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ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION
PART 1: INFORMATION OF FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

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Submitted by Panama

REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

AQUATIC RESOURCES AUTHORITY OF PANAMA

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE WESTERN & CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION (WCPFC)

2025

PART I

INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

Submission: July 5, 2026

1. Abstract/Summary

The Republic of Panama, located in Central America, exercises sovereign rights and jurisdiction over its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in accordance with international law. As a flag State with an international fishing fleet operating in various ocean regions, Panama maintains a legal and institutional framework aimed at ensuring compliance with national legislation and the conservation and management measures adopted by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs).

Panama reaffirms its commitment to fulfilling its reporting, monitoring, participation, communication, and cooperation obligations within the framework of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Through its competent authorities, the country continues to strengthen its fisheries governance system and implement measures aimed at ensuring the sustainable use of marine resources and the effective oversight of fishing vessels and fishing support vessels flying its flag.

The national fisheries management framework is governed by Fisheries and Aquaculture Law No. 204 of 18 March 2021, which regulates fishing, aquaculture, and related activities. This legislation promotes sustainable fishing practices and establishes measures for the conservation, management, and long-term sustainability of marine resources.

Since 1997, Panama has required all fishing vessels and fishing support vessels authorized to operate on the high seas under its flag to hold a valid fishing licence. In addition, Panama has implemented a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) as a key monitoring, control, and surveillance tool. Initially established through Executive Decree No. 17 of 30 June 2008 and subsequently strengthened through Executive Decree No. 13 of 1 November 2023, the VMS requirement applies to all vessels applying for or maintaining fishing or fishing support licences for international operations. Position reports are continuously transmitted to and monitored by Panama's Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC).

As part of its efforts to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, Panama has adopted various legal and policy instruments, including the National Maritime Strategy and the National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing, approved through Executive Decree No. 98-A of 17 November 2009. Panama also ratified the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) through Law No. 43 of 14 September 2016. Furthermore, Executive Decree No. 130 of 14 April 2020 established the Interagency Commission for the Prevention, Deterrence and Elimination of IUU Fishing, with the purpose of coordinating national actions in this area.

As a Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) of the WCPFC, Panama continues to implement the applicable conservation and management measures, submit required reports, maintain monitoring and compliance mechanisms, and actively participate in the work of the Commission. Panama also maintains oversight of fishing vessels and fishing support vessels authorized to operate in the Convention Area under its flag, in accordance with the measures adopted by the Commission and applicable national legislation.

Panama's Participation in Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Other International Instruments

Panama actively participates in various Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), reflecting its commitment to international cooperation, the conservation of marine resources, and the sustainable management of fisheries.

As a Contracting Member

1. Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC): Panama became a Contracting Party through Law No. 24 of 1954 and ratified the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) through Law No. 75 of 1998.
2. International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT): Panama acceded through Law No. 74 of 1998.
3. South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO): Panama became a Contracting Member on 7 July 2022 following the adoption of Law No. 265 of 2021.

As a Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CNCP)

During the reporting period, Panama participated as a Cooperating Non-Contracting Party in the following organizations:

- North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC).
- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

As a Cooperating Non-Member (CNM)

- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Other International Instruments

Panama adopted the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) through Law No. 1 of 2013 and participates as an Acceding State to the Convention.

Panama remains committed to fulfilling its obligations arising from international fisheries instruments and the regional organizations in which it participates, including the timely submission of reports, implementation of conservation and management measures, active participation in meetings, cooperation in compliance matters, and payment of financial contributions within the established deadlines.

ANNUAL FISHERIES INFORMATION

2. Tabular Annual Fisheries Information

In accordance with the participation rights of the Republic of Panama in the Convention Area of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the activities authorized during 2025 were primarily related to fishing support operations. These included the operation of carrier vessels and bunker vessels authorized to provide logistical support services to fishing operations, in accordance with national legislation and the conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission.

3. Background

The Republic of Panama participates in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) as a Cooperating Non-Member (CNM).

During 2025, a total of 110 Panamanian-flagged vessels were authorized to operate in the WCPFC Convention Area, including fishing support vessels authorized to carry out activities related to fishing operations. Of these, 80 vessels recorded operational activity during the reporting period.

All Panamanian-flagged vessels authorized to operate in the WCPFC Convention Area are subject to the applicable national legislation and are required to hold the corresponding licences and authorizations. Their operations are conducted in strict compliance with the conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission, as well as with the obligations arising from Panama's effective exercise of its responsibilities as a flag State.

4. Flag State Reporting

During 2025, Panama authorized the operation of a fleet composed of fishing support vessels within the WCPFC Convention Area, consistent with the participation rights granted to the country under the Commission.

This fleet consisted primarily of carrier vessels and bunker vessels whose activities were limited to providing logistical support services to fishing operations, including the transshipment of fish products and the supply of fuel. None of these vessels engaged in direct fishing activities during the reporting period.

Number of active fishing vessels in WCPFC Area.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
No. of registered Vessels	96	90	124	84	167	163	173	166	144	131	110
No. of Active Vessels (Fished)	28	74	59	58	87	84	92	90	83	79	80

5. Coastal State Reporting

Not applicable. The Republic of Panama is not a coastal State within the WCPFC Convention Area.

6. Socio-economic factors

Panama continues to play an important role in the international trade of fishery products, including import, export, and re-export activities. The fisheries sector generates significant economic benefits and employment opportunities through the Panamanian-flagged fishing fleet, vessel crews, processing facilities, logistics operations, and related services.

During the reporting period, the fisheries sector continued to contribute significantly to national exports and economic development. Fisheries and aquaculture production, together with processing and marketing activities, remain important components of Panama's maritime economy.

Investments made by the private sector, together with national policies aimed at sustainability and competitiveness, have improved access for Panamanian fishery products to specialized international markets, strengthening their market position and added value.

In this context, the Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (ARAP) remains committed to the implementation and enforcement of Fisheries and Aquaculture Law No. 204 of 18 March 2021 and other applicable regulations, promoting the responsible and sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture activities.

7. Disposal of Catch

Not applicable. During the reporting period, Panama did not have fishing vessels authorized to conduct harvesting activities within the WCPFC Convention Area.

8. Onshore Developments

Not applicable. Panama is not a coastal State within the WCPFC Convention Area and does not operate fish processing facilities or other fisheries support infrastructure within the Convention Area.

9. Future Prospect of the Fishery

Panama will continue strengthening the implementation of its responsibilities as a flag State and its active participation as a Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) of the WCPFC. Panama will also continue to maintain effective monitoring, control and surveillance mechanisms for vessels authorized under its flag to operate within the Convention Area, in accordance with applicable national legislation and the conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission.

Panama remains committed to strengthening its cooperation with the WCPFC and ensuring effective compliance with applicable conservation and management measures through the implementation of national monitoring, control and surveillance mechanisms.

In