



**5th International Forum on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
Keynote address delivered by Hon. Dr. Abraham Iyambo, Minister
of Fisheries and Marine Resources of Namibia
Chatham House, 15th October**

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It is with a sense of great pleasure and singular honour that I embrace this opportunity to address this esteemed gathering.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the special and long history I have with the UK. Educationally, I am a product of this great Kingdom.

My message is directed to all World leaders at whatever level. The plague of illegal fishing is one of the largest environmental crimes of our time. We must prevent this scandal crime and bring to an end the troubling destruction of our oceans. We cannot allow this tragic and endemic plunder and the obliteration of fish stocks to continue.

Fish worth more than one billion US dollars are lost from sub-Saharan Africa annually due to IUU – a very conservative estimate indeed.

Globally, IUU account for 30% of world's fish and the monetary value is estimated to be worth around 10 billion Euros annually.

IUU fishing is a curse of our fisheries, it violates and denigrates everything that UNCLOS and FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries stands for.

The fisher, the processor, the trader, the transporter, the producer, the consumer, government and non-government organisations - all have a due to overcome this menace. We must ensure that any vessel fishing illegally is banned from all ports, in terms of landing the catch and receiving services. We must issue lists of non-compliance and deny these vessels any license. We need to ban transshipments at sea.

The key to success is with us, in our ability to commit to our words, to communicate with each other and to cooperate with each other to make the changes we are seeking. We must move from rhetoric to action as future generations will judge us on our inability to combat IUU fishing.

Why does IUU fishing happen at all? We have a plethora of comprehensive legal and institutional instruments such as the UN Stocks Agreement, the Compliance Agreement, the Code of Conduct and the various International Plans of Action. Do these instruments have loop-holes and are toothless? Are they ambiguous and unclear? Is it due to a lack of coordination? We have all spent precious time and resources developing these! Why does the rape of the sea continue? Why are IUU vessels still able to offload at our ports and find lucrative markets for their illicit cargoes? The answer is simple.

It is because we have individually or collectively failed to act and stop IUU. We must all share in the blame! But in particular, it is because of a lack of political will to tackle the problem. That is an international tragedy. We should control our vessels and nationals.

We must recognise that IUU fishing is not an accident. It is carefully planned and unfortunately tolerated. Those who finance it make great profits. Some may have high contact in the right places. As a result, some States continue to offer ports of convenience. Again, there must be real political commitment to stop it. By the way, I think we should call them Ports of "Inconvenience". They are only convenient for IUU operators.

We have signed up to laudable international conventions, agreements and arrangements. It is however, a pity that we are simply failing to meet our obligations. At gatherings like this we come up with noble instruments, then we miserably fail to implement them. At each meeting, we just move goal-posts and redefine terminologies. It seems that we agree on these plans and instruments just as a formality, a diplomatic nicety, but that's all! It is my view that we individual States are the main culprits for allowing IUU fish to be landed. Why should the political leaders of this world abdicate from their responsibilities? We can talk and develop well-intended plans to our heart's content, but if real political will is lacking for implementation, then, we are wasting time and the rape of oceans will continue unabated!

May I tell you what Namibia, a developing country has done to develop its fisheries and fight IUU. Upon attaining Independence in March 1990, our major fish stocks were depleted. They had been mercilessly plundered. IUU fishing was given free-reign! Foreign fishing vessels operated in our zone under the aegis of the infamous and defunct International Commission for South-East Atlantic Fisheries (ICSEAF).

Between 1969 and 1990 over 8.6 million tonnes of fish worth US\$1.4 billion, were taken but we received only 0.004% of this value.

To seize control of the situation, we ensured that, the third piece of legislation was the Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone. This underlines the importance we attached to fisheries. The 1992 Sea Fisheries Act provided for a rights-based fisheries management system, including a comprehensive MCS system.

We then signed up to the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, the FAO Compliance Agreement, and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and ratified the ICCAT, CCAMLR and SEAFO Conventions. Consequently, a new Marine Resources Act came into force in August 2001 that duly incorporates our commitments to regional and international arrangements and agreements.

Namibia made a strong commitment to establishing monitoring, control and surveillance. The system includes virtually 100% onboard observer coverage for quota species; sea and air patrols, complete monitoring of all landings; and a ban on discarding and transshipment at sea.

The Namibian Government provided adequate support to MCS in terms of financial, material resources and human resource development.

Port States need to develop legislation and administrative procedures to prevent entry to port, and/or departure, for vessels that are suspected of IUU fishing. By this, we will cut the live-blood, of IUU vessels. Adequate and effective boarding and inspection methods must be established as well as procedures for detention, persecution and punishment. If we are serious about curtailing access to ports and markets by fish caught by IUU fishing, the first step is to sign up to, ratify and strictly implement the various existing international Conventions, agreements and arrangements. However we must have the political will to follow through on the obligations imparted by such instruments.

We must ensure that everyone involved in the IUU business is declared *persona non-grata* everywhere! If you are in the IUU business, please do not come to Namibia, you are certainly not welcome!

There is an excellent example to stop this abhorrent fishing practice.

During the eighties, States in the South Pacific took highly effective action against the use of large-scale pelagic drift-nets. These so-called "curtains of death" indiscriminately caught anything and everything in their path. Coastal and port States in the region joined together with regional fisheries bodies and international organisations and acted in unison to close off all port and market access to the fishing vessels and their support ships. They could not land their catch, get provisions, fuel etc. The artery was cut off! This concerted action killed off this unsustainable fishery in a very short time. Surely it is in within our power to do the same against IUU fishing.

Namibia supports the work of the International Task Force to fight IUU. We, the Ministers in the SADC region are committed to fight IUU. That is why on the 4th July 2008, we gathered in Namibia at a SADC Marine Ministers' Conference. We signed a document entitled "SADC Statement on Illegal Fishing." What we need is assistance to build capacity and acquire equipment to combat IUU.

We do not need to wait for yet more Conferences in order to produce legal definitions of IUU, "genuine link" between a State and a vessel, or the rights and responsibilities of port States in regard to access by vessels to ports or flags of convenience. We cannot repeat the same songs. We must implement and enforce instruments. Our experts have given us real and frightening information about the cancerous IUU. We have the ability and authority to stop IUU. What we need is action. We need it now! Now is the time for firm action!

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