

 

## DOMESTIC

### MoU concretises collaboration on FAD Watch Initiative Project | 01 August 2023



(L to r) Dr Robinson, Mr Michaud and Mr Edmond after signing the MoU (Photo: Louis Toussaint)

- **'Ocean Track' benefits highlighted**

The Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA), the Sustainable Indian Ocean Tuna Initiative (SIOTI) and the Spanish-based association of tuna vessels, '*Asociacion de Grandes Atuneros Congeladores*' (AGAC) have signed a memorandum of understanding to concretise their collaboration on a project designed to intercept drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs).

It is an update to the FAD Watch initiative to prevent and mitigate the stranding and entanglement of drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs) in coral reefs, shallow water habitats and coastal zones.

The signing yesterday morning at SFA's headquarters were done by SFA's acting chief executive, Philippe Michaud, SIOTI's representative, Dr Jan Robinson and Selwyn Edmond on behalf of AGAC.

There are several activities proposed under the MoU including conducting analysis and risk assessment based on dFAD data collected by the service provider, Thalos, through the online tool, 'Ocean Track', developed in the previous FAD Watch project. 'Ocean Track' makes it easier for fishing vessels using dFADs, to share real-time position data which in return is communicated to the SFA.

Dr Robinson explained that with the tool, SFA is alerted as soon as dFADs leave rough seas around the Seychelles' islands, and move towards shallow waters.

"They then receive the dFAD's position every hour, see its trajectory and monitor whether or not it is just moving through the area or is it potentially getting caught up in the bottom of the shallow habitat," he explained.

He added this provides information on where the coast guard vessel, *Saya de Malha*, should focus its searches and effectively recover or intercept the dFADs before they could pose a risk to the shallow water habitats.

Other than the deployment of the *Saya De Malha*, another activity proposed under the MoU is the return of recovered dFADs to Mahé for disposal, reuse or recycling by agents of the SIOTI and AGAC fleets.

At yesterday's signing, a number of benefits were brought up by SFA's acting chief executive, Philippe Michaud, who stated that it will establish the future cooperation in the FAD Watch project.

"It will help the SFA to boost its capacity concerning the management of FADs. We want to make sure that the FADs are used in the most efficient way and that the negative impacts of FADs are reduced and mitigated," said Mr Michaud.

He also expressed his joy that the industry was taking environmental protection seriously and stated that it will be financed by the industry itself. It should be noted that the *Saya de Malha* vessel, has already effected two trips to recover dFADs.

"We need to make sure that our oceans are protected to a maximum but at the same time we realise that the FADs are necessary to fish for tuna. Without it, it would be very difficult," he added.

For his part, AGAC's representative, Selwyn Edmond, said the FAD Watch programme started as a pilot project some years back and was now an important management tool for the FAD retrieval and recovery efforts. "The importance is that dFADs are closely monitored and this is why after the first step with the donation of the *Saya de Malha*, it was felt that it was important to have a formal agreement," he stated. The vessel was a donation to the Seychelles Coast Guard in January 2022, from Inpesca Fishing, a Spanish group operating in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean.

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