

PRESS RELEASE



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CRFM and CARICOM IMPACS partner with Norway to fortify the region's response to fisheries crimes

Belize City, Friday, 18 March 2022 (CRFM)—The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS) hosted a Technical Meeting on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Organized Crime in the Fishing Industry this week. It marked an important milestone in the region's efforts to fortify the region's response to this very challenging and costly problem, through coordinated action at both the national and regional levels, with the support of the Government of Norway and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the Blue Justice Initiative.

The CRFM, its Member States, and partner agencies both at the CARICOM and international levels committed to advancing their collaboration using modern digital technology, to strengthen the region's response to illegal fishing and transnational organized criminal activities, such as drugs, human and small arms trafficking, trade in contraband goods, document fraud and forgery, tax crimes, and money laundering, which use commercial and recreational fishing as a cover for their activities.

Last October, during a high-level meeting of CRFM Ministers, twelve (12) Member States signed the International Declaration on Transnational Organized Crime in the Global Fishing Industry (also known as the 'Copenhagen Declaration'). They also endorsed the Blue Justice Initiative, which supports developing countries in operationalizing the Copenhagen Declaration, aimed at "promoting a sustainable and fair Blue Economy for all, that is free from fisheries crime."

The CRFM and CARICOM IMPACS convened the technical meeting of senior fisheries and maritime law enforcement officers to identify priority actions to strengthen regional and international cooperation to combat and eradicate IUU fishing and transnational organized crime in the fisheries sector. The event marked an important milestone for the Caribbean region in collectively combating the scourge of crime connected with the fishing sector.

Over 90 participants from 15 Member States of the CRFM and representatives of the CARICOM Secretariat, the CRFM, CARICOM IMPACS, the Regional Security System (RSS), UNDP and the Government of Norway participated in the virtual session.

The meeting featured a diverse array of speakers who provided participants with insights on the Blue Justice Initiative and 'Copenhagen Declaration, the UNDP Blue Resilience Project and its use of digital technology and institutional cooperation, tools and techniques to detect and analyze fisheries crime, and

a general overview of fisheries crime in the Caribbean. Participants engaged in interactive sessions, as they contributed to charting the way forward.

In addressing the gathering, Hon. Saboto Caesar, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour, and Chair of the Ministerial Council of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, said: “The fight globally has increased against IUU fishing and organized crime, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Member States of the CRFM continue to honor our duty... It is our quest in the Caribbean to partner with all international agencies to ensure that we reduce criminal activities when it comes to the Blue Economy. We intend to work with regional and international partners and other friendly governments such as Norway... because every Member State in the global community must play an important role.”

CRFM Executive Director Milton Haughton noted the seriousness and impacts of illegal and criminal activities in the fisheries sector and expressed the CRFM’s appreciation for Norway’s commitment to the sustainable use of ocean resources, through the Blue Justice Initiative and the Copenhagen Declaration. He thanked the Government of Norway and the UNDP for supporting the region in its efforts to help address this intractable problem.

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Important Dates:

15 October 2018:

The Copenhagen Declaration was initially adopted by 9 countries: Faroe Islands, Ghana, Indonesia, Kiribati, Namibia, Norway, Palau, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka.

10 December 2020:

Several Ministers responsible for Fisheries from the CARICOM / CRFM Member States took part in a virtual High-Level International Blue Justice Conference that was convened by the Government of Norway. The main purpose of the Conference was to promote and advance political support for the non-binding Copenhagen Declaration on Transnational Organized Crime in the fishing industry.

21 May 2021:

At the Fifteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the CRFM, Ministers discussed the issues and recognized the need for Member States to cooperate with other affected countries to improve understanding and knowledge of the problem, identify countermeasures, and build capacity to prevent, deter and eradicate IUU fishing and transnational organized crime in the fishing industry, in the region and globally. The Ministers issued Resolution No. MC 15(6) of 2021, documenting their position.

4 October 2021:

During a special ministerial meeting, several Ministers from the Caribbean Community responsible for Fisheries, the Blue Economy and related matters, delivered official statements endorsing The

International Declaration on Transnational Organized Crime in the Global Fishing Industry (also known as the 'Copenhagen Declaration'). They also affirmed their support for the Blue Justice Initiative, established by the Government of Norway to support implementation of the declaration. ([View the proceedings and country statements here.](#))

Twelve (12) CRFM Member States, The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and The Turks and Caicos Islands, signed the Copenhagen Declaration on this occasion.

ABOUT THE CRFM:

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) was officially inaugurated on 27 March 2003 in Belize City, Belize, where it is headquartered, following the signing of the "Agreement Establishing the CRFM" on 4 February 2002. It is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is "to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region."

CRFM social media links:

You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheCRFM>

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