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**THIRD MEETING OF THE AGREEMENT ON PORT STATE  
MEASURES (PSMA) OPEN-ENDED TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP  
ON INFORMATION EXCHANGE  
Rome, 13–14 December 2022**



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## PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is the report of the third meeting of the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) Open-Ended Technical Working Group on Information Exchange, which was held in Rome, Italy, from 13 to 14 December 2022.

### ABSTRACT

The Meeting of the Parties to the PSMA, in its third meeting, recognized the importance of information sharing for the implementation of the Agreement and more widely for combatting IUU fishing. Parties recognized the importance of the availability of information related to the national contact points and designated ports (DPs) for the Agreement in the PSMA application and called for all those Parties not having done so yet, to provide updated information. Parties welcomed the prototype of the GIES and agreed that GIES enter a pilot phase and encouraged its use by Parties to allow for complete familiarization with the data upload and information sharing functions, and other features. The Parties stressed the importance of data protection and confidentiality, and ensuring the system is practical and user friendly, including making it as interoperable as possible with existing systems to minimize unnecessary burdens on Parties. Parties requested technical and operational matters related to the GIES to be discussed at TWG-IE meeting in 2022.

With regard to the pilot phase of the GIES, TWG-IE made specific recommendations on improvements and future developments of the GIES, whilst stressing the need for the system to remain sustainable and that the development of new features does not postpone the operationalization of the system. The TWG-IE recommended that a deadline be set for all Parties to share technical comments on the GIES system and recommended the operationalization of the GIES in 2023 following the approval of Parties at their fourth meeting. The TWG-IE noted the importance of defining how long reports published within the GIES should be retained. The TWG-IE considered that the IMO (International Maritime Organization) number should be made mandatory in the GIES if the vessel has an IMO number, whilst recommending that other identifiers such as the international radio call sign, the external marking usually referring to national registration numbers, the regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) identifiers and the Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) should be considered for vessels without IMO numbers.

The TWG-IE reiterated the importance that all Parties submit information on NCPs and DPs and keep this information updated. The TWG-IE highlighted the importance of ensuring that all DPs under the PSMA, have been attributed a UN/LOCODE, when possible. The TWG-IE recognized the need for the terms of reference for the working group. The TWG-IE made further recommendations in relation to: considerations in cases of Force Majeure in relation to the GIES; the importance of security in the GIES; the importance of RFBs in supporting information exchange; and the importance of materials and trainings to guide GIES users.



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## **OPENING OF THE MEETING**

1. The third meeting of the Open-ended Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE) was held in Rome, Italy, from 13 to 14 December 2022. The meeting was attended by 139 experts from 54 Parties to the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA/Agreement), 32 other FAO Members, 10 inter-governmental, five international non-governmental organizations and two specialized agencies. A list of participants is attached in Appendix 2.
2. Mr Matthew Camilleri, Leader, Global and Regional Processes Team, FAO, opened the meeting, welcomed participants and thanked the European Union, Iceland, the Republic of Korea, Norway, Spain and Sweden for supporting the attendance and/or the arrangement of the TWG-IE3. He also informed the TWG-IE of the kind contribution by the European Union and Iceland to FAO to support the development of the PSMA global information exchange system (GIES).
3. Mr Manuel Barange, Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, FAO, delivered opening remarks.

## **ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON**

4. The floor was opened for nominations for the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Working Group.
5. Mr Urbain Thibauthéon Arron Sonagnon Brito, Head of Service for Controls and Monitoring of Fishery Products and Post-harvest, Benin, was elected chairperson and Mr Byron Alejandro Fuentes Falcones, Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Specialist, Ecuador, was elected Vice-Chairperson of the Working Group.

## **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING**

6. The TWG-IE adopted the agenda without modification, as shown in Appendix 1.
7. The TWG-IE agreed that only the recommendations of the Working Group would be adopted in plenary, whilst the remaining sections would be drafted by the Secretariat.

