

# Call for the IATTC to support stronger transparency and anti-IUU measures

August 2024

The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), Oceana, The Pew Charitable Trusts and WWF are working together in a coalition of non-governmental organisations to ensure that the EU's engagement with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and key partners leads to strong transparency and anti-illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing measures worldwide.

In a coalition report titled "[Achieving transparency and combating IUU fishing in RFMOs](#)"<sup>1</sup>, we outline the minimum transparency and anti-IUU fishing measures that we consider essential for RFMO Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) and fishing entities to adopt and implement in order to end IUU fishing. The report's annexes are updated annually to reflect the progress achieved in RFMOs in adopting these key measures.

This document details vital measures for discussion and adoption at the 102nd meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).

To promote transparency and tackle IUU fishing, we ask IATTC Parties to prioritise the following actions:

## 1. Adopt a new measure to improve traceability through an electronic Catch Documentation Scheme

Regional fisheries bodies need to deliver effective enforcement mechanisms and create a culture of compliance with fishing regulations among their CPCs. One of the most effective mechanisms for monitoring catches, verifying their legality and preventing IUU fishing, is the adoption of electronic Catch Documentation Schemes (CDS). Although a CDS may not prevent all forms of IUU fishing, it can complement other monitoring, control and enforcement efforts, and significantly improve traceability along the value chain. The key role of CDS has been highlighted in the FAO Committee on Fisheries, including in the most recent one in September 2022<sup>2</sup>.

Other regional fisheries bodies, such as CCAMLR, CCSBT and ICCAT, have successfully deployed such schemes for years. Furthermore, other organisations, such as IOTC, are in advanced discussions of introducing one. It is also worth noting that in 2010, the participants in the Joint Tuna

RFMO workshop on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance, supported the expansion of the catch documentation scheme to species other than Atlantic bluefin tuna and southern bluefin tuna. ICCAT is one such RFMO in advanced discussions on expanding their current schemes to include more species.

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition welcomes the ongoing inter-sessional work, including the work at the IATTC-WCPFC Joint Working Group on CDS for Pacific bluefin, and encourages CPCs to accelerate exchanges and set achievable and timely milestones with the aim of introducing a draft proposal in line with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes and established best practice in other RFMOs, by the annual meeting of 2025. A phased approach should have the proposed scheme covering the most at-risk stocks from the outset (i.e. bigeye, Pacific bluefin, swordfish and north Pacific striped marlin).

This year there is a clear opportunity to advance CDS in bluefin tuna fisheries in the Eastern Pacific Ocean to ensure the increase in bluefin catches are properly monitored. The EU IUU Coalition urges CPCs to support the EU's recommendations for increased MCS measures, beginning with CDS.

## 2. Adopt a new measure to prevent nationals from deriving benefits from or supporting IUU fishing

RFMOs must adopt measures that require their contracting parties to verify and take appropriate measures if any of their nationals, whether a natural or legal person subject to their jurisdiction, are responsible for, benefiting from, supporting or engaging in IUU fishing activities. Other regional fisheries bodies, including CCAMLR, GFCM, ICCAT, SIOFA, SPRFMO, and most recently IOTC, have adopted or strengthened measures that promote compliance by nationals.

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition urges IATTC to adopt a Resolution that explicitly requires the CPCs to verify and take appropriate action when nationals are found to be engaged in and responsible for IUU activities or otherwise benefiting from or supporting such activities and/or vessels (e.g. as operators, effective beneficiaries, owners, logistics and service providers, including insurance providers and other financial service providers).

## 3. Adopt interim Electronic Monitoring standards

The current Resolution on longline observers - C-19-08 - was adopted in 2019 and reiterates the IATTC scientific staff and the IATTC Working Group on Bycatch recommendation for at least 20% observer coverage on longline vessels fishing for tunas in the Convention Area. However, on-board observer coverage for longline fishing vessels in IATTC waters is barely 5% - well below the 20% rate that IATTC scientists recommend as the minimum threshold for sustainability.

To help fill the gap, IATTC has identified electronic monitoring (EM) as a valuable tool which would use computers, gear sensors, and video cameras to monitor and analyse fishing activity, in conjunction with physical observation. A 2022 report<sup>3</sup> has found that implementing such a programme could lead to hundreds of millions of dollars in net benefits over the next decade.

Since then IATTC has taken commendable steps to reach this goal including developing an EM workplan, definitions and recommendations for EM standards, hosting several workshops and setting up a dedicated working group to advance discussions. At the last Commission meeting in 2023, two co-chairs for the EM programmes and enable updates to the standards based on implementation feedback.

1 <http://www.iuuwatch.eu/2019/06/new-report-achieving-transparency-and-combating-iuu-fishing-in-rfmos/>

2 <https://www.fao.org/3/nk497en/nk497en.pdf>

3. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2022/07/11/wider-use-of-electronic-monitoring-would-yield-broad-benefits-for-eastern-pacific-tuna-fishery>

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition urges IATTC parties to:

- Finalise the interim standards at the August 2024 EM working group meeting so as to adopt them at the 2024 Commission meeting in September 2024
- Establish, in 2024, a fleet-wide observer programme (either human or electronic or a combination) for small purse seine vessels and adopt measures to progressively increase observer coverage (human and/or electronic) on longline vessels from 5% to 100% coverage in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those vessels engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2025.

