at the European Parliament on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 a hearing on “Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in West Africa: which impacts, which solutions?”

Representatives from the different countries of West Africa: Mauritania, Guinea Bissau and Senegal as well as key organisations such as IUCN, Environmental Justice Foundation, WWF and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation participated in the hearing. The European Commission was represented by the unit in charge of IUU fishing within DG MARE. The meeting was chaired by Struan Stevenson, MEP and Chair of the Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development.

The conference enabled to raise awareness about the situation in the West African Countries regarding IUU fishing and its disastrous environmental and socio economic consequences on the population. It also warned the European Union on the important problems that will generate the entry into force of the IUU regulation, as many developing countries are not ready yet. The report as well as the various presentations will be sent to the European Parliamentarians, members of the Intergroup.

The participants recognized unanimously the need to fight efficiently against IUU fishing.

As indicated by **DG MARE and other participants**, it is estimated that IUU practices amount to approximately 10 billion Euros every year worldwide and IUU fishing represents 19% of the worldwide reported value of catches. The sub region of West Africa is particularly concerned by this problem as its waters are one of the richest waters in the world regarding fisheries resources.

**Dougoutigui Coulibaly**, *Secrétaire Général du Groupement des Armateurs et des Industriels de la Pêche au Sénégal*, urged the European Commission to postpone the entry into force of the IUU regulation of two years. Countries of West Africa including Senegal are not ready for the implementation of the IUU regulation. Mr Coulibaly insisted on the fact that most of the pirogues fish without licence and are

not registered. What those fishermen will do with their catches when they will become IUU from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2010? Mr Coulibaly emphasized that the definition of IUU fishing should be reviewed and adapted to the reality of the situation. IUU fishing practiced by big industrial trawlers flagging some flags of convenience and IUU practiced by local small scale fisheries should not be treated in the same way.

The catch certification scheme is considered by West African Countries and several NGOs as a disproportionate measure which should not apply to all species and to all kind of fisheries. Fisheries is often unregulated or little regulated in those countries. However, those Countries understand the need to manage adequately their fisheries and started adopting some conservation measures and regulating the access to their waters. The 1993 Commission of fisheries of the sub-region is currently working on reviewing the Convention on the minimal conditions of access and exploitation of the fisheries resources which has not been implemented yet.

**DG MARE** considered that there was a need to develop a better cooperation with those countries in order to circulate the information on the IUU regulation which will provide the adequate answers. Furthermore, DG MARE insisted on the fact that the entry into force of the IUU regulation will not be postponed and that no derogations will be granted. It also indicated that the European Commission was aware of the need to adapt the system to small scale fisheries. To this end, a simplified catch certificate will be implemented.

A doubt subsists in the NGOs community and in the West African Countries: Is the IUU regulation the appropriate tool to address the IUU fishing?

IUU fishing is a global problem which needs to be addressed at the international level by the whole international community. The action took by the European Union to fight IUU fishing is laudable. However, this initiative should not be isolated and has collateral consequences on the fishermen community in West African countries which already suffer from IUU fishing.

Besides those discussions, the Parliamentarians from West African Countries proposed to the MEPs to strenghten mutual cooperation in order to share experiences between the North and the South under the IUCN network of West African Parliamentarians on Environment. A visit in West Africa could be organised in the future, said **M. Stevenson**, Chair of the Intergroup.

**Other speakers:**

Renaud Bailleux, International Union for Conservation of Nature

Duncan Copeland, Environmental Justice Foundation

Khady Sane, Programme régional de conservation de la zone côtière et marine en Afrique de l'Ouest

Oumar Sy, project co-ordinator, IUCN Network of West African Parliamentarians on Environment

This meeting was organized by the Intergroup' Secretariat composed jointly by the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

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