

# Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Action Alliance (IUU-AA)

Deep Dives Concept Paper (2024)

## Background and Objective

Members and Supporters of the IUU Fishing Action Alliance (IUU-AA/Action Alliance) have worked for years to fulfill regional, national, and international commitments dedicated to combatting IUU fishing, and by signing on to the IUU-AA Pledge, they commit to be proactive in supporting, implementing, and strengthening regionally and internationally agreed-upon measures to combat this issue. The proposed Deep Dive sessions in 2024 and 2025 offer both an opportunity for Members and Supporters to showcase **how** they are implementing these measures to combat IUU fishing, which are the components of the IUU-AA pledge, and identify opportunities for further topics to discuss in 2024-25, with a view to reporting outwards at the UN Ocean Conference in 2025.

## Goals

- Showcase the “how” of the IUU-AA Pledge (i.e., how Members and Supporters are tackling IUU fishing issues), as this will allow the IUU-AA to demonstrate and illustrate current best practices for implementing the IUU-AA Pledge in an action-oriented manner;
- Map the landscape of recent, ongoing, and planned work in line with the components of the Action Alliance pledge;
- Promote, strengthen, and collaborate on new actions or ideas to combat IUU fishing at a regional and international level (e.g., existing regional fisheries management organizations; international dedicated agreements); and
- Create a framework for coordination among Action Alliance Members and Supporters.

## Structure

Each Deep Dive will focus on one of the following themes:

- Transparency;
- Traceability; or
- Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) and Enforcement.

Canada, as Chair, will work in coordination with the Stimson Center, as Administrator, to identify topics within these themes, select speakers and/or subject matter experts, and craft a moderated panel, to include space for discussion. Discussions will include a mix of Member and Supporter perspectives.

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The Deep Dives will be held virtually and, depending on the desired level of detail, may be scheduled anywhere from 90 minutes to four hours (with health breaks) to accommodate broad participation by Members and Supporters at a technical level. Future Deep Dive sessions could focus on the work being done in a particular region, e.g., West Africa, Oceania, Indo-Pacific, as each chair of the IUU-AA sees fit (should they wish to host Deep Dive sessions).

A proposed format for the Deep Dive sessions will be as follows:

- a) A moderated panel discussion, composed of Members and Supporters, providing an overview of the topic, along with areas of success and general challenges within the identified topic.
- b) Following the discussion, moderated groups would break out to discuss what they heard, share challenges they might be facing in implementation, and discuss best practices in overcoming those challenges. Group members will be organized to ensure a fulsome discussion representing all areas of interest (e.g., government, non-government).
- c) Following the breakout group session, Members and Supporters would return for a moderated wrap-up discussion which will be summarized by the moderator..

Discussion questions and surveys, if required, may be sent to Members and Supporters in advance of the Deep Dive session, in order to prepare all participants for a fulsome, in-depth conversation.

Canada and the Stimson Center will seek out Members and Supporters or external partners upon suggestion from Members and Supporters who are interested and available to join panel discussions, and will work with the selected Members and Supporters to develop a run-of-show for each Deep Dive.

The structure of the Deep Dive sessions may be changed or modified following the October 2, 2024 session in order to ensure the most effective methods of engaging IUU-AA Members and Supporters.

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## Outcomes

Deep Dives should focus less on accomplishments and more on gaps: how Members and Supporters can improve internally, and what we want to collectively and strategically advocate for in 2024-25. Outcomes could include:

- Greater collaboration between Members and Supporters through the identification of shared goals and areas of overlap to support knowledge exchanges, along with opportunities for further discussion;
- Mapping of current best practices and accomplishments to act as a guide on implementation of the IUU-AA Pledge;
- Identification of key findings and insights after each Deep Dive session to inform strategic priorities for the group.

To facilitate these outcomes, the Chair and Administrator may summarize each Deep Dive session through an internal readout for Members and Supporters, including possible ways forward as proposed by Members and Supporters. These materials will be shared with Members and Supporters for approval before being shared publicly.

