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EJF's contribution to the Fisheries Transparency Initiative Standards

The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) is a UK-registered charity working internationally to protect the environment and human rights. We have for many years been campaigning for the wellbeing of the Oceans and this work focuses on protecting our marine resources, combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, and promoting sustainable fisheries management. Through at sea investigations and by working closely with affected communities on the ground, we are working to build transparency and traceability within seafood supply chains and markets.

Headquartered in London, EJF has offices in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Spain, Germany and South Korea and undertakes regular investigations in South-East Asia to document the related problems in IUU fishing and human trafficking. Our ambition is to secure truly sustainable, well-managed fisheries and with this the conservation of marine biodiversity and ecosystems and the protection of human rights.

FiTI Standards

EJF is committed to contribute to the work of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative and believe that setting in place clear standards for the common work is indeed important.

EJF's position is that nations who are a part of FiTI should comply with the following measures applied to industrial and semi-industrial vessels:

Public list of vessels with fishing licence as well as access agreements

States should regularly publish a list of authorized vessels that contain details about registered fishing vessels that fly a nation's flag or are licensed to operate in a specified area – such as a coastal State's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) or an area under a regional fisheries management organisation's (RFMO) jurisdiction. These lists represent an important tool to combat IUU fishing: they reduce the likelihood of corruption within coastal and flag States, help port and market States monitor the assertions of vessels and seafood importers, and they minimise the risk of operators using fake or fraudulent licences. This simple tool is virtually free to introduce and run. These lists should include IMO numbers or, for small vessels, other recognized unique vessel identifiers that include up-to-date information on the beneficial ownership of vessels.

In addition to this, conditions and payments relating to all access agreements between coastal States and other States, regions or companies should be made public.

Transparent procedures linked to payments

All license fees, sanctions and other payments to fishing authorities should be made public. These should be paid to public bank accounts and they should be independently audited.

UVI and IMO numbers

One of the simplest and most cost effective steps in improving transparency in global fisheries is the mandatory use of Unique Vessel Identifiers (UVIs). A UVI is a reliable and permanent number assigned to a vessel for its entire existence to ensure its traceability and prevent vessels evading sanctions for IUU fishing by changing identity. All States, no matter their position in the supply chain, can promote the use of UVIs.

The most widely recognised UVI is the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) number. An IMO number is allocated to a vessel for its entire life, even if it changes flag, ownership or name.

To strengthen transparency and effective traceability in global fisheries, States should support and promote the establishment of a Global Record of fishing vessels, a database of vessel's including their IMO numbers as well as information on vessel ownership, flag and history. All industrial vessels over 100 GT should have an IMO number, and all other vessels (industrial, semi-industrial and artisanal) should be assigned a unique vessel identifier that remains with them for their entire existence.

Data requirements for issuing an IMO number

- Vessel ownership details
- Flag State and previous flags
- Vessel name and previous names
- International radio call sign
- Registration or licence number
- Registered port
- Ship builder's name, location and year built
- Vessel type and details
(length, depth, beam, Gross Tonnage (GT), engine power, etc.)
- Parallel flag
(i.e. allowing vessels to temporary transfer to another country's flag)
- Commercial operator (e.g. charters)

Port State Measures Agreement

Transparency covering the flow of fisheries products to market is important in the effort to reduce and eliminate IUU fishing. States should fully implement the Port States Measures Agreement (PSMA). PSMA is an international treaty designed to prevent, deter and eliminate pirate fish entering ports by strengthening and harmonising controls. This includes rules on port inspections, pre-notification of vessel arrival and information sharing. States should then publish information regarding trade flows, inspections, sanctions and refused importations under the PSMA.

Information-sharing and transboundary cooperation

States should agree to increase transboundary cooperation and sharing of information in regards to Monitoring, Control and Surveillance of fishing vessels. Access to specific data for catch certificate control by EU Member States in accordance with the EU IUU Regulation and further importing states should be made easy and effective.

Digital catch documentation and vessel logbooks

In many regions, fishing management uses antiquated, paper-based methods to record and report catch and import information. States should develop and implement electronic systems for catch logs and reporting to authorities. In addition to allowing better scrutiny of catch by those tasked with managing fisheries, digital reporting also facilitates quicker and more accurate public reporting of catch information as well as information sharing among States and RFMOs.

Use of Automatic Information Systems (AIS)

Industrial vessels should be constantly equipped with functioning AIS. This allows scrutiny by coastal, flag and port States as well and industry and civil society. This does not and should not replace the use of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) by coastal States and distant-water flag States for Monitoring, Control and Surveillance.