

The need to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing through seafood transparency

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1. SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES – TARGET FOR UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through the SDGs, both developed and developing countries agreed to build a better world with “no one left behind” by ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all. The SDGs set out 17 goals (Figure 1) with 169 targets that the UN member states agreed to use to frame their policy agendas over the following 15 years. The SDGs apply to all countries; as such UN members are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks to achieve the 17 goals.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made a public statement on Japan's intention to fully implement the SDGs at the 2015 UN Summit where SDGs were adopted, including further strengthening its efforts to achieve a sustainable environment and society. Following the SDG adoption, Prime Minister Abe established the SDGs Promotion Headquarters to ensure a whole-of-government approach to implementing the SDGs in a comprehensive and effective manner.



Figure 1. The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 14 of the SDGs focuses on “conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources” for sustainable development. Targets under this goal include:

“By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics (Target 14.4).”

Achieving Goal 14 means addressing the worsening condition of global fish stocks. As the world's per capita seafood consumption grew from 9.9 kg in 1963 to 19.7 kg in 2013², global fishing effort has increased by a factor of as much as four¹, which was assisted by technological improvements in the last four decades². However, global capture fishery production has been stagnant since the late 1980s². Nearly

90% of global fish stocks have already been fully fished to their biological limits or beyond².

Japan, the world’s fifth largest marine capture producer and third largest market for fish imports², is an essential player in moving the world toward a future of sustainable fisheries. The high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 on June 5–9, 2017 will be an ideal opportunity for Japan to demonstrate its leadership and practical steps for achieving Goal 14 and its commitment to combating IUU fishing.



Fish for sale on the beach at Puerto López, Ecuador. ©Mark Godfrey/TNC

2. WHAT IS ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING?

IUU fishing refers to fishing activities conducted contradictory to legal conservation and management measures that are currently adopted by national, regional or international communities. IUU fishing is particularly prevalent in areas where national jurisdiction no longer applies and enforcement is difficult².

Although it is difficult to precisely quantify the total catch deriving from IUU fishing in value or tonnage terms due to the nature of the activities, existing estimates highlight the significant scale and size of IUU fish traded in global markets. Agnew et al³ estimated IUU fishing accounted for 13–31% of global fish catches, equivalent to \$10 billion to \$23.5 billion annual losses in value. Souter et al⁴ estimate that 35% or 56,000 tonnes of the total estimated catch of bigeye tuna within the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)⁵ Convention Area can be attributed to IUU fishing.

IUU fishing further exacerbates the critical status of the marine resources. It also lowers confidence in and effectiveness of stock assessments which are critical to ensure sustainable fisheries. Thus, combating such destructive practices will help restore the fish stocks.

3. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO TACKLE IUU FISHING

The international community has committed to tackling IUU fishing by strengthening international governance. High levels of IUU fishing were associated with areas of poor governance³. Hence, increased management efforts and the rule of law were considered key to preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing⁶. The Japanese government has also recognized the importance of combating IUU fishing and strengthening international cooperation for this purpose as outlined below.

3.1. International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU)

In 2001, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) adopted the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU) as a voluntary instrument within the framework of the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The IPOA sets out all state responsibilities and encourages them to use and apply all available measures including coastal state measures, port state measures or internationally agreed market-related measures. The IPOA called for national plans of action to be implemented by 2004, including action to implement initiatives adopted by relevant regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs).

3.2. Joint Statements with EU and USA

In July 2012, the European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and the Japanese Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries signed a Joint Statement on cooperative efforts to combat IUU fishing. As flag States and market States, both parties agreed to support the adoption of effective tools to combat IUU fishing, which constitutes a major threat to the conservation and sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States and the Fisheries Agency of Japan also signed a joint statement in December 2015 to strengthen cooperation to establish effective measures to tackle IUU fishing both at regional and global levels.

3.3. G7 Foreign Ministers’ Statement on Maritime Security

Following the G7 High-level Meeting on Maritime Security in Germany in December 2015, G7 Foreign Ministers (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and USA) released a statement on maritime security during the G7 meeting in Hiroshima, Japan, in April 2016. This statement included their support for the implementation of measures and regulations to prevent IUU fishing:

“We firmly condemn piracy and armed robbery at sea, transnational organized crime and terrorism in the maritime domain, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and other maritime activities that threaten global stability, security and prosperity, and express our continued commitment to pursue international cooperation to combat these threats. We particularly underline the importance of stepping up efforts to ensure the implementation of measures and regulations aimed at preventing IUU fishing.”

3.4. G7 Niigata Agriculture Ministers' Meeting Declaration

In April 2016, the Ministers of Agriculture of the G7 members gathered to discuss global food security as the core of the global agenda. While supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the G7 Ministers committed to addressing food security through various actions, including measures and regulations to prevent IUU fishing as part of sustainable fisheries resource management:

“They [Ministers] commit to efforts to ensure the implementation of measures and regulations aimed at preventing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and encourage third countries and dedicated regional and international organizations to step up efforts.”

3.5. Port State Measures Agreement

In June 2016, the world celebrated the entry into force of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA). It was originally adopted by the FAO Conference in 2009, and to date 46 countries⁷ (Table 1) have ratified this binding international treaty that focuses specifically on IUU fishing.