#### 4. Amend Resolution C-14-02 to further strengthen vessel monitoring

Vessel monitoring systems (VMS) are crucial for RFMOs and a vital requirement with respect to monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing and fishing-related activities. Current RFMO practices vary with different levels of accuracy, reporting and polling requirements and frequencies, sharing protocols and implementation rates. These diverging modalities can create gaps, inefficiencies and difficulties for cross-jurisdiction operators, allowing IUU vessels to slip through the net.

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition calls on IATTC to align its vessel monitoring requirements with the best practice of other RFMOs, including ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC and NPFC, by increasing polling rate to hourly, introducing provisions on manual reporting in case of malfunction and sharing positioning and vessel id data with coastal state or the Secretariat when deemed necessary, including for enforcement or inspection purposes.

#### 5. Improve labour standards for crew on fishing vessels in line with international conventions

As acknowledged by the member States of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the FAO during the 4th FAO/ILO/IMO Joint Working Group meeting on IUU Fishing and other related matters in Torremolinos, Spain, on 23-25 October 2019, vessels with substandard safety and working conditions for fishers and observers are frequently linked to IUU fishing activities.

A recent study by the FISH Safety Foundation has found that more than 100.000 fishing-related deaths occur each year<sup>4</sup>. Widespread implementation of relevant minimum international standards and full reporting of safety and labour-related incidents will allow for the identification and potential mitigation of dangerous situations and indirectly help to reduce IUU fishing activity. Other RFMOs have work streams on labour and safety standards and have also established working groups, including ICCAT in 2021, “acknowledging that unfair and abusive labour practices and unsafe working conditions are dire problems in international fisheries.”

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition calls on IATTC parties to adopt a resolution on crew safety, wellbeing and labour standards in the 2024 annual meeting and to establish a working group charged with establishing relevant recommendations based on relevant international labour conventions, including the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188) and the 2012 IMO Cape Town Agreement on fishing vessel safety. Safe and decent working and living conditions for all fishers and fisheries observers on board vessels flying their flag and operating within the Convention Area must be ensured.

#### 6. Strengthen the compliance process and improve transparency

Transparency is a particularly important but often overlooked aspect of RFMOs’ compliance review processes. Granting public access to information about those who violate rules and jeopardize the health of fisheries is vitally important in ensuring that RFMOs are accountable to all stakeholders with interests in the shared public resources under their management. The more accountable and transparent an RFMO, the more likely it is to make decisions that favour the long-term sustainability of fish stocks.

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition acknowledges the recent positive development with the adoption of Resolution C-22-02 and the introduction of status categories and suggested actions in response to non-compliance (Annex 2) – additions that will improve compliance reporting within the RFMO. The Coalition calls on IATTC to further continue efforts to strengthen the compliance process by publishing the compliance reports annually as per best practice by most RFMOs, addressing the significant existing backlog and introducing a ranking system to assess the severity of non-compliance cases. Compliance mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure processes are transparent and robust so that members are held accountable for the implementation of all conservation management measures and data reporting requirements and there are clear consequences for non-compliance. In this context, it has been agreed in section 2b of the Resolution C-22-02 to convene an intersessional committee meeting, biennially, specifically to improve the compliance review process.

The EU IUU Coalition calls upon the IATTC to use the biennial compliance meeting scheduled this year to develop a workplan to improve the IATTC compliance process based on the above made recommendations.

#### 7. Further strengthen the Resolution C-21-07 on Port State Measures

Adopting effective port State measures minimises the risk of illegally caught fish entering international markets. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization’s Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) is the only binding international agreement that specifically targets illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and is the most cost-effective means to ensure the sustainability of fisheries through the enforcement of rules and regulations at port.

While acknowledging the progress made with the adoption of the Resolution C-21-07 (PSMs), more needs to be done to better align it with the PSMA and bridge several gaps in its effective implementation.

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition calls for all IATTC parties to opt-in to the minimum standards for port inspection as per Resolution C-21-07 by designating ports. We recognise the special requirements for developing CPCs and urge parties to ensure the assistance fund is sufficiently resourced and ready to disperse to support implementation from 2024. We encourage developing States to submit an action plan as required to identify areas for targeted assistance to ensure all remaining CPCs can opt into the measure as soon as possible. Furthermore, the EU IUU Fishing Coalition calls for IATTC to align the Resolution with the PSMA, introduce more detailed provisions on national coordination, information exchange, use of ports, training and recourse of information to maximise the effectiveness of the Resolution. And finally, we call for IATTC Parties to work together in making the PSMs binding in the near future. This will ensure that ports are not an avenue for illegal products to enter the seafood supply chain.

4. S. Willis and E. Holliday, “Triggering Death: Quantifying the True Human Cost of Global Fishing” (FISH Safety Foundation, 2022), <https://the-human-cost-of-fishing.org>