



Brussels Rural Development Briefings
A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues

Briefing session n° 10:
Fighting against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU):
Impacts and challenges for ACP countries

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What do fishing pirates need to plunder the oceans?

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Executive Summary

While world leaders, including those from the European Union (EU), pledged to eliminate illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing by 2004 (WSSD Plan of Implementation), the catch of pirate fishing is still thought to be of a worldwide value of between US\$ 4 billion and US\$ 9 billion per year, including at least US\$ 1 billion per year for Sub-Saharan Africa.

One way of evading the rules, where they do exist, is to register a vessel in a country that has no rules, or where the rules are less stringent. A vessel that flies the flag of a country other than the country of ownership is known as a flag-of-convenience vessel. The most common factors motivating a vessel owner to 'flag out' are: rule evasion, cheap registration fees, low or no taxes and the freedom to employ cheap labour. In other words, ship owners are seeking flags of non-compliance.

Other loopholes and failures of governance that are being exploited to launder IUU catches and avoid sanctions are: weak and inconsistent port state controls, a lack of vessel traceability, rules permitting transshipment at sea and in port, lack of control over non-fishing vessels, lack of enforcement with respect to beneficial owners/companies, poor communication between governments and with regional or international organisations, and lack of governance and control in particular on the high seas.

Greenpeace has observed and documented - time and again - fishing vessels, nationals and companies, from the European Community and other developed and developing nations, flouting international agreements where they exist, and fishing with impunity where they do not. The presentation will use examples from Africa, Europe and the Pacific Ocean to summarise some of the characteristics of IUU fishing, provide concrete examples of progress and lack thereof, and will highlight the concrete actions which could make a difference in the fight against IUU.

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