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Press release | 26.11.2013

Illegal fishing

Blacklisting of non-compliant states welcome; Commission must not hesitate to sanction other offenders

The European Commission today announced that it is blacklisting three countries for illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU): Belize, Cambodia and Guinea (1). This is the first time this EU mechanism has been used. The Commission also issued warnings to a further three countries - South Korea, Ghana and Curaçao. These now have six months to improve their fisheries control and surveillance systems to avoid the same fate. Commenting on the decision, Green fisheries spokesperson and European Parliament draftsman/rapporteur on illegal fishing **Raül Romeva** said:

"Blacklisting these non-compliant states for failing to take steps to combat illegal fishing is a significant and welcome move, which shows the Commission is serious about addressing this global problem. EU governments in Council must swiftly endorse this proposal, which would result in trade sanctions on fisheries products, among other measures. Despite intense consultations over the past year, these 3 countries have demonstrated that they are not serious about combatting IUU fishing.

"The pre-identification of South Korea and Ghana as problem states is also a welcome move. There is abundant evidence of their lack of interest in addressing the problem of illegal fishing, with Ghana - in particular - having played a very obstructive role, blocking attempts to reinforce fisheries control measures, at this year's International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) meeting, which just concluded. If they fail to take steps to improve their fisheries control and surveillance systems in the specified timeframe, the Commission should have no hesitation in adding them to the blacklist.

"Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing remains a major threat to vulnerable fish stocks, accounting for up to one-third of global catches, and adding further strain to already-vulnerable fish stocks. The EU's IUU regulation is critical as part of international efforts to combat IUU fishing. However, as we have seen at ICCAT, it is being systematically threatened from many fronts and can only succeed if it is supported both multilaterally and through the adoption by other countries of compatible measures to close down the market for IUU-caught fish."

(1) See the Commission statement: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1162_en.htm?locale=en

These three were among a longer list of eight countries that were given a warning by the Commission in November 2012: Belize, Cambodia, Guinea, Cambodia, Fiji, Panama, Sri Lanka, Togo and Vanuatu.

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