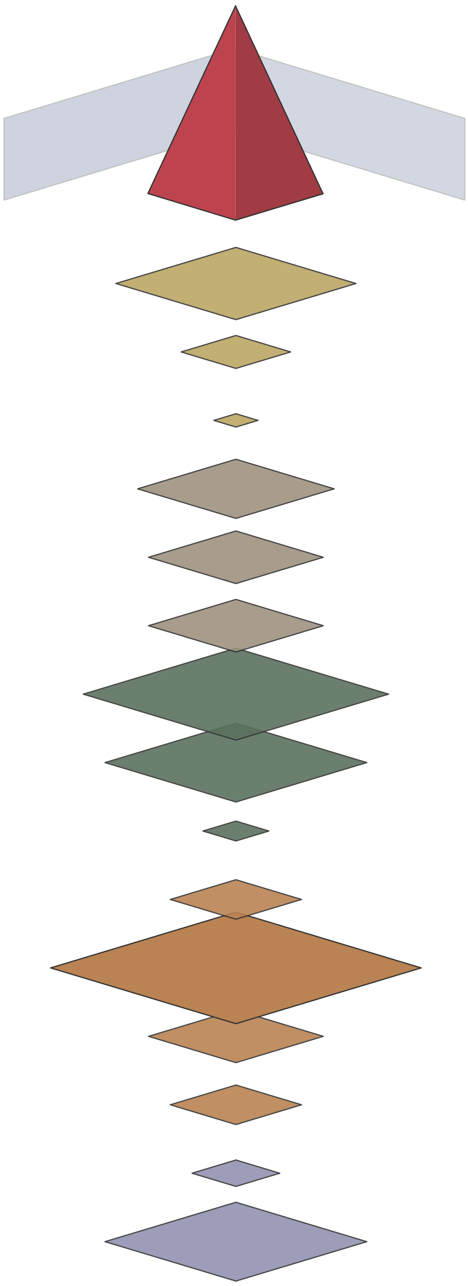
Africa
ORGANISED CRIME INDEX 2025

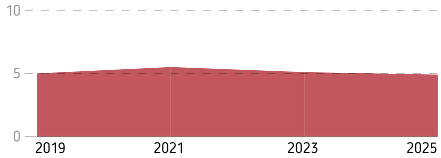
This project is funded by the European Union

GUINEA-BISSAU



4.88 ↘0.22
CRIMINALITY SCORE

34th of 54 African countries ↘6
13th of 15 West African countries ↘2



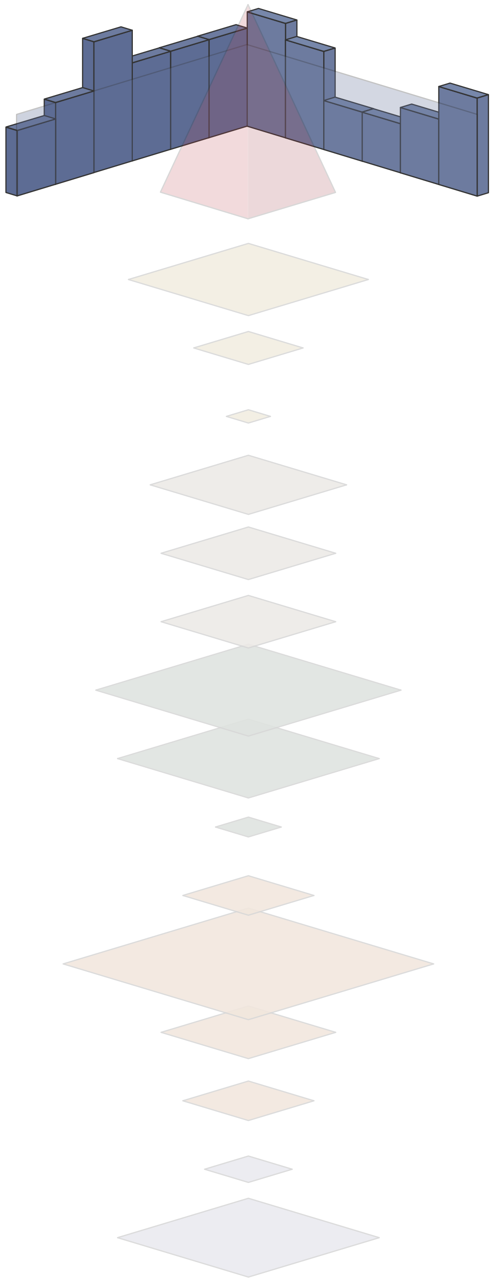
CRIMINAL MARKETS	4.17	↘0.43
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.50	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.00	↘3.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.50	↘1.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	4.00	↗1.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	7.00	↘1.50
FAUNA CRIMES	6.00	↘0.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.50	↗0.50
HEROIN TRADE	3.00	↘2.00
COCAINE TRADE	8.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.00	↘1.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.00	↗1.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.00	0.00

CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.60	0.00
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	8.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.50	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.00	0.00

enact
Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organised crime

This project is funded by the European Union

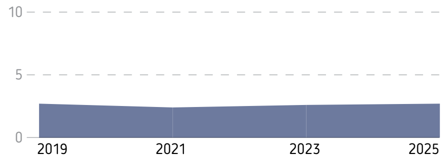
GUINEA-BISSAU



2.67 ↗0.08

RESILIENCE SCORE

42nd of 54 African countries ↗1
14th of 15 West African countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	2.00	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	2.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	4.00	↗0.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	3.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	3.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	3.50	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	3.00	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	1.50	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	1.50	↗0.50
PREVENTION	2.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.00	0.00

CRIMINALITY

Criminal markets

PEOPLE

The human trafficking market in Guinea-Bissau is characterized by various forms of exploitation, including child labour trafficking, forced marriage, street vending and domestic work. These activities are facilitated by a range of actors, including religious figures, regional trafficking groups and people with influence in government institutions. Quranic school teachers have been widely implicated in rising cases of forced begging involving children from Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. Guinea-Bissau functions as both a source and destination country, with victims trafficked domestically and to neighbouring countries such as Senegal, Guinea, The Gambia and Sierra Leone. Some young people are lured by promises of employment or educational opportunities and subsequently subjected to forced labour or sexual exploitation. Reports also indicate that girls are exploited in domestic work within Guinea-Bissau and in other West African countries.

Guinea-Bissau serves as both a source and transit hub for human smuggling. Economic decline has driven demand for smuggling services, particularly among young people seeking a better life. Foreign nationals, particularly from Sierra Leone, also increasingly use the country as a transit point to reach their end destination. Smuggling routes include maritime corridors towards the Canary Islands from the Bijagos archipelago. Criminal networks work with state-embedded actors and foreign actors in this market.

Extortion and protection racketeering is virtually absent in the country, with no recent incidents reported.

TRADE

Guinea-Bissau operates as both a source, transit and destination country in the illicit arms trade. The diversion of state weapon stocks underlines the gaps in arms control, particularly during periods of political instability. Locally, firearms are acquired for various purposes, including hunting, self-defence and participation in illicit activities. The arms trade intersects with other criminal markets, such as extortion and drug trafficking, forming part of a broader organized crime landscape.

The counterfeit goods market is a growing concern. The prevalence of counterfeit medicines is particularly harmful, compounded by persistent shortages in the country's pharmaceutical supplies. Counterfeit medicines are mainly produced in China and India and often pass through Guinea before reaching Guinea-Bissau, where the Bandim market serves as the primary distribution point.

