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A UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (UVI) FOR TUNA FISHING VESSELS

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Paper prepared by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. The suggestion to keep records of fishing vessels was raised during the development of the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (FAO Compliance Agreement), and adopted by the FAO Conference in 1993. As issues related to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing began to attract increasing international attention, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and FAO convened the first meeting of a “Joint FAO/IMO *ad hoc* Working Group” in October 2000 that recognized the importance of the registration of fishing vessels. It endorsed the need to ensure flag State links to the registration of a fishing vessel with its authorization to fish, and urged closer collaboration between relevant agencies in national administrations. This *ad hoc* Working Group also agreed that consideration should be given to how the IMO numbering scheme might be applied to fishing vessels not currently subject to this requirement in order to enable vessels to be traced regardless of changes in registration or name over time.
2. The twentieth meeting of the Coordinating Working Party on Fisheries Statistics (CWP20) in 2003 agreed that, for the purpose of inter-agency exchanges of vessel records, a unique vessel identifier (UVI) should be assigned to each vessel, since current vessel identifiers (e.g. vessel name, flag State and registration number in the flag State, international radio call sign, etc.) are unstable. CWP20 recommended that the FAO draft a list of essential and desirable vessel identifiers for vessel registries (keeping them to a minimum) for the consideration of CWP agencies, and that FAO consult with those agencies regarding the use of UVIs in the FAO’s High Seas Vessel Authorization Record (HSVAR) database and CWP agency vessel registries. An essential part of the proposal was the inclusion of a unique HSVAR_ID (and its non-HSVAR_ID complement) identifier.
3. The 2005 Rome Declaration on IUU Fishing, adopted by the Ministers includes a call “to develop a comprehensive record of fishing vessels within FAO, including refrigerated transport vessels and supply vessels, that incorporates available information on beneficial ownership, subject to confidentiality requirements in accordance with national law”. Thereafter, the FAO Fisheries Department undertook a study to determine the feasibility and viability of developing such a comprehensive record, hereinafter referred to as the “Global Record”.
4. The twenty-seventh meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI 27), in 2005, received the FAO Study report which concluded a need to introduce a system through which any vessel could be clearly identified over time, irrespective of change of name, ownership or flag. In relation to the concept of a unique method to identify vessels over time, the FAO Study recognized the advantages that would accrue from the use of the Lloyds Registry-Fairplay (LR-F) Number (that forms the basis for the IMO number and is obligatory for certain classes of fishing vessels), which would include, inter-alia, that,

“...the identification number remains with the vessel irrespective of change of name or ownership and/or flag thus it provides a possibility to follow the history of a vessel”. Further, the study noted that the use of the LR-F/IMO number would allow ready comparison with other databases, such as LR-F, European Quality Shipping Information System (EQUASIS), RFMOs and such port State control records where the LR-F/IMO number is included in the criteria.

5. The IMO and LR-F have different policies relating the treatment of Chinese Taipei-flag vessels. The IMO must refer to Chinese Taipei as “Taiwan, China” and only refers to these vessels in matters relating to casualties involving “Taiwan, China” vessels, and port State control deficiencies found on board “Taiwan, China” vessels. LR-F, on the other hand, holds Chinese Taipei-flag vessels ($\geq 100\text{GT}$) on its database and allocates IMO Numbers to these vessels.

6. The first substantive meeting of the Ministerial-led Task Force on IUU Fishing on the High Seas that took place at Paris, France on 9 March 2005 agreed, inter-alia, to establish a global information system on high seas fishing vessels in the form of a publicly available international database of information relating to the global high seas fishing fleet. It was noted that this might form one of the core activities of the enhanced MCS Network and it was suggested that its Secretariat also consider the feasibility of building on the EQUASIS database.