Tuna purse-seine fishing boats in Pohnpeian waters off-loading their tuna catches to trampers that will keep it frozen and transport to ports in China and Japan. © Nick Hall

Table 1. Countries that ratified PSMA (current as at 14 April, 2017: sourced from FAO ⁷)					
Albania	Australia	Bahamas	Barbados	Cape Verde	Chile
Costa Rica	Cuba	Dominica	EU*	France+	Gabon
Gambia	Ghana	Grenada	Guinea	Guyana	Iceland
Indonesia	Madagascar	Maldives	Mauritania	Mauritius	Mozambique
Myanmar	New Zealand	Norway	Oman	Palau	Panama
Republic of Korea	St Kitts and Nevis	St Vincent and the Grenadines	Sao Tome and Principe	Senegal	Seychelles
Somalia	South Africa	Sri Lanka	Sudan	Thailand	Togo
Tonga	United States of America	Uruguay	Vanuatu		

*The EU counts as one signature and one ratification for the PSMA. EU members include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France+, Germany, Greece, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

+France initiated the ratification process on behalf of its overseas territories. Overseas French Territories include French Polynesia, Saint Martin, New Caledonia, Saint Barthelemy, French Southern Territories, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, and Wallis and Futuna.

The PSMA aims to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing through robust port state measures, and parties to the Agreement are required to implement measures while managing their ports to prevent illegally caught fish from being offloaded. Such measures include⁸:

- Requiring foreign fishing vessels wishing to enter ports to request permission in advance;
- Allowing landings to only happen at specially designated ports equipped for effective inspections;
- Requiring those foreign fishing vessels to demonstrate the license to fish by the country whose flag they used and the necessary permissions from the countries in whose waters they operated;
- Denying entry into port outright, permitting to enter for inspection purposes only, or refusing to permit fish offloading, refuelling or resupplying if ships are suspected of being involved in IUU fishing.
- (When a ship is denied access or inspections reveal problems) communicating that information to the country under whose flag the vessel is registered and informing other treaty members as well as port masters in neighboring countries.

Conventional options for combating IUU fishing at sea—such as monitoring, pursuing and inspecting vessels in vast areas of the ocean—are not easily implemented due to the sheer scale of ocean spaces and the costs of the required technology⁸. Port state measures are considered to be some of the most efficient, cost-effective and safe ways to fight IUU fishing^{8,9}. The international community is expected to use the tools provided by the now-active PSMA to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Key PSMA signatories include large seafood importers, such as the EU and USA, whose markets account for 27% and 13–14% of the global market, respectively^{10,11}. Japan becoming a signatory would contribute to the successful implementation of the agreement since it is another major

seafood market, accounting for 13–14% of the global total¹¹; together with the EU and USA it constitutes two thirds of the global seafood market.

This international conference on “seafood transparency and sustainability” provides an opportunity for the multiple Japanese stakeholders concerned with and affected by this issue to share information, learn from lessons and experiences of other countries, and discuss potential next steps. Potential actions to be explored during the conference include enhanced international cooperation in tackling IUU fishing, the establishment of a transparent and traceable system to regulate, control and monitor seafood imports and the improvement of purchase standards of fishing companies, retailers and consumers.

ENDNOTES

¹ Arnason, R., Kobayashi, M., and de Fontaubert, C. (2017). *The Sunken Billions Revisited: Progress and Challenges in Global Marine Fisheries*. Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank).

² FAO. (2016). *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture – Contributing to food security and nutrition for all*. Rome: FAO.

³ Agnew, D. J., Pearce, J., Pramod, G., Peatman, T., Watson, R., Beddington, J. R., & Pitcher, T. J. (2009). Estimating the Worldwide Extent of Illegal Fishing. *PLoS ONE* 4(2): (e4570, 8 p.).

⁴ Souter, D., Harris, C., Banks, R., Pearce, J., & Davies, T. (2016). *Towards the Quantification of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in the Pacific Islands Region*. Toowong, Australia: MRAG Asia Pacific.

⁵ WCPFC is one of the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), an international organisation formed by countries with fishing interests in a specific area.

⁶ High Seas Task Force (2006). *Closing the net: Stopping illegal fishing on the high seas*. Governments of Australia, Canada, Chile, Namibia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, WWF, IUCN and the Earth Institute at Columbia University. http://www.imcsnet.org/imcs/docs/hstf_final_report.pdf

⁷ FAO (April 14, 2017): Status of Port State Measures Agreement http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/legal/docs/037s-e.pdf

⁸ FAO (June 5, 2016). *World's first illegal fishing treaty now in force*. <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/417286/icode/>

⁹ The PEW Charitable Trusts. (2016). *Benefits of Becoming a Party to the Port State Measures Agreement: Why countries should join their neighbours in the global fight against illegal fishing*. <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2016/06/benefits-of-becoming-a-party-to-the-port-state-measures-agreement>

¹⁰ FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. (2009). *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2008*. Rome: FAO.

¹¹ Pramod, G., Nakamura, K., Pitcher, T. J., & Delagran, L. (2014). Estimates of illegal and unreported fish in seafood imports to the USA. *Marine Policy* 48: 102-113.



Fishing vessels in Choshi, Chiba – Japan. © Takashi Hososhima/Wikimedia

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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