The illicit trade in excisable goods, notably alcohol and tobacco, has gained traction amid political instability and poor enforcement. Criminal networks and foreign actors exploit porous borders and regulatory weaknesses. Smuggling is most active in border regions with Senegal and Guinea, especially in Bafatá and Gabú. Given limited domestic demand, Guinea-Bissau mainly acts as a transit hub. The closure of a brewery in The Gambia contributed to increased smuggling of alcohol there via Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes, particularly illegal logging, are pervasive. The lifting of a regional timber export moratorium in May 2022 enabled some timber to leave, although logging levels in many regions remain historically low due to the long-term depletion of forests. Regions such as Cacheu, Tombali, Bafatá and Quinara have suffered significant deforestation, threatening biodiversity and protected areas, including the Cufada Lagoons Natural Park. Logging is linked to cashew cultivation, charcoal production and the export of tree species prized elsewhere. State-embedded actors, including officials in forestry departments, have been implicated in facilitating illegal activities. Although raw timber exports are still prohibited, ambiguity in the regulatory framework has facilitated continued trade. Timber is exported primarily to China, sometimes via Banjul, in The Gambia, and local demand for wood and charcoal remains high.

Fauna crimes are also widespread, including the poaching of hooded vultures and sea turtles. Poaching is driven by local demand for traditional medicine and food. Guinea-Bissau is home to a quarter of the world's hooded vulture population, which faces heavy poaching pressure, especially in regions like Bafatá, Gabú and Canchungo. Illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing is widespread and poses a significant threat to livelihoods. Foreign-flagged vessels exploit loopholes to conduct IUU fishing in Bissau-Guinean waters, often enabled by corruption in licence allocation procedures and limited monitoring of maritime areas.

Illicit mining exists only on a limited scale, and includes extraction of heavy sands, particularly by foreign actors. Regulation of the sector is weak, increasing the country's vulnerability to illicit activities.

DRUGS

The heroin trade in Guinea-Bissau is limited, but a notable case has implicated political figures in its operations. Cocaine trafficking, on the other hand, is significant and has continued expanding, reinforcing Guinea-Bissau's role as a key logistical and redistribution hub for shipments from Latin America to Europe. Most volumes trafficked through the country follow maritime routes, particularly trans-shipment in the Gulf of Guinea and disembarkation using smaller fishing vessels and motorboats, either on the Bijagos archipelago or on the mainland. The country also plays an important warehousing role for onward trafficking towards Europe by sea and air. International cooperation contributed to a significant seizure of 2.63 tonnes in a private aeroplane that landed at Osvaldo Vieira International Airport in September 2024, highlighting the volumes potentially being trafficked by air. Criminal networks include several significant and often long-standing local criminal entrepreneurs and foreign criminal actors, particularly from Latin America and, to a lesser extent, Europe. State-embedded actors play a significant role, with political actors and the security forces at high levels of seniority providing protection. Profits are laundered through financial and real estate markets, notably within Bissau, but also in Dakar and European cities. The domestic cocaine market, though limited, is expanding, particularly in the form of crack cocaine.

Cannabis in Guinea-Bissau is predominantly sourced from the Casamance region in Senegal, largely to feed local demand, while the remainder continues on to destinations outside the region. Although recent years have not seen major seizures, the market remains active and cannabis consumption is common.

The synthetic drug market in Guinea-Bissau is expanding sharply. MDMA use is reportedly increasing particularly among young people, and is sourced at least partly from Europe. Consumption of a synthetic drug known as 'kush', which consists of synthetic cannabinoids or nitazenes (potent synthetic opioids), is also reported to be rising. Kush is believed to be predominantly trafficked from Sierra Leone, the regional epicentre of the market. Methamphetamine is also available on Bissau's retail markets, alongside tapentadol and Tramadol.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes remain limited in Guinea-Bissau, largely due to low internet penetration and limited digital infrastructure. Isolated incidents, including cyber-attacks on businesses, have been reported. However, the country is more often a target than a point of origin for such activities. Information on affected institutions or businesses remains sparse.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are a persistent issue in Guinea-Bissau, with recurring cases of embezzlement and misuse of public funds contributing to financial instability. Several high-profile incidents have linked government officials to allegations of misappropriation, further complicating the country's political landscape. Additionally, cyber-enabled financial fraud is a growing, although still limited, concern. Reports indicate that individuals have been targeted by scams involving fraudsters impersonating legitimate organizations to extract financial or personal data. These incidents highlight the increasing role of technology in facilitating fraud in the country.

