

ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY PROGRAMME

Strengthening Law Enforcement Cooperation Against Fisheries Crime

March 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides an overview of INTERPOL's work across the entire fisheries sector, including operational, tactical and analytical activities delivered worldwide in support of our member countries and in coordination with strategic partners.

Transnational criminal networks exploit the fisheries sector across the globe, depleting fish stocks, undermining national economies, affecting vulnerable communities, and threatening their food security.

These criminals target weaknesses in national jurisdictions. This may be by use of corruption, taking advantage of legal loopholes, or taking advantage of countries weaknesses at Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) systems at sea, in port or at the borders where the fishery products are traded. The vessels used by the criminal networks have a number of points in common: they may have multiple, counterfeit identities and flags, or they may not be registered by any state, they carry out illegal transshipments, and their crews obstruct boarding by government vessels' personnel.

The damage caused by illegal fishing goes far beyond the fisheries themselves. Fisheries crime is transnational in nature and has links to other crimes such as money laundering, document fraud, tax evasion, forced labour and human trafficking. While these crimes are directly connected to illegal fishing business operations, it is important for enforcement officers to be aware that fishing vessels are also used to smuggle independent commodities such as drugs, firearms and people, and are even used for piracy or terrorist attacks. Due to their highly nomadic navigation patterns and long periods at sea, fishing vessels are able to blend into the maritime background without raising suspicion.

INTERPOL is working to prevent and fight this kind of crime through enhanced cooperation and innovation on police and security matters.

In 2013, INTERPOL launched Project Scale to work across the fisheries supply chain, with the aim of stimulating cooperation in transnational investigations and, ultimately, disrupting criminal networks. Since 2020, INTERPOL's Environmental Security Programme (ENS) addresses fisheries crime under a programmatic approach.

ENS assists member countries in raising awareness of abuses of regulations and enhances their investigative and analytical capabilities leading to decisive enforcement action.

Of particular note is the cooperation and mentoring between developed and developing countries in identifying the *modi operandi* of organized criminal groups and encouraging the use of INTERPOL Notices and its secure global police communications network called I-24/7. Specific outcomes include the detention of vessels, prosecutions, fines and even prison sentences for non-fisheries crimes which were intended to obstruct justice and secure the criminal profits from the illicit fishing activities.

The INTERPOL Fisheries Crime Working Group (FCWG) provides an international platform for additional cooperation between member countries. Under the guidance of its board, the FCWG organizes annual meetings for operational-level representatives from fisheries and tax authorities, customs, national police, navies and coastguards, to work on fixed objectives and actions throughout the year.

This cross-sector approach is strengthened by collaboration with intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the public and private sectors, which are encouraged to enter into dialogue with national enforcement authorities and combine their efforts to tackle transnational fisheries crime.

THE ISSUES

INTERPOL uses "fisheries crime" as an umbrella term to describe crime across the fisheries sector, from harvest to processing, through the supply chain, including food fraud at consumer levels. The terminology also refers to well established criminal offences which facilitate the activity, such as money laundering, document fraud, corruption, human trafficking or modern slavery in the fisheries sector.

CONNECTED CRIMES

Evidence often points to other criminal and administrative abuses of sovereign and secrecy jurisdictions, registries, customs regulations and government documentation, as well as tax fraud, human trafficking, modern slavery or food labelling fraud. All are exploited by criminals to maximize profits from the capture and global trade in fisheries products and increasingly, marine species protected by national or international law, such as abalone, eels or sharks.



THE KEY FACTS

- The global economic impact of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is estimated between USD 25.5 and USD 49.5 billion annually.
- Economic losses are especially higher in Asia, Africa and Latin America which account for 85% global catch losses to IUU fishing.
- 11-26 million tonnes of fish are caught illegally each year.
- One in every five fish caught is estimated to come from IUU fishing.
- Environmental crime ranks among the top five most lucrative illicit trades in the world.
- Human trafficking and modern slavery are severe problems in the fishing industry.



