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**Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the
Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal,
Unreported and Unregulated Fishing**

**8-12 May 2023
Bali, Indonesia**

**REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE AGREEMENT ON
PORT STATE MEASURES (PSMA) OPEN-ENDED TECHNICAL
WORKING GROUP ON INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

Report of the
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

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

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 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 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, RFMO identifiers and 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 designated ports 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.

CONTENTS

Preparation of this document	iii
Abstract.....	iii
Opening of the meeting.....	1
Election of the Chairperson and Vice-chairperson	1
Adoption of the agenda and arrangements for the meeting	1
State of affairs of national contact points and designated ports.....	1
State of affairs of the Global Information Exchange System (GIES).....	1
Confidentiality and data security	2
The importance of the IMO number in the implementation of the PSMA	2
Role of regional fishery bodies in data exchange	2
Role of the GIES in support of the implementation of other international instruments and regional fisheries management measures.....	3
Workplan and strategy for the implementation of the GIES.....	3
Assistance to developing States	3
Terms of reference for the TWG-IE	3
Conclusions and recommendations.....	4
Date and venue for the next meeting of the Working Group.....	6
Adoption of conclusions of the meeting	6
Closure of the meeting	6
Appendix 1. Agenda and Timetable	7
Appendix 2. List of participants.....	9
Appendix 3. Speaking points by Mr Manuel Barange, Director, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division	24

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 (NCP) and designated ports (DP) 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 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 IOTC and 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 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 MOP4)
- ii. Operationalization of current version of GIES (after MOP4)
- iii. Development and piloting of 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 CD 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 EU, 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 designated ports along with the implementation of security and confidentiality of country data;
- a section showing all national contact points and designated ports;
- the registration of an authority as well as the main NCP and multiple alternate NCPs;
- optional data fields within the designated port 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 designated ports 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"
- 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 advance request for port entry (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 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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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTIES**ANGOLA**

Helder JAMBA
 Tecnico de instrucao processual
 Ministerio das pescas e recursos marinhos
 Luanda
 E-mail: helderjamba26@hotmail.com

Liliana PEDRO
 Technician
 Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
 Luanda
 E-mail: lilimarino39@gmail.com

BANGLADESH

Shoukot Kabir CHOWDHURY
 Assistant Director
 E-mail: shoukot2014@gmail.com

BENIN

Urbain Thibauthéon BRITO
 Chef Service des contrôles et suivi des
 produits halieutiques et de la post-capture
 Cotonou
 E-mail: cresusfr2004@yahoo.fr

CABO VERDE

Aguinaldo Antonio GOMES LIMA
 Harbour Master
 Instituto Maritimo Portuario
 Mindelo
 E-mail: aguinaldo.lima@imp.cv

Maysa VERA-CRUZ ROCHETEAU
 General Inspector of Fisheries
 Ministry of the Sea
 Mindelo
 E-mail: maysa.rocheteau@mm.gov.cv

CAMBODIA

Roitana BUOY
 Deputy Director General
 Fisheries Administration and
 PSMA focal point
 Phnom Penh
 E-mail: roitana@gmail.com

Kimchhea CHHUON
 Deputy Director
 Department of Fishing Affairs and
 PSMA technical assistant in Fisheries
 Administration
 Phnom Penh
 E-mail: kimchhea@yahoo.com

CANADA

Marsden DALE
 Deputy Director, International Fisheries
 dale.marsden@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Browne DION
 Senior Compliance Officer
 dion.browne@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Harris WILLIAM
 Policy Analyst
 E-mail: william.harris@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

CHILE

Carlos AHUMADA QUEZADA
 Ingeniero Pesquero, Encargado del Centro de
 Monitoreo y Control
 E-mail: cahumadaq@sernapesca.cl

Pablo ORTIZ
 Subdirector de Pesquerias
 Servicio Nacional de Pesca y Acuicultura
 Ministerio de Economía, Fomento y Turismo
 Valparaíso
 E-mail: portiz@sernapesca.cl

COSTA RICA

Maricela de los Ángeles OBANDO CUBERO
Departamento de fiscalización
INCOPECA
Puntarenas
E-mail: mobando@incopesca.go.cr

Guillermo RAMIREZ GATGENS
Jefe Asesoría Jurídica
Instituto costarricense de pesca y acuicultura
Puntarenas
E-mail: gramirez@incopesca.go.cr

Carla SIERRA ZUÑIGA
Consejera, Representante Permanente alterna
de Costa Rica ante la FAO
Roma, Italia
E-mail: csierra@rree.go.cr;
miscr-fao@rree.go.cr

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Yapo Guillaume DAGOU
Représentant Permanent Adjoint
E-mail : codivoirerep@yahoo.com;
dagouyapo@yahoo.fr

Maxime DIOMANDE
Ingénieur informaticien
Direction de l'aquaculture et des pêches
Ministère des ressources animales
et halieutiques
Abidjan
E-mail: maxime.diomande@gmail.com

