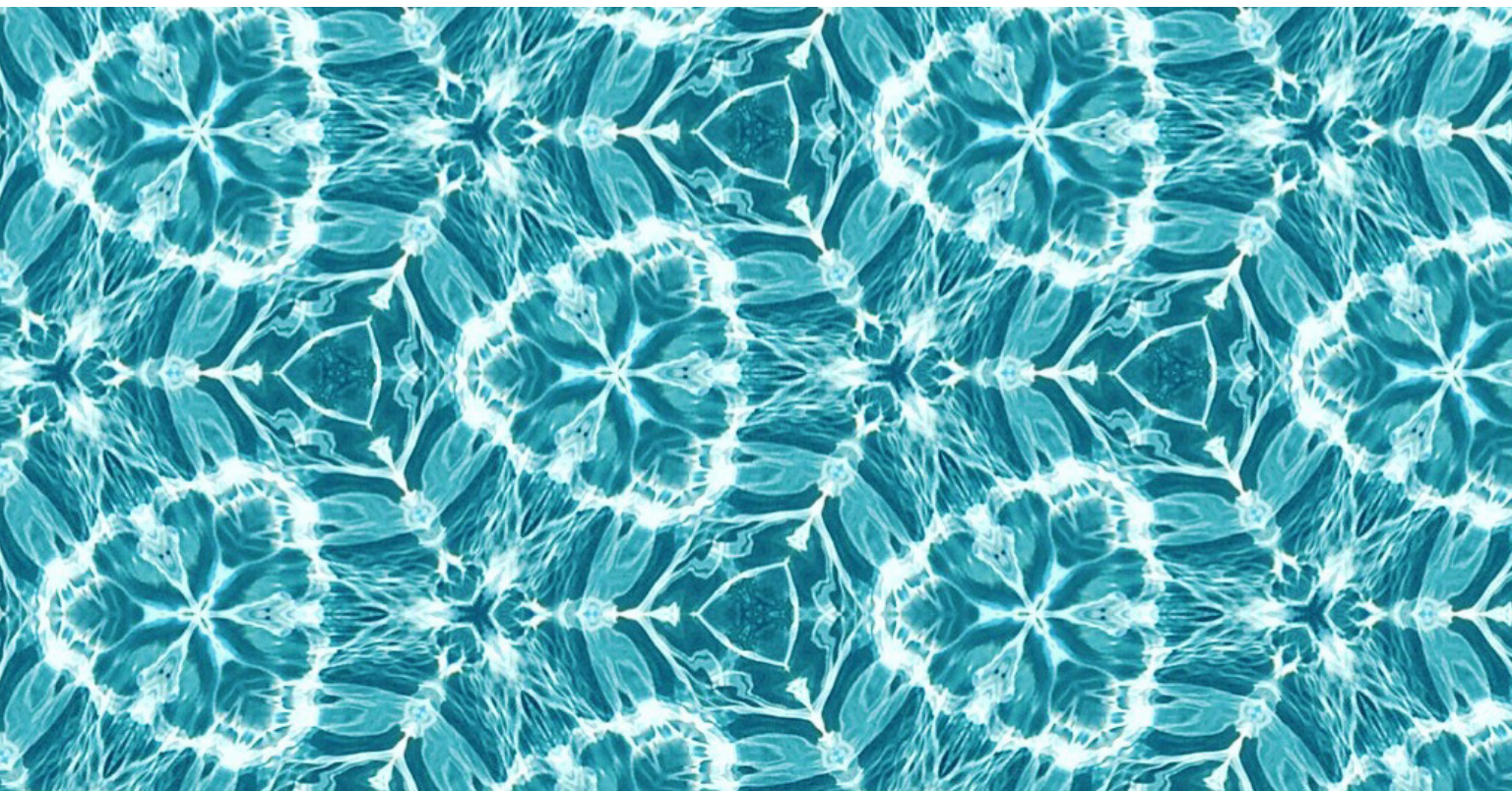




Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



working for Zero Hunger



COMBATting AND ELIMINATING  
ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING  
IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

