

## **Belize's Annual Report of Internal Action Review In accordance with Res. C-11-05 Para. 5**

**18<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

During 2021, there was one long line fishing vessel which commenced operations in early January for a few days within the IATTC Convention area. Due to the financial impact of the pandemic, the vessel was unable to continue operations and was laid up for the remainder of the year.

The Registration of fishing vessels is carried out by the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE) in accordance with the Registration of Merchant Ships Act 2010. The management of fishing vessels to ensure compliance with conservation and management measures and other MCS measures is carried out by the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) of the Ministry of Finance in accordance with our High Seas Fisheries Act 2013 and its subsidiary regulations. Matters of policy regarding fishing vessels are determined jointly by both institutions.


### **Currently;**

1. Belize's domestic fishing fleet operates within the jurisdictional waters of Belize only and is managed by the Belize Fisheries Department, under the newly established Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation. The commercial fleet which operates on the high seas is managed by the BHSFU. Pursuant to our HSFA, 2013, it is not mandatory for owners of the high seas fleet to be citizens of Belize for registration purposes. However, for the purpose of ensuring that control or punitive actions can be effectively taken against appropriate entities, an applicant for fishing license must provide beneficial ownership information on the owners of the vessel as well as a legal representative located in Belize in accordance with our national regulations.
2. The Registration and Licensing of vessels to operate in the IATTC area is granted only after the BHSFU has established that the vessel has no previous IUU history or is affiliated with IUU vessel owners and have met the requirements for the obtainment of a fishing license, which inter alia, includes the installation of a mobile transceiver unit (MTU) in accordance with standard RFMO specifications and national regulations.
3. Vessels are required to maintain a functional MTU at all times, failure of which results in the imposition of disciplinary measures or the denial of a fishing authorization.

4. At the time of licensing, vessel owners/operators/ charterers/master are provided with all relevant conservation and management measures applicable to the IATTC area of competence. These are normally issued through legally binding circulars or form part of the conditions of their license authorization.
5. Maintaining a manual logbook onboard the vessel and the submission of catch and effort reports monthly is our primary catch reporting method. This is complimented by our electronic catch reporting system where data is received at the FMC on an hourly basis.
6. It is a mandatory for all vessels to keep on board valid original or copies of their registration documents and fishing authorizations including issued logbooks. Ad hoc inspections are carried out to ensure compliance with this measure, among others.
7. Pursuant to the HSFA 2013, sanctions are administered in accordance with our Sanction Regulations.
8. All our vessels authorized to operate in the IATTC or changes thereto are reported to the Secretariat.

**Actions that have been taken or are being taken as a result of our internal review;**

1. Since the adoption of our revised HSFA in 2013, no additional changes have been made to our legislation. However, as part of our strategic objective, the review and amendment of all our legislation shall take place every five years from the date of their adoption. As a result, our Act and its subsidiary regulations will be reviewed in 2023 respectively.
2. Our VMS requirements are in line with the specification required by the relevant RFMO measures. Apart from the minimum standards required, our VMS has been updated to ensure 24 hours reporting, geo fencing for RFMO areas, restricted fishing areas or areas of interest, designated port areas, fisheries closure zones as well as EEZ zones. New features have been added for position data to be sorted by statistical area for Catch/effort data to be matched with VMS history, estimates of fishing (compared to vessel movement i.e. speed, course variations), Port to port trip recording, effort management system, fish stock traceability and catch certification and most importantly a new platform has been created for an electronic catch reporting system. In addition, we are also in the process of further developing our VMS compliance and measures in line with new and more advanced technologies.

3. The implementation of our e-log system allows for the ease of transmission of daily catch and effort reports. The new system, includes, among others, trip reports, daily catch activity report, area entry/exit reports, transshipment reports, unloading reports etc.
  4. Our NPOA IUU for the high seas fleet was adopted on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014. This document outlines Belize's NPOA-IUU for its distant water fisheries. It is intended to support the effective implementation of the FAO's International Plan of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU. Belize's NPOA-IUU focuses on the general measures indicated in FAO-IPOA and reflects only those measures that are applicable to the High Seas fleet. This document focuses on the long- and short-term measures that Belize has and will adopt to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing by its High Seas fleet. Additionally, this document will be reviewed bi-annually or may be updated as may be appropriate.
  5. We have contracted the services of Capricorn Fisheries Monitoring Company (CAPFISH) to utilize their services for the deployment of observers to our vessels. It is also our intention to utilize CAPFISH provide training to our nationally appointed observers in the future. This agreement with CAPFISH was signed on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014, renewable every two years. Our first observer deployment on our IATTC fleet was conducted on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and there was a total of three official deployments done in 2015, one in 2016, one in 2017. No deployment was carried out in in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. We have developed a national observer policy, which now provides the platform for our National Observer Program.
  6. In accordance with our MSC Regulations, Belize flagged fishing vessels are no longer authorized to carry out transshipment at sea. All transshipment operations must now be conducted at a port, under a Regional Observer Program or as authorized by the Director.
  7. We have developed a fleet policy in respect to our fleet capacity which will allow for the improved control and overall management of our fleet.
  8. In accordance with our MCS Regulations, Belize has developed a Belize High Seas Inspection Plan on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 for the inspection of Belize flagged vessels and their products. The focus of the Plan is to ensure compliance with national and international obligations. Inspections shall be conducted by Belize appointed inspectors or by appropriately qualified organizations in accordance with signed agreements between Belize and other parties or States.
  9. Belize adopted its National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks for its high seas fishery on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015. This plan is in the context of the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing and its general objectives for sustainable fishing and follows the guidelines of the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks). We are currently collaborating with the Belize Fisheries
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Department for the adoption of a consolidated NPOA-Sharks which will include both domestic and high seas fisheries

10. Belize has adopted its National Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in its Long-Line High Seas Fisheries on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016. This plan is developed in accordance with the provisions of the International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds), as developed by United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The objective of this plan is to implement full mitigation measures in an effort to reduce incidental catch of seabirds by our high seas fishing fleet. Our aim is to promptly adopt any new mitigation measures that have been introduced by regional fisheries management organizations.
11. In 2016, through legally binding circular, Belize also implemented measures to mitigate the impact of fishing for all fish stocks on sea turtles. This circular was updated on 24-February-2021
12. Through legally binding circulars we have implemented all Resolutions adopted by IATTC as it pertains to the operations of our fleet in this area.