Bina FOFANA
Directeur des pêches, Ministère des
Ressources Animales et Halieutiques
E-mail : Binafof3@gmail.com

ECUADOR

Cesar Alfredo ALVARADO GILCES
Analista de análisis y procesamiento 2
Ministerio de producción, comercio exterior,
inversiones y pesca
E-mail: calvarado@produccion.gob.ec

Nancy Janneth CONTRERAS PARRA
Especialista de política pesquera y Acuicola
E-mail: ncontreras@produccion.gob.ec

Jose Luis FERRIN MONTESDEOCA
Analista de importación 2
Ministerio de producción, comercio exterior,
inversiones y pesca
E-mail: jferrin@produccion.gob.ec

Byron Alejandro FUENTES FALCONES
Especialista de Control y Vigilancia
Ministerio de Producción Comercio Exterior
Inversiones y Pesca
Manta
E-mail: bfuentes@produccion.gob.ec

Patricio LOOR ROMERO
Analista de Control Pesquero, Ministerio de
producción, comercio exterior, inversiones y
pesca
E-mail: ploor@produccion.gob.ec

Ivan Fabricio MARIN DELGADO
Ingeniero en sistema, Ministerio de
producción, comercio exterior, inversiones y
pesca
E-mail: imarin@produccion.gob.ec

Maria Gabriela ZAVALA ZAMBRANO
Analista de importaciones y permisos 2
Ministerio de producción, comercio exterior,
inversiones y pesca
E-mail: mzavala@produccion.gob.ec

ERITREA

Kidane T. ASMEROM
Alternate Permanent Representative of Eritrea
to FAO
Rome, Italy
E-mail: asmeromk2016@gmail.com

Gezaf Feven Sium
MCS Staff, Ministry of Marine Resources
E-mail: fevensium7@gmail.com

Sulema Osman IDRIS
Director of fishing liaison Division, Ministry
of Marine Resources
E-mail: suleosm755@gmail.com

EUROPEAN UNION (MEMBER ORGANIZATION)

Marc RICHIR
International Relations Officer
EC Directorate General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Brussels
E-mail: Marc.Richir@ec.europa.eu

Maris BERZINS
Policy Officer, Directorate General For Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
E-mail: Maris.BERZINS@ec.europa.eu

Desiree KJOLSEN
Policy Officer, Directorate General For Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
E-mail: desiree.kjolsen@ec.europa.eu

FRANCE

Fanny LOISEL
Chargée de mission lutte contre la pêche INDNR
Ministère de la transition écologique
Paris
E-mail: fanny.loisel@agriculture.gouv.fr

GABON

Bernice Carol BOUPANA BOLA
Responsable du centre de surveillance des pêches
Direction Générale des pêches et de l'aquaculture
Libreville
E-mail: carolboupana@gmail.com

GHANA

Alexander ADU-ANTWI
Legal/principal fisheries manager
Fisheries Commission Ghana
Accra
E-mail: alexander-antwi@fishcom.gov.gh;
lexozua@gmail.com

Richner ODOI
Principal Capture Fisheries Manager
Fisheries Commission Ghana
Accra
E-mail: richnerodonkor@yahoo.com

Rebecca SACKEY-MENSAH
Senior Fisheries Manager
Fisheries Commission Ghana
Accra
E-mail: rebecca.sackey-mensah@fishcom.gov.gh

GUINEA

Lansana KOLIË
Chef de la division plans d'aménagement des pêcheries
Ministère de la Pêche
Conakry
E-mail: klansana74@gmail.com

Guile INAPOGUI
Inspecteur des pêches
E-mail : guileinapogui6@gmail.com

ICELAND

Matthias G. PÁLSSON
Permanent Representative of Iceland to FAO, WFP and IFAD
Rome, Italy
E-mail: matthias.palsson@utn.is

INDONESIA

Andreas MAHARDIKA
Cooperation Analyst
Public Relation and Cooperation Bureau
Ministry of Marine Affairs
Jakarta
E-mail: andreasmdbl@gmail.com

Fadhilah NENDA INASA
First Secretary
Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
E-mail: nenda.fadhilah@kemlu.go.id

Nilanto PERBOWO
MMAF Senior Expert on Fisheries Management
DG Capture Fisheries
Jakarta
E-mail: perbowon@me.com

Mochammad R. PRAYOGA
 Sub-Coordinator of Design and
 Standardization of Fishing Vessels
 DG Capture Fisheries
 Ministry of Marine Affairs
 Jakarta
 E-mail: rachadian.prayoga@gmail.com

JAPAN

Kenichi ONO
 Officer, Fisheries Agency of Japan
 E-mail: kenichi_ono250@maff.go.jp

Sayako TAKEDA
 Assistant director, Fisheries Agency of Japan
 E-mail: sayako_takeda590@maff.go.jp

Kyutaro YASUMOTO
 Officer, Fisheries Agency of Japan
 E-mail: kyutaro_yasumoto890@maff.go.jp

