Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

THE
Global Record
of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels

Providing a single access point for information on vessels used for fishing and fishing-related activities to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing

While the fisheries sector contends with declining stocks and catches, it also faces a parallel increase in IUU fishing – now estimated at

USD10-23 billion

worth of fish caught each year by IUU fishing methods.

The Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record), is a new and powerful tool, spearheaded by FAO, that supports international instruments such as the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) and can be used by the fisheries sector to combat IUU fishing.

The Global Record gathers and disseminates certified, unequivocal information about vessels and vessel-related activities provided by the official State authorities responsible for it. It also gathers and provides historical information, such as data on vessels not currently holding any fishing authorization.

This means, for example, that:

PORT INSPECTORS
can refer to the Global Record when carrying out risk analysis to determine which vessels to inspect;

PORT STATE ADMINISTRATIONS
can rely on the Global Record when deciding whether to allow foreign-flagged vessels to land their catches in their ports;

FLAG STATE ADMINISTRATIONS
can use the Global Record to check a vessel's history before issuing a flag, which can avoid double flagging or flag hopping – which are often used in IUU fishing;

NGOs AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC
can use the Global Record – which is accessible to all – when there are questions about the current or past status of a vessel and its fishing-related operations.

With the support of national fisheries sectors, NGOs and other partners, the Global Record is gaining traction in its effort to:

- **build and share** a global database of the world's fishing-related vessels: their names, owners, flag States, authorizations, physical characteristics, inspections and presence on IUU lists;

- **close** the global information gap on vessels involved in IUU fishing by increasing transparency, traceability and dissemination of data on the global fishing fleet and its operations to a wide range of stakeholders.

The Global Record thereby **aims** to:

- **strengthen** fisheries management and the sector's sustainability in order to contribute to human and ecosystem well-being;

- **enhance** food security and the livelihoods of rural populations by diminishing IUU fishing and unfair competition among fishers, which, in turn, leads to increased fishery production and generates more supply for local communities.

FAO's **5-year strategy** for a sustainable Global Record Programme, resulting from a meticulous set-up process, calls for:

- **SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT** – developing and implementing a user-friendly Global Record web portal, making timely data on the global fishing fleet accessible to all;

- **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT** – ensuring that countries have the technical and human capacity needed to gather and share data on their fishing fleets;

- **SECTORAL SYNERGY** – facilitating relationships between the Global Record and other initiatives in the fight against IUU fishing;

- **AWARENESS RAISING** – sharing information about the benefits of participating in the Global Record and obtaining an International Maritime Organization (IMO) number that serves as the Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI) required by the Global Record.
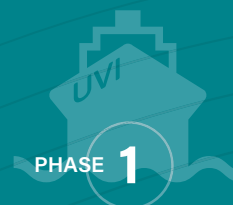
The Information System

The Global Record Programme is collaborating with both developed and developing countries to implement the information system. The Programme will support participants in building their capacities to gather appropriate information about their fishing fleets and then to prepare it in the proper format to enter it into the Global Record's database. The Programme will ensure that all partners have a more tangible understanding of the value and benefits of the Global Record and will become well versed in how to access and make effective use of all the information in the global database.

Collaborative Approach

In order to encourage and increase participation and commitment of FAO Members, the Global Record is taking a collaborative approach in order to establish a sense of ownership among partners. Thus, following the Committee on Fisheries' (COFI's) recommendation, the Global Record has established working groups to guide the implementation of the policy and technical aspects of the strategy.

Phased implementation of the Global Record

The Global Record is incorporating vessels in phases according to vessel size, in gross tonnage (GT or GRT) or vessel length.

PHASE 1

all vessels of 100 gross tonnage, or 24 m, and above

PHASE 2

all vessels between 50 and 100 gross tonnage, or between 18 and 24 m

PHASE 3

all vessels between 10 and 50 gross tonnage, or between 12 and 18 m

Once Phase 1 is in operation, the Global Record will conduct a feasibility study to assess the most effective ways to move into Phases 2 and 3.

The Working Group

Initiated at a meeting held in February 2015, the **Global Record Informal Open-Ended Technical and Advisory Working Group** asked representatives of FAO Members and Observers, including NGOs, to offer guidance on the general direction of the Global Record in areas such as its scope and approach, what type of data would be most efficient in fighting IUU fishing and how to build capacity to supply that data. The Global Record, established as a voluntary action, seeks sustainability well beyond the 5-year strategy, which has necessitated a well-structured process for development and implementation. At the introductory meeting, the Working Group recommended focusing efforts on making a first version of the system – the database, web portal and data exchange mechanisms – operational in order to demonstrate its value and benefits.

The Core Groups

At the recommendation of the Working Group, three Global Record Specialized Core Working Groups were launched in 2015.

- **DATA REQUIREMENTS** – focuses on the actual information content of the Global Record, and looks at how to deal with any inconsistencies in information received and data confidentiality issues

- **DATA EXCHANGE** – defines the file formats and mechanisms for efficient data exchanges, sets operational rules that senders and receivers will need to follow and determines how to ensure that data submission is both simple and effective for participants

- **THIRD PARTY DATA** – identifies external stakeholders that may have information relevant to the Global Record and assesses the potential for linking to or incorporating that information in the Global Record.

International Maritime Organization number and the Unique Vessel Identifier

MAKING VESSELS TRACEABLE THROUGHOUT THEIR LIFETIMES, REGARDLESS OF CHANGES IN FLAG, OWNERSHIP OR NAME

Entering the vessels of the world's fishing fleet into the Global Record's database starts with issuing each vessel a permanent Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI). The UVI is based on the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Ship Identification Number Scheme. Initially, this scheme only applied to merchant ships, including refrigerated transport and supply vessels, but through an amendment in 2013, it now also applies to fishing vessels. To date, IMO numbers, which serve as Global Record UVIs, have been allocated to more than 23 000 fishing vessels worldwide, indicating a commitment to increasing transparency and traceability in fisheries sector activities. Having a UVI and being a part of the Global Record database facilitates their registration, port entry and vessel inspections. In addition, some FAO Members and regional fisheries management organizations are amending regulations, making it mandatory for certain fishing vessels to have IMO numbers as UVIs.

The Global Record is poised to add a critical new element to efforts to support the sustainability of the world's fisheries sector. As it solidifies its work in Phase 1, it invites the participation of FAO Members and regional fisheries management organizations in its information system, as well as its working groups.

Contacts are welcome.

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