

At Our Ocean Conference, Global Fishing Watch helps drive global push for ocean transparency

From vessel tracking to better fisheries management, new partnerships and policy commitments signal growing momentum toward accountability at sea

MOMBASA, KENYA, June 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Global Fishing Watch, the leading international nonprofit organization advancing ocean governance through [transparency](#) of human activity at sea, today announced new measures aimed at bolstering fisheries management, vessel tracking adoption and ocean sustainability, including a new partnership with the government of Madagascar and an agreement with the Panamanian fisheries authority to publicly share vessel tracking data from the country's domestic fishing fleet.

The announcements come as the 11th Our Ocean Conference concludes in Mombasa, Kenya, where participating governments endorsed the Mombasa Declaration and reaffirmed the growing importance of transparency, accountability and cooperation in safeguarding the future of the ocean.

"The message coming out of Mombasa is clear," said Tony Long, chief executive officer at Global Fishing Watch. "The future of sustainable fisheries depends on making activity at sea visible and verifiable — and holding those who fish fully accountable."

Indeed, a defining outcome of the conference was the adoption of the Mombasa Declaration, a new international call to action on fisheries transparency endorsed by 16 governments spanning Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and the Pacific. Developed with the support of the Coalition for Fisheries Transparency — of which Global Fishing Watch is a member — the declaration commits signatories to strengthening access to information on vessel ownership, licensing and fishing activity and advances global efforts to improve accountability at sea, combat illegal fishing and support more sustainable and equitable management of marine resources.

"From new transparency commitments on vessel tracking to deeper partnerships with governments here in Africa and around the world, we're seeing growing recognition that sustainable fisheries begin with knowing who is fishing, where they are operating and whether they are following the rules," Long added.

From [Panama](#) to Madagascar: Expanding partnerships for transparency

Among the major announcements made at the conference, the government of Panama confirmed its commitment to publicly share the vessel monitoring system (VMS) data of its nearly 200 domestic fishing vessels through the Global Fishing Watch map, significantly expanding visibility into fishing activity in the country's waters.

Global Fishing Watch's head of Latin America, Mónica Espinoza Miralles, welcomed the decision, describing it as "a significant milestone" in Panama's transformation from a country once under international scrutiny for shortcomings in fisheries oversight into a leading advocate for transparency and accountability at sea.

"We are thrilled to deepen our collaboration with the Panamanian Authority of Aquatic Resources to strengthen transparency, support evidence-based fisheries management and advance responsible ocean governance," said Espinoza Miralles. "By opening up VMS data from its national fleet and disclosing the beneficial ownership information for its international fleet, Panama is creating new opportunities for scientific research, traceability and responsible fisheries governance."

The announcement builds on a partnership that began in 2019 with the first public sharing of tracking data from Panama's international fleet on the Global Fishing Watch map. According to Espinoza Miralles, Panama's commitment demonstrates how open data, technology and political will can strengthen fisheries governance and sustainable ocean management.

At the same time, Madagascar's Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy announced its commitment to formally expand its partnership with Global Fishing Watch, building on nearly two years of collaboration between the two partners to strengthen ocean governance. This planned partnership will bring transparency to the forefront of the country's fisheries, dedicating resources to vessel tracking, joint analytical work, capacity development and bolstered monitoring, control and surveillance operations.

Against that backdrop, Global Fishing Watch also launched a new partnership with the Minderoo Foundation to create the first global map of fishing activity that captures both industrial fleets and small-scale vessels. By combining tracking data with advanced satellite imagery and analytics, the initiative aims to map the millions of artisanal vessels that remain largely missing from existing datasets.

The project, which is slated to deploy on July 1, 2026, will seek to provide governments and fisheries managers with a more complete picture of human activity at sea, helping inform policies to combat overfishing and support more sustainable management of marine resources.

In Mombasa, innovation and policy converge for ocean transparency

The Our Ocean Conference put Global Fishing Watch's commitment to tech-driven transparency front and center. At the Scientific and Research Pre-Conference Symposium, chief scientist David Kroodsma presented groundbreaking research that uses artificial intelligence and high-resolution satellite imagery to illuminate small-scale fishing activity previously invisible to traditional monitoring systems.

The [analysis](#) detected more than 30,000 small-scale vessels operating across Africa's coastline and identified critical areas where industrial and small-scale fisheries compete for the same resources. This data provides governments with powerful new insights to support fisheries management, protect livelihoods and strengthen ocean governance.

"For the first time, satellite imagery and artificial intelligence are giving us an unprecedented view of small-scale fishing activity across African waters, revealing the people, places and pressures that have long remained hidden," Kroodsma explained. "This is about more than technology — it's about empowering governments and communities with the information they need to make better decisions for the future of the ocean."

The conference also highlighted how transparency is moving beyond technological innovation and into the realm of policy, enforcement and international cooperation. To that point, Global Fishing Watch joined partners from the Coalition for Fisheries Transparency to spotlight Africa's growing leadership in fisheries transparency.

The official side event, headlined From Africa to the World: Scaling Fisheries Transparency Reforms, showcased a series of reforms and initiatives aimed at strengthening fisheries governance, and new efforts by countries such as Ghana and Cameroon to embed transparency and accountability into national and regional fisheries policies. Together, the initiatives highlighted how African governments are translating transparency commitments into concrete action to combat illegal fishing, strengthen enforcement and protect coastal livelihoods.

"What we've seen in Mombasa is clear evidence that ocean transparency is becoming a global expectation," Tony Long continued. "From new government commitments and partnerships to advances in technology and data, momentum is building around a simple principle: we cannot sustainably manage what we cannot see. The challenge now is to turn that momentum into lasting action and make transparency the standard for every fishery, every vessel and every ocean around the world."

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