KENYA

Benedict KIILU
 Assistant Director of Fisheries
 Kenya Fisheries Service
 E-mail: kiilub@yahoo.com

Shadrack MACHUA
 Assistant Director of Fisheries
 Kenya Fisheries Service
 E-mail: machuask@gmail.com

Nyaga Christopher NKOROI
 Assistant Director Fisheries and Blue Economy
 E-mail: nyagachristopher@gmail.com

LIBYA

Abdalah Mohamed A. ABOU SBIE
 Port Management
 Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and
 Marine Resources
 Tripoli
 E-mail: info@gam.com.ly

Feras ELGABRI
 Director of information and documentation
 Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and
 Marine Resources
 Tripoli
 E-mail: felgabri@gmail.com

MADAGASCAR

Andrianaivonavalona RAKOTONIAINA
 Chef Service technologie de l'information et
 communication
 Centre de surveillance des pêches
 Ministère de la pêche et de l'économie bleue
 Antananarivo
 E-mail: csp-mprh@madagascar-scs-peche.mg

Sedera RAMAHEFALALA
 Chef de service des affaires juridiques et
 contentieuses
 Centre de surveillance des pêches
 Ministère de la pêche
 Antanarivo
 E-mail: sedera.ramahefala@gmail.com

MAURITIUS

Shakeel Sen MAHADOO
 Senior Officer, Senior Scientific Officer,
 Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources,
 Fisheries and Shipping
 E-mail: smahadoo@hotmail.com

MOROCCO

Jihane ABDERRACHID
 Cadre à la Direction de Contrôle des activités
 de la pêche maritime, Département de la pêche
 maritime
 E-mail : j.abderrachid@mpm.gov.ma

MOZAMBIQUE

Lourena Mela BONNOU
 Vessel Monitoring System
 National Sea Institute
 Maputo
 E-mail: lourenamahomed@gmail.com

Samuel J. MALHOPE
 VMS and Fisheries Intelligence Officer
 National Sea Institute
 Maputo
 E-mail: jacobmalhope@gmail.com

MYANMAR

Tun Tun HLAING
 Staff Officer, Department of Fisheries
 E-mail: tunhlaingkym@gmail.com

Than Than LWIN
Deputy Director, Department of Fisheries
E-mail: Than21win@gmail.com

Min Min SOE
Deputy Director, Department of Fisheries
E-mail: minsoedof@gmail.com

NEW ZELAND

Monique MESSINA
International Fisheries Compliance, Ministry
for Primary Industries
E-mail: monique.messina@mpi.govt.nz

Jordan OWCZAREK
International fisheries compliance, Ministry
for Primary Industries
E-mail: Jordan.Owczarek@mpi.govt.nz

Andrew WRIGHT
Team Leader, International fisheries
compliance
Ministry for Primary Industries
E-mail: Andrew.Wright@mpi.govt.nz

NICARAGUA

Brenda BRENES SOTELO
Subdirectora General
INPESCA
Managua
E-mail: brenes@inpesca.gob.ni

NIGERIA

Apoy Paul OPUAMA
Deputy Director of Fisheries
Federal Department of Fisheries and
Aquaculture
Lagos
E-mail: paulopuama@yahoo.com

OMAN

Tariq Darwish AL ALAWI
Director of Fisheries Surveillance and
Licensing
E-mail: Tariq.alalawi@mef.gov.om;
ta_alalawi_211@hotmail.com

Naseer AL-ABUDI
Specialist Marine Navigation
E-mail: alaboudi85@gmail.com;
naser.alabodi@mef.gov.om

Ali ALBUSAIDI
Head of the coastal and commercial fishing
fleet control department
E-mail: Tidaq@hotmail.com

Musallam RAFEET
Assistant Director General of Fisheries in
Dhofar Governate
E-mail: musallemr@gmail.com

PALAU

Everson SENGEBAU
EM Officer
E-mail: ebs6ya@gmail.com

Keith MESEBELUU
Fishery Policy Specialist
E-mail: keithmesebeluu@gmail.com

PANAMA

Miguel Alfonso GONZALEZ GAMBOA
Adjunto
Médico veterinario
Autoridad de los Recursos Acuáticos
de Panamá
Panamá City
E-mail: migonzalez@arap.gob.pa

PERU

Jorge Joel ARANDA VILLAS
Profesional de la Dirección General
de Supervisión Fiscalización y Sanción
Lima
E-mail: jaranday@produce.gob.pe

Camilo RIOS
Fiscalizador
Ministerio de la Producción
E-mail: DSF_pa_temp160@produce.gob.pe

Johnny GONZALES CARMEN
Analista, Encargado del registro mundial de
buques, Ministerio de la Producción
E-mail: jgonzalesc@produce.gob.pe

Santos SAAVEDRA MONCADA
Director General de Supervisión fiscalización
y Sanción
Ministerio de la Producción
Lima
E-mail: sesaavedra@produce.gob.pe

PHILIPPINES

Aldrin Jude MADALAG
Focal Person, global records
Bureau of fisheries and aquatic resources
Quezon city
E-mail: ajudem7@gmail.com

