

Liberia Joins West African States to Fight Illegal Fishing

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FULL TEXT

Monrovia, Sept. 26 – Liberia is currently hosting the West African Task Force (WATF) Meeting of the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) as part of plans to combat Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in West Africa.

The ongoing conference in Liberia is the ninth meeting of the think tank of experts and technicians, who propagate the fight against IUU fisheries.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Liberia's Director-General of the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NaFAA), Mrs. Emma Glassco, proposed a stronger collaboration among member states of the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) in an effort to successfully combat IUU fishing.

Mrs. Glassco stated that there is an urgent need to expatiate efforts beyond national level to form synergies in combating IUU fishing activities.

Mrs. Glassco, at the same time, is urging member states to form synergies in any event that may warrant hot pursuit against IUU fishing vessel.

The NaFAA boss told her visiting counterparts of the Fisheries Committee for the region that now is the time for stronger collaboration in the areas of formulating regional observers program, conduct regional joint patrol and harmonization of vessel monitoring system as well as establishing a regional vessel registry.

Speaking further at the start of the three-day FCWC taskforce meeting, Mrs. Glassco noted that it is incumbent upon all member states as flag states, port states, market states and coastal states to ensure that this program becomes achievable considering the fact that FCWC has evolved beyond infancy stage and must embark on initiatives, take up challenges and responsibilities amidst international support in ensuring that our region is free of fisheries and fisheries-related crimes.

Speaking earlier, the Secretary General of the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), Seraphin Dedi, explained that the West Africa Task Force (WATF) activity comes up under the implementation of the project "Fisheries Intelligence and MCS support in West Africa with the support of the Norwegian Agency for International Development (Norad) and in collaboration with its technical partners, Trygg Mat Tracking and Stop Illegal Fishing. Dedi disclosed that the objectives of the 9th meeting in Liberia are to review and provide an update on the WATF and PESCAO supporting initiatives to date.

The meeting will present cases that involved more than one country's intervention and provide an update on ongoing cases; it will discuss the requirement for practical implementation of the Port State Measure Agreement (PSMA) in FCWC region.

The team is expected to review and discuss the regional Reefer Study as part of the implementation of the Regional Strategy to Combat Illegal Transshipment at sea and provide an update on transshipment activities in the FCWC region. They are further expected to review and discuss the feasibility for the establishment of a Regional Record for fishing vessels including the legal and institutional frameworks.

There will be discussion on the small-scale fisheries management issues including various trials conducted around the region and outside of the region on the tracking of vessels.

Members' countries will also review the institutional and legal framework for the operationalization of the Regional

MCS center.

However, the meeting will provide the opportunity to neighboring countries and regional fishery organizations to present their MCS structures and activities and explore opportunities for collaboration.

They will review the strategy documents for the implementation of the regional plan of action to combat IUU as well as countries' national plans of action.

The Fisheries Committee for West and Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) was established in 2007 to facilitate cooperation in fisheries management between the member countries, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria.

These countries have several shared fish stocks and identified a need for cooperation and shared management of these resources.

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DETAILS

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