# KEY MESSAGES

1. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is the harvesting of fish or aquatic living resources that contravenes the national, regional or international laws and frameworks that are in place to maintain a sustainable and healthy marine environment. Fishing operators that engage in illegal fishing generally fail to report, misreport or under-report their catches to prevent discovery of its illegal nature. It is unregulated mainly because some coastal states are unable to monitor and regulate their waters and because of the involvement of “stateless” vessels. IUU fishing destroys marine and freshwater ecosystems, threatens biodiversity and food security, and causes the loss of millions of dollars to the legal economy.

2. We can eliminate IUU fishing if we work together. Individuals, the sector as a whole, and society in general, have important roles to play: consumers need to be better informed and empowered to make better choices and value chain actors need to ensure the legality and traceability of their products.

3. Eliminating IUU fishing requires effective collaboration, strong partnerships, policy coordination within and across national boundaries, and financial and human resource commitments, backed by solid political will to adopt and implement legal frameworks and tools such as national plans of action, international agreements, traceability schemes and improved fisheries management.

4. Ensuring the rights and responsibilities of small-scale fishers (both men and women) will play a key role in combatting IUU fishing.

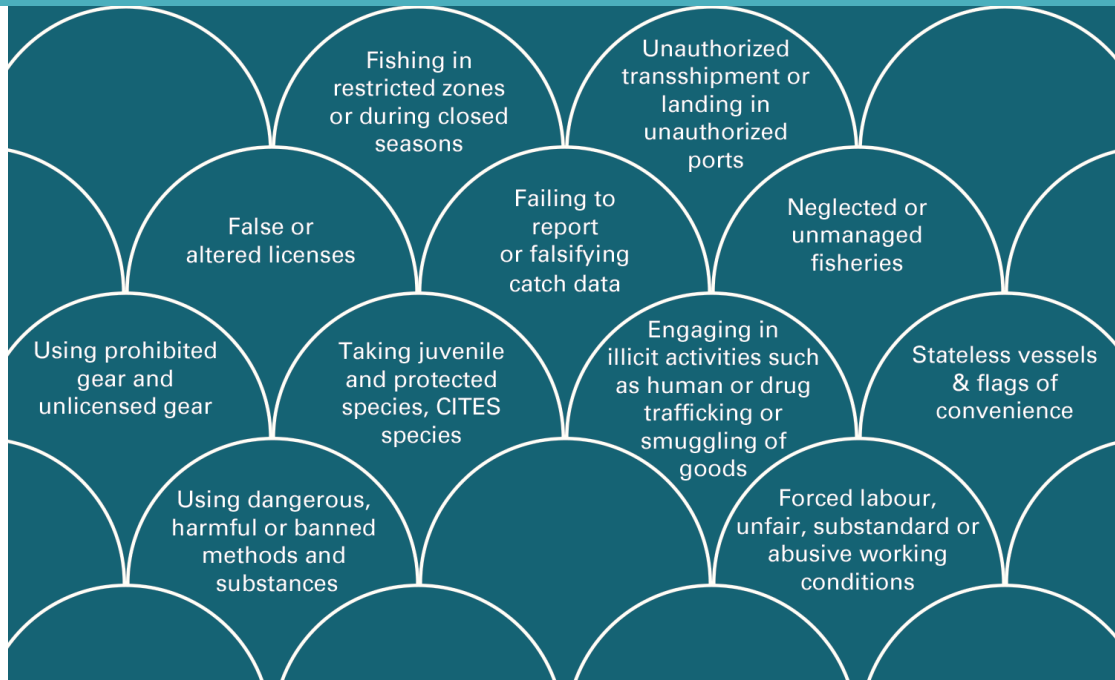


# WHAT IS ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING?

IUU is a broad term that includes:

- I: Fishing, fishing-activities or taking of aquatic living resources conducted in contravention of national, regional and international laws.
- U: Non-reporting, misreporting or under-reporting of catch data or other information on fishing activities.
- U: Fishing by “stateless” vessels. These vessels fish in areas or for fish stocks for which there are no conservation or management measures, or that are not regulated by states and cannot be easily monitored and accounted for.

