

OPRT's Work to Restrict and Reduce Tuna Longline Fishing Capacity
(IATTC Workshop, October 10—12, San Diego)

Presented by OPRT

1. Introduction

Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT) was established in December 2000 in Tokyo to promote responsible tuna fisheries for ensuring sustainable use of tuna resource and development of tuna fisheries in accordance with international and social responsibility.

Ever since from its establishment, OPRT has been tackling on the problem of over fishing capacity of tuna resources.

The initial task of OPRT was to eliminate FOC longline fishing vessels, which had been conducting IUU fishing operation. In the meantime, with increase of its members, OPRT have effectively restricted large scale tuna longline fishing capacity in the world. Currently, number of larger scale tuna longline vessels in Chinese Taipei and Japan, top two owners of the fleets in the world is rapidly reducing. Reduction of 194 large scale tuna longline fleet is being carried out by Chinese Taipei in order to solve the over fishing capacity. (The project is to be completed by the end of next year.)

This paper explains why OPRT was established and how the private initiative worked to restrict the tuna longline fishing capacity. Furthermore, this paper raises the concern of new problems causing increase in fishing capacity on tuna resources.

2. Why OPRT was established.

In February 1999, based on a global awareness that the world's tuna resources are being excessively exploited, the Fisheries Committee of the UN FAO adopted an International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity (IPOA- Management of Fishing Capacity) indicating necessity to reduce a 20 to 30 % for large scale tuna longline fleet in the world. In response to this, Japan has reduced its domestic deep-sea tuna longline fishing fleet by 132 vessels, equivalent to 20 %. This has been done based on the fact that Japan is one of the world's principal tuna fishing nations.

Moreover, as well as executing the FAO IPOA- Management of Fishing Capacity, Japan has asked other leading deep-sea tuna longline fishing nations such as the Republic of Korea, Chinese Taipei to reduce their fleet accordingly. The aim in so

doing is to ensure that Japan's fleet reduction is not rendered ineffective. But, other countries were reluctant to reduce their fleets. In case of Chinese Taipei, they rather increased the vessels.

Given this situation, flag-of-convenience (FOC) vessels (that operate outside the framework of management measures by regional tuna fisheries management organizations) became the international concern. There were about 250 FOC vessels. So, efforts aimed at eliminating these vessels became an urgent task to prevent them from diminishing the effectiveness of the international conservation and management measures for tuna resources. Japan held consultations with Chinese Taipei, the effective source of the FOC vessels, on more than twenty occasions to resolve the problem of FOC vessels. At the beginning of 2000, Chinese Taipei basically agreed to an initiative aimed at eliminating FOC vessels owned by Chinese Taipei boat-owners on the condition of cooperation from Japan. Both tuna longline fishing industry of Japan and Chinese Taipei agreed to scrap 62 large scale FOC tuna longline fishing vessels in three years (2001-2003). Thus, OPRT was established to carry out the project of scrapping FOC vessels. OPRT borrowed Yen 3.27 billion from the Government of Japan to implement the project on the condition that the fund shall be reimbursed to the Government in 20 years. The reimbursement is being made by the owners of large scale tuna longline fishing vessels of Japan and Chinese Taipei. By the project, 39 FOC vessels were scrapped and 4 sank. It was incomplete but it was an impetus for the international community to address the issue more seriously. Obviously IUU/FOC fishing vessels were not be eliminated only by the joint effort of Japan and Chinese Taipei. There were many countries that accepted FOC vessels and allowed free trade of tunas caught by IUU/FOC vessels, knowing the concern of the international community. It was necessary for the international community to address the issue and introduce concrete measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU/FOC fishing activities. Accordingly, all Regional Tuna Fisheries Management Organizations as well as FAO have energetically dealt with the issue. It was really long time, but the IUU/FOC fishing by using large scale tuna longline vessels is now almost eliminated with the introduction of the positive list scheme in the world.

3. OPRT members and agreement to limit fishing capacity of large scale tuna longline vessels

Initially, members of OPRT were the tuna longline fishing industry of Japan and

Chinese Taipei from the fishing sector and the national organization of trade, distributors and consumers in Japan (Annex 1). In other words, all stakeholders in tuna fisheries were initial members of OPRT. The participation of all stake holders were essential as so indicated by the resolutions of RFMOs.