## **STATE OF AFFAIRS OF NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS AND DESIGNATED PORTS**

8. The Secretariat introduced the agenda item, describing the current process for the collection of information relating PSMA national contact points (NCPs) and designated ports (DPs) through the PSMA application. The Secretariat noted that as of 17 October 2022, 8 percent of Parties had not provided a NCP, 15 percent have not provided a DP and 29 percent have provided neither a NCP or a DP. The Secretariat also presented on plans for migrating the PSMA application into the Global Information Exchange System (GIES) in order to streamline information exchange related to the PSMA into one application.
9. The TWG-IE noted that several Parties were in the process of submitting information on their NCPs and DPs, whilst certain states having recently become Party to the Agreement have uploaded information on their NCPs and DPs in the lead up to the working group, after the publishing of the working documents of the meeting.
10. The TWG-IE noted that any requests related to provision of NCPs and DPs should be sent to PSMA-GIES@fao.org.

## **STATE OF AFFAIRS OF THE GLOBAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE SYSTEM (GIES)**

11. The Secretariat introduced the current status of affairs of the work in relation to the GIES including, the GIES team, the infrastructure and current features of the system, and the status of the pilot stage. The Secretariat noted that some feedback had been received on bugs and improvements in relation to

the system which were subsequently addressed, however further testing and feedback was needed from Parties in order to refine the GIES.

12. The Secretariat provided a live demonstration of the GIES, detailing its current functions and features.

13. Ms Yan Zhang, Economic Affairs Officer, UNECE, provided a presentation on the importance of the UN/LOCODE as the international code list for ports and the process for assigning UN/LOCODEs for ports which have not already been assigned a code.

14. The TWG-IE welcomed the expansion of the GIES Team, both for the management and development of the system as well as the creation of a dedicated help desk to support users. The Group commended the work of the Secretariat in relation to the GIES.

15. The TWG-IE noted that information exchange through the GIES is not only useful for combatting IUU fishing through the implementation of port State measures but also to reflect the compliance of those vessels acting in accordance with applicable with conservation and management measures.

16. The TWG-IE recognized the usefulness of the PSMA Regional Coordination Meetings to hold discussions on regional specificities including on information exchange. The Group welcomed efforts by the Secretariat to continue holding these meetings, subject to the availability of funds.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA SECURITY**

17. The Secretariat introduced the work conducted and additional considerations for the TWG-IE with regard to confidentiality and data security in relation to the use of the GIES including recipients of reports, improved password security requirements and an approach towards personal user account instead of country account to avoid security risks related to sharing of passwords.

18. The TWG-IE welcomed the efforts being made by the Secretariat towards ensuring data security and confidentiality of information being shared through the GIES.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IMO NUMBER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PSMA**

19. The Secretariat introduced the agenda item, emphasising the importance of the IMO (International Maritime Organization) number for the implementation of the Agreement, including being a key data element for information exchange with regard to vessel identification, globally recognized as being the unique vessel identifier (UVI) for the Global Record, as well as being contained within both Annex A and C of the Agreement. The Secretariat noted that the IMO number is in many cases being made mandatory both at national and regional level.

20. The TWG-IE agreed on the importance of the IMO number as the only unique identifier for vessels and its importance for tracking vessels, however noted that certain smaller vessels such as those conducting coastal fisheries do not have IMO numbers.

## **ROLE OF REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES IN DATA EXCHANGE**

21. The Secretariat described the importance of regional fishery bodies (RFBs) for information exchange, including the importance of connecting with RFB electronic port State measures (ePSM) systems where present. The Secretariat informed that the GIES is catered for receiving information directly from Parties or from RFB ePSM systems through a customisable application programming interface (API). Where an agreement is in place and a connection has been established with a RFB ePSM system, Parties would have additional options for sharing information as required under the Agreement.

22. The TWG-IE noted that the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) had automated ePSM systems and that prior to creating a connection between the systems, a decision would need to be formalised through the relevant regional fisheries

management organization (RFMO) decision making forums. The TWG-IE further noted that other RFBs are either in the process of developing an ePSM system or assessing the need for such a system.