IUU fishing is a complex problem. More than just a single, direct illegal activity, it is a set of multiple, overlapping actions and behaviours that collectively constitute serious crimes against the environment and people. It includes:





# THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF IUU FISHING

The effects of IUU fishing can be severe, particularly for coastal and small island developing states heavily dependent on fisheries. It has adverse impacts on national economies, on peoples' livelihoods—especially of individual small-scale fishers in poor coastal communities in developing countries—on food security, and on the environment. It typically degrades the environment, inhibits stock rebuilding efforts and exacerbates the decline of many fisheries.

Countries unable to fulfil international obligations for fisheries management and governance also risk incurring trade sanctions on their fisheries exports. Furthermore, IUU fishing is increasingly being associated with national and transnational organized criminal activities such as human and drug trafficking.

Although IUU fishing is difficult to quantify, as methodologies for quantifying it improve so too will our knowledge of the impacts of IUU fishing and, by extension, the benefits of combatting IUU fishing. A 2015 draft report by the Asia Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) provided initial estimates of illegal fish caught by foreign vessels in Asian countries and offer a glimpse of its magnitude – 2.1 million tonnes to 2.5 million tonnes of illegally caught fish every year, with an annual value of USD 3.7 billion to USD 5.2 billion. This report also identified 33 hotspots for illegal fishing by foreign vessels in Asia, with just six of these hotspots accounting for over 80 percent of the illegal fishing.

The FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), APFIC members, and the Asia Pacific Regional Conference (APRC) confirmed the need to increase efforts to understand and combat IUU fishing, both globally and within the Asia-Pacific region.

## WHY DO PEOPLE FISH ILLEGALLY?

IUU fishing persists because it is profitable. Largely because of the lack of a strong political will, weak implementation capacity and because of the complexity of the issue, the problem of IUU fishing continues to undermine national and regional efforts to manage fisheries. In the Asia-Pacific region, there are huge numbers of people and vessels, particularly medium-scale trawlers, push-netters and larger motorized vessels, engaged in fishing activities. There are over 3.5 million fishing vessels in the region, of which more than 80 percent are less than 12 metres in length. With such an enormous volume and variety of fishing vessels, regulating the sector is challenging and where there is limited enforcement or only minor sanctions imposed, IUU fishing can be easier and more profitable than complying with the relevant laws. In addition, there is often pressure on policymakers to allow practices that are unsustainable but profitable for their constituents and these practices compromise the protection of those same resources for long-term sustainable use. To eliminate IUU fishing, we have to engage fishers, governments and consumers to support a fishery sector that is fair, sustainable and legal.

# FAO'S WORK IN THE REGION TO COMBAT IUU FISHING

The work of FAO is driven to a strong degree by the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. FAO is the custodian of four indicators of SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. This role gives FAO the responsibility to plan and take action that will support countries to achieve and monitor the SDGs. SDG 14 has several targets that explicitly recognize the need to eliminate IUU fishing, prohibit overcapacity and overfishing and destructive fishing practices, and which require the implementation of science-based management plans aimed at restoring stocks to within biologically sustainable levels and regulating fisheries.

In order to mainstream the goals of SDG 14 into fisheries governance at every level, FAO realigned its [Blue Growth Initiative](#) and put it into action on a regional level. The FAO's Asia-Pacific [Regional Initiative on Blue Growth](#) (RI-BG) is about helping countries to achieve sustainable and efficient resource use in capture fisheries and aquaculture, ecosystem services, trade, livelihoods and food systems. It aims to facilitate the transition to fishing techniques that minimize environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and the unsustainable use of resources while maximizing the economic and social benefits that build resilient communities. The RI-BG initiative helps to ensure implementation of the global instruments working to promote legal and regulated fishing.