Additional support for a UVI

7. There are numerous references to a UVI in the literature, most of them supportive, e.g.
- a) “Best Practices for the Collection of Longline Data to Facilitate Research and Analysis to Reduce By catch of Protected Species” - report of a workshop held at the International Fisheries Observer Conference, Sydney, Australia, November 8, 2004;
 - b) the report of the High Seas Task Force, “Closing the Net”; and
 - c) an address by U.S. Ambassador David Balton, “Remarks Before the House Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans, Washington, DC in April 2008” in which he states, “The United States continues to advocate for other measures to combat IUU fishing. Through FAO, we are pressing for the development of a global record of fishing vessels – including transport and support vessels – that would include unique vessel identifiers and comprehensive ownership information. At the RFMO level, we are seeking stronger MCS measures, including broader access to data from vessel monitoring systems, increased vessel observer programs, stronger documentation schemes, etc.”

Expert Consultation on the Development of a Comprehensive Global Record of Fishing Vessels

8. From 25-28 February 2008, the FAO staged an “Expert Consultation on the Development of a Comprehensive Global Record of Fishing Vessels” at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy. During that consultation, LR-F described the management of both the IMO Ship Numbering Scheme and the IMO Registered Owner and Company Numbering Scheme on behalf of the International Maritime Organization which, in LR-F practice, have been extended to include fishing activities related records. Both schemes provide a mechanism for sourcing comprehensive fishing vessel data from flag administrations. Currently, approximately 26,000 fishing vessels over 100GT and corresponding registered owners have LR-F numbers (within the unique number range of the IMO Ship Numbering Schemes).

9. With regard to vessels of less than 100GT, the Consultation was advised that this could not be accommodated with the LR-F numbering scheme which is basically limited to vessels over 100GT. For vessels of less than 100GT it was recommended that a unique number, allocated though FAO, be provided. Such a scheme would need to be developed avoiding duplication with other schemes and taking advantage of best practices identified from other vessel numbering regimes.

10. The Expert Consultation agreed that a system to provide a unique identifier which would not change even if the vessel changed flag, owner or name, was essential. This might be accomplished through a combination of LR-F for vessels 100GT and over, and those that might eventually be issued by FAO for vessels smaller than 100GT. Close cooperation between FAO and IMO on these issues was strongly encouraged.

Proposed strategy for introduction of a UVI

11. It is clear that the issue of a UVI has received wide-spread consideration in a range of international discussions and is considered an essentially element in global efforts to combat IUU fishing. It has also been discussed on numerous occasions in meetings of the t-RFMO secretariats, where it has broad support as an issue on which the RFMOs can collaborate.

12. While keen to integrate to any process established through the FAO, the t-RFMO Secretariats, in close consultation with FAO, the IMO and LR-F, have collaborated to identify minimal information requirements to enable the vessel records of t-RFMOs to be integrated with that maintained by LR-F and, except for Chinese Taipei-flag vessels, the IMO. In relation to the tuna-RFMOs this can commence immediately.

13. The information requirements to acquire a UVI are summarised at Attachment 1. This matrix was designed to assist each t-RFMO identify that information which the RFMO currently doesn't collect and which would support coordination with LR-F and the IMO to produce a UVI. In the case of the WCPFC, the following additional information would be required for each vessel on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels:

- Parent company registered owner
- Ship manager
- Flag State
- MMSI Number
- GT
- Net tonnage
- Dead weight
- Ship builder
- Nationality of shipbuilder
- Date entered onto flag State Register
- Date ship re-registered (by the previous flag State, if applicable)
- Parallel flag (if applicable)
- Commercial operator (if applicable, charterer)

14. The Technical and Compliance Committee is invited to discuss the issues associated with the acquisition of the additional information required to generate a UVI. It is noted that, on the basis of advice from both LR-F and the IMO, there are no costs associated with acquiring a UVI once this information is obtained.

15. If this concept is endorsed by TCC4 it will be considered by the Fifth Regular Session of the Commission (WCPFC5) when it meets in early December 2008. If approved by WCPFC5, it may take 12-24 months to acquire the additional information for the 2,300 vessels on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels greater than 100GRT – a small proportion of which already have LR-F numbers. It is proposed that, for vessels less than 100GRT, the WCPFC await the outcome of further discussions in

FAO before deciding on a course of action. It is anticipated that each t-RFMO will invite its members to consider this initiative.

