



## **Welcoming Remarks: FISHForce Dialogue - Tightening the Net**

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13:30, 9 March 2020, Conference Centre, North Campus

Programme Director, and our convening host, Prof Hennie van As, I am honoured and privileged to welcome you all to Nelson Mandela University.

I welcome our partners from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the impressive array of stakeholder representatives in attendance, including:

Members of Commissions, notably the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the Benguela Current Commission

SADC colleagues and in particular our fellow Africans from Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, and Tanzania

Academics and students from sister universities, including the Free University of Brussels, and Rhodes University,

Government officials

Regulatory agency representatives

Business

Colleagues from Nelson Mandela University

Members of the media

Visitors and friends

Fisheries crime has escalated so staggeringly that today it is in effect a parallel economic system that is undermining global sustainable growth. The devastating impact is that countries are being deprived of taxes; citizens of jobs, food and income; and fisheries and environments are being completely destroyed.

Research by the United Nation (UN) estimates that Southern and East Africa lose in the region of R12.2 billion to illegal and unreported fishing every year. The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that 85% of fish stocks worldwide are now fully exploited, and illegal fishing is one of the primary contributory reasons for this

The task of limiting the on-going losses of marine living resources and livelihoods, cannot be an undertaking by one institution or a single government. It requires an integrated and collective effort by multiple stakeholders all along the value chain. Recognising this, in 2016 Nelson Mandela University, in partnership with the Norwegian government, jointly established a Fisheries Law Enforcement Academy at the University called FishFORCE.

FishFORCE's main purpose is to assist government agencies to combat sea fisheries crime and related criminal activities. It is training fisheries control officers, police officers, customs officials, border management and prosecutors along the South African and East African coastlines, as well as the Small Island States. The plan is to extend the training through-out the Indian Ocean Rim, including countries such as Indonesia.

FishFORCE also works towards promoting knowledge and intelligence-led investigations and to increase successful prosecutions of criminals engaged in fisheries crime. It is encouraging to see that illegal fishing is increasingly being approached as transnational organised crime, and as a result the policing, legal and policy implications of using transnational criminal law and procedure to strengthen fisheries law enforcement is now being explored.

Through our Faculty of Law, FishFORCE enables law enforcement officers to obtain formal qualifications, including higher certificates, diplomas and postgraduate diplomas, as a springboard to further academic qualifications. A sterling example of this is the first of its kind diploma in law enforcement. This diploma as well as other

courses developed by the Centre for Law in Action, within which FishFORCE is housed, enjoy the recognition of the South African Police Services and the Higher Education bodies.

Apart from training and research, FishFORCE has also established an operational helpdesk which provides expert guidance and advice in “real-time” and post-training support. It assists people in the field, including when they require further assistance while at a crime scene or while doing an investigation.

The FishFORCE model includes the establishment of linkages with universities in other countries and the building of their capacity to replicate and expand what is being undertaken in South Africa. To date, formal memoranda of understanding (MoU's) have been concluded with the University of Nairobi, the University of Dar-es-Salaam and the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. MOU's with the University of Seychelles and the Toliara University in Madagascar, as well as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission are in the process of finalisation. I wish to thank our colleagues in these institutions for entering into these partnerships with Nelson Mandela University, which position our respective institutions to be in service to society.

I am also pleased to share that discussions are underway with formal structures within the Southern African Development Community. We are humbled to serve as host to the Regional Technical Committee meeting for the SADC Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre to be held here at Mandela university after this event.

FishFORCE is a fine example of a proactive response to the global fisheries crisis. Our university is a leader in Africa in the marine and maritime fields in keeping with our vision to be a dynamic African university, recognised for generating cutting-edge knowledge and engagement for a sustainable future.

Our University's namesake, Nelson Mandela, believed in the “human-in-interaction” vision for a brighter future and a better world. To achieve this requires our collective effort to engage and challenge one another to think differently, do differently and be agents of change. The power of the partnerships between our institution and everyone here today can be powerful and impactful, making a significant difference. Together

we can contribute to a more socially just society, and a fairer and more inclusive world in which no-one is left behind.

I thank you.