



FISHERIES CRIME



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



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BRINGING TO LIGHT THE PERFECT STORM OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN THE FISHING SECTOR

What is fisheries crime?

Fisheries crime is an ill-defined legal concept referring to a range of illegal activities in the fisheries sector. These activities – frequently transnational and organized in nature – include transshipment of marine resources; illegal fishing; corruption; money laundering; and document, tax and customs fraud, among others.

Fisheries offences are one of various serious, organized criminal offences, committed transnationally along the entire value chain of a specific group of products in trade: fish and fish products.

Organized criminal organizations engage in fisheries crime with relative impunity due both to low risk and high profits and uncoordinated, ineffective domestic and cross-border law enforcement efforts.

Social and economic consequences

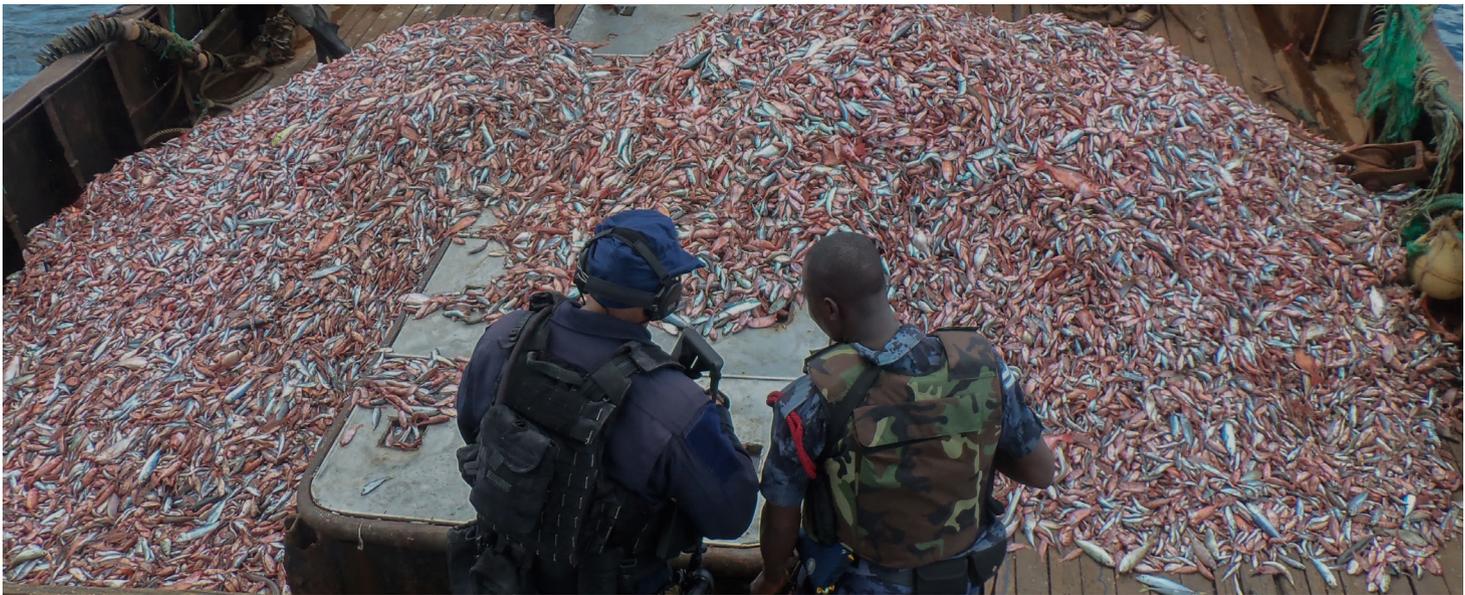
Fisheries crime has significant adverse ecological, social and economic impact. Large scale illegal fishing depletes valuable fish stocks which threatens the long-term marine sustainability and food security of coastal communities. It further deprives States of economic revenue, while illegal operators benefit from a competitive advantage which creates unfair economic conditions and pushes law abiding businesses out of the market.

A transnational and organized crime

Proceeds from this profitable crime enable and sustain further transnational organized crime with damaging effects. Organized criminal networks operating in the fisheries sector engage in illicit activities ranging from criminal fishing to tax crimes, money laun-

Corruption and other financial crimes, such as large-scale tax evasion and money-laundering, are a key element of fisheries crime, rendering it highly profitable and undermining the rule of law and accountability. Financial investigation is thus key to identifying those who profit from fisheries crime.





A U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment member and a Ghanaian navy sailor inspect a fishing vessel suspected of illegal fishing. Photo: Kwabena Akuamoah-Boateng, U.S. Embassy Ghana/Released.

dering, corruption, document fraud, and trafficking in persons, drugs and arms.

How to counter fisheries crime

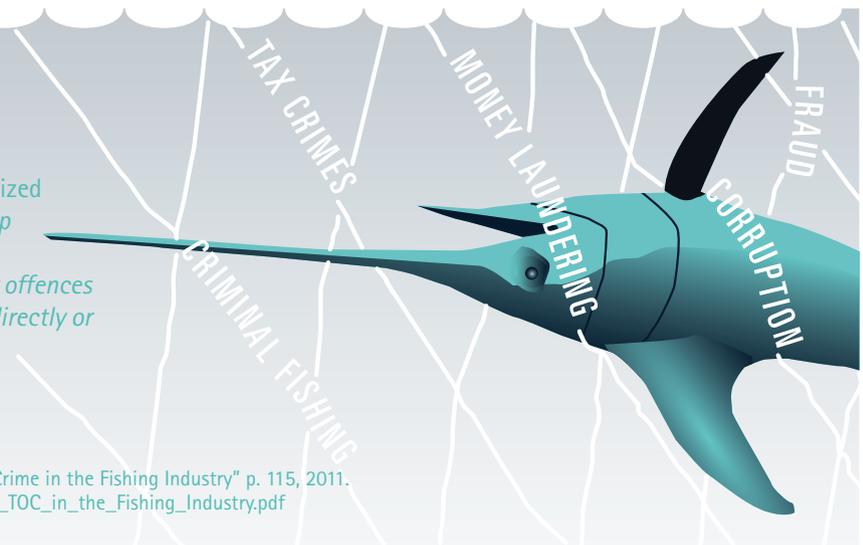
Due to its cross-cutting nature, fisheries crime needs to be addressed from a multi-disciplinary, cooperative criminal law enforcement approach both nationally and at an international level.

Together with international collaborative law enforcement, environmental, legislative, and consumer-oriented efforts, several UNODC initiatives, such as the Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime, the Maritime Crime Programme, the Global Programme on Money Laundering and the Container Control Programme, can be tailored to improve intelligence-led domestic and cross-border law enforcement efforts against fisheries crime.

TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

Within the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, an organized criminal group is defined as a "structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit." A "serious" crime is one which carries at least four years of imprisonment or a "more serious penalty".¹

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Issue Paper: "Transnational Organized Crime in the Fishing Industry" p. 115, 2011. Available from: http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Issue_Paper_-_TOC_in_the_Fishing_Industry.pdf





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Fisheries crime has a devastating ecological, social and economic impact, enabling and sustaining many criminal activities in the fisheries sector: from illegal fishing to tax offences, money laundering, corruption, document fraud, and more. UNODC Programmes on container control, money laundering, and maritime and wildlife crime, among others, address transnational organized crime in the fishing industry, helping to combat it around the world.

www.unodc.org/fisheriescrime

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