

JOINT WORKING GROUP ON FISHING BY NON-PARTIES

2ND MEETING

ANTIGUA (GUATEMALA)
20 JUNE 2003

**THE IATTC AND THE FAO INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON
ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING**

The FAO *International Plan of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing* (IPOA-IUU) asks regional fisheries management organizations to report to FAO on progress with the elaboration and implementation of their plans to prevent, deter, and eliminate IUU fishing as part of their biennial reporting to FAO on the Code of Conduct. The following report was submitted to FAO in February 2003:

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the regional fisheries management organization responsible for the tuna fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), has not developed a plan of action but has taken actions in support of the IPOA IUU. Purse seining is the most important method of taking tunas in the EPO, with more than 90% of landed catches, and, since purse seining also takes many relatively small yellowfin and bigeye, has meant that restrictive management measures have been applied primarily to purse-seine vessels. The second most important fishing method is longlining. While this form of fishing is not restricted in the EPO, international obligations to cooperate include those of reporting data relating to fishing activity. The IATTC currently has no restrictive measures for vessels engaged in other methods of fishing for tunas, although they should also report data associated with their fishing activity.

The IPOA-IUU refers to a range of illegal, unreported and unregulated activities. To some extent, there has been fishing activity in the EPO that may be placed in each category, and might be described as IUU fishing.

1. ILLEGAL FISHING

The restrictive measures that apply to purse-seine vessels include controls on entry to the fishery, closed seasons, and bycatch restrictions. As well, the associated Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program requires that large purse-seine vessels carry observers, and, if they fish for tuna associated with dolphins, comply with a variety of operational measures and fish only as long as the incidental mortality of dolphins does not exceed prescribed limits. There are procedures for reporting possible infractions to flag states, and for those states to report on their investigation of any actions they may have taken on such infractions. In general, compliance by members and non-members of both organizations with the measures is good. However, in the case of the closure of the purse-seine fishery for tunas in the EPO adopted by the IATTC for December 2002, the Government of Colombia declined to impose this measure on its fleet, and vessels flying the flag of Bolivia also ignored the closure. There are currently no restrictive measures applied by the IATTC to vessels using methods other than purse seines, and in that sense there is no illegal fishing in the EPO by such vessels.

2. UNREPORTED FISHING

The IATTC has established a Regional Vessel Register to record details of every vessel authorized to fish for tunas in the EPO. The Register is complete for purse-seine vessels and information is being collected for other types of vessels. In accordance with the IPOA-IUU, the completed part of the Register is being provided to FAO and the other tuna regional fisheries management organizations. Catch reporting is based on logbooks for vessels that unload in ports in the Americas and on flag state reports for the distant-water longline fleets. Unreported fishing by purse-seine vessels is extremely rare.

The national authorities for most distant-water longline fleets provide adequate data, but there are

longline vessels in the region that are not reporting their fishing activities. Unreported fishing by longline vessels flying the flags of non-member governments is probably the most serious IUU issue facing the IATTC.

3. UNREGULATED FISHING

The IATTC is in the process of establishing whether there are unregulated or unauthorized vessels fishing in the EPO. There are some vessels flying flags of non-member states that have not responded to Commission inquiries or with which the IATTC has no regular contact, and which do not attempt to cooperate with the IATTC. It is not yet clear whether those vessels are fishing in a manner that is inconsistent with State responsibilities for the conservation of living marine resources under international law. However, while these vessels may be unregulated in the sense of being unauthorized, they cannot be considered “unregulated” in the IATTC context since there is no regulation of longline fleets at the regional level in the EPO.

4. IATTC ACTIONS

There are well-established procedures for dealing with illegal fishing for tunas in the EPO. The IATTC is in the process of establishing the extent of, and means of dealing with, unreported and unregulated fishing in the area through the following actions:

1. The flag states of all vessels identified as fishing for tuna in the EPO are being asked to confirm vessel specifications and whether the vessels have appropriate authorization by that state to fish in the EPO.
2. The IATTC resolution on fishing by vessels of non-Parties of June 2001 provides that a list of vessels that are not cooperating with the IATTC conservation and management measures, together with the responses of governments to enquiries about the status of their vessels and whether they are ready and able to apply the IATTC measures, be presented to the Commission annually.
3. The IATTC is currently considering a draft resolution to establish a statistical document for bigeye tuna to assist in recording all catches of that species from the EPO.

At the IATTC meeting in June 2002, a preliminary list of non-cooperating longline vessels was provided, and the importance of communicating with the governments of the relevant flag states to inquire about the authorization of these vessels to fish in the EPO and their willingness to cooperate with the IATTC was stressed. The Commission noted the difficulties for the Secretariat in attempting to establish lists of non-cooperating vessels, as called for in the June 2001 resolution, but expressed the view that it was necessary to proceed to implement those resolutions in the best way possible.