

RPOA-IUU Newsletter

PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that I present the January to March 2026 edition of the RPOA-IUU Newsletter. As we conclude another productive year, this quarter reflects the unwavering commitment and collective efforts of our member countries and partners in combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF) across our region.

IUUF continues to pose significant challenges to the health of our marine ecosystems, the livelihoods of coastal communities, and the sustainability of regional fisheries. Yet, through close collaboration, knowledge sharing, and strengthened partnerships, we continue to make meaningful strides toward more effective governance and responsible fisheries management.

This quarter has seen further progress in advancing regional cooperation, including regional forum participation, global updates on international treaty, collective action on information-sharing, and regional capacity building initiatives.

Our engagement with international and regional partners also continues to reinforce the collective resolve of RPOA-IUU to address IUUF through theoretical and practical approaches.

The first edition of the 2026 highlights regional cooperation in information transparency. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all member countries, partners, and dedicated individuals whose contributions and collaboration have been instrumental in driving our collective mission forward.

As we look ahead to 2026, let us continue to strengthen our cooperation, embrace innovation, and uphold our shared vision for sustainable and well-managed fisheries in the RPOA-IUU region.

EDITORIAL TEAM

This newsletter is a collaborative work from the RPOA-IUU Secretariat's editorial team. We work together to develop and create the contents that inform and engage towards responsible fishing practices. Meet the team below and stay connected with us if you have any feedback and insights.

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➤ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The successful implementation of the Regional Plan of Action to Combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (RPOA-IUU) in the region has been made possible through the unwavering support, collaboration, and dedication of esteemed advisory bodies, observers, and partner countries. Their invaluable guidance, expertise, and commitment have played a pivotal role in shaping and advancing efforts toward sustainable fisheries management and the protection of our marine ecosystems. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all stakeholders who have contributed to this vital initiative. Together, we continue to make significant strides toward ensuring the long-term health of our oceans and fostering a more sustainable future for all.

THE BLUEPRINT: IMPLEMENTING THE HIGH SEAS TREATY

The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), also known as the High Seas Treaty, represents a transformative shift in global ocean governance. This agreement has officially entered into force on 17 January 2026.

As we move from adoption into action, the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement at the regional level is important. In line with the RPOA-IUU Core Element, as follows:

- The current resource and management situation in the region
- Implementation of International and Regional Instruments

The agreement comprises a comprehensive legal framework for nearly two-thirds of the global ocean through main focus areas:

- Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs), including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits; focusing on the development and conduct of marine scientific research
- Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs); providing a standardized mechanism to establish Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) on the high seas to safeguard fragile ecosystems.
- Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs); setting unified rules for assessing the potential harm of human activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- Capacity-Building and Transfer of Marine Technology; developing the marine scientific and technological capacity for developing States Parties

Some RPOA-IUU participating countries, like Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste have ratified the BBNJ Agreement. This action showcases that RPOA-IUU participating countries acknowledge the BBNJ as a critical instrument to ensure the health and resilience of ocean ecosystems beyond national jurisdiction.

STRENGTHENING INFORMATION EXCHANGE TO COMBAT IUU FISHING: RPOA-IUU SECRETARIAT CONTRIBUTION AT THE REGIONAL MCS WORKSHOP



- Building regional capability by improving fisheries intel
- Finalizing a **clear and comprehensive data-sharing pro** support from the RPOA-IUU partners
- Advancing **the importance of implementing decent working conditions on fishing vessels and fishing industry** with support from the ILO
- Enhancing regional capacity by strengthening investigative and analytical skills to combat fisheries crime through the **Regional Workshop on Crimes in the Fisheries Sector**
- Continuing **the development of publicity material** and formalizing the RPOA-IUU Knowledge Management Platform

In support of these efforts, Yudhistira Rizky Abdillah, as the Vice Executive Director for the RPOA-IUU Secretariat, participated as one of the speakers in the Regional Workshop on Information Exchange on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) for Combating IUU Fishing, organized by SEAFDEC and held from 24–26 February 2026. The workshop brought together regional stakeholders and countries to strengthen collaboration and improve mechanisms for sharing fisheries monitoring and enforcement information.

During the workshop, the RPOA-IUU Secretariat delivered a presentation titled “The Roles of RPOA-IUU in Promoting Collaborative MCS Measures in the Region.” The presentation highlighted how the Regional Plan of Action to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices including Combating IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU), established in 2007 by eleven participating countries, continues to serve as a platform for regional cooperation in promoting responsible fishing practices and combating IUU fishing.

A key element discussed was the **RPOA-IUU MCS Sub-Regional Groups**, which facilitate practical cooperation among neighboring countries. These groups include the Gulf of Thailand Sub-Regional Group, the Southern and Eastern South China Seas and Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Sub-Regional Group, and the Arafura-Timor Seas Sub-Regional Group. Through these mechanisms, member countries can coordinate monitoring activities, share intelligence, and strengthen collective responses to suspected fisheries violations.

