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OVERVIEW AND PROGRESS OF THE FISHFORCE PROJECT FUNDED BY THE NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

About FishFORCE

In line with Nelson Mandela University's strategic decision to develop a strong marine and maritime institutional focus, the Fisheries Law Enforcement Academy (FishFORCE) – the first ever in Africa funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was officially launched on 8 November 2017 at the Ocean Sciences Campus in Port Elizabeth. Norway is proud to be supporting the FishFORCE Academy. The support amount is just under 24 million Norwegian kroner (42 million rand) for the period of 2016 – 2020.

Fisheries crime, or "multicrimes" affecting the fisheries sector range from illegal capture of fish to human trafficking and forced labour, fraud, forgery, corruption, money laundering and tax and customs evasion. These crimes pose a real challenge to fisheries law enforcement agencies in developing countries across the world.

Many developing countries are unable to effectively enforce fisheries laws and are therefore unable to manage their coastal zones. The result is fish stocks in sharp decline, instability, food insecurity, and the loss of livelihoods and state revenue.

The Nelson Mandela University Fisheries Law Enforcement Academy (FishFORCE) is a unique institution in Africa which is helping to build fisheries law enforcement capacity in developing countries to meet emerging threats and build adequate and resilient law enforcement responses. The aim of the Academy is to establish a 'FISHFORCE' that can handle the increasingly complex investigations and prosecutions of fisheries crime throughout Africa and the world.

Fisheries crime law enforcement requires traditional policing methods and tools, but these must be adapted to the specific circumstances affecting the fisheries sector. It is a cross-disciplinary field, and includes aspects related to law, criminology, police science, but also fisheries management and conservation. The aim is to achieve knowledge and intelligence led investigations and prosecutions of criminals engaged in fisheries crime.

The FishFORCE Project goals are:

1. Poverty reduction through the training of law enforcement officers
2. Advance economic development by increasing the capacity of selected countries to investigate & prosecute fisheries crime
3. Promote the sustainable utilisation of marine living resources

FishFORCE: Research, training and other activities

A cornerstone of the FishFORCE initiative is to facilitate research and innovation in the field of fisheries crime law enforcement. It is an ambition of the initiative that the training is cutting edge and evidence based, giving fisheries law enforcement officers the advantage of the most updated information, techniques and tools available. Therefore, FishFORCE is engaging a number of research associates and students at Masters and PhD level to carry out research projects in the fisheries crime and fisheries law enforcement field. These research projects will be multi-disciplinary and include law enforcement gap analysis and evaluation, as well as focus on the development of national and international law and policies.

The FishFORCE Law Enforcement Academy is an exciting example of how research can lead to real world results that potentially will improve the lives of millions of people.
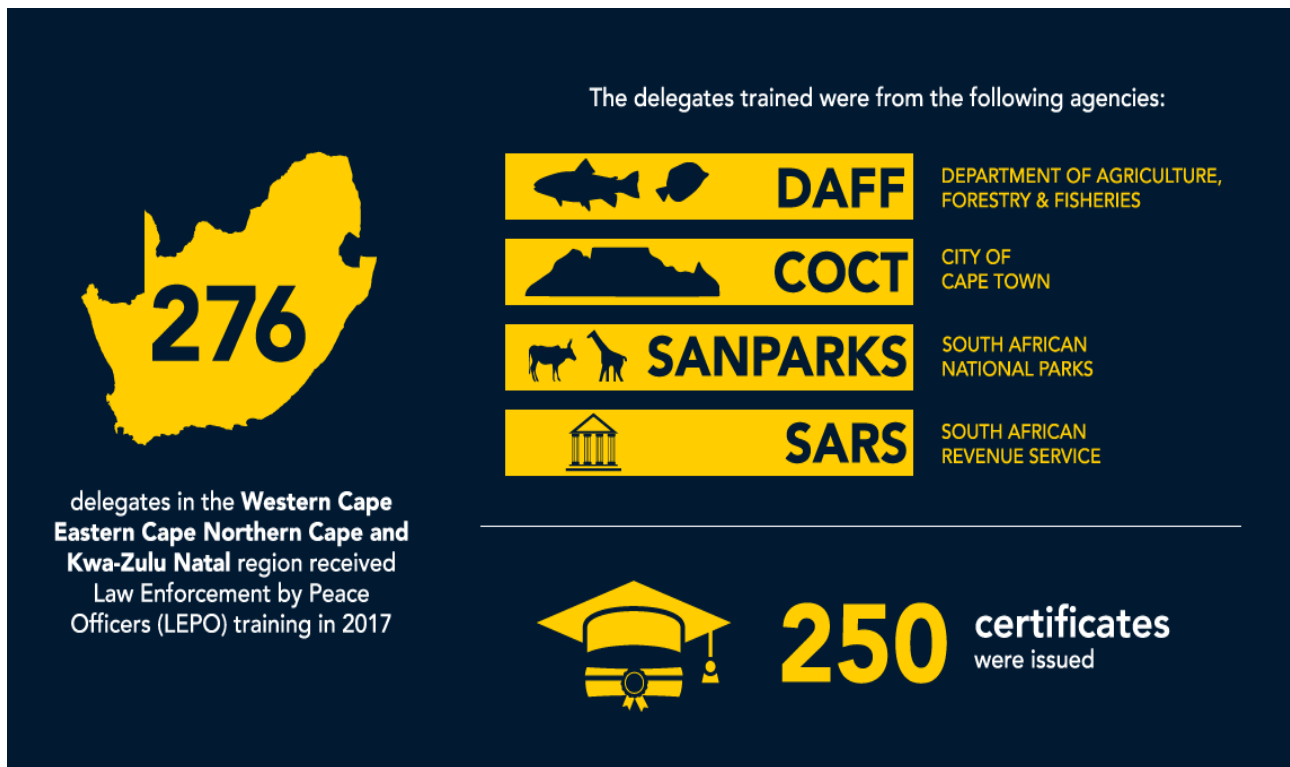
It is important to note that the training developed and delivered by the FishFORCE Academy is linked to formal qualifications, such as a Higher Certificate in Criminal Justice and a Diploma in Law Enforcement, thus providing an articulation pathway for trainees. This was specifically developed in order to promote fisheries law enforcement as a career choice by professionalising this sector.