Conclusion

16. The introduction of a UVI is widely regarded as a practical, positive step towards combating IUU fishing world-wide. The development of a UVI by the t-RFMOs for their collective use would facilitate the exchange of vessel information among the t-RFMOs in the short term, facilitate the implementation of a global vessel list among t-RFMOs and make a positive contribution to related efforts within the FAO towards this goal.

List of fields collected by IMO and LR-F and those currently collected by t-RFMOs

Information required	Required to provide an LRF No.	LR-F ¹	IMO ² For vessels >100GRT	WCPFC	IATTC	IOTC	CCSBT	ICCAT
IMO Unique Company (DOC) Number			X					
IMO Registered Owner Identification Number			X					
IMO Ship Identification Number			X			X ¹		
LR-F Number		X	IMO<Company/registered owner><7 digit LR-F number>					
Document of Compliance (DOC) Company		X	X					
Current Company name			X					
Date of company registration			X					
Country of registration			X					
Full address details for Company			X					
Previous company name (if known)			X					
Registered Owner	X	X	X	X	X	X	X ²	X
Parent company of registered owner (if known)	X		X					
Date of incorporation of company			X					
Ship Manager (if applicable)	X	X	X					
Technical Manager		X						
Operator		X			X	X	X ³	X
Bareboat/Demise Charterer		X	X					
Group Beneficial Owner		X						
Group Operated Fleet		X						
Flag State	X		X	X		X ⁴	X ⁴	

¹ If available

² It is not known if Owner details submitted by all flags are in accordance with the LR-F definition of the Registered Owner.

³ It is not known if Operator details submitted by all flags are in accordance with the LR-F definition of the Operator.

MMSI Number	X		X					
Flag State Identification Number (Official No.)	X		X	X				
Name of fishing vessel	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Registration number (Fishing No.)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Previous names (if known)	X	X		X	X	X	X ⁵	X
Port of registry	X		X	X	X			
Address of owner or owners	X	Company	X	X	X	X	X	X
Name and nationality of master				X				
Previous flag (if any)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
International Radio Call Sign	X		X	X	X	X	X ⁶	X
Vessel communication types and numbers (INMARSAT A, B and C numbers and satellite telephone number)		X		X				
Colour photograph of vessel		X		X	X			
Where and when built	X		X	X	X			
Type of vessel	X	X		X		X	X	X
Normal crew complement		X		X				
Type of fishing method or methods		LR-F ship type	X	X	X	X	X ⁷	X
Length	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Moulded depth	X	X		X	X			
Beam	X	X		X	X			
Gross register tonnage (if applicable)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
GT (if applicable)	X							
Power of main engine or engines	X	X		X	X			
The nature of the authorization to fish granted by the flag State				X	X	X		
Carrying capacity, including freezer type,		X		X	X	X ⁸		Carriers

⁴ This information is not requested but becomes available by virtue of a flag State submitting vessel information to add to the authorized list

⁵ This information is often recorded as “Unknown”.

⁶ This is absent for 11% of vessels over 100 tonnes and 35% of vessels under 100 tonnes.

⁷ This is recorded as “Unclassified” for 11% of vessels over 100 tonnes and 22% of vessels under 100 tonnes.

capacity and number and fish hold capacity.								only
Net tonnage	X		X					
Dead weight	X		X					
Shipbuilder	X		X					
Nationality of shipbuilder	X		X					
Parallel-in ships true ownership registration details			X					
Parallel-out ships true owner details			X					
Ship status code			X					
Date ship entered register	X		X					
Date ship de-registered (if applicable)	X		X					
Fishing authorization period							X	X

1. See Attachment A

2. Associated with the a). IMO Unique Company Number Scheme, b). the IMO Registered Owner Identification Number Scheme and, c). IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme

⁸ Information on carrying capacity is sought only in relation to carrier (transport) vessels

2. Lloyd's Register – Fairplay: Owner / Manager Definitions

LRF identify the following roles in respect to a vessel's Ownership/Management. It should be noted that the same company may perform more than one role on a ship.

