



Joint Statement on the International Day for the Fight against IUU Fishing

Bangkok, 5 June 2019

On the occasion of the International Day for the Fight against IUU Fishing (5 June), Kundhavi Kadiresan, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Tomoko Nishimoto, Regional Director for the International Labour Organization and Dr. Nenette Motus, Regional Director for the International Organization for Migration, have made the following statement:

Asia-Pacific's seafood not only feeds the people of this region – it feeds the planet. More than 75 percent of the world's seafood comes from the oceans of Asia and the Pacific and yet this vital source of food security and the millions of livelihoods these fisheries support are under threat.

Today we stand together to raise awareness of the insidious practice of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and acknowledge the commitment that Governments of Asia and the Pacific have made to eliminate IUU fishing from this region.

IUU fishing leads to over-exploitation of fish stocks and financially disadvantages honest fishers and the communities dependent upon them, including buyers, sellers and legitimate industrial fishing and small scale operators. Increasingly IUU fishers are exploiting our least developed economies and most vulnerable communities in Asia and the Pacific, at a cost to our region of roughly USD 5 billion per year. IUU also has a devastating impact on the biodiversity and habitat of our oceans.

But there is an even darker side to IUU fishing that goes beyond economic and environmental damage. It is becoming increasingly clear that many IUU fishers engage in other transnational crimes such as human and drug trafficking, and piracy. They exploit workers – including youth and migrants – who crew their vessels with working and living conditions well below acceptable standards. They are notoriously known for not paying their crewmembers agreed wages. The captains and owners of these vessels ignore basic human rights, force crews to endure extended time at sea in dangerous conditions, and then strip them of their earned income.

Our region is working tirelessly to ensure that our people, oceans and fisheries are healthy and realize their potential. Only strong regional cooperation can deliver this. The operationalizing of Fisheries Monitoring and Surveillance Centres and Information Fusion Centres throughout Asia and the Pacific, both key tools for detecting IUU fishing, means that the region is ready for action. Our United Nations' Agencies are working closely with Governments to create stronger systems of ocean governance that will eliminate IUU and its associated criminal activities.

The FAO's Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA) is a regulatory instrument for countries to refuse entry for vessels suspected of participating or facilitating IUU fishing activities or enforcing inspection of vessels if entry is granted. Put simply the PSMA cuts off opportunities for IUU vessels to resupply, refuel and offload their catch. If all coastal states are party to the FAO's PSMA then vessels suspected of engaging in IUU fishing activities should have no access to markets. Nineteen Asia and Pacific Nations are currently signatories to the PSMA.

Two other United Nations instruments, the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188), which provides the minimum standards for working conditions of fishers, and the 2012 Cape Town Agreement, which sets fishing vessel standards and regulations to protect the safety of crew, provide countries with tools to help combat poor working conditions and forced labour in fishing. Both instruments provide the regulatory framework for Port and at-sea inspection. Thailand became the first in Asia and Pacific Nations to ratify C188 in January 2019 and the Forced Labour Protocol (P. 29, 2014).

Moreover, fishing remains one of the most physically taxing and dangerous professions globally. Death rates from accidents every year in the fishing sector are more than ten times the number on merchant ships. Adherence to the standards set by these instruments will also go a long way to minimizing injury and death in the fishing sector.

Our three agencies of the United Nations: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reiterate our commitment to assist countries in Asia and the Pacific combat IUU fishing. We will continue to facilitate and foster regional cooperation and cohesion.

And finally, we call upon all countries in the Asia-Pacific region to accede (or apply equivalent or stronger national legislation) to the PSMA, C188 and the CTA by 5 June 2021.

Eliminating IUU fishing will ensure our region's future food security, protect livelihoods, improve working standards, help to protect marine resources and sustainably provide for a thriving blue economy.

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