Madeleine MANAPAT
Market Specialist II
Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
Quezon City
E-mail: mmanapat@bfar.da.gov.ph

Glenn PADRO
Senior Fishing Regulations Officer
Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
Koronadal City
E-mail: glennpadro@gmail.com

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Kim Ji Hyun
Deputy Director, International cooperation
Division, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries
E-mail: jihyun77@korea.kr

Park Jong Woo
Assistant Director, International cooperation
Division
E-mail: pppp3173@korea.kr

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Damir BEKYASHEV
The Head of International Fisheries Law
Division
E-mail: dambek@yandex.ru

Grigorii GALSTIAN
Senior Specialist
E-mail: galstyan@vniro.ru

Anastasia PODOLYAN
Representative of the Federal Agency for
Fisheries within the Permanent Mission of the
Russian Federation to FAO and other UN
Agencies in Rome
E-mail: rusfishfao@gmail.com

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Maritza QUEELEY
Port State Control
Department of Marine Resources
E-mail: maritzaqueele@gmail.com

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Shamal CONNELL
Fisheries Officer, Fisheries Division
E-mail: fishdiv@gov.vc

Jeremy SEARLES
Fisheries Officer, Fisheries Division
E-mail: fishdiv@gov.vc

SENEGAL

Mamadou DIOP
Directeur de Cabinet
E-mail: mamdiop@orange.sn

Magatte Birama DIOP
Inspecteur des pêches
Direction de la protection et de la surveillance
des pêches
Dakar
E-mail: bbiirroouu@gmail.com

Ibrahima DIOUF
Chef de la Division de la pêche industrielle
E-mail : ivesdiouf@gmail.com

Cheikh FALL
Ingénieur des pêches
Chef Division inspection
Direction de la protection et de la surveillance
des pêches
Dakar
E-mail: cheihf@gmail.com

Modou MBENGUE
Chef du Bureau des Autorisations de pêche
Direction des pêches maritimes
Dakar
E-mail: modoumalickmbengue@gmail.com

Jupiter LO
Coordonnateur Cellule Communication
Ministère des pêches et de l'économie
maritime
E-mail: jupiterlo@hotmail.com

SIERRA LEONE

Ivorymae Chrismin Remi COVIER
Senior Fisheries Officer; Ministry of Fisheries
and Marine Resources
E-mail: Coker-ivorymae007m@gmail.com

Lahai DURAMANY SEISAY
Assistant Director of Fisheries, Ministry of
Fisheries and Marine Resources
E-mail : Lahaisesay@yahoo.com

Kadijatu JALLOH
Director of Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
Freetown
E-mail: kadijatujalloh4@gmail.com

Hindolo MOMOH
Assistant Director of Fisheries, Ministry of
Fisheries and Marine Resources
E-mail: hindomoh@yahoo.co.uk

Sahr Patrick SANDY
Senior Fisheries Officer
Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
E-mail: sarpsandi@gmail.com

Harold Bundu SAFFA
Deputy head of mission
E-mail: haroldsaffa410@gmail.com

SOMALIA

Abdullahi Abdi ADOW
Director of Planning, Policy and Economic
Development
Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
Mogadishu
E-mail: planning@mfmr.gov.so

SRI LANKA

Kalyani HEWAPATHIRANA
Director Fishing Operation
E-mail: hewakal2012@gmail.com

Medawaththe G. JAYAKODY
Director (Investigation and training)
Department of fisheries and Aquatic
Resources
Colombo
E-mail: jayakodymgn@gmail.com

Marcus MALLIKAGE
Director Management
Department of Fisheries and Aquatic
Resources
Colombo
E-mail: mmallikage67@gmail.com

SUDAN

Fathi Mirghani AHMED
Manager
Ministry of Animal Resources, Fisheries
Administration
E-mail: fmyahmed@gmail.com

THAILAND

Suthasinee MANOONPHATAPORN
Fishery Biologist, Practitioner Level
E-mail: sutha_sutha@hotmail.com

Thira RODCHEVID
Fishery Biologist
Department of Fisheries
Bangkok
E-mail: thirar.dof@gmail.com

Jitpisut SANBOONPENG
Fishery Biologist
Practitioner Level
Department of Fisheries
Bangkok
E-mail: pompam58@gmail.com

Ratthanin SANGSAYAN
Fishery Biologist, Practitioner Level
E-mail: ratthanins@fisheries.go.th

THE GAMBIA

Amadou JALLOW
Senior Fisheries Assistant
Department of Fisheries
E-mail: jallowfish@gmail.com

TOGO

Kossi AHOEDO
 Chef de la Section promotion des pêches,
 Direction des pêches et de l'aquaculture
 E-mail : secretariat.dirap@maritime.gouv.tg

Domtani ALI
 Directeur
 Direction des pêches et de l'aquaculture
 Ministère de l'économie maritime de la pêche
 et de la protection côtière
 Lome
 E-mail: domtania@yahoo.fr