The RPOA-IUU Secretariat also highlighted several ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening regional MCS cooperation. These include facilitating bilateral communication between member countries in addressing alleged illegal fishing activities, maintaining and updating the **RPOA-IUU Vessel Watch List**, and compiling the **RPOA-IUU MCS Key Instruments List** as a reference for enforcement agencies across the region. These tools support authorities in identifying potential risks and improving coordination in monitoring and enforcement operations

In addition, the presentation emphasized progress in developing a **regional data-sharing mechanism**. A working group meeting held in Makati, Philippines, in November 2024 initiated discussions on formalizing the mechanism, including agreed data types, protocols for information exchange, and integration with the existing MCS Sub-Regional Groups. Member countries are currently conducting internal consultations on the proposed roadmap before further discussions in upcoming meetings.

The workshop also highlighted practical examples demonstrating the importance of timely information exchange. One case involved coordinated communication among RPOA-IUU participating countries that led to the apprehension of vessels suspected of IUU fishing activities. Another example showed how the RPOA-IUU Secretariat facilitated bilateral communication between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea to resolve operational issues involving fishing vessels and fisheries observers, illustrating how effective dialogue can support due process and strengthen regional cooperation.

The RPOA-IUU Secretariat further shared updates on recent capacity-building initiatives, including MCS training programs and workshops on flag State responsibility supported by international partners. These initiatives aim to strengthen technical skills, investigative capacity, and regional understanding of international fisheries instruments.

The workshop concluded with a shared recognition among participants that strengthening information exchange remains a critical component in combating IUU fishing. Continued collaboration through regional platforms such as RPOA-IUU will play an important role in improving fisheries intelligence, advancing data-sharing protocols, and strengthening collective enforcement efforts across the region.



STRENGTHENING REGIONAL FISHERIES GOVERNANCE AND TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION: RPOA-IUU SECRETARIAT PARTICIPATION IN INDO-PACIFIC WORKSHOP

The Workshop on Strengthening Regional Fisheries Governance and Technology Integration to Combat IUU Fishing in the Indo-Pacific, held from 17–19 March 2026, provided an important platform for enhancing regional cooperation and exploring innovative approaches to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The workshop brought together regional stakeholders to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and discuss the role of technology in strengthening fisheries governance.



Yudhistira Rizky Abdillah, as Vice Executive Director for the RPOA-IUU Secretariat, participated as one of the speakers and delivered a presentation on “Sub-Regional Cooperation Model and Progress.” The presentation highlighted the role of the RPOA-IUU framework in facilitating regional cooperation through its MCS Sub-Regional Groups, which support information exchange, joint risk analysis, and coordinated responses to transboundary IUU fishing challenges.

Discussions also emphasized ongoing progress across sub-regions, including efforts to strengthen coordination in the Gulf of Thailand, address key IUU fishing issues in the South China Seas and Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, and enhance collaborative enforcement and information-sharing in the Arafura and Timor Seas. Practical examples, such as joint enforcement actions and coordinated responses to IUU fishing cases, demonstrated the effectiveness of strengthened regional communication and cooperation.

▶ RPOA-IUU SECRETARIAT

The workshop further highlighted the importance of integrating technology and strengthening fisheries intelligence to support monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) efforts. These align with RPOA-IUU initiatives on data-sharing, capacity building, and regional collaboration with partners.

Finally, the workshop reaffirmed the importance of strengthening sub-regional cooperation and leveraging technology as key elements in enhancing fisheries governance and advancing collective efforts to combat IUU fishing in the Indo-Pacific region.



➡ RPOA-IUU SECRETARIAT

RPOA-IUU SECRETARIAT ENGAGEMENT WITH ILO IN PROMOTING DECENT WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

The RPOA-IUU Secretariat held a coordination meeting with the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 11 March 2026 to discuss the possibility for organizing a regional workshop on Introducing Decent Working Conditions in the Fisheries Sector.

The discussion primarily focused on the improvement of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the planned workshop, which has incorporated inputs from RPOA-IUU participating countries.

These inputs reflect shared priorities and perspectives from RPOA-IUU participating countries, particularly in addressing the linkage between IUU fishing and labour issues, including decent working conditions onboard fishing vessels. The planned workshop will also invite representatives from the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to share their recent regulation concerning labor standards on fishing vessels operating in relevant RFMOs areas.

The RPOA-IUU Secretariat also proposed that the workshop should aim to enhance understanding of international frameworks, promote information exchange, and identify practical actions to address gaps in labour conditions within the fisheries sector.

Overall, the coordination meeting highlighted the collective commitment of the RPOA-IUU Secretariat and the ILO to bring countries coming together to discuss decent working conditions as part of broader regional efforts to combat IUU fishing and promote sustainable fisheries management.



