

EJF chief: 'Thailand will succeed' in the fight against illegal fishing

Chief of the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), a leading international NGO, praises Thailand for the “significant progress” achieved in advancing a comprehensive fisheries reform.

In a meeting with Thailand’s Deputy Prime Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan held on 8 April 2016 in Bangkok, EJF Executive Director Steve Trent expressed his confidence that “Thailand will succeed” in eradicating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and human rights abuses in the fisheries sector. Mr. Trent said that he was impressed with the commitment and “energy” of the Thai authorities, which have produced concrete improvements over a short period of time.

Deputy Prime Minister Prawit emphasized that the Thai Government takes a “zero tolerance” approach in enforcing fisheries and labor laws. He also underlined the Government’s strong commitment to safeguarding international standards on sustainable fisheries management and human rights.

As the current Chair of the Group of 77 (G77), the Thai Government aims to strengthen international cooperation in order to end IUU fishing by 2020, a target specified under Goal 14 of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. Thai agencies are also revising domestic laws in order to prepare for future ratifications of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement and the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (C188).

Thailand aspires to be a successful model for other developing countries in reforming the fisheries sector. In addition, Thailand is also seeking to deepen regional cooperation in the fight against IUU fishing, particularly with ASEAN Member States.

Highlighting Thailand’s prominent position in the world seafood industry, Mr. Trent said that Thailand’s ongoing fisheries reform would have a “global impact” and bring about a “win-win” outcome for both the Thai economy and international trade. Mr. Trent also expressed his support for Thailand’s initiative to take a “leadership role” in the regional and global stages.

Deputy Prime Minister Prawit underlined the importance of Thailand’s constructive partnership with the EJF, which has led to better law enforcement results and capacity building programs for the Thai government agencies. In response, Mr. Trent said that it had been a pleasure to collaborate with the Thai Government. He presented the Deputy Prime Minister with a set of

recommendations aimed to bolster the implementation of Thailand's fisheries reform and reiterated the EJF's willingness to provide further advice and support to the Thai Government who will seriously consider translating these recommendations into concrete actions.

The meeting was also attended by Thailand's Minister of Labour, Minister of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, and senior officials from the Department of Fisheries and other state agencies. The Thai Government launched a massive initiative to revamp the country's fisheries management last year. New fisheries legislations and policies have been put in place, together with measures to ensure effective monitoring and control of fishing activities. Infringements have been detected and sanctions imposed accordingly.