TONGA

Mele Fehoko ATUEKAHO
 Ministry of Fisheries
 E-mail: meletoaatuekaho@gmail.com

Losalina LOTOAHEA
 Principal Fisheries Officer, Ministry of
 Fisheries
 E-mail: losilini@gmail.com

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Bria DE COSTA
 Fisheries Researcher
 E-mail: decostabria.fd@gmail.com;
 bdecosta.gov.tt

Louanna MARTIN
 Fisheries Officer
 E-mail: lmartin@fp.gov.tt;
 louannamartin@gmail.com

Elizabeth MOHAMMED
 Senior Fisheries Officer
 E-mail: emohammed.2fdtt@gmail.com

TÜRKIYE

Burcu Bilgin TOPÇU
 Senior Fisheries Officer
 Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
 General Directorate of Fisheries and
 Aquaculture
 Ankara
 E-mail: burcu.bilgin@tarimorman.gov.tr

Turgay TÜRKYILMAZ
 Deputy Director-General
 Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
 General Directorate of Fisheries and
 Aquaculture
 Ankara
 E-mail: turgay.turkyilmaz@tarimorman.gov.tr;
 turgay.turkyilmaz@tarim.gov.tr

**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

Luke BANTOCK
 Policy officer
 DEFRA
 E-mail: luke.bantock@defra.gov.uk

Joanna BUCKLEY
 Head of IUU fishing and Control Enforcement
 Department for Environment Food and Rural
 Affairs
 Bristol
 E-mail: Joanna.Buckley@defra.gov.uk

Jacob FLAHERTY
 Principal Marine Officer, IUU Fishing Team

David FENNER
 Maritime and Coastguard Agency
 E-mail: David.Fenner@mca.gov.uk

Nick MYNARD
 Head of Fisheries Services
 UK Marine Management Organization
 London
 E-mail:
 Nick.Mynard@marinemanagement.org.uk

Stefan READE
 Head of Fisheries Management Statistics and
 Publications
 E-mail:
 stefan.reade@marinemanagement.org.uk

Gerlinde SCHAEFFTER
 Senior Policy Advisor, IUU Fishing Team
 E-mail: Gerlinde.Schaeffter@defra.gov.uk

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Murray BAUER
 Special Agent; Office of Law Enforcement
 E-mail: murray.bauer@noaa.gov

Siri HAKALA
 Foreign Affairs Specialist
 NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement
 Washington D.C.
 E-mail: siri.hakala@noaa.gov

Cheri McCARTY
 Senior Foreign Affairs Specialist
 E-mail: cheri.mccarty@noaa.gov

Katheryn PATTERSON
 Foreign Affairs Specialist
 NOAA
 Washington D.C.
 E-mail: katheryn.patterson@noaa.gov

Tara PRAY
 Lieutenant Commander
 Coast Guard Liaison Officer
 U.S. Department of State
 Office of Marine Conservation
 Washington D.C.
 E-mail: PrayTC@State.gov

Rebecca WINTERING
 Foreign Affairs Officer
 NOAA Fisheries
 U.S. Department of Commerce
 Washington D.C.
 E-mail: WinteringRJ@state.gov

URUGUAY

Fernando Germán AREA BENITEZ
 Inspector estado rector
 DINARA
 Montevideo
 E-mail: orops@mgap.gub.uy

Jaime CORONEL LASCANO
 Director General
 Dirección Nacional de Recursos Acuáticos
 Montevideo
 E-mail: jcoronel@mgap.gub.uy

VANUATU

Felix Toa NGWANGO
 Acting Compliance Manager
 Department of Fisheries
 Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry,
 Fisheries and Bio-security
 Port Vila
 E-mail: ftngwango@fisheries.gov.vu

VIETNAM

Thi Trang NHUNG
 Deputy Director
 Directorate of Fisheries of Vietnam
 E-mail: tranghungicd@gmail.com

Thuy Linh NGUYEN
 International Cooperation Department
 Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
 Development
 E-mail: linhnguyen.mard@gmail.com

Kien NGUYEN DANG
 Program Official, Director of Fisheries
 E-mail: nguyendangkien2011@gmail.com

Phuon Dung NGUYEN THI
 Director, PSMA National focal point
 for Vietnam
 E-mail: nguyendzung@gmail.com

OBSERVERS FROM FAO MEMBER NATIONS

ARGENTINA

Julián Osvaldo SUAREZ
 Director Nacional de Coordinación e
 Fiscalización Pesquera
 Ministerio de Economía
 Buenos Aires
 E-mail: josuare@magyp.gob.ar

BELIZE

Robert ROBINSON
 Deputy Director
 High Seas Fisheries Unit
 Ministry of Finance
 Belize City
 E-mail: robert.robinson@bhsfu.gov.bz

Ian CONSTANTINO
 Monitoring Officer
 High Seas Fisheries Unit
 Ministry of Finance
 Belize City
 E-mail: Ian.Constantino@bhsfu.gov.bz

