



PRESS RELEASE

A Multi-Agency Task Team to address blast-fishing issues in Tanzania

Dar es Salaam, 30th June 2015 – A Multi-Agency Task Team (MATT) is officially introduced today by the Tanzanian government to combat environmental crime in the country. This initiative is strongly supported by the Indian Ocean Commission's SmartFish Programme, implemented jointly with FAO and funded by the European Union.

This MATT network is going to address organized environmental crime including fishery crimes (Illegal Unreported and Unreported fishing and blast fishing), illegal mining, smuggling of wildlife and timber.

Blast Fishing has escalated since the mid 2000 to such an extent that over 50 blasts can be heard in certain areas on a single day from shore in Dar es Salaam. Also, the fish caught from this very destructive practice has a huge demand, making blast fishing a very lucrative practice for fishermen.

"It is international best practice to establish a Multi Agency Task Team (MATT) aimed at coordinating efforts and resources to combat environmental crime and protect our natural resources" said Mathias Chikawe, the minister of Home Affairs in Tanzania. "We have already conducted successful operations since 2013, and the government of Tanzania is committed to eradicate this very bad practice" he concludes

The EU Ambassador Filiberto Ceriani Sebregondi said, "the EU is very proud to have contributed to this major milestone through its support to the regional flagship programme, IOC-SmartFish. I wish to commend the Government of Tanzania for taking this important step towards a whole of government approach to tackling environmental crime, and would like to encourage it to maintain momentum with law enforcement actions, in line with international best practice".

Since 2011, the IOC-SmartFish Programme with the Tanzania Ministry of Livestock and Fishery Development conducted multiple interventions along the Tanzania Coast Line. Some successes were achieved, numerous arrest made and hundreds of kilograms of explosives seized.

"We have been working to combat illegal fishing in East Africa over the past 4 years" said Marcel Kroese, the IOC-SmartFish MCS Key Expert. "However, the problem of blast fishing is far more complex than previously expected in Tanzania. The practice is outlawed in all countries in the world"

The continued use of explosive is detrimental to the biological integrity of the coral reefs, and it ultimately will undermine food security. Due to the damage this destructive fishing practice causes to the aquatic biota and environment, and the risks involved for the users, the practice is outlawed in all countries in the world.

The IOC-SmartFish programme is the largest donor funded fisheries program in Africa.

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