Namely, in 1999, ICCAT and IOTC resolved that member states should urge their importers and transporters to refrain from trading in tuna caught by FOC vessels, and consumers to refrain from purchasing tuna caught by these vessels. The participation of all stakeholders to OPRT was essential particularly because Japan has been the major tuna consumer and the fishing nation of tunas in the world. Besides, all tuna caught by IUU fishing vessels were exported to Japan.

In regard to members of the fishing sector, major tuna longline fishing industries in the world have joined OPRT and registered their vessels. More than 90 % of large scale tuna longline vessels in the world are registered by OPRT and doing efforts to conduct fishing in responsible manner.

OPRT members have gradually increased by help of the Japanese government. Major tuna longline fishing industries in the world joined OPRT by the result of consultation between the Japanese government and the relevant government regarding the management of tuna fisheries.

OPRT has now become an organization representing large tuna longline fishing industries in the world. The total number of large scale tuna longline fishing vessel registered by OPRT is 1,305 as of March 2006 (Annex 2).

OPRT has restricted the fishing capacity of large scale tuna longline vessels in the world by the agreement with its members.

As a condition to enroll OPRT membership, each tuna longline fishing industry is required to agree the following conditions.

- a) Limitation of number of large scale tuna longline fishing vessel to be registered by OPRT
- b) Increase of vessels shall not be made without prior mutual consent.

This agreement is endorsed by the consultation between the Japanese government and the each relevant government, which OPRT member belongs to.

As a matter of fact, it was not easy to obtain agreement from any industry to limit number of vessels.

The hardest case was the consultation with China. The Chinese government had a national plan to develop its deep sea tuna longline fishing industry, intending to increase its large scale tuna longline fishing vessel to 250. China finally agreed to limit the number to 108, paying due respect to the FAO's IPOA-Management of Fishing Capacity.

On the occasion of the enrolment of China to OPRT, Japanese tuna longline fishing industry agreed to extend cooperation to China's tuna longline fishing industry for the development of the tuna longline fisheries in China including development of Sashimi-tuna market in China. (The number of vessels was slightly increased to 113 under the condition that China scraps 38 small scale tuna longline vessels and does not increase the number of vessels for 5 years.)

4) Commitment by OPRT members concerning the restriction of fishing capacity by large scale tuna longline vessels

A. Joint Declaration at the World Tuna Longline Fishery Conference (WTLFC) held on August 26-27,2003 in Tokyo

All OPRT members and the government officials of each member gathered in Tokyo to discuss various issues in related to tuna fisheries including over fishing capacity, IUU fishing, incidental catch etc. WTLFC adopted the Joint Declaration (Annex 3). In regard to over fishing capacity, it was declared that the participants take the following actions jointly and cooperatively.

- a) To take effective measures respectively and jointly to restrict tuna longline fishing capacity on a global and sustainable basis.
- b) To express concern over the rapidly increasing number and capacity of large-scale tuna purse seine fishing vessels.

The agreement by each OPRT members to limit number of vessels has been reaffirmed by this joint declaration with participation of the government officials concerned.

B. Yokohama Declaration 2005 at the International Tuna Fishers Conference on Responsible Fisheries and the Third International Fishers Forum on July 25-29, 2005 in Yokohama, Japan

More than 200 participants from the countries facing the Pacific Rim

including tuna fishers, researchers, government officials, traders, distributors, Consumers and environmental NGOs actively exchanged wide-ranging perspectives and approaches to promote responsible tuna fisheries and to reduce sea turtle and seabird incidental catch in longline fishing. Yokohama Declaration was adopted. The declaration is commitment by the participating fishers – operators of large and small scale longline, purse seine, artisanal vessels.

In regard to fishing capacity, they expressed concern that number and capacity of tuna fishing vessels are still increasing and that tuna farming is rapidly expanding in the absence of fully developed conservation and management policies, even though several tuna and tuna-like stocks are fully exploited or overexploited, in spite of (a) FAO's IPOA- Management of Fishing Capacity and (b) the efforts to limit fishing capacity by large-scale longline vessels. Thus, it was declared to engage in the following activities to.