COMPLEX FISHERIES CRIME NEED AN INTEGRATED RESPONSE

Criminals will always exploit the lack of communication between domestic, regional and global law enforcement agencies. By taking advantage of gaps in the regulation of fishing activity and the trade in its produce, criminals are able to avoid detection and sell into lucrative markets.

As an example, the Antarctic toothfish carried on the vessel "KUNLUN" (subject of an INTERPOL Purple Notice to seek information on *modus operandi*) travelled more than 25,000 nautical miles in a highly complex supply chain before finally being seized at its destination country.

The owners and operators of this kind of fishing vessels are behind complex shell companies to mask the ownership. Such sophisticated crimes, the smuggling of marine species and the mixing of illegal with legal catches can only be countered by multi-agency international cooperation and full supply chain traceability.

ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES ALONG THE FISHERIES SUPPLY CHAIN

THE CRIMES

Money laundering Tax and food fraud Customs fraud Document fraud Crimes against national fisheries legislation

THE PREPARATION building the crime



THE CATCH illicit harvests



THE SALE turning fish into money



THE CRIMINALS

Businesses, executives and corporate services Lawyers Accountants Fishing captains and vessel owners Public officials

- Create shell companies in tax havens or offshore financial centres
- Change flags regularly
- Falsify documents
- Establish corrupt relationships with officials
- Set up finances with trusted criminal customers
- Create smuggling networks and techniques
- Use forced labour
- Transport the crew, officers, illegal gear, and ship supplies to a vessel in a "friendly port"
- Employ "fixers" to facilitate vessel landings or
- containerized trade
- Use multiple fraudulent identities
- Obstruct boardings
- Dispose of navigational and other computing devices and paper records on board
- Exploit weak port state control
- Carry out unregulated transhipments at sea

• Mix illegally caught fish with legally caught fish

- Falsify customs, health and other regulatory documents
- Bribe officials
- Conspire with accountants to launder money
- Mislabel products

THE CONSEQUENCES

Depletion of scarce renewable natural resources Reduced food security in developing countries Institutional corruption Environmental degradation Weakened economies and abuse of national maritime sovereignty Heightened security risks Human rights abuses

THE CHALLENGE OF MULTIPLE JURISDICTIONS

IUU fishing may be a criminal or administrative matter, or both. The fishing activity of the vessel itself is subject to the primacy of flag state or coastal state jurisdictions depending on where it develops its activities in relation to both port state and flag state law.

In a global industry such as the fisheries sector, the business models used by criminal groups are subject to multiple jurisdictions in the same way as any other internationally traded commodity. That includes states of import and export, the states of nationality of the crew, operators and companies and the states of the business and corporate services they use. IUU fishing may be a standalone risk factor but it can also be a risk factor of organized transnational crimes, and those risks may be apparent in any combination of the above jurisdictions.

The Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) came into force in 2016. It is in the port state that the vessel can be thoroughly inspected for compliance with fisheries related laws and nationally or internationally determined IUU fishing risk factors. In the highest risk cases, it can be inspected in a coordinated way for compliance with other laws, which may include criminal jurisdictions.

One of the biggest challenges to criminal investigations and law enforcement activities at the international level, is connecting flag states, coastal states, port states, market states and countries of beneficial owners and crew members to exchange and collate intelligence. This is necessary, in order to narrow down investigations to the national level and encourage multi-agency cooperation between competent authorities to effectively investigate and prosecute.



INTERPOL ACTS AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN COUNTRIES

Where member countries are limited by national borders, jurisdictional boundaries or access to intelligence, INTERPOL plays a critical role in coordinating international cooperation in a timely and effective manner.



INTERPOL APPROACH

INTERPOL operates globally and acts as a neutral platform for the global exchange of law enforcement information, allowing ENS to identify, deter and disrupt transnational organized fisheries crime and associated crimes.