In the region, the FAO and APFIC are supporting a series of national, regional and inter-regional initiatives under a coordinated global programme on capacity development for implementation of the PSMA and other related instruments and which provides assistance in:

- assessing legal, institutional and operational capacity to implement the PSMA and complementary instruments and regional mechanisms to combat IUU fishing;
- strengthening national policy and legislative frameworks to combat IUU fishing;
- strengthening monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) enforcement institutions and systems, including South-South cooperation and mechanisms for regional harmonization, coordination and cooperation;
- enhancing capacity to improve flag state performance in line with the various FAO Voluntary Guidelines, and to take action more effectively against persons and entities engaged in IUU fishing;
- implementing market access measures, such as catch documentation and traceability schemes; and
- developing, implementing and monitoring of sustainable fisheries management plans.

# GLOBAL INSTRUMENTS TO COMBAT IUU FISHING IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

FAO encourages improved cooperation between countries, legal mechanisms for landing of fish across borders, agreements to report foreign vessels landing fish, joint controls of dual flagging, standardization of vessel markings, and harmonization of catch documentation. The following binding and non-binding instruments negotiated by member countries can help eliminate IUU fishing:

[The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries](#) (1995) is a negotiated, international instrument that represents a global consensus on a wide range of fisheries and aquaculture issues. It establishes principles of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management and provides standards applicable to the conservation, management and development of all fisheries. Since 1995 it has guided countries in implementing sustainable fisheries management policies.

[The FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas](#) (1995) aims to prevent the “reflagging” of vessels fishing on the high seas under the flags of states that are unable or unwilling to enforce international fisheries conservation and management measures. The maintenance of records of fishing vessels, international cooperation, submission of data on fishing vessels to FAO and exchange of information are covered by the provisions of the Agreement. FAO has developed a set of tools and methodologies called the FAO Vessel Record Management Framework to assist in the collection of standardized data on vessels, and this data is compiled into a searchable High Seas Vessels Authorization portal that is updated regularly.

[The FAO International Plan of Action- IUU Fishing](#) (2001) is a toolbox to combat IUU fishing. The IPOA-IUU calls upon all countries to develop and implement a consistent National Plan of Action (NPOA) and to review it periodically. Implementation of flag state responsibilities, including those related to fishing vessel registration and records, fishing authorization and MCS, as well as coast state measures, port state measures and market-related measures, are core elements of the IPOA-IUU fishing. The development of an NPOA-IUU fishing includes identifying the types, prevalence and scale of IUU, the costs and impacts in the country and the weaknesses in legal and institutional frameworks that allow IUU fishing to occur. NPOA-IUU requires collaboration among government agencies and among nations: port controls, MCS, vessel registration and the judicial process must work together to implement the plans.

[The Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels](#) (Global Record) is a single, collaborative tool to make vessel registration transparent and accessible. State authorities and regional fisheries management organizations compile certified information about all vessels authorized for fishing operations in their countries or regions and enter this data into the Record. The database assigns a global unique vessel identifier (UVI) to each vessel. The UVI is the key to the Global Record. This UVI ensures traceability through reliable, verified, and permanent identification of the vessel because the UVI remains with a vessel throughout its lifespan, regardless of change of the vessel’s name, ownership or flag. To date, IMO has allocated UVIs to more than 23 000 fishing vessels worldwide. Launched in April 2017, the Global Record's

initial scope is for larger vessels (100 gross tonnage, or 24 metres and above) but aims, over time, to include official information on vessels of 10 gross tonnage to 50 gross tonnage or between 12 metres and 18 metres. The database is crucial for the work of inspectors, port state authorities and flag state authorities, making it easier to identify vessels not regularly identified and registered by the proper national and regional authorities. It bridges the information gap that allows transshipment and IUU fishing to undermine our aquatic resources.

