**Joint fisheries surveillance operation organised in West Africa in the framework of the EU project PESCAO**

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In the framework of the EU cooperation PESCAO project, a joint fisheries surveillance operation to detect illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing was just undertaken, the operation Alexandre Baptista.  Under the coordination of the Subregional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) and with the technical and human support from EFCA, the joint operation brokered cooperation between Mauritania, Cabo Verde and Senegal. With the Coordination Centre in Senegal, representatives from all participating countries collected and exchanged fisheries information data.

The five-year EU funded PESCAO project, includes a component aiming to improve the fight against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing activities in Western Africa, contributing to sustainable fisheries management and the reduction of food insecurity in the region.

As part of this project, the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) provides technical assistance to the SRFC and their member countries in order to improve regional cooperation in the fight against IUU fishing. The EFCA supported the operation through the deployment of one EFCA official in the Coordination Centre. The deployment of an expert from EFCA in one of the fishing patrol vessels also allowed sharing best practices and experiences.

During this operation, participating countries have shared information from the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and other fisheries data to get a full picture of the area of operations. With this broader surveillance picture, the fishing patrol vessels were sent to where illegal activities were suspected. There were 36 inspections at sea that resulted in the detection of a number of potential non-compliances including non-conform documentation and the use of illegal gear. The cases and investigations will be followed up by the competent national authorities.