



PRESS RELEASE

About two-thirds of the Earth is covered by the oceans, which contribute half of the oxygen we need for life and absorbs most of the carbon-dioxide our bodies don't need. The oceans are home to immense diversity of species, serving as significant protein source among others. The world's economy hinges precariously on the health of the oceans, which provides an enormous workforce with their daily livelihood. The benefits of the oceans are indeed invaluable. However, our misdeeds can destroy this resource which sustains life on earth.

On the 8th of June each year, we remind ourselves of our responsibility to the oceans. The theme for this year by the United Nations is most appropriate: *"The Ocean: Life and Livelihoods"*.

International days and weeks are occasions to increase public awareness about significant events, mobilise political will and resources to address global concerns, and celebrate and reinforce humanity's progress. The Regional Marine Centre (RMC) is thus, appealing to all stakeholders in West Africa to help protect our maritime domain. The RMC is at the forefront in using earth observation technologies to address some of the challenges we are confronted with. Notable among them is Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing which deprives the region over 7 billion dollars annually. Fisheries earnings account for up to 30% of the GDP of West Africa, and fish makes up a large amount of animal protein. The fishing resource in Western Africa makes a substantial contribution to the socio-cultural and economic well-being of the people.

The call to help protect the earth's water resource would require data on the processes, events and phenomena taking place in our oceans. Earth Observation (EO) data, obtained via satellites and from *in situ* measurements is made available through the continent-wide Global Monitoring for Environment and Security and Africa (GMES & Africa) program. The Regional Marine Centre is one of the repositories of EO data on the Gulf of Guinea, and ready to make it accessible to scientists, researchers, resource managers, and anyone interested in understanding what is taking place in the region. We also add value to provide intelligence to combat IUU fishing, alert our fishermen with forecasts of the seas before they embark on their fishing trips, and monitor the health of coastal ecosystems and habitats of West Africa.

As we celebrate the day, let us remind ourselves that we are custodians of whatever we have inherited and it is our sacred duty to improve upon it and leave a legacy for posterity. The destiny of the human race is baton that is passed on from generation to generation. Our lives are transient but the oceans continues to live on. The beating of the waves on our shores must remind us that it is there to serve us and we must also protect it. Together, let's make the Gulf of Guinea a better place to live in.





The Regional Marine Centre takes this opportunity to announce that it will soon launch its Incubation Programme. The programme is designed to provide assistance to start-ups and entrepreneurs to design commercially viable products using EO data to address some of the challenges in the marine sector. Ocean business is boundless and technology drives it further.

*On behalf of the GMES & Africa Community in West Africa we call on each one of us
to protect the oceans to protect our lives and livelihoods*

For more enquiries, please Contact:
rmc@ug.edu.gh

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