- a. Facilitate the establishment of new, or cooperation with existing international rules for management of tuna fishing capacity based on the principle that any introduction of new fishing capacity should be accompanied with removal of equivalent fishing capacity consistent with FAO IPOA on Management of Fishing Capacity and the recommendations or rules of relevant RFMOs, while taking due note of the rights and obligations of developing countries.
- b. Refrain from circumventing conservation and management measures by reflagging our fishing vessels to non-parties of relevant RFMOs and/or RFMO Parties with little to no ability to control their fishing vessels.

4. Summary Conclusion

The private initiative by OPRT to restrict fishing capacity of large scale tuna longline fleets has worked and is working. This was achieved by the understanding of each OPRT members on the need to limit fishing capacity for ensuring sustainable tuna resources. But, it is obvious that the positive support by the relevant governments, RFMOs, FAO and the international community was the vital element to make the efforts by OPRT effective. Without their support, initiative by OPRT would have remained as just a voice, although a voice raising a concern is important. OPRT, therefore, highly appreciates the supports by all parties in the international community. OPRT believes that effectiveness of any measures will be best assured by the private initiatives rather than by implementing stricter

regulations by authorities and the private initiative should be more encouraged. Lastly, OPRT expresses concern with the recent movement of increase of fishing capacity. We are afraid if no control of rapid increase of tuna farming capacity and large scale purse seine fishing capacity(Annex 3) be introduced somehow, it would nullify the efforts by OPRT members to have restricted their fishing capacity and moreover tuna resources may further decline. Furthermore, control of expansion of fishing capacity by small scale tuna longline vessels should be also considered. We hope the international community pays due attention on them and introduce appropriate measures as soon as possible in order ensure sustainability of tuna resources.

Annex 1

OPRT members and registered vessel

Producers

1. [Federation of Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Associations](#)
2. [Japan Tuna Fisheries Association](#)
3. [National Ocean Tuna Fishery Associations \(Japan\)](#)
4. [National Offshore Tuna Fisheries Association \(Japan\)](#)
5. [Taiwan Deep Sea Tuna Boat Owners and Exporters Association](#)
6. [Korea Deep Sea Fisheries Association
\(Tuna Long-Line Fisheries Committee\)](#)
7. [OPRT Philippines, Inc.](#)
8. [Indonesia Tuna Association \(ASTUIN\)](#)
9. [China Fisheries Association \(Distant Water Fisheries Branch\)](#)
10. [Foundation for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries \(Ecuador\)](#)

Trade and Distributor Organizations

11. [Japan Fish Traders Association](#)
12. [All Japan Fish Wholesalers Union of Central Wholesale Market](#)
13. [National Federation of Middle Wholesalers Association for Aquatic Products
\(All Japan Fish Brokers Union\)](#)
14. [All Japan Fish Retailers Union](#)

Consumers Organization

15. [National Liaison Committee of Consumers Organization](#)

Public Corporations

16. [Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation](#)
17. [Japan Fishery Association](#)

Annex 2

Number of OPRT Registered Vessels

Members	November 2001	March 2002	March 2003	March 2004	March 2005	March 2006
Japan Federation of Japan Tuna Fisheries Co-operative Associations Japan Tuna Fisheries Association National Ocean Tuna Fishery Association National Offshore Tuna Fisheries Association	495	490	495	473	434	381
Taiwan Taiwan Deep Sea Boatowners and Exporters Association	562	562	599	597	600	526
Korea Korea Deep Sea Fisheries Association (Tuna Longline Fisheries Committee)		183	176	174	172	172
Philippines OPRT Philippines Inc.		6	17	17	18	26
Indonesia Indonesia Tuna Association (ASTUIN)			14	14	14	14
P. R. China China Fisheries Association (Distant Water Fisheries Branch)				105	113	113
Ecuador FUNDATUNA				5	5	4
Vanuatu and Seychelles Legitimized Vessels				69	69	69
Total	1,057	1,241	1,301	1,454	1,425	1,305

Annex 3