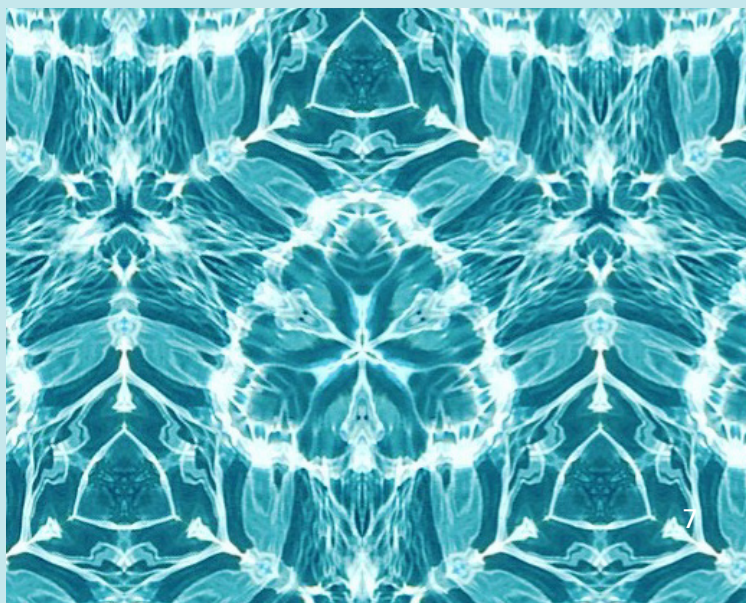
*The FAO Port State Measures Agreement to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing* (2009) FAO member countries adopted the PSMA in 2009, and it came into effect on 5 June 2016. The PSMA is the first binding international agreement specifically to target IUU fishing. Its objective is to prevent, deter, and eliminate IUU fishing by preventing vessels engaged in IUU fishing from using ports and landing their catches, thereby reducing the profit incentive of such vessels to continue to operate and blocking fishery products derived from IUU fishing from reaching national and international markets. Only when a port state is assured of the legality of the vessel can the vessel enter a port and land its fish.

*The FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food security and Poverty Eradication* (2015) are the first internationally agreed instrument for the small-scale fisheries sector, which comprise more than 90 percent of the world's capture fishers and fish workers. The Guidelines support investing in health, literacy, and education, eradicating forced labour, promoting social security protection, mandating gender mainstreaming, and building fisheries' resistance to

climate change and extreme weather events. FAO supports countries as they work towards implementing the Guidelines in their national policies and programmes.

*The FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance* (2015) provides guidance to strengthen and monitor compliance by flag states with their international duties and obligations regarding the flagging and control of fishing vessels. It covers the relevant responsibilities of flag states based in international law, including binding and non-binding international fisheries instruments. Fisheries management, registration and records of vessels, authorizations, MCS and cooperation between flag states and coastal states are among the central components of the Guidelines. State flag responsibilities include:

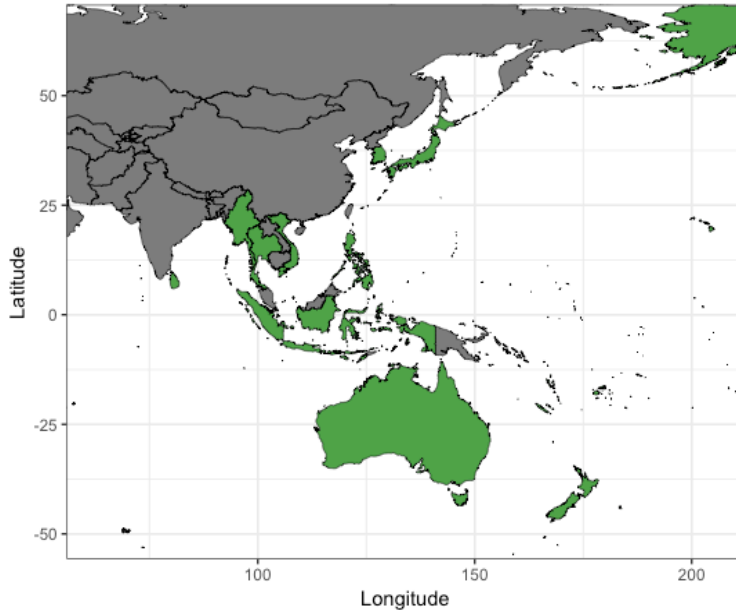
- establishing control and reporting mechanisms for vessels flying their flag;
- requiring all vessels to operate only with authorization;
- maintaining accurate and up-to-date fishing vessel registers;
- tracking vessels using vessel monitoring and surveillance (VMS); and
- connecting with regional and global vessel records and information exchanges.