Criminal actors

There are no indications of mafia-style groups operating in Guinea-Bissau. Instead, criminal activities are largely carried out by loose criminal networks and state-embedded actors, who exert much greater influence over the country's illicit economies.

Criminal networks are particularly active in the realm of drug trafficking. Powerful criminal entrepreneurs, often with dual Bissau-Guinean and European nationality, are prominent in the cocaine trade. These figures often occupy prominent roles in business and society, blurring the line between legal enterprise and illicit activity. These figures have long-standing links with Latin American suppliers, and are responsible for the final leg of import logistics, and any warehousing and protection in-country. Often, these actors own shell companies which they use to manage financial flows linked to the cocaine trade, and operate across a number of countries in the subregion. The market is characterized by collaboration, rather than competition, between key players. Prominent figures are also connected with European markets, often having spent time in Europe, and are able to leverage their personal networks.

State-embedded actors play a central role in enabling organized crime in Guinea-Bissau, especially in protecting and enabling the transnational cocaine trade. While, historically, this was mainly a military activity, now political actors, the judges and a number of police bodies are also heavily implicated. State-embedded actors are also linked to a range of other illicit activities, including illegal logging and IUU fishing. Corruption within law enforcement exacerbates the issue, with reports of people being extorted for committing minor offences. Political influence is a recurring theme, with clear collusion between elements of some political parties and criminal groups – underscoring the depth of criminal infiltration of state institutions, where positions of power are often used to shield and facilitate illicit operations.

Foreign actors also have a significant presence in Guinea-Bissau's criminal landscape, particularly in the cocaine trade. There are strong links between local intermediaries and foreign networks based in South America and Europe, including Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Italy, among other European countries. Most foreign criminal actors in the cocaine trade are not permanently established in Guinea-Bissau, but instead travel in and out of the country frequently, working closely with nationals. Sierra Leonean nationals are reported to be prominent in the kush trade. The influence of foreign actors extends into environmental crimes, especially IUU fishing. Numerous foreign-flagged vessels – some operating under the guise of neighbouring nations – are active in Guinea-Bissau's waters, circumventing regional fishing regulations and depleting stocks.

Large swathes of Guinea-Bissau's private sector – particularly real estate, construction, import–export, tourism and fishing – are implicated in laundering illicit money. Criminal actors are known to invest profits from illicit activities, particularly cocaine trafficking, into these sectors, thereby filtering illicit capital into the legitimate economy. Businesses contribute to the overall opacity of financial flows and create opportunities for organized crime to further entrench itself.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Guinea-Bissau continues to face deep-rooted challenges in political leadership and governance, with its instability, weak institutional frameworks and limited state capacity. The political environment is volatile, characterized by conflict between branches of government and a history of frequent coups. In 2022, there was an attack on the presidential palace, triggering the deployment of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping troops to the country. The national assembly has been dissolved twice by the current president– first in May 2022, and again in December 2023. Presidential and legislative elections have been delayed, and are currently scheduled for November 2025, leaving the country without a functioning legislative branch for almost 12 months, and a president serving beyond his constitutional term. Political leadership on organized crime issues has been inconsistent. Although the government recently reaffirmed its commitment to combating drug trafficking, the lack of sustained focus on organized crime is a notable weakness. Significant intimidation and harassment of opposition figures, and prohibitions on political rallies and protests, raise concerns about the integrity of political processes.