## **ROLE OF THE GIES IN SUPPORT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

23. The Secretariat introduced the current and potential linkages between the GIES and other international instruments and tools, including:

- the Global Record as the global source of truth for vessel information;
- support for the implementation of the Compliance Agreement in fulfilling responsibilities under that Agreement to assess the compliance of flagged vessels; and
- the potential for the support in the uptake of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment with regards to information exchange

## **WORKPLAN AND STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GIES**

24. The Secretariat presented a proposed a GIES implementation workplan consisting of the following general phases:

- i. Finalization of GIES pilot (up to the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the PSMA [MOP4])
- ii. Operationalization of current version of GIES (after MOP4)
- iii. Development and piloting of advance request for port entry (ARPE) and other selected functionalities (intersessional period until MOP5, passing through TWG-IE4)
- iv. Operationalization of ARPE (from MOP5)
- v. Future improvements and maintenance

## **ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING STATES**

25. The Secretariat noted the need for assistance to states with regard to information exchange as regards the Agreement including, awareness raising, backstopping support, technical support, guidance material and training workshops. The Secretariat noted that support is available through the FAO Global Capacity Development Programme to support the Implementation of the Agreement and complementary measures and tools and that new course modules within its “Prospectus – FAO fisheries training programme in support of the implementation of international instruments” are being developed on information exchange.

26. The TWG-IE welcomed the announcement of the Secretariat for initiating the development of a check list for information exchange, as a new volume within the series “Checklists and technical guidelines to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing”.

27. The TWG-IE welcomed the efforts of the FAO through its Global Capacity Development Programme to support states in building their capacity to effectively implement the framework of international instruments to combat IUU fishing. The Group welcomed the creation of a new project funded by the European Union, the first project under the Programme with a dedicated element to support states with information exchange matters.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TWG-IE**

28. The Secretariat noted the absence of terms of reference for the TWG-IE and shared with the participants a draft version for consideration.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

29. The TWG-IE reiterated the importance that all Parties submit information on NCPs and DPs and keep this information updated. This information is essential for PSMA implementation including enabling contacts among NCPs and for the functioning of GIES.

30. The TWG-IE noted that the communication of the NCP to FAO is through the online form of the application, however some supplementary information may be required by the Secretariat to confirm the identity of the proposed NCP.

31. The TWG-IE welcomed the proposal by the Secretariat to work on migrating the functions and data contained within the PSMA application on NCPs and DPs into the GIES, hence creating a single access point for sharing information to support the implementation of the Agreement. Furthermore, the Group suggested that this new development could include the following features:

- facilitated bulk upload of DPs along with the implementation of security and confidentiality of country data;
- a section showing all national contact points and DPs;
- the registration of an authority as well as the main NCP and multiple alternate NCPs;
- optional data fields within the DP form, whereby Parties can specify which services are available to vessels in those ports.

32. The TWG-IE highlighted the importance of ensuring that all DPs under the PSMA, have been attributed a UN/LOCODE, when possible.

33. The TWG-IE welcomed that Comoros and Ukraine have initiated the process of becoming Party to the Agreement and encouraged other FAO Members to also become Party.

34. The TWG-IE welcomed efforts by FAO to improve the security of the GIES, such as through the changes made in relations to the strengthening of user passwords and the approach of having accounts tied to individual users rather than having a generic account per Party. The Group welcomed proposals by the Secretariat on further improving security, such as multiple factor authentication and encryption of emails, however noted that such changes should not delay the operationalisation of the system nor make the system overly complex for the users.

35. The TWG-IE agreed that emails can only be used for sending links to secured parts of the application, ensuring that no sensitive data is part of the email or leaked by the GIES, which could contain personal and business identifiable information. The Group recommended that a manual or guidance related to the protection, uploading and access of protected or sensitive data be considered for development.

36. The TWG-IE noted that security goes both ways, and it is also important for Parties to take careful considerations with regard to security. The Group welcomed the proposal to have an access log within the GIES to show who accessed what data and facilitate identification of leaks, should they occur. In such cases, the Group considered that the relevant State(s) should be informed.