# STOPPING IUU FISHING AT PORTS: A GROWING NETWORK OF PARTIES TO PSMA IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

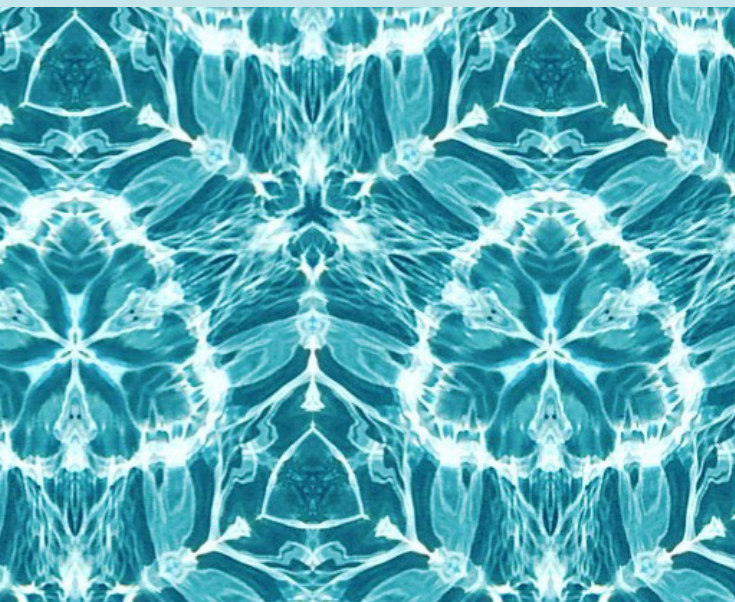
Port State Measures Agreement Parties in Asia and the Pacific



Source: www.fao.org

[Asia-Pacific Parties to the PSMA](#)  
(as of February 2019)

The boundaries shown and the designations used on the map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries.



[The Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes](#) (2017) are tracking and tracing systems that monitor the fish catch through the whole supply chain from ship deck to the consumer, thereby documenting the legality of the seafood catch. The Guidelines enjoy a high level of buy-in by governments. These Guidelines are the “gold standard” to which new catch documentation schemes at the national, regional or international level will adhere. The Guidelines enable tracing of fish from their point of capture through the entire supply chain – from “sea to plate” – in order to stop illegally caught fish from entering the market-place.





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## VITAL COLLABORATION — FAO AND REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES (RFBs)

Regional fishery bodies (RFBs) are a mechanism through which States or organizations that are parties to an international fisheries arrangement or agreement work collaboratively for the conservation, management and/or development of fisheries and aquatic resources. Regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), a subset of RFB, adopt fisheries conservation and management measures that are binding on their members. RFBs and RFMOs are integral partners with FAO in combatting IUU. RFB and RFMO partners in the region are the Bay of Bengal Programme-Inter-Governmental Organisation (BoBP- IGO), the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific (NACA), the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), the Regional Plan of Action for IUU (RPOA-IUU), the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), the South Pacific regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO), and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). In addition, FAO also works with regional cross-sectoral bodies, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

FAO hosts the Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission, which promotes the sustainable use of living aquatic resources through the growth and management of fishing and aquaculture operations. It also studies and reports on fishery issues for both marine and inland waters in the region. As IUU fishing is a high priority on the agenda of APFIC and of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, FAO has invested substantially in capacity building projects to support the application of port state measures.



