

NEW EVIDENCE SHOWS FOREIGN FISHING FLEETS IN SOMALI WATERS ARE TAKING THREE TIMES MORE FISH THAN SOMALIS, THREATENING RENEWED MARITIME INSECURITY, AND UNDERMINING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

London, U.K. & Nairobi, Kenya, Wednesday 16th September 2015 — A new report published today shows that foreign illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Somali waters by foreign fleets is reducing fish stocks, and has caused widespread resentment among Somali coastal communities, threatening renewed maritime insecurity.

Entitled *Securing Somali Fisheries*, the report shows that foreign industrial IUU fishing vessels catch over 132,000 metric tons of fish each year, while the Somali artisanal fleet catches only 40,000 metric tons. The report is produced by Secure Fisheries (www.securefisheries.org), a program of the One Earth Future Foundation and developed as part of Oceans Beyond Piracy (www.obp.ngo).

The report uses published and unpublished data, interviews with Somalis and regional experts, and unveils new satellite evidence of IUU fishing. Iran and Yemen have the largest fishing presence in Somali waters, while vessels from Europe and Asia also have landed significant catches.

The report shows foreign IUU fishing in Somali waters has been a problem for decades. During the 1990s, IUU fishing was a justification for pirate attacks in Somali waters. And though Somali pirates quickly shifted their focus toward more lucrative vessels, such as cargo ships and oil tankers, piracy appears to have caused many foreign fishing vessels to leave the area during the mid-2000s.

But recently this trend has reversed. According to John Steed, Secure Fisheries Regional Manager for the Horn of Africa, "Illegal fishing was the pretext used by criminal gangs to shift from protectionism to armed robbery and piracy. And now the situation is back where it was, with large numbers of foreign vessels fishing in Somali waters again - and there is a real danger of the whole piracy cycle starting all over."

One recent example is that in March this year, two Iranian vessels, suspected of fishing illegally, were taken by pirates. The sixteen man crew of one of these Iranian vessels, the Jaber, escaped along with the vessel itself after being held for over four and a half months, but the crew of the other vessel, the Siraj, are still in pirate hands.

The long Somali coast should provide a source of food and income security in underdeveloped coastal communities, but foreign IUU fishing has resulted in depleted stocks, a loss of income for Somalis, and violence against local fishers. It also has threatened to ignite local support for a return of piracy.

Another key finding is that economically important fish stocks in Somali waters are being fished at unsustainable levels, and foreign IUU vessels are harvesting commercially

valuable tuna stocks at maximum capacity, leaving no room for Somalis to profit from their rich marine waters.

“Illegal fishing in Somalia has tremendously reduced the fishing activities of local businesses, leading to low production. As a result, my business is facing difficulties,” says Jama Mohamud Ali, a business owner in Somalia’s maritime industry. “These large, modern fishing vessels are depleting our catch.”

The report also reveals newly acquired satellite tracks which show that foreign industrial vessels operate throughout the year, some dragging large nets through shallow waters, destroying fragile ocean habitats that will take years to recover.

According to the report, the Somali government currently lacks infrastructure to monitor, police, and protect its maritime domain, and foreign fishing vessels are taking full advantage.

The report provides nineteen recommendations to reduce foreign IUU fishing in Somali waters and develop a sustainable Somali fishing sector, including:

- Improving information sharing between international and regional actors to better identify fishing vessels operating in Somali waters;
- Increasing the use of satellite tracking devices on fishing vessels; and
- Advancing fisheries infrastructure and development projects in Somalia.

The following are contact details for journalists who wish to seek more information or wish to carry out interviews on or before 16th September:

London Press Contact:	William Reeve , Press Officer reeve.william@gmail.com +44 774 865 4183	Nairobi Contact:	Kaija Hurlburt , Program Associate Director khurlburt@securefisheries.org +1 360 464-5509
London Report Contacts:	Dr. Sarah Glaser , Lead Author sglaser@securefisheries.org Robert Mazurek , Program Director rmazurek@securefisheries.org +1 831 295 3390	United States Contact:	Paige Roberts , Project Coordinator proberts@securefisheries.org +1 720 214 4424

Secure Fisheries is a program of the One Earth Future (OEF) Foundation, working at the state, regional and global levels to promote sustainable management of fisheries and combat illegal fishing throughout the Indian Ocean. Secure Fisheries was developed as part of Oceans Beyond Piracy's work to facilitate public-private partnerships and promote maritime governance and security.