ENS is composed of criminal intelligence officers with backgrounds in maritime policing, national, and international fisheries enforcement, multi-disciplinary analysts and other specialists with appropriate expertise and skills. Staff members work with specialized officers in other crime areas, in order to identify connections between crimes, routes and trends. ENS also nurtures working relationships with law enforcement experts in each of INTERPOL's 194 member countries.

INTERPOL has developed broad capacity building and intelligence initiatives with the aim to disrupt or prosecute illegal activities whether for fisheries offences or related crimes. It enables enforcement training and operational planning, the development of information collection techniques, identification of priority threat areas, inspection procedures for High-Risk Vessels (HRVs), generation of alerts, and the risk assessment of associated criminal activity.

INTERPOL RESPONSE: THE KEY FACTS



Identifies and tracks HRVs Disrupts the trade of protected marine species Supports cooperation between port states, flag states, coastal states, market states and the states of nationals including the jurisdictions where their companies are based

"INTERPOL is committed to addressing the range of crimes related to the fisheries sector. These include illegal fishing, fraud, tax evasion, corruption and money laundering, as well as the use of fishing vessels to traffic drugs and weapons, and forced labour.

While progress has been achieved, further global concerted efforts are required to effectively address these crimes which often involve transnational organized criminal networks.

INTERPOL will continue to support its 194 member countries in combating all types of transnational crime, as no country or region alone can tackle these threats."



Jürgen Stock **INTERPOL Secretary General**

- Using INTERPOL's broad and versatile networks of law enforcement officials, civil society and private sector, to enhance international cooperation.
- Promoting INTERPOL's policing capabilities and mentoring member countries in investigative and analytical matters as well as subsequent law enforcement actions.
- Enhancing intelligence exchange through INTERPOL's secure global police communications network - I-24/7 - and alerting member countries to how high-risk vessels and companies commit their crimes.
- Assisting member countries with regional and international law enforcement operations and investigations.
- Enhancing awareness of risks and threats at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.
- Issuing international notices and alerts on behalf of member countries to request information on, and warn of, the movements and activities of people and vessels.

INVESTIGATIVE, OPERATIONAL AND ANALYTICAL SUPPORT

INTERPOL provides investigative, operational and analytical support to member countries.

INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT TEAM (IST)

At the request of a member country, a team of specialized law enforcement experts can be deployed to support local law enforcement authorities in their investigations. Available expertise includes inspection procedures support for HRVs, digital forensics, language and technical support in interviewing suspects, database gueries, follow-up criminal intelligence analysis, identification of transnational crime components and advice on how to issue INTERPOL Notices.

REGIONAL INVESTIGATIVE AND ANALYTICAL CASE MEETING (RIACM)

RIACMs allow investigators from several member countries to review case files and share intelligence and analysis to further their investigation. These meetings help identify criminal network connections or their company structures, and lead to opportunities for further exchange of police information and evidence under international crime cooperation procedures.

RIACMs can be arranged at the request of member countries or put forward by INTERPOL and can be supported by INTERPOL law enforcement officers with expertise in relevant crime areas as needed.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

INTERPOL hosts a wide variety of training sessions, workshops, seminars, working groups, meetings, conferences and other events in all regions of the world. Training is provided to strengthen the skills of National Central Bureau (NCB) staff and other national law enforcement officers in the use of INTERPOL's policing capabilities and compliance with INTERPOL's regulations and to address national or regional needs or specific crime areas.

In order to assist member countries in enhancing their response to the transnational aspect of fisheries crime, INTERPOL organizes national and regional training on fisheries crime investigations, the identification and inspection of HRVs, analysis of vessel documentation, evidence collection, chainsof-custody and operational planning.



NOTICES

INTERPOL Notices are international requests for cooperation or specific alerts allowing law enforcement in all continents to share critical crime-related information. INTERPOL often uses Purple Notices, which are typically published to seek or provide information on the modus operandi of vessels suspected of IUU fishing activities and crimes related to the fisheries sector, and Blue Notices, which are used to collect additional information about a person's identity, location or activities in relation to a crime.