Government transparency and accountability mechanisms remain largely underdeveloped, with corruption remaining pervasive across all sectors, including at senior levels of government and law enforcement. Public appointments are often politically motivated, and mechanisms for accessing government information are weak. Financial transparency is also limited; government officials frequently fail to disclose assets, as legally required. The lack of parliamentary oversight due to institutional dysfunction impedes proper scrutiny of government spending and exacerbates fiscal deficits, with recurring delays in public-sector salary payments. Recent efforts aimed at increasing transparency include the development of a national strategy for digital transformation and the implementation of a blockchain-based platform to manage civil servant salaries. However, these efforts are at an early stage and their impact remains to be seen.

Guinea-Bissau's record on international cooperation presents a mixed picture. On the one hand, the country has ratified several key conventions, including the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the UN Convention against Corruption and relevant treaties on narcotics and firearms trafficking. Furthermore, the country is working with international partners to enhance its technical capacity through initiatives such as a forensic autopsy laboratory funded by China. However, Guinea-Bissau has not ratified the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants and remains outside other crucial frameworks such as the Agreement on Port State Measures to combat illegal fishing. The implementation of signed international agreements is limited by capacity and political will. But, in some instances Guinea-Bissau has made significant efforts to collaborate with international and regional partners. Following the September 2024 seizure of 2.63 tonnes of cocaine, Guinea-Bissau has worked with its international partners, especially the US, to extradite those implicated in cocaine trafficking and convicted in-country, resulting in subsequent judicial procedures. Close collaboration between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal also resulted in the arrest of a major Bissau-Guinean cocaine trafficker in Senegal in April 2024. More broadly however, cross-border cooperation in responding to organized crime is sometimes undermined by a lack of resources and corruption.

National legislation addressing organized crime remains underdeveloped and inconsistent with international norms. Political instability, particularly the lengthy period without a functioning national assembly, has hindered legislative progress. Significant gaps remain in the legal framework.

Guinea-Bissau is the only country in the region that has not criminalized piracy in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Its outdated drug laws, last revised in 1993, do not account for the emergence of new synthetic drugs. Similarly, the legal framework for cybercrime is inadequate, lacking provisions for specific offences and relying solely on general clauses in the penal code. Other sectors also suffer from outdated or insufficient legislation. Fisheries laws are poorly formulated and rarely updated, imposing inadequate penalties and lacking mechanisms for enforcement. Planned labour law reforms intended to extend protections to domestic workers and prevent forced labour have still not been introduced. These legal deficiencies collectively weaken the state's ability to combat various forms of organized crime and ensure the rule of law.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Guinea-Bissau's judicial system is critically impaired by political interference, corruption and operational deficiencies. While there has always been executive influence over the judicial system, the current level is unprecedented, with executive involvement reported in the last two appointments for president of the Supreme Court. The 2023 resignation of former Supreme Court president José Pedro Sambú after armed soldiers stormed the court and occupied his office highlighted the critical pressures on the judicial system through violence and intimidation from other arms of government. Disciplinary procedures have been implemented against judges within the Supreme Court deemed to be critical of those in power, which has undermined its ability to carry out its essential functions. The Supreme Court's highly contentious acquittal of two people alleged to have run a prominent cocaine trafficking organization in 2022, is perceived as evidence of criminal capture of judicial processes. Prominent organized crime cases have collapsed due to alleged procedural irregularities and political interference. The lack of prosecution of high-profile figures implicated in cocaine trafficking and their ongoing appointments to political office further reflect the systemic lack of judicial accountability. Prison conditions in Guinea-Bissau are extremely poor with overcrowding, lack of hygiene and insufficient food and water. Some facilities have ceased meal services due to supplier strikes, and inmates must rely on family or charity support. There are no formal mechanisms for reporting or investigating inhumane treatment, and some facilities are in such poor condition that human rights organizations have called for their closure. These conditions foster the spread of organized criminal activity within the prison system, with limited state control over incarcerated populations.

