

Agenda Item 9 **Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing**

The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) urges states to continue their efforts to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by acting on a number of key issues, including adopting measures designed to increase transparency on fishing vessel activities, and welcomes the continued support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to its Members in this regard.

EJF believes that the current opacity of the fishing sector is one of the main enablers of IUU fishing. States need to adopt measures that will increase transparency and access to information on vessels' identity and activities. The FAO plays a pivotal role in promoting the implementation of many of these aspects and relevant measures include:

- ***Maintaining efforts to develop the Global Record of Fishing Vessels and implementation of the FAO Port State Measure Agreement*** - We urge all states to require that all eligible vessels registered under the country's flag and/or operating in the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) have an International Maritime Organization (IMO) number and populate the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record). Once fully populated, the Global Record will be a crucial tool to assist fisheries authorities to make informed judgments about whether vessels should be considered as high risk, and whether they should be granted flags, fishing licences and access to ports. In addition to regularly submitting all information to the FAO for inclusion in the Global Record, we further urge states to share information relating to the implementation of port state measures, including designated ports, contact points, inspection records and detected infringements, flag state performance statistics, port access refusals, and suspected IUU fishing vessels. Sharing such information is key to the implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), as well as regional-level port State measures that are aligned with the Agreement.
- ***Monitoring trans-shipments at sea*** - We note that trans-shipments at sea continue to facilitate trade in illegally-caught products and other illicit activities, and we commend the efforts made by the FAO to investigate global trans-shipment practices, as laid out in Information Paper 13. Recognising the urgent need for improved trans-shipment oversight, we urge COFI to establish formal negotiation processes that would lead to the adoption of international trans-shipment guidelines. As a minimum, these should require 100% observer coverage (by fully trained and certified human observers, electronic means, or a combination of both) onboard both the fishing vessel and the carrier vessel for all trans-shipping events registered under the country's flag or operating within the country's EEZ. States should otherwise consider banning fishing vessels and carriers registered under their flag or operating within their EEZ from carrying out trans-shipments at sea.
- ***Harmonizing Catch Documentation Schemes among major market states*** - EJF supports the valuable work of the FAO on catch documentation schemes (CDS) and urges the implementation of harmonised and compatible CDS in line with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines. We call for more market states to establish robust schemes and so further limit entry points around the world for IUU caught seafood, and encourage the alignment of existing and emerging CDS through the adoption of common Key Data Elements (KDEs).

In addition, recognising the important role flags of convenience in fisheries play in undermining flag state performance standards on the one hand and obscuring true vessel ownership on the other, **we are calling on the FAO Members to work directly and indirectly through COFI and other relevant fora to address the issue of flags of convenience and establish mechanisms to end their use by fishing vessels.**