1. **Document of Compliance (DOC) Company** - the owner of the ship or any other organisation or person such as the manager or bareboat charterer who has assumed the responsibility for the technical operation of the ship from the owner of the ship and who on assuming such responsibility has agreed to take over all the duties and responsibilities imposed by the ISM Code.

A documented company on both DOC and SMC Certificates issued by flag Administrations; but the information for which is also available from the Responsible Organisations, such as Classification Societies, who may undertake the audits.

In most cases the DOC Company will be responsible for the Technical Management of the ship

2. **Registered Owner** - The legal title of ownership of the vessel that appears on the ship's registration documents. It may be an Owner/Manager or a wholly-owned subsidiary in a larger shipping group; or a bank or one-ship company vehicle set up by the bank; or of course, it may be a "brass-plate" company created on paper to legally own a ship and possibly to limit liability for the "real" owners and/or benefit from off-shore tax laws. It may anyway be a legal-requirement of the flag-state with whom the ship is registered for the legal owner to be a company registered in that country.
3. **Shipmanager** - The company designated by the ship owner or charterer to be responsible for the day to day running of the ship and the best contact for the ship regarding commercial matters. This company may be an owner related company, or a third-party manager, whose purpose is primarily the management of ships for their ship-owning clients. This company may also be responsible for major purchases for the fleet, such as classification, insurance, surveys etc.

N.B. Many ships today are owned by banks or finance/leasing companies who have no operational involvement whatever. In practice the lessee companies, referred to as 'Disponent Owners' or one of their subsidiary companies, may appear as the Manager of the ship.

4. **Technical Manager** - The company designated by the ship owner or operator or ship manager to be specifically responsible for the technical operation and technical superintendancy of a ship. This company may also be responsible for purchases regarding the fleet, such as repairs, spares, re-engining, surveys, dry-docking, etc.

In the majority of cases the DOC Company will also be responsible for the Technical Management of the ship.

5. **Operator** - The company responsible for the commercial decisions concerning the employment of a ship and therefore who decides how and where that asset is employed. The direct beneficiary of the profits from the operations of the ship, this company may also be responsible for purchasing decisions on bunkers and port services. A medium to

long-term time or bareboat charterer is considered to be the operator of the ship. Companies heading operator pools (e.g. Cool Carriers or Gearbulk) are Operators of the ships in the pool.

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6. **Bareboat/Demise Charterer** – The company identified on the charter-party who charters the ship on a bareboat or demise charter. In this the charterer assumes control over all operations, costs and responsibilities associated with the vessel for an agreed period of time. The charterer becomes or appoints the shipmanager and may also have the right to sub-charter the vessel.

It is increasingly common for ships to be in parallel registry during the period of a bareboat charter. In this case, the ship is transferred by the bareboat charterer to a new operational flag, while the ownership of the ship (Registered Owner) continues under the original Registry. None of the legal or financial responsibilities of the Registered Owner are transferred to the bareboat charterer during the period of charter.

N.B. In Demise Charter agreements, if negotiated at the beginning of charter agreement, the charterer may have the option to purchase the vessel at the end of the charter period. In **Time Charter Party** agreements, the charterer may only assume responsibility for operations, routing and cargo, while technical, crewing etc. remain with the owner.

7. **Group Beneficial Owner** – This is the parent company of the Registered Owner, or the Disponent Owner if the ship is owned by a bank. It is the controlling interest behind its fleet and the ultimate beneficiary from the ownership. A Group Beneficial Owner may or may not directly own ships itself as a Registered Owner. It may be the Manager of its fleet, which is in turn owned by subsidiary companies. Its ships may also be managed by a 3rd party under contract.
8. **Group Operated Fleet** – For companies identified as Group Beneficial Owners, LRF can identify the total operational fleet. This Group Operated Fleet includes all the ships in the fleet operated by the group, including both their owned vessels and chartered in ships.