



**COMMISSION SOUS-RÉGIONALE DES PÊCHES
SUB-REGIONAL FISHERIES COMMISSION**



**MCS/ EU / WAMEU Project on "Strengthening Cooperation in Sub-Regional Monitoring,
Control and Surveillance (MCS) of Fishing Activities in the Maritime zone of the
Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) "**

**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE
TECHNICAL COMMISSION ON MCS (TC / MCS /SRFC) OF
MEMBER STATES OF THE SRFC**

Praia, March 2012

Minutes of the second meeting of the Technical Committee on MCS of Member States of the SRFC

7 to 8 March 2012, Cape Verde

The Technical Committee on MCS, comprising all Heads of surveillance structures in the SRFC member States, held a meeting from 7 to 8 March in Praia (Cape Verde), in the presence of the Head of MCS Department, members of the MCS/EU Technical Assistance Project, the WARFP Regional Coordinator and the representative from Liberia, sitting in as observer, to consider the following three items:

1. **Assessment of the activities** and achievements of the project since its inception in March 2011.
2. **The new draft strategic guidelines** of the surveillance programme, definition of surveillance equipment, staff training and institutional support.
3. **The Action plan** on activities for 2012.

Following the welcome remarks by the representative from Cape Verde and vote of thanks by the Head of DMCS of the SRFC, the Coordinator of the EU/MCS project reported on activities undertaken in 2011, which could be summarized as follows:

- a. A joint surveillance operation was conducted in July 2011 involving two countries (Guinea and Guinea Bissau) with the participation of the coastal units from Member States and a support vessel. During the operation, six vessels were boarded for various reasons.
- b. A mission was undertaken in search of a suitable location to establish the coastal surveillance stations (AIS-Radar) in Guinea and Guinea Bissau although a definitive selection has yet to be made.
- c. An expert initiated a study on developing specifications for the sub-regional database, and will submit the final draft probably in March.
- d. The training programme for supervisors which was scheduled on many occasions has still not materialized due to issues on expectations of member States, especially on whether it should be conducted as group training and the use sub-regional experts as trainers.

On all these points, the Committee registered its concern about the slow progress of the program in general.

Subsequently, the EU / MCS Project Coordinator presented the document on the **new strategic guidelines** based on recommendations made by the SRFC and DEU at the January 5, 2012 meeting and the more favourable environment heralded by the availability of surveillance capabilities for the high seas (Popenguine, Vigilante, Guardia, Arguin) and surveillance aircraft in the sub-region (Dornier aircraft from Cape Verde and Senegal).

The new strategic plan presented **re-partitioned the zones** and is more centred towards sub-regional operations, which are more directed towards the use of high seas patrol boats rather than support vessels.

Support to the coastal units of the most poorly equipped countries (Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone) is still maintained in the new plan.

The Program for equipping the coastal stations was also reviewed in the new plan to provide targeted States with **simple, but more complete surveillance stations** with all the necessary equipment. To achieve this, it was necessary to abandon the combined Radar/AIS system in order to access more funds without weakening the system.

The Committee approved all the above measures and adopted the revised strategy and action plan proposed, but drew the attention of participants to the short time remaining for completion of the project.

Some member countries requested for less stringent administrative procedures for funding surveillance operations and provision of radar equipment for the coastal stations.

At the end of its deliberations, the Technical Committee on MCS made several recommendations including:

1. The involvement of member States in the process of setting up coastal stations and acquisition of radar equipment: these investments will be effected in concert with the WARFP Project of the World Bank and will mainly target member States where WARFP national programs were absent. The Gambia and Guinea made the commitment to inform the SRFC of the sites proposed. The establishment of a chain of coastal radar stations in the maritime zone of the SRFC remains a priority for member States;

2. Revitalization of SOCU, by providing appropriate communication equipment and sufficient staff to facilitate analysis and monitoring of information required by member States. Previously, the Committee had requested for a general policy document from SOCU to determine the real role this structure could play in the future;

3. Consolidation of all MCS regulatory aspects into a document or new agreement, including, *inter alia*, the right of pursuit, VMS exchanges, inspection and control procedures and harmonization of sanctions with a view to making MCS monitoring more dissuasive;

4. Standardization of the VMS system to facilitate exchange of information between national MCS structures. The States will still have the liberty to choose their own VMS systems;

5. The merger of the training programmes with the participation of sub-regional trainers is a priority for member States instead of one-off workshops for MCS staff development using international experts only. The objective of the MCS Directors is to maximize benefits to the Sub-Region and to create a pool of regional trainers who could continue training even after the end of the project. This issue will be discussed at the next meeting of the Steering Committee;

6. Removing procedural bottlenecks to allow states to become more involved in the installation of equipment and construction of surveillance stations and thus facilitate the whole process.

The WARFP Coordinator reiterated his willingness to work in synergy with the EU/MCS programme, and expressed the hope that the EU project in Member States will work in tandem with WARFP national coordination units to supplement their individual efforts.

The DMCS informed members of the MCS Technical Committee of Liberia's request to join the MCS program of the SRFC. Collaborative processes are ongoing.

The DMCS further urged the States to sign the Agreement on Port State Measures, an effective tool for monitoring activities and specifically to expedite expected responses from member States on both technical and financial reports, contracts and other information required.

The TA Coordinator commended the spirit that always prevailed during meetings of the MCS Technical Committee which he qualified as an engine of future actions and vowed to put all his energy into implementing the proposed Action Plan according to the timetable.

The next meeting will be held within three months, in one of the countries in the sub-region to be determined by the DMCS.

Technical Assistance on Strengthening
Sub-Regional MCS Cooperation