ANALYTICAL SUPPORT

At the request of member country, INTERPOL analysts provide analytical support on vessel movements, supply chains, financial flows and ownership. This may include criminal intelligence analysis, forensic analysis of electronic equipment through support from the INTERPOL Digital Forensics Laboratory, and expert examination of fishing material, equipment and documentation. The analysis is then used to provide insights that can drive or support law enforcement investigations, operations and strategy, as well as influence government policy and decisions. INTERPOL provides both operational and strategic analytical support to fisheries crime-related projects, investigations and operations.

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

INTERPOL developed the fisheries fellowship programme to promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices between fisheries enforcement officers from a wide range of different countries. The objective is to foster greater interaction between these fisheries agencies to strengthen cooperation in transnational fisheries and associated crimes. Two editions of the programme have been implemented to date, in which officers of Indonesia and Canada came together to identify common challenges and present potential solutions on a regulatory, investigative and strategic level.



GUIDES AND PUBLICATIONS

INTERPOL publishes regular guides and reports on crimes associated or related to the fisheries sector, such as:

- 2014: Study on Fisheries Crime in the West African Coastal Region (available online)
- 2015: Report on Fisheries Crime in Latin America
- 2018: International Law Enforcement Cooperation in the Fisheries Sector: A Guide for Law Enforcement (available online)
- 2019: Technical Report on Fishing Gear Evidence Collection







2018 International Law Enforcement Cooperation in the Fisheries Sector: A Guide for Law Enforcement Practitioners



2019 Technical Report on Fishing Gear Evidence Collection

REGIONAL THREATS

The map below shows a broad sample of regional threats identified by INTERPOL member countries during RIACMs, ISTs and National Environmental Security Seminars (NESS). It is not an exhaustive list but captures the global and interconnected nature of fisheries crime, demonstrating why an international multi-agency response is necessary.

WEST AFRICA AND CENTRAL TROPICAL ATLANTIC

Uncontrolled transshipments, which consist of the unloading of all or any of the fish on board a fishing vessel to another fishing vessel either at sea or in port, and unlicensed fishing are a significant problem. Encroachment by industrial trawlers on inshore areas designed to protect artisanal fisheries threatens food security.

The economic benefits of marine resources to coastal states are eroded by fisheries crime. The tuna species caught, landed and processed in this region are destined for foreign markets, and the fisheries are vulnerable to IUU activity.

LATIN AMERICA

Incursions into Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) by unlicensed vessels lead to use of force and risks to life and property. Enforcement cooperation between the coastal state and a flag state two oceans away is essential. Increasingly, countries in Latin America are using INTERPOL for Purple Notices related to the smuggling of species protected by national or international law. For instance, they have been used to alert and seek international cooperation regarding the illegal trafficking in totoaba fish bladders from Central America to Asia.

SOUTHERN OCEAN

For over 15 years, toothfish operators fished the high seas in the Southern Ocean on vessels with multiple false identities or flying flags of state with no control over the vessels' activities. In many cases the vessels are stateless. Despite a lack of compliance with international trade regulations, these vessels routinely laundered their catches into markets with unquestioned false documentation presented to customs, food health sanitation authorities, port and fisheries authorities.

EUROPE

Since the implementation of a zero export quota, Europe has experienced an epidemic of illegal commercial harvest and smuggling of juvenile European eels (glass eels or elvers) out of the continent to Asia to support a burgeoning aquaculture business where the eels are subsequently raised to adulthood. Once grown to marketable size, the eels are processed and simply wrongfully listed for export as non-CITES species, such as American eel (Anguilla rostrata) or Japanese eel (Anguilla japonica). This is easy to do as the species are difficult to differentiate, and in the absence of genetic (DNA) testing and consignment, they are simply labelled as "eel".



BAY OF BENGAL

This water space enjoys one of the most productive coastal fisheries systems in the world. However, its coastal fisheries are currently being overfished due to a lack of industrial fisheries enforcement, which left the area unmanaged for a long period of time. The poor state of the fisheries stock is mostly due to the uncontrolled trawling and gillnetting by industrial vessels, mainly in shallow seas or close to the shores, where their access is forbidden.

chain.