37. With regards to the development of the GIES, the TWG-IE welcomed the advancements by the Secretariat and recommended that work towards the operationalisation of the system should be focused on increasing participation. Additionally, the Group called for several changes to the current pilot system such as:

- multiple fishing areas and species within fields of the authorisation module;
- review the reference list of RFMOs within the GIES and ensure it is comprehensive;
- allow for the inclusion of vessels with an unknown or false flag to be entered into GIES reports;
- ability to download published reports notified to the State within the application in PDF format;
- allow an option of free entry for port related fields within GIES reports;

- inclusion of an additional optional field within inspection reports, to specify whether a related court case is open or closed;
- removal of list of “Actions taken” within inspection result module, instead have free entry of information;
- inclusion of an additional entry fields for fishing areas;
- removing the binary nature of the data field “evidence of IUU fishing”; and
- inform coastal states of any IUU activities through an email which contains all the contact points of coastal states so that they could be informed.

38. The TWG-IE recommended that a deadline be set for all Parties to share technical comments on the GIES system, should they have them, so that the Secretariat can address these issues before the operationalisation of the system.

39. The TWG-IE recommended the operationalisation of the GIES in 2023 following the approval of Parties at their fourth meeting.

40. The TWG-IE noted the importance of defining how long reports published within the GIES should be retained.

41. The TWG-IE noted that consideration should be made on cases of Force Majeure in relation to the GIES.

42. The TWG-IE welcomed the proposal of the Secretariat with regard to new features to be included in the GIES, whilst stressing that consideration should be made to ensure that the system remains sustainable. The Group called that such features when developed should be tested by Parties in parallel to the main environment of the GIES and should not postpone the operationalisation of the GIES with its current base features. The Group considered that the following features could be included in future development phases, if agreed by the Parties:

- The voluntary ARPE feature, noting that this development should take into account normal use cases whereby such requests are supplied directly by non-State actors.
- Work to help countries to have systems able to provide data to the GIES, if they wish to.
- The inclusion of features to facilitate risk analysis, such as the receipt of summary compliance information to port states for the vessel for which it has received an ARPE or in another manner. The Group however noted that a decision on which summary fields should be included would need to be considered by the Parties.
- The inclusion of advanced user management, allowing a Party's PSMA National Contact Point to be able to approve or define additional user accounts for their State, including the rights of such accounts.
- A feedback mechanism whereby Global Record NFPs of the flag State would be notified when a vessel entered within the GIES is not in the Global Record, or the information on a vessel is outdated.
- A unified search, to serve as a single-access point to search of any information contained on the GIES.
- Dynamic dashboard

43. The TWG-IE called on the Secretariat to analyse the potential inclusion into the GIES of the following features:

- increasing the number attachments that can be attached to reports in the application considering the cost implications on cloud space; and
- an alert system in the application so that NCPs of neighbouring states could be notified when a vessel has been suspected of having conducted IUU fishing activity.

44. The TWG-IE considered that the IMO number should be made mandatory in the GIES if the vessel has an IMO number. Furthermore, the Group recommended the use of other identifiers for vessels without an IMO number such as the international radio call sign, the external marking usually referring to national registration numbers, the RFMO identifiers and the Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI).

45. The TWG-IE recognised the important role of RFBs in supporting their Contracting Parties with regard to information exchange and more widely their key role in support of the implementation of international instruments. The Group recalled the importance of connecting the GIES and the Global Record with existing regional systems, as relevant, should that RFMO members approved.

46. The TWG-IE emphasised that effective information exchange requires that the Parties have legal, policy and operational procedures in place, in line with the Agreement.

47. The TWG-IE recommended that Parties to the PSMA be more active in RFMO to which they are a member to support the implementation of the Agreement.

48. The TWG-IE recommended materials and modalities to provide guidance to Parties for the use of the GIES including user guides and in-person training when possible, and stressed that training and guidance in the use of the GIES is important for all Parties.

49. The TWG-IE recognised the need for the terms of reference for the working group, noted that a draft has been prepared by the Secretariat and called for this matter to be brought up at the next Meeting of the Officers to the PSMA.

#### **DATE AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP**

50. Panama kindly offered to host the next meeting of the TWG-IE which will tentatively be held in the first quarter of 2024.