BRAZIL

Vitor PONTES
 Head of Division, Fishery and Aquaculture
 Secretary
 E-mail: vitor.matos@agro.gov.br

CAMEROON

Pierre OTETE BIKIMI
 Contrôle national des pêches
 E-mail: otetebikimiguy@gmail.com

CHINA

Zhenye CHEN
 Chief officer 2nd class
 E-mail: boffad@agri.gov.cn

Ying JING
 Consultant IV, bureau of Fisheries
 Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
 E-mail: fishcngov@126.com

Chao LV
 Vice Professor, Shanghai Ocean University
 E-mail: clv@shou.edu.cn

Ming XU
 Consultant III, bureau of Fisheries
 Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
 E-mail: yyjaqc@agri.gov.cn

COMORES

Fatima Mze Ali ABDALLAH
 Assistante de la Direction générale des
 ressources halieutiques
 Moroni
 E-mail: fatoumamzali@yahoo.fr

Boina SAID
 Conseiller
 Direction générale des ressources halieutiques
 et NFP for GR
 Moroni
 E-mail: dalili@live.fr

Ali YOUSSEUF
 Directeur Général adjoint des ressources
 halieutiques
 Direction générale des ressources halieutiques
 Moroni
 E-mail: yousmed69@yahoo.fr

CONGO

Dieudonné KISSIEKIAOUA
 Conseiller à la pêche et à l'aquaculture
 Ministère de la pêche et de l'aquaculture
 Brazzaville
 E-mail: kissiekiaouad@yahoo.fr

Bienvenu NTSOUANVA
 Conseiller d'Ambassade
 Représentant Permanent adjoint du Congo
 E-mail: bienvenuntsouanva@gmail.com

EL SALVADOR

Katya Lisbeth PEÑA SALAZAR
 Jefe del registro nacional de pesca y
 acuicultura
 E-mail: katya.salazar@mag.gov.sv

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Mariano NGUEMA ASANGONO
 Director general de pesca, Ministerio de Pesca
 y Recursos Hidricos
 E-mail: mariano.n68@yahoo.com

GEORGIA

Maia CHKHOBADZE
 Head
 Biodiversity Control service of the Department
 of Environmental Supervision,
 State Sub-Agency
 Ministry of Environmental Protection and
 Agriculture
 E-mail: maiachkhobadze@gmail.com

Davit DADIANI
 Chief Specialist of International and Public
 Relations Division of Administrative Service
 National Environmental Agency
 Tbilisi
 E-mail: david.dadiani@nea.gov.ge

GUATEMALA

Wesley Alexander AGUILAR ACABAL
 Técnico en Registro Nacional de la Pesca y
 Acuicultura
 E-mail: waguilar@maga.gob.gt

GUINEA BISSAU

Wane KITANNY DA SILVA
 Chefe de repartição de informatica
 Ministério das Pescas
 E-mail: kitannywane@gmail.com

HONDURAS

Marco Tulio AVELAR CASTELLANOS
 Asesor técnico del Estado Rector del puerto
 E-mail: mtavelar@gmail.com;
 mavelar@marinamercante.gob.hn

Mirella GONZALEZ FLORENTINO
 Asistente Técnico
 Dirección General de la Marina Mercante
 E-mail: bgonzalez@marinamercante.gob.hn

Alejandro RODRIGUEZ
 Head of Maritime Safety Department
 E-mail: arodriguez@marinamercante.gob.hn

IRAN

Vahid FOROOZANDEH
 Deputy Director General of the Office of
 Development and Management of Fishing
 Ports
 Email: vahidforoozandeh@yahoo.com

JAMAICA

Ian JONES
 SNR Director Compliance, National Fisheries
 Authority
 E-mail: fisheries@nfa.gov.jm

LATVIA

Artis ABOLTINS
 Senior Expert, Ministry of Agriculture
 E-mail: artis.aboltins@zm.gov.lv

LEBANON

Ali NASSAR
 Head of Fisheries Centre
 Fisheries and Wildlife Department
 Ministry of Agriculture
 Beirut
 E-mail: nassar_a78@hotmail.com

MALAYSIA

Abdul Rahman ABDUL WAHAB
 Agriculture Counsellor
 Embassy of Malaysia
 E-mail: aa.rome@ambasciatamalaysia.it;
 rahman_wahab@mafi.gov.my

Arthur BESTHER
 Section Head, Tuna Development
 Department of Fisheries
 Putrajaya
 E-mail: arthur@dof.gov.my

Nur Fadhlina Chan BINTI MAHADIE CHAN
 Fishery Officer
 International Section
 Department of Fisheries

Nur Fadhlina Chan MAHADIE CHAN
 Senior Fisheries Officer
 International Section Policy and Strategic
 Planning Division
 Department of Fisheries Malaysia
 E-mail: fadhлина@dof.gov.my

MALTA

Owen ZAMMIT
 Manager II, Fisheries Control Unit
 E-mail: owen.zammit.1@gov.mt

Myfanwy CORTIS
 Assistant Manager, Fisheries Control Unit
 Email: myfanwy.cortis@gov.mt

