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**GLOBAL REVIEW OF ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING ISSUES:
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?**

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**GLOBAL REVIEW OF ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING ISSUES:
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?¹**

1. IUU fishing, and the related issue of fishing by vessels flying flags of convenience, is not a single phenomenon. As noted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, IUU fishing “occurs in virtually all capture fisheries, whether they are conducted within areas under national jurisdiction or on the high seas.” Examples include reflagging of fishing vessels to evade controls, fishing in areas of national jurisdiction without authorization by the coastal State and failure to report (or misreporting) catches. But the list of activities encompassed by the term “IUU fishing” is really much broader.

2. Just as IUU fishing is a multifaceted phenomenon, the problems caused by IUU fishing are many and diverse. Among the obvious adverse consequences are:

1. diminished effectiveness of fisheries management;
2. lost economic opportunities for legitimate fishers; and
3. reduction in food security.

3. Those who conduct IUU fishing are also unlikely to observe rules designed to protect the marine environment from the harmful effects of some fishing activity, including, for example, restrictions on the harvest of juvenile fish, gear restrictions established to minimize waste and bycatch of non-target species, and prohibitions on fishing in known spawning areas. To avoid detection, IUU fishers often violate certain basic safety requirements, such as keeping navigation lights lit at night, which puts other users of the oceans at risk. Operators of IUU vessels also tend to deny to crew members fundamental rights concerning the terms and conditions of their labor, including those concerning wages, safety standards and other living and working conditions.

4. In addition to its detrimental economic, social, environmental and safety consequences, the very unfairness of IUU fishing raises serious concerns. By definition, IUU fishing is either an expressly illegal activity or, at a minimum, an activity undertaken with little regard for applicable standards. IUU fishers gain an unjust advantage over legitimate fishers. In this sense, IUU fishers are “free riders” who benefit unfairly from the sacrifices made by others for the sake of proper fisheries conservation and management. This situation undermines the morale of legitimate fishers and, perhaps more importantly, encourages them to disregard the rules as well. Thus, IUU fishing tends to promote additional IUU fishing, creating a downward cycle.

5. Given the diversity of the phenomenon we call IUU fishing and the multiple problems it causes, we must take a multi-tiered approach to combating it. The FAO International Plan of Action on IUU Fishing sets forth such an approach. The IPOA is conceived of as a “toolbox” – a set of tools for use in dealing with IUU fishing in its various manifestations. Obviously, not all tools in the toolbox are

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appropriate for use in all situations. Still, it is now incumbent on all FAO Members to fulfill their commitments under the IPOA, both in their general capacity as States as well as in their more particular capacities as flag States, port States, coastal States, market States and as members of regional fishery management organizations.

6. Other international institutions, including the OECD, also clearly have a role to play in the fight against IUU fishing. Through workshops such as this and follow-on activities, the OECD can shed further light on the economic drivers of IUU fishing, help refine the tools currently being used in response to IUU fishing and contribute to the development of new tools as well.