



Fighting against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing: Commission notifies the Republic of Ghana with a yellow card

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The Commission, leading the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing worldwide, has issued a warning (so-called yellow card) to the Republic of Ghana that it risks being identified as a non-cooperating country in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Today's Decision is based on various shortcomings in Ghana's ability to comply with its duties under international law as flag, port, coastal or market State.

Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: "*The Commission stands for zero tolerance for IUU fishing. Ghana plays an important role in fisheries governance in West Africa. Therefore, we stand ready to work with Ghana to address the threats IUU fishing poses to the sustainability of fish stocks, coastal communities, food security and the profits of those fishermen and – women who follow the rules. Sustainable fisheries is key to better ocean governance.*"

Ghana is encouraged to take the necessary actions in order to abide by its international obligations in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The identified shortcomings include illegal transshipments at sea of large quantities of undersized juvenile pelagic species between industrial trawl vessels and canoes in Ghanaian waters, deficiencies in the monitoring, control and surveillance of the fleet and a legal framework that is not aligned with the relevant international obligations Ghana has signed up to. The sanctions imposed by Ghana to vessels engaging in or supporting IUU fishing activities are not effective and not an adequate deterrent.

Ghana should ensure effective monitoring and control of the activities of its fishing vessels and an adequate implementation of its enforcement and sanctioning system. It should also ensure a sound fisheries management system in order to prevent fish stemming from IUU fishing activities from reaching its market or others, including the European one.

The yellow card is a warning and offers Ghana the opportunity to react and take measures to rectify the situation within a reasonable time. At this stage, the decision does not entail any measures affecting trade. However, in cases of prolonged and continued non-compliance countries can ultimately face a procedure of identification (a so-called red card), which entails sanctions such as the prohibition to export their fishery products to the EU market.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is jeopardising the very foundation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the EU's international efforts to promote better ocean governance. Under the [European Green Deal](#) and pursuing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal for conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, sea and marine resources, the Commission has committed to a zero-tolerance approach to IUU fishing. The fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is also an important aspect of the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#)'s objective to protect the marine environment. The [Strategy for Africa](#) highlights the fight against IUU fishing as one of the key issues to address with our African partners.

The Republic of Ghana had already received a yellow card in November 2013, which was then lifted in October 2015, after Ghana addressed the shortcomings.

Background

The EU is the world's biggest importer of fisheries products. The global value of IUU fishing is estimated at 10-20 billion euros per year. Between 11 and 26 million tonnes of fish are caught illegally every year, corresponding to at least 15% of world catches.

Today's Commission Decision is based on the EU's '[IUU Regulation](#)', which entered into force in 2010. One of the pillars of this Regulation is the catch certification scheme that ensures that only legally caught fisheries products can access the EU market. The Regulation also provides for specific dialogue mechanisms with the countries that are not complying with their obligations as flag, coastal, port and market State under international law. While failure to cooperate in the framework of

the dialogue can lead to an identification of the country (a so-called "[red card](#)"), the IUU dialogues are based on cooperation and support to countries and are an important step in tackling IUU fishing, with sanctions, including trade prohibition being only a last resort measure.

Since November 2012, the Commission entered in formal dialogues with 27 third countries, i.e. officially warned them of the need to take effective action to fight IUU fishing. In most cases, significant progress was observed and therefore the Commission could satisfactorily close the formal dialogue phase and lift the yellow card. Only a few countries have not shown the necessary commitment to reforms until now.

The EU is working to support Ghanaian population on the ground with several capacity building projects.

For More information

[Q&A on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in general and in Ghana](#)

[Overview of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing procedures with third countries](#)

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