



Let's leave our children a living planet

Endangered Seas Programme

Newsroom

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Press Release

West Africa Puts EU To Shame

Brussels, Belgium - This week three West African nations will announce drastic action to save one of the world's richest marine environments from overfishing by EU and other fishing fleets.

"If developing countries in West Africa can invest precious resources in safeguarding fish stocks why can't the European Union stop overfishing in West African waters? European Fishing Ministers should hang their heads in shame" said Julie Cator, WWF's European Fisheries expert. "The EU is subsidising European fleets to overfish off West Africa." The EU pays 266 million euros for access to Mauritanian waters alone: a huge subsidy for EU boats.

Mauritania, Senegal and Guinea Bissau are all taking action to protect fish and marine life off the coast of West Africa. Mauritania is banning all fishing, except traditional non-motorised fishing by local communities, in the Banc d'Arguin National Park, a 12 ,000 km² coastal wetland (an area one and a half times the size of Corsica) home to the world's most endangered marine mammal, the monk seal, and over two million migratory water birds. Guinea Bissau will announce the creation of the João Viera / Poilão National Park - a 500 km² marine protected area in the southern part of the Bijagos Archipelago including Poilão island, the largest green turtle nesting site on the Atlantic coast of Africa. The waters of the archipelago shelter dolphins, sharks and rays and migratory waterbirds. Senegal will announce a project to develop marine protected areas within its territorial waters.

WWF is this week recognising the actions of the Governments of Mauritania and Guinea Bissau as 'Gifts to the Earth' – outstanding pledges that go well beyond legal obligations to help conserve our planet.

West Africa has suffered massive overfishing by EU fishing fleets – with local small fishing boats being forced to seek fish further and further out to sea at growing risk to life or to concentrate their activity in sensitive coastal areas like the Banc d'Arguin National Park.

"These actions to save fish stocks and marine life are necessary because of years of overfishing by industrial fishing fleets from Europe and elsewhere" said Souleymane Zeba, Director of WWF's West Africa Programme "Fish stocks have been devastated and damaging fishing techniques have caused a decline in

species like dolphins, sharks and turtles.”

The EU has a chance to assist West African nations to conserve the natural resources off their coast with fishing agreements due for renewal with Mauritania, Senegal and Guinea Bissau this year. A new WWF handbook proposes principles to be followed in fishing agreements including respect for the interests of communities dependent on fishing for food supply, and a limit on fish that can be caught based on a scientific assessment of stocks.

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