**EFCA provides support to the second joint West African fisheries surveillance operation of 2019 organized by the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) on 6-14 May 2019**

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EFCA has participated to the second joint fisheries monitoring operation in West Africa in 2019, organized by the SRFC as part of the PESCAO program. That operation, called “KUTA”, was an aeronautical and maritime surveillance operation coordinated by the SRFC and in which the Member States concerned cooperated to detect illegal fishing activities which did not comply with the conservation and management rules in force. An EFCA expert was deployed in the patrol boat of Sierra Leone and worked in the framework of the coordination of activities in the Sub-Regional Operation Coordination Centre in Freetown, Sierra Leone, at the headquarters of the Joint Maritime Committee.

EFCA supported the operation “KUTA” with Integrated Maritime Services (IMS) and Copernicus imagery to provide additional information on fishing activities to the coordination center. Monitoring activities were conducted in the EEZs of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone using three patrol boats from the countries surveyed and a patrol boat from Cape Verde chartered by the SRFC.

The naval assets engaged in the operation "KUTA" inspected 55 fishing vessels resulting in the detection of 06 alleged infringements for which the competent national authorities initiated an investigation. Thanks to the aerial surveillance provided by the French Navy[1], 52 fishing vessels were sighted including an apparently non-authorized trawler. The coordination centre, which examined control activities in detail, also informed participating Member States of the suspected activities of refrigerated vessels in their EEZ and provided support to them in separate investigations.

EFCA welcomes the partnership with the SRFC and the collaboration with its Member States and France in the implementation of the PESCAO program which, through the "KUTA" operation, sends a clear message that there is no place for illegal fishing in the sub-region.

[1] The Aerial Surveillance support was provided by the French navy in the framework of the Éléments Français au Sénégal (EFS). Under this framework, France provided support to the project PESCAO with air surveillance using a FALCON 50 aircraft that flew over the EEZ of Guinea-Bissau on 07 and 08 of May 2019.