Law enforcement agencies are constrained by limited resources, corruption and political influence. Corruption is widespread among the National Guard and the Public Order Police. The Judicial Police, which has a mandate for organized crime, suffers from understaffing, inadequate infrastructure and limited presence beyond the capital in Bissau. Its operating freedoms are also hampered by executive influence, and elements of corruption within the force undermine some operations, especially when it comes to the cocaine trade. Nonetheless, the force has had significant successes, particularly when operating alongside international and regional partners, and is significantly more effective than other law enforcement institutions in the country. The Judicial Police has received external support for to build its capacity, including training courses for investigators and border officials. Law enforcement performance is inadequate when dealing with environmental crimes like illicit logging and IUU fishing. Weak inspection, limited numbers of forest guards and marine patrolling capabilities exacerbate these issues.

Maintaining territorial integrity is a major challenge for Guinea-Bissau. Its coastal location makes it a key transit hub for cocaine moving between South America and Europe. Despite this, the country lacks the infrastructure and capacity to monitor its borders effectively. Insecurity in the areas around its land and maritime borders is compounded by political instability, underfunded enforcement bodies and corruption at checkpoints. The lack of a functional maritime security governance system leaves its territorial waters vulnerable to illegal fishing and infiltration by criminal networks trafficking cocaine. The state's limited cybercrime capacity also exposes it to infiltration.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Guinea-Bissau faces extremely high risks in terms of money laundering and financial secrecy, driven by profits from cocaine trafficking, corruption and tax evasion. Despite pledges to address shortcomings, it remains unclear whether a national anti-money laundering (AML) strategy will be fully implemented. Efforts to combat money laundering are largely concentrated within the national financial information treatment cell (CENTIF), which has sought to raise awareness but lacks enforcement capacity. The judiciary's failure to prosecute high-profile money laundering cases and a broader lack of institutional follow-through further undermine progress on AML.

The economic regulatory environment remains weak and underdeveloped. Political instability, widespread corruption and inadequate institutional capacity continue to hinder market development. While some minor improvements were achieved in government integrity and business freedom, core components such as trade, investment and financial freedom remain stagnant. The economy is heavily reliant on informal and subsistence-based activities, with limited opportunities for formal employment outside of elite circles. Poor property rights protection, a weak legal system and inconsistent enforcement discourage investment and entrepreneurship. Customs procedures are cumbersome, and regulatory frameworks lack transparency. Overall, Guinea-Bissau's economic environment is characterized by fragility, informality and susceptibility to criminal infiltration.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Support mechanisms for victims and witnesses of organized crime in Guinea-Bissau are minimal. While the identification of human trafficking victims has improved in recent years, the burden of providing care continues to fall almost entirely on NGOs funded by international donors. There are no victim or witness protection programmes, and legislation to address this issue has yet to be passed. Victims lack access to restitution mechanisms, civil remedies or legal alternatives to deportation. Although the country has two in-patient drug treatment facilities – one government-run and one privately operated – to address its growing drug epidemic, there have been reports of inhumane practices and poor conditions at the country's main rehabilitation centre.

Prevention efforts remain limited. The inter-ministerial committee responsible for anti-human trafficking initiatives lacks funding and did not convene at all between 2022 and 2024. Although a new national action plan for 2024–2028 has been approved, it is not clear when it will be implemented. Public awareness campaigns have resumed through partnerships with foreign donors, but labour inspections and enforcement remain inadequate.

Non-state actors, particularly civil society organizations and independent media, have played an important role in mitigating the impacts of organized crime under significant pressure. Media freedom is constitutionally protected but frequently and increasingly undermined by harassment, intimidation and restrictive policies. Journalist outlets face attacks, high licensing fees and threats of closure, especially ahead of major political events. This has driven many journalists to leave the sector, and the remainder tend to avoid reporting on sensitive issues such as organized crime and refrain from criticizing the government. Activists have been similarly harassed and, while a number continue to work, they do so under immense pressure. Civil society groups have faced similar constraints, including harassment and exclusion from policymaking processes. Despite these challenges, several NGOs remain active in victim support, anti-trafficking work and environmental protection, including initiatives against illegal fishing and wildlife crimes.