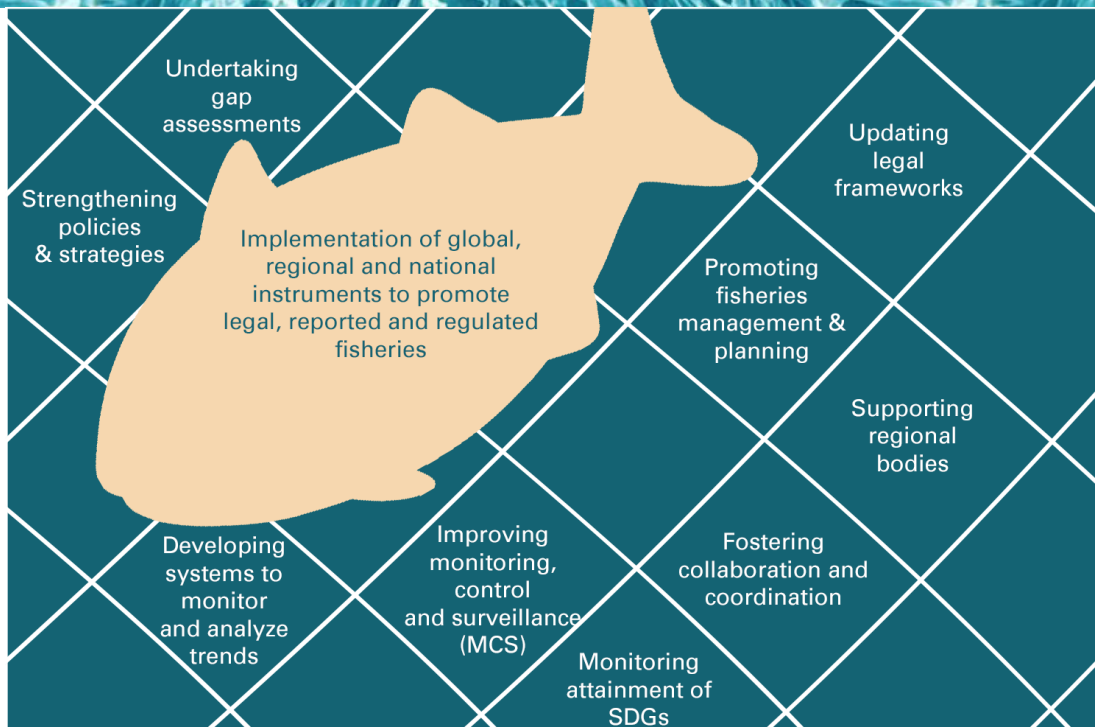
## GETTING TO LEGAL, REPORTED AND REGULATED FISHING

We can eliminate IUU fishing if we work together. We can create a global fisheries community in which everyone from governments to fishing companies to small fishers to consumers respect the aquatic resources that come from the Earth's oceans, lakes and rivers. We can envision a world with only legal, reported and regulated fisheries. The key to success in reducing and eventually eliminating IUU fishing is the active development and implementation of international agreements, national plans of action for IUU fishing, and capacity development in countries to identify IUU, enforce sanctions and controls and manage fisheries. We need to recognize and act upon the interests and concerns of small-scale fishers – including gender issues and the significant role of women – and we need to motivate consumers and value chains need to prefer legally caught fish products. Ultimately, legal, reported and regulated fishing will be achieved by building awareness that what is better for the fish stocks is better for the environment and for fishing communities and the sector as a whole.

5 June is the International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. This date commemorates the coming into force on 5 June 2016 of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA). Today, more than a third of the world's countries are signatories to it. Implementing the PSMA is one of the most powerful means of curbing IUU fish before it lands; its ratification reflects the strong international will to end IUU fishing.



# FAO'S WORK TO ELIMINATE IUU FISHING IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION



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