Many of the large operators explore the lack of effective control by the coastal states and, above all, the lack of cooperation both at the national level (between national law enforcement agencies), and the international level (within the Bay of Bengal countries). Related and/or connected crimes to the fisheries sector mainly include corruption, human trafficking and smuggling, piracy and armed robbery of vessels (including the kidnapping of fishermen) and drug trafficking using fishing vessels.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Multiple vessels use the same identity. Enforcement authorities sink the vessels of foreign poachers. Forced labour exists in the fisheries sector and supply chains are contaminated with many crime types such as customs fraud and document fraud. This region contains major market states for protected marine species originating in Latin America and toothfish from the Southern Ocean.

PACIFIC OCEAN

Over 60% of the world's tuna comes from the Pacific Ocean. According to regional organizations, licensed fishing vessels are responsible for the majority of the illegal catch, which accounts for 95% of the total volume and value of IUU fishing estimated activity. Many illegal operators are not from Pacific Island countries, but from distant water fishing nations.

It has also been estimated that in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, at least USD 142 million worth of IUU catch is transshipped each year — with most licensed fishing vessels not reporting it properly. If not regulated and monitored correctly, transshipment can contribute to move illegal caught products into the global supply

CASE STUDY 1 - FISHING VESSEL (F/V) "STS-50" Also known as: "AYDA", "SEA BREEZE", "ANDREY DOLGOV"





THE CASE FACTS

The "STS-50" was a listed IUU fishing vessel, subject of an INTERPOL Purple Notice, which was captured after a fine-tuned coordination process between INTERPOL, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), nonprofit organizations and member countries. For years, the vessel and its operators engaged in illegal fishing activities in the Southern, Pacific and Indian Oceans violating restrictions on the catch of protected species.

Over the years, the vessel was flagged to a handful of different countries, under different names and registries, and was known for fleeing to international waters to avoid law enforcement.

After being captured, the vessel was linked to 11 different countries.

• Philippines

Russia

• Togo

Sierra Leone

•

•

COUNTRIES INVOLVED:

 Australia China

Indonesia

Madagascar

Mozambique

New Zealand





CASE STUDY 2 – FISHING VESSEL (F/V) "JINZHANG"



THE CASE FACTS

The fishing vessel "JINGZHANG", also known as "HAI LUNG" aka "YELE", allegedly flagged to Equatorial Guinea, was a longtime IUU-listed vessel by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) since 2006, and later on by several other Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO).

In 2015, Automatic Identification System (AIS) signals showed the vessel in West Africa waters. In March 2016, human intelligence collected by INTERPOL located the vessel in Conakry waters targeting deep-sea species, using fraudulent documentation. INTERPOL monitored the vessel's movements throughout the years, and it was inspected at least five times, with only two leading to sanctions against it.

The modus operandi was similar to other roque vessels i.e. registry abuse, flag hopping, fraudulent documentation, but more importantly, it was allegedly linked to other serious crime areas, using a skeleton crew of six as opposed to the standard of at least 30 crew members.

Sierra Leonean authorities arrested the vessel for document fraud and suspicious IUU fishing activities in its waters. Upon inspection by several other countries in the region, vessel operators repeatedly used the excuse that the vessel was was on its way to be scrapped at a shipyard in India. However, the vessel never left West Africa waters.

The vessel was detained after inspection due to fraudulent documentation and suspicions on its involvement in other crimes in the region. The operators and beneficial owners had links to countries in the West Africa region where it regularly operated, and shell companies based in countries scattered around the world.

Given the transnational dimension of the case and limited resources, Sierra Leonean authorities requested the deployment of an INTERPOL IST to support the collection of evidence and extraction of information from shipborne equipment. This support continued producing analytical reports on the evidence collected.