## Proposal – Deep Dive Session 1: Transparency (October 2, 2024)

A proposed first Deep Dive session will focus on transparency, from the perspective of flag state responsibility. Two example definitions for transparency are as follows:

- *Transparency refers to the availability, accessibility, and credibility of information related to fisheries which involves not only providing information about fishing activities and regulations but also ensuring that such information is easily accessible to the public ([COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade 2024](#)); or*

- *Transparency: clearly defining and widely publicizing policies, laws and procedures in applicable languages, and widely publicizing decisions in applicable languages and in formats accessible to all ([FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#); [FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication](#)).*

In view of FAO voluntary guidelines on Flag State Performance from 2014, Members and Supporters will exchange best practices, current challenges, and what systems exist now that can be leveraged to close gaps and build capacity on two sub-themes:

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- **Information and reporting systems:** including information and reporting systems at domestic, regional (e.g., RFMOs), bilateral () and international levels, examining what associated capacity-building needs, gaps, limitations, and opportunities for improvement exist. Additional discussions on other transparency tools, such as the Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency or the Global Record of Fishing Vessels may also be discussed. What collaborative systems between flag and coastal states exist on exchanging information on non-compliance, in order to sanction IUU fishing (e.g., sharing VMS data, logbook data, provision of subsidies, fishing authorization lists, international instruments such as the PSMA)?
- **Beneficial ownership of vessels:** Collecting and/or publishing information on both flagged vessels and also nationals or companies supporting or benefitting from foreign fishing vessels or companies, along with the parameters or boundaries within which flag states have authority/ jurisdiction to collect information on beneficial ownership data and make this available to other authorities, regional fisheries management organizations, or the public. Possibilities of making fishing access agreements and authorization lists publicly available.

## Proposal – Deep Dive Session 2: Traceability (March 2025)

A proposed second Deep Dive session will focus on traceability, with a view to mapping current practices to disincentivize IUU fishing. Traceability refers to tracking the movement and possession of a product (fish/seafood) by various actors through a supply chain from start to finish.

Suggested themes include the following, though other suggestions are welcomed:

- **Supply chain traceability, specifically:**
  - **Facilitated discussion on current traceability systems** such as catch documentation schemes, including using the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes, or RFMO rules and reporting.
  - **Facilitated discussion on standardizing the key data elements used by different systems**, increasing interoperability among systems or tools (e.g., the Global Record) and moving away from paper-based systems. This discussion could include identification of barriers to developing more comprehensive traceability, and of tools or strategies that could be used to mitigate or overcome these barriers (domestic legislation, trade/international agreements, RFMOs, compliance monitoring). For example, how can data be collected on all harvest, transfer, storage, and export events to enable a full accounting of legal product across the supply chain?

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## Proposal – Deep Dive Session 3: Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) and Enforcement (2025)

Monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) activities, as well as supporting enforcement activities, are key tools in combatting IUU fishing in domestic and international waters. In many areas, however, current MCS operations and capacity are not sufficient to adequately deter IUU fishing activity. More oversight of fishing activities is needed to ensure that measures, laws and regulations are being followed and to identify violations, including through the possible development and implementation of high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI) schemes, observer programs, and shared IUU vessel lists, as well capacity building to support MCS efforts. Discussions should focus on what benefits exist regarding MCS and how to optimize/better focus MCS and enforcement action to deliver results.

Suggested themes include the following, though other suggestions are welcomed:

- **High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI)** – Facilitated discussion on effective HSBI schemes across RFMOs:
  - **Explore variations and gaps** in HSBI frameworks and coverage, including the benefits and limitations of current frameworks.
  - **Explore the barriers which States have to HSBI and MCS deployment**, including platform availability, trained crews, etc.; and discuss ways that barriers might be overcome in order to pursue HSBI measures in RFMOs
  - **Explore the different ways through which States can be involved in HSBI schemes**, beyond providing inspection vessels and personnel, such as surveillance, intelligence-sharing, and joint risk assessment.
  - **Inquire what role stakeholders can play in the information environment**, including sharing advice with policy makers on the role of HSBI, and gaps in capacity.
- **Observer Programs**
  - **Explore the landscape of observer programs** that currently exist, both RFMO-coordinated regional programs and national programs.
  - **Discuss challenges and barriers to implementing observer programs** either domestically or at RFMOs, including cost, logistics, and observer safety.
  - **Discuss best practices** around the development and administration of observer programs.
- **IUU Vessel Lists**

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- **Explore how different RFMOs develop IUU vessel lists** as a tool to share information and deter IUU activities (e.g. criteria, processes, publication).
- **Discuss the benefits of such lists**, as well as any gaps or challenges (e.g. missing information, cumbersome processes).
- **Discuss potential ways that IUU vessels lists can be improved** to increase effectiveness and/or leveraged in other efforts to combat IUU fishing (e.g., use in MCS activities, RFMO cross-listing of vessels).

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