



Tuvalu joins forces with Sea Shepherd Global to Combat Illegal Fishing in Pacific Waters



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The Government of Tuvalu has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sea Shepherd Global, a marine conservation organization based in the Netherlands, to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Tuvalu's waters. The MoU commits Sea Shepherd Global to send the Allankay, a 54.6-meter vessel, to support Tuvalu's law enforcement efforts through at-sea patrols.

Under the MoU, signed by the Honorable Simon Kofe, Tuvalu's Minister of Justice, Communications & Foreign Affairs, the Allankay will accommodate a detachment from the Tuvalu Police Service with the authority to board, inspect, and arrest fishing vessels engaged in IUU activity in Tuvalu waters.



Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a significant problem in the Pacific region. The Pacific Ocean covers an enormous area, and some Pacific Island states lack enforcement capacity and resources, making their waters a prime target for IUU fishing vessels. IUU fishing not only threatens the marine ecosystem and biodiversity of the Pacific but also undermines the livelihoods of local communities that depend on the ocean for food and income. The Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) estimates that the annual loss due to IUU fishing in the Pacific is around \$600 million.

In recent years, satellite imagery has spotlighted the presence of so-called 'dark vessels' operating in the waters of Tuvalu. A 'dark vessel' is one that is not transmitting its position through a mandatory location transponder, likely in an attempt to elude authorities and fish illegally. "The use of the Allankay will allow the government of Tuvalu to make

such intelligence actionable, as the ship has the range and endurance to allow for law enforcement agents stationed on board to control the entirety of Tuvalu's maritime space. We know that there are operators out there fishing illegally, and we are honored to provide the platform that allows for these criminals to be arrested and brought back to Funafuti to face justice," said Peter Hammarstedt, Sea Shepherd Global's Director of Campaigns.

Minister Kofe expressed his gratitude to Ambassador Shivshankar Nair, Tuvalu's Envoy for the Oceans, Climate Change, and the Commonwealth, for his role in initiating the collaboration with Sea Shepherd Global. Nair became aware of Sea Shepherd Global's conservation achievements in Gabon, where the organization has been working for seven years, and saw an opportunity for similar success in Tuvalu. Minister Kofe said that "the engagement of Sea Shepherd Global to provide support in monitoring and surveillance of Tuvalu's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) could not come at a better time, as Tuvalu's sole patrol boat, the "Te Mataili II," was severely damaged by a cyclone in Vanuatu in March this year and is currently under repair in Australia."

Since 2016, Sea Shepherd Global has collaborated with governments around the African continent, assisting eight country partners—Gabon, Liberia, Tanzania, The Gambia, Benin, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, and Namibia—to arrest 85 vessels for illegal fishing and other fisheries crimes. "Sea Shepherd Global is excited to bring a model that we know works to the South Pacific for the first time. We know the impact of these patrols. In the places where we work, illegal fishing has been largely eliminated. We are proud to support the leadership of the government of Tuvalu in the fight against illegal fishing," said Alex Cornelissen, Sea Shepherd Global's CEO.

The MoU signed between Tuvalu and Sea Shepherd Global represents a significant step forward in the fight against IUU fishing. By strengthening law enforcement efforts, enhancing monitoring and surveillance, and raising public awareness of the consequences of illegal fishing, the partnership aims to protect Tuvalu's marine ecosystem and the livelihoods of its people.

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