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Francisco Ignacio BLAHA
 Offshore Fisheries Advisor
 Marshall Island Marine Resource Authority
 E-mail: fblaha@mimra.com

MEXICO

Jaime de Jesús CABALLERO TRINIDAD
 Director de Prevención
 E-mail: jaime.caballero@conapesca.gob.mx

José de Jesús DOSAL CRUZ
 Subdirector de Normalización Pesquera
 E-mail: jose.dosal@conapesca.gob.mx

Miguel HUERTA
 Jefe de Departamento de Elaboración de
 Normas Acuícolas
 E-mail: miguel.huerta@conapesca.gob.mx

Karla Gabriela RIVERA VÍZCARRA
 Analista Administrativo "B"
 E-mail: karla.rivera@conapesca.gob.mx

Adrián SALGADO VARGAS
 Jefe de Departamento Encargado
 E-mail: adrian.salgado@conapesca.gob.mx

PAKISTAN

Muneer HUSSAIN
 Assistant Manager Technical (Marine)
 E-mail: muneer.fdb@gmail.com

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Gesling Lulupa CHEE
 National Fisheries Authority
 Morobe
 E-mail: geslulupa@gmail.com;
 gchee@fisheries.gov.pg

Martina Bubula RAGAGALO
 Manager
 Compliance and Enforcement
 PNG National Authority
 Port Moreby
 E-mail: mragagalo993@gmail.com

Emil SIHONO
 National Fisheries Authority MCS Group
 Port Moresby
 E-mail: eisiallesihono@gmail.com

SAINT LUCIA

Sarita WILLIAMS-PETER
 Chief Fisheries Officer
 Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food
 Security and Rural Development
 E-mail: sarita.peter@govt.lc

SAUDI ARABIA

Khalid ALSHAYE
 Director Marine Fisheries Department
 E-mail: shaye@agriserv.com.sa

Ibrahim AJIMAN
 Fisheries Center Manager
 Marine Fisheries Department
 E-mail: e15450@mewa.gov.sa

Khaled bin Saleh ALSHAYE
 E-mail: shaye@mewa.gov.sa

Ibrahim BIN ALI OJAIMAN

SINGAPORE

Tingting LIN
 Senior Manager, Fishery ports team
 E-mail: lin_tingting@sfa.gov.sg

Kihua THE
 Team Lead Fishery Ports Team
 E-mail: The_kihua@sfa.gov.sg

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Charlyn Grace GOLU
 Principal Fisheries Officer Compliance
 Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
 Honiara
 E-mail: CGolu@fisheries.gov.sb

SOUTH SUDAN

David Peter BAYA
 Researcher of Fisheries and Aquaculture
 National Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries
 Juba city
 E-mail: dodipeter@yahoo.com

SPAIN

Cristina LABORDA SÁNCHEZ
 Inspectora de pesca
 Ministerio de agricultura, pesca y alimentación
 E-mail: claborda@mapa.es

Gonzalo DELGADO GONZÁLEZ
 Técnico Gestión Área de lucha contra la pesca
 ilegal
 Ministerio de agricultura, pesca y alimentación
 E-mail: gdelgado@mapa.es

Carolina TORRESANO VILLAREJO
 Inspectora de pesca, Ministerio de agricultura,
 pesca y alimentación
 E-mail: ctorresano@mapa.es

SWEDEN

Ylva MATTSSON
Analyst, Swedish Agency for Marine and
Water Management
E-mail: ylva.mattsson@havochvatten.se

UKRAINE

Ihor HONCHARUK
Chief Specialist of the Division of
International Cooperation
E-mail: igor-goncharuk96@ukr.net

Oleh KLOCHAK
Head of the Division of International
Cooperation
E-mail: klochak2003@yahoo.com

Vovkotrub VOLODYMYR
Head of the Department of the Organization
of the Use of Aquatic Bioresources
Aquaculture and Scientific Support
E-mail: vetmed_bcrda@ukr.net

Bakumenko VOLODYMYR
Head of the Division of the Fishing Industry
Fleet
E-mail: darg_vgb@ukr.net;
tehogyad@darg.gov.ua

YEMEN

Ahmed SALEH
Director of Quality and Technical Affairs
Ministry of Agriculture, irrigation and fish
wealth
E-mail: a_abood990@yahoo.com

**OBSERVERS FROM THE UNITED
NATIONS, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES
AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS**

**INTERNATIONAL MARITIME
ORGANIZATION**

Gangcan RAO
Head
Instruments Implementation Support, MSAIS
London

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC
COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Yan ZHANG
Economic Affairs Officer
United Nations Economic Commission for
Europe
Geneva

**OBSERVERS FROM
INTERGOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

**BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME-
INTERGOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATION**