#### **ADOPTION OF CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING**

51. The recommendations of the report were adopted on 14 December 2022

#### **CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

52. The meeting was closed at 19.40 hours.

**AGENDA AND TIMETABLE****Tuesday 13 December 2022***Morning, 10.00–12.30*

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of the Chairperson and Vice-chairperson
3. Adoption of the agenda and arrangements for the meeting
4. State of affairs of national contact points and designated ports

*LUNCH**Afternoon, 14.00–16.30*

5. State of affairs of the Global Information Exchange System (GIES)

*Evening, 17.00–19.30*

6. Confidentiality and data security
7. The importance of the IMO number in the implementation of the PSMA

**Wednesday 14 December 2022***Morning, 10.00–12.30*

8. Role of regional fishery bodies in data exchange
9. Role of the GIES in support of the implementation of other international instruments and regional fisheries management measures

*LUNCH**Afternoon, 14.00–16.30*

10. Workplan and strategy for the implementation of the GIES
11. Assistance to developing states
12. Terms of reference for the TWG-IE

*Evening, 17.00–19.30*

13. Adoption of conclusions of the meeting
14. Date and venue for the next meeting of the Working Group
15. Closure of the meeting



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**SPEAKING POINTS  
BY  
MR MANUEL BARANGE,  
DIRECTOR, FAO FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE DIVISION**

1. Dear colleagues, friends, on behalf of the FAO DG let me give you a warm welcome to this, your house.
2. As you well know the Agreement on Port State Measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (PSMA), which entered into force in 2016, represents an international milestone in the global action against IUU fishing.
3. You may not know that PSMA is the instrument with the highest rate of adherence of all ocean instruments, which indicates that the PSMA is called to play a key role in the sustainability of fisheries worldwide.
4. Every fish that enters national or international markets must pass through a port in its way to consumers. This is the reason why this instrument has the potential to change the way we deal with IUU fishing. The ports, the PSMA designated ports, act as a check point for the international framework of instruments, conservation and management measures of regional fisheries management organizations, as well and national legislation.
5. Port inspectors, and other control authorities involved, hold a great responsibility in ensuring that no IUU fishing product passes through. With a globalized world, they will have to check conformity with global, regional and national measures for those products being landed.
6. This great effort will result in immediate action when non-compliance is found, but will now go beyond thanks to the PSMA Global Information Exchange System, the GIES. The results of those inspections and decisions on whether to grant or deny port entry or use will, from now onwards, be shared with other Parties and concerned non-Parties as per Article 15 of the PSMA, and consequently this will produce a multiplier effect by giving other Parties key information to feed their risk analysis.
7. Ladies, Gentlemen, the process is underway.
8. The Meeting of the Parties gave the green light for the establishment of this Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE) to see to technical matters related to the implementation of the Agreement with a focus on information exchange. Following advice from this group, the Parties decided to launch the Global Information Exchange System, the GIES, through an initial pilot phase. A year has passed already and I am sure that soon we will be able to launch it operationally.
9. We are here today, more than 120 participants in person and around 115 online from 58 states, Parties and non-Parties, observers, experts in monitoring, control and surveillance and information exchange, to bring this work forward.
10. The FAO is committed to a Blue Transformation, a vision that has as main objectives to expand sustainable aquaculture globally, to ensure all fisheries are subject to effective management and to invest in developing and innovating aquatic foods' value chains.
11. Implementing PSMA and developing tools such as GIES are essential steps to achieve a Blue Transformation, which has the ultimate objective of feeding the world with nutritious and sustainable resources from our oceans, lakes and rivers.
12. Thank you very much. I wish you a successful meeting, and trust you will also have some time to enjoy the eternal city of Rome.





**The third meeting of the PSMA Open-ended Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE) was held in Rome, Italy, from 13 to 14 December 2022. The TWG-IE commended the advances made in the development of the Global Information Exchange System (GIES), provided recommendations for the refinement of the system and recommended that GIES should be operationalised in 2023 following the approval of Parties at their fourth meeting.**

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