



**TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE**

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**REPORT ON OPERATION NASSE 2023**

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**WCPFC-TCC19-2023-DP01**

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Paper submitted by New Zealand on behalf of Australia, Fiji, France, and the United States of America



# Report to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Technical and Compliance Committee

## Overview of Operation Nasse

Operation Nasse is an annual, multi-lateral Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) activity involving personnel and patrol assets from the 'Pacific Quad' (Australia, France, New Zealand, and the United States of America) and collaboration with Pacific Island Country partners. The operation coincides with the albacore tuna season in the high seas of the South Pacific.

Operation Nasse focuses on combatting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing on the high seas and examines vessel compliance to the several Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs), including the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO), and the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT). The inspection of fishing vessels during the albacore season is a critical opportunity to ensure regional compliance, validate catch reported at sea and offloaded in port, check vessel licencing and marking requirements, examine protected species bycatch mitigations, and examine crew working conditions.

Joint Coordination Centres (JCC, operational headquarters) were hosted between Australia and New Zealand throughout May to July 2023. This year, Fiji participated in the operation, providing one liaison officer to the JCC. The operation involved multiple Pacific Quad surveillance aircraft and surface patrol assets, analysis and planning support to the JCC, and the coordination of national compliance staff for in port inspections.

## Outcomes of the Operation

As a result of Operation Nasse 2023, the following was achieved:

- 20 WCPFC authorised fishing vessels were subject to High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI).
- Five WCPFC authorised fishing vessels were further radio interrogated (and not boarded).
- 90 fishing vessels were observed by surveillance aircraft (totalling 120 observations) and,
- 108 WCPFC authorised vessels were inspected in Port by participant Fishery Officers.
- In total, 28 potential breaches to WCPFC CMMs were identified and raised with flag state fisheries authorities.

The following breaches to WCPFC CMMs were identified from aerial surveillance and HSBI:

- **WCPFC CMM 2013-05 (Catch and Effort Records).** Misreporting of catch is considered to be a serious breach of WCPFC CMMs. During HSBI, inspectors raised concern of potential under reporting of catch by three vessels targeting albacore (2) and yellowfin tuna (1).
- **WCPFC CMM 2018-03 (Seabird Mitigations).** Non-compliance with seabird mitigations requirements have historically been the most common issue identified during Operation Nasse. During 2023, issues were identified with vessels using tori lines which were too short; did not include enough streamers (including long streamers); or were not secured at a height compliant with the measure. Inspectors noted many of these issues are arising due to the construction of tori lines from low quality materials and crew failure to maintain tori lines to WCPFC specifications. Issues were also raised with flag States

regarding WCPFC authorised vessels not complying with line weighting requirements and night setting procedures. It is important to note that seabird activity is known to increase around the periods of dawn and dusk, and there is ongoing concern that vessels fishing below 30° South which record using night setting as a seabird mitigation method, are continuing to set after nautical dawn. It is possible that vessel masters may have a misconception of night setting requirements, believing that they are compliant by start before nautical dawn (but continue to set lines after this time).

- **WCPFC CMM 2004-03 (Markings) and 2009-09 (Flags).** Vessels continue to be observed in the Convention Area with markings and flags which do not comply with WCPFC requirements.
- **WCPFC Resolution 2018-01 (Labour Standards).** The inspection of crew labour and safety standards is still a non-binding measure however, allegations of crew mistreatment and poor working conditions was raised with flag States during the operation. One vessel with historical reporting of poor labour standards was boarded and inspected, and was found to have significantly improved onboard working conditions. This incident demonstrates the importance of continued compliance action and the need for increased and continued flag state control over vessels.
- **WCPFC CMM 2019-05 (Rays) and 2022-04 (Sharks).** One vessel inspected was found to be in breach of safe handling procedures for mobulid rays and sharks. Crew were reported to tear hooks from protected species instead of using the required de-hooker.
- **WCPFC CMM 2021-04 (Maritime Pollution).** Crew members were observed discarding plastic rubbish from the vessel during the inspection.
- **WCPFC CMM 2009-06 (Transshipping).** Enquiries were raised with flag States regarding procedures for reporting catch weights before and after transshipping at sea. Further enquiries are being made to ensure that differences in reported weights are not due to underreporting of catch.
- **WCPFC CMM 2014-02 (Vessel Monitoring System).** Enquiries were sent to flag States to ensure compliance with WCPFC Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements. Several vessels that were observed in the Convention Area were not reporting to WCPFC VMS. Flag States are to be reminded of their obligation to ensure all vessels operating in the WCPFC Convention Area are providing their vessels VMS reporting to the Commission in a timely manner.

New Zealand would like to thank regional partners, fishers, and flag States for their cooperation during Operation Nasse 2023.