

COFI 35 – WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

RECEIVED COMMENTS FROM OBSERVERS

A – BASIC INFORMATION

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B – COMMENT RECEIVED

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), FAO and ILO, have been working together over many decades to improve the safety of fishers and fishing vessels. Much has been accomplished over these long years, such as the entry into force of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement, the ILO Work in Fishing Convention and the IMO STCW-F Convention. However, one part of the international regulatory regime for fishers that has remained elusive is the much-needed mandatory safety standards for fishing vessels and their crew. The most recent effort by IMO culminated in the adoption of the Cape Town Agreement by the Diplomatic Conference held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2012. Since the Diplomatic Conference in 2012, our Organizations have been working in concert to promote the entry into force of the Agreement. Unfortunately, progress in this regard has not moved as quickly as was hoped for back in 2012.

That is why the IMO Secretary-General decided to bring interested States back to Torremolinos, Spain, the city where the effort to achieve better safety standards for fishing vessels began in 1977, and was reinforced again in 1993. The result of these efforts culminated in the Ministerial Conference on Fishing Vessel Safety and IUU Fishing, organized by IMO in collaboration with the Government of Spain, FAO and the Pew Charitable Trusts, which was held in Torremolinos, Spain, in October 2019. The Ministerial event was the largest fishing conference in IMO history, which was attended by over 125 States, 70 ministerial and Ambassador-level representatives and 30 international organizations, including other UN organizations like ILO, UNCTAD and the United Nations. The States that attended the Ministerial Conference adopted the Torremolinos Statement on the 2012 Cape Town Agreement, relating to fishing vessel safety and combating IUU fishing, which called upon the States that have not yet become parties to the 2012 Cape Town Agreement to consider doing so by the tenth anniversary of its adoption (i.e. 11 October 2022).

In this regard, 48 States also signed the Torremolinos Declaration to indicate their determination to take action to bring the 2012 Cape Town Agreement into force by the aforementioned target date. The Declaration has now been signed by 51 States. Currently the number of Parties to the Agreement stands at 17; however, we have been informed by more States that they will ratify the Agreement very soon. This is encouraging news and provides a positive momentum for the entry-into-force of the Agreement.

To maintain the momentum emanating from the Ministerial Conference, the IMO Secretariat launched a series of regional webinars in collaboration with the Pew Charitable Trusts, to share lessons learned among regional States, identify any obstacles to ratification and discuss best practices. Representatives of FAO, ILO and PEW have been generously contributing to the webinars with their expertise, as fishing vessel safety goes hand in hand with combatting IUU fishing, forced labour and poor living conditions of fishers. The last of the regional webinars was held this past February with European States. All regions of the world were covered by the webinars, which provided an excellent forum for States to discuss their plans with regard to ratification of the Agreement as well as any challenges they are encountering. Full details on the outcome of the regional webinars can be found on the IMO website at the following link: [Regional Webinars on Fishing Vessel Safety](https://www.imo.org/en/About/Pages/Regional-Webinars-on-Fishing-Vessel-Safety.aspx) (imo.org).

Regarding the implementation aspect of the Cape Town Agreement, following the recommendation of the last Joint ILO/FAO/IMO Working Group (JWG 4), the 105th session of the Maritime Safety Committee noted that, under the coordination of Spain, an informal group had been established to develop draft guidance on the implementation of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement for the use of competent authorities and invited interested delegations to join the group. The group is expected to report its progress to MSC 106 in November of this year.

The Secretariats of IMO, FAO and ILO are also involved in the development of a project, together with the PEW Charitable Trusts, the Lloyd's Register Foundation and the Fish Safety Foundation, to establish a global accident and fatality reporting and data management system for the fisheries sector.

Finally, all of the aforementioned information can be found on our new web-based easy guide to the 2012 Cape Town Agreement (2012 Cape Town Agreement (Explained) (office.com)), which has been prepared by the IMO Secretariat in order to provide comprehensive information on the Agreement and incorporates various useful information materials from FAO, ILO and PEW.

In conclusion, IMO would like to express its sincere appreciation to FAO, ILO and the PEW Charitable Trusts for their strong support in enhancing the safety of fishing vessels and the promotion of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement, and our collective efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.