INTER-REGIONAL SYNERGY: STRENGTHENING THE RPOA-IUU WATCH LIST THROUGH RFMO COOPERATION

The RPOA-IUU Watch List is a platform that compiles detailed information on vessels engaged in IUU activities, including actions taken. Data is sourced from participating countries and regional fisheries management organizations. The platform helps mitigate and respond to IUU fishing effectively.

In early 2026, the RPOA-IUU Secretariat received the 2026 IUU Vessel list from the WCPFC, approved at its 22nd Annual Session.

Key notes include:

- In 2015, the Executive Director sought information from Chinese Taipei and Georgia about vessels on the IUU list and requested cooperation from other RFMOs.
- Georgia confirmed that the vessels Neptune and Fu Lien No 1 are no longer under its flag.
- Chinese Taipei revoked the Yu Fong 168's license in 2009 and penalized the owner for not returning to port.
- Chinese Taipei noted that Thailand reported the Yu Fong 168 landed catches in Phuket in 2013 and confirmed its deregistration on November 17, 2017.
- On April 29, 2020, WCPFC received information from Chinese Taipei about the master of the Yu Fong 168 being sanctioned for IUU fishing.

WCPFC22 Outcomes | Attachment



Note: Information provided in this list is in accordance with CMM 2019-07 para 19 and WCPFC13 decisions

Current name of vessel (previous names)	Current flag (previous flags)	Date first included on WCPFC IUU Vessel List ¹	Flag State Registration Number/ IMO Number	Call Sign (previous call signs)	Vessel Master (nationality)	Owner/beneficial owners (previous owners)	Notifying CCM	IUU activities
Neptune	unknown (Georgia)	10 Dec. 2010	M-00545	unknown (4LOG)		Space Energy Enterprises Co. Ltd.	France	Fishing on the high seas of the WCP Convention Area without being on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels (CI 2007-03-para 3a)
Fu Lien No 1	unknown (Georgia)	10 Dec. 2010	M-01432 IMO No 7355662	unknown (4LIN2)		Fu Lien Fishery Co., Georgia	United States	Is without nationality and harvested covered by the WCPFC Convention in Convention Area (CMM 2007-03, para 3h)
Yu Fong 168	unknown (Chinese Taipei)	11 Dec. 2009		BJ4786	Mr Jang Faa Sheng (Chinese Taipei)	Chang Lin Pao-Chun, 161 Sanmin Rd., Liouciu Township, Pingtung County 929, Chinese Taipei	Marshall Islands	Fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of the Marshall Islands without permission and in contravention of the Marshall Islands' laws and regulations (CMM 2007-03, para 3b)
Kuda Laut 03	Philippines	08 Dec 2023	Registry No. 120001812	DUM-4015	Alex L Cerina, Filipino	Tuna Explorers Incorporated	New Zealand	Fishing on the high seas of the WCP Area (High Seas Pocket One) without WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels (CI para 3a)

LOOKING AHEAD

The RPOA-IUU Secretariat will continue working on the implementation of the 2026 RPOA-IUU Work Plan. Following is the activity in near future:

- Re-circulation of the RPOA-IUU Joint Ministerial Statement
- Development of the Second Quarter of the 2026 RPOA-IUU Newsletter
- Regional Workshop on Crimes in the Fisheries Sector (14 - 16 April 2026, Bali, Indonesia)
- Regional Workshop on Introducing Decent Working Conditions in the Fisheries Sector (dates to be confirmed)



► COUNTRIES: AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA'S MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE (MCS) TRAINING COURSE



Australia's Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Promoting Sustainable Fisheries in Southeast Asia program successfully delivered its third cohort of the Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) Training Course in 2025.

The MCS Training Course is a comprehensive capacity-building program co-delivered by fisheries experts from the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Nha Trang University, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. Designed to strengthen regional efforts to combat IUU fishing, the course combines theoretical instruction with hands-on practical exercises.

Delivered through 10 integrated modules, the program equips participants with both technical expertise and operational skills, with a strong emphasis on regional cooperation and operational readiness. Beyond building technical capacity, the course fosters informal professional networks among fisheries officers, enhancing collaboration and strengthening the collective ability to implement effective MCS strategies across the region.

Reflecting the program's commitment to inclusive capacity building, female participation in the 2025 MCS Training Course reached 50 per cent, supported by targeted inclusivity promotion and gender-responsive participant selection practices.



► COUNTRIES: AUSTRALIA

Nominations for the 2026 MCS Training Course opened in January and attracted 90 applications from across 10 RPOA-IUU countries, demonstrating strong regional demand. The embedded involvement of the 3 RPOA-IUU Sub-Regional MCS Groups in the student selection and endorsement process further strengthens regional ownership and ensures the training remains relevant and responsive to shared regional priorities. Countries will be informed of their successful nominations by the end of March 2026.



➤ RPOA-IUU SECRETARIAT TEAM

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