Krishnan PAULPANDIAN
Director
E-mail: krishnanars@bobpigo.org

BENGUELA CURRENT COMMISSION

Kumbi Nsingi KILONGO
Ecosystem Coordinator
E-mail: kumbi@benguelacc.org

**COMMISSION FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF SOUTHERN
BLUEFIN TUNA**

Susie IBALL
Compliance Officer
E-mail : siball@ccsbt.org

INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION

Gerard DOMINGUE
Compliance Manager
Providence, Seychelles

**INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC
TUNAS**

Valérie SAMEDY
VMS Manager
E-mail: valerie.samedy@iccat.int

**LAKE VICTORIA FISHERIES
ORGANIZATION**

Benedict Abura ACHIENG
Director Information, Communications and
Technology
E-mail: sbabura@lvfo.org

**NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC FISHERIES
COMMISSION**

Hrannar MÁR ÁSGEIRSSON
Monitoring Control and Surveillance Officer
North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
E-mail: hrannar@neafc.org

**SOUTHEAST ASIAN FISHERIES
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

Kongpathai SARAPHAIVANICH
Training and Information Section Head, Training
Department
E-mail: kongpathai@seafdec.org

Malinee SMITHRITHEE
Secretary-General
E-mail: sg@seafdec.org

Worawit WANCHANA
Policy and Program Coordinator
E-mail: worawit@seafdec.org

**ORGANIZATION FOR THE FISHING
AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR OF THE
CENTRAL AMERICAN ISTHMUS**

Jose INFANTE
Director regional SICA/OSPESCA
E-mail: jinfante@sica.int

**PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM FISHERIES
AGENCY**

Yaniba Koimilla ALFRED
Catch Documentation Scheme
Technical Advisor
Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
E-mail: yaniba.alfred@ffa.int

Bryan SCOTT
E-mail: bryan.scott@ffa.int

**OBSERVERS FROM INTERNATIONAL
NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

GLOBAL FISHING WATCH

Courtney FARTHING
International Policy Director
E-mail: courtney@globalfishingwatch.org

Charles KILGOUR
Senior Strategy Advisor Fisheries
E-mail: charlie@globalfishingwatch.org

**INTERNATIONAL SEAFOOD
SUSTAINABILITY FOUNDATION**

Holly KOEHLER
Vice President, Policy and Outreach
E-mail: hkoehler@iss-foundation.org

Michael COHEN
Market outreach associate
E-mail: ncohen@iss-foudation.org

**INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT
WORKERS' FEDERATION**

Rossen KARAVATCHEV
Fisheries Coordinator
International Transport Workers' Federation
E-mail: karavatchev_rossen@itf.org.uk

TM-TRACKING

YVERGNIAUX, Yann
Senior Analyst
yyvergniaux@tm-tracking.org

PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

Nikolas EVANGELIDES
Officer
E-mail: nevangelides@pewtrusts.org

Elaine YOUNG
Officer
Ending Illegal Fishing, International Fisheries
E-mail: eyoung@pewtrusts.org

FAO**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION
FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN**

Nicola FERRI
Compliance Officer
E-mail: Nicola.ferri@fao.org

Ahmed SILIMAN
Compliance Coordinator
E-mail: Siliman.Ahmed@fao.org

PSMA SECRETARIAT

Matthew CAMILLERI
Senior Fisheries Officer
Leader, Fisheries - Global and Regional
Processes
Secretary, PSMA
E-mail: Matthew.Camilleri@fao.org

Blaise KUEMLANGAN
Chief
Development Law Service
Legal Office
E-mail: Blaise.Kuemlangan@fao.org

Alicia MOSTEIRO
Fishery Officer (PSMA/IUU Fishing)
Fisheries - Global and Regional Processes
E-mail: Alicia.Mosteiro@fao.org

Minmin LEI
Fishery Officer
E-mail: Minmin.Lei@fao.org

Gaëlle HERMANUS
Office Assistant
Fisheries - Global and Regional Processes
E-mail: Gaëlle.Hermanus@fao.org

Gabriel BORG
Consultant
E-mail: Gabriel.Borg@fao.org

Giuliano CARRARA
Consultant
E-mail: Giuliano.Carrara@fao.org

Stefano PIREDDA
Consultant
E-mail: Stefano.Piredda@fao.org

Gregoire PICHENOT
Consultant
E-mail: Gregoire.Pichenot@fao.org

Paul GRIESELHUBER
Consultant
E-mail: Paul.Grieselhuber@fao.org

Lavinia PLATICA
Consultant
E-mail: Lavinia.Platica@fao.org

Antonio PORTALO MESA
Consultant
E-mail: Antonio.PortaloMesa@fao.org

Joao Goncalo PEDROSA CARNEIRO
Consultant
E-mail: Joao.PedrosaCarneiro@fao.org

Olivier ROUX
Consultant
E-mail: Olivier.Roux@fao.org

Fabrizio SIBENI
Consultant
E-mail: Fabrizio.Sibeni@fao.org

Gianluca SILVESTRI
Consultant
E-mail: Gianluca.Silvestri@fao.org

**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 2023. The TWG-IE commended the advances made in the development of the 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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