- **GFCM:** General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
- ICCAT: International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
- IOTC: Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
- NEAFC: North East Atlantic **Fisheries Commission**
- SEAFO: South East Atlantic **Fisheries Organisation**
- SIOFA: Southern Indian Ocean **Fisheries Agreement**

Name	Flag	D
YELE	Sierra Leone	20
RAY	Belize	20
KILY	Equatorial Guinea	20
CONSTANT	Equatorial Guinea	20
TROPIC	Equatorial Guinea 🛛 🚬	20
ISLA GRACIOSA	South Africa 🛛 🚬	20
ISLA GRACIOSA	Spain 🔍	19
ISLA GRACIOSA	Unknown	19









Dates

- 2012-Present
- 2012
- 2011-2012
- 2008-2011
- 2005-2008
- 2000-2005
- 980-2000
- 966-1980

INTERPOL COORDINATION

COUNTRIES INVOLVED:

- Angola
- Belize
- Benin
- Equatorial Guinea
- India
- Indonesia
- Liberia
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- Togo

OTHER ENTITIES:

- CCAMLR
- NEAFC
- SEAFO

MULTI-AGENCY COOPERATION

Effective enforcement requires a global multi-agency approach. Due to the nature of organized fisheries crime, INTERPOL promotes an inclusive and collaborative approach to law enforcement cooperation.



INTERPOL NETWORK

With 194 member countries, INTERPOL enables police in different countries to work together by facilitating police cooperation. The INTERPOL General Secretariat based in Lyon, France is supported by the Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, seven regional bureaus in Argentina, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Kenya, Thailand and Zimbabwe, and Special Representative Offices at the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations. In addition, each member country has its own INTERPOL office, the NCB, staffed by highly trained law enforcement officials, linking national police with our global network.



"Since 2011 INTERPOL and CCAMLR have been working collaboratively to prevent deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, both within the CCAMLR Convention Area and broadly internationally acknowledging that IUU fishing has global consequences and knows no borders.

The combined efforts of INTERPOL and CCAMLR have furthered the objective of CCAMLR through the use of innovative surveillance monitoring technologies, the promotion of the CCAMLR Objective, and support of dedicated CCAMLR programmes, such as the CCAMLR Ecosystem Monitoring Program (CEMP).

Recent collaborative work has focused on combatting IUU activity the resulted in a significant reduction of the known IUU fishing fleet which threatened the Antarctica marine environment for decades."

> **Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine** Living Resources (CCAMLR)

"We believe that Norwegian support through Norad to INTERPOL has encouraged cooperation between industrialised countries and developing countries. The support has produced concrete results in the fight against fisheries crime and crimes related and/or connected to the fisheries sector."

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)

CROSS SECTOR PARTNERS

CURRENT PARTNERS/ DONORS

- Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) – through the European Commission
- ► The Pew Charitable Trusts
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

PREVIOUS PARTNERS/DONORS

- ► The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)
- U.S. Department of State: Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)

INTERPOL also works closely with international and regional organizations, the private sector, academia and civil society for an effective and holistic approach.

International

- ► Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)
- European Commission
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- ► World Bank (WB)
- World Customs Organization (WCO)

Regional

- Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)
- Regional police bodies

Private sector partners

Institutionalized private partnerships

"Information-sharing is critical in the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and the cooperative efforts of the INTERPOL team have been central to improving the global response needed to strengthen fisheries enforcement."

The Pew Charitable Trusts





About INTERPOL

INTERPOL's role is to enable police in our 194 member countries to work together to fight transnational crime and make the world a safer place. We maintain global databases containing police information on criminals and crime, and we provide operational and forensic support, analysis services and training. These policing capabilities are delivered worldwide and support three global programmes: counterterrorism, cybercrime, and organized and emerging crime.

> INTERPOL General Secretariat 200 quai Charles de Gaulle 69006 Lyon, France Tel: +33 4 72 44 70 00 Fax: +33 4 72 44 71 63 environmentalcrime@interpol.int



WWW.INTERPOL.INT