Training Statistics:

FishFORCE has successfully trained 276 delegates in the Law Enforcement by Peace Officers (LEPO) short learning programme to date, delivering a total number of fourteen (14) training

sessions, which led to the issuing of two hundred and fifty (250) certificates at a success rate of 90%. Please refer to figure 1 below illustrating the training conducted.

Figure 1: FishFORCE Training Statistics

The training taking place in 2018 was inter-agency and cross-border in nature comprising prevention of corruption, taking of statements as well as Species identification and Fisheries Technology. Please refer to figure 2 below.

Figure 2: FishFORCE Training Statistics

Post-training support provided:

- In order not to leave trainees to their own devices after their training, an electronic helpdesk was established through which support is given to SAPS, fisheries control officers (FCO's) and the National Prosecuting Authority.
- WhatsApp groups have been established to assist law enforcement with requests for assistance with regard to suspect vehicles and people. Quite a few successes have been achieved, especially on the West Coast where a number of arrests were effected in the last month.
- The groups are also linked to scientists who can assist with species identification, shark fins and natural phenomena such as shoals of fish moving up rivers. FCO's are then alerted and their presence prevent the large scale harvesting of these young fish.
- FishFORCE is also looking at changing its training to blended learning and the development of apps where learning can take place through gamification.
- FishFORCE is involved with innovative law enforcement solutions by investigating the use of drone technology to assist agencies with monitoring and surveillance operations
- FishFORCE makes use of a transversal approach across all crime areas that originates from fisheries crime and pursues a multi-agency and cross-border model.

FishFORCE and the signing of the "StopGAP" Agreement

One aspect of fisheries crime that many people may not be aware of concerns port security. Ports are actively used by organised crime in a way which also involves threats to marine living resources. Ports are without a doubt key points of entry and exit for commodities associated with fisheries crime e.g. the export of marine living resources and the import of drugs and firearms, including other aspects such as human trafficking.

Port security officers are tasked with the control of goods entering and leaving harbours and they are on duty 24 hours per day. However, they are not trained to differentiate between species and to identify whether fisheries products that are leaving the country are illegal or not. They are also not trained to detect tampering (and possible smuggling) with vehicles and containers or to identify illicit substances such as drugs that are often associated with the poaching of marine living resources.

FishFORCE wants to do something about this, and through the financial support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Nelson Mandela University FishFORCE Academy will also train port security officers and their supervisors and managers in South African ports. The training of port security officers is a means towards reducing the fishery crime problem by increasing detection capabilities. It as a way of stopping a gap in the way we fight fisheries crime. That is why we call the project "StopGAP".

"StopGAP" is a small-scale project strategically aligned to FishFORCE which will receive funding of 575 000 Norwegian kroner (1 million Rand).

Norway and South Africa Ocean Priorities

Norway is supporting the FishFORCE Law Enforcement Academy because Norway seeks to be at the forefront of international efforts to promote sustainable use of our oceans and to ensure that we have clean and healthy oceans and to support the blue economy in developing countries. Fighting fisheries crime is one component towards achieving this.

Like Norway, the Ocean Space is also a strategic priority for South Africa. This is exemplified by South Africa's innovative and ambitious Ocean Economy Programme "Operation Phakisa". Norway wants to work with the South African government and South African institutions to protect and sustainably use our ocean resources.

Please refer to the FishFORCE website (http://fishforce.mandela.ac.za/) for further information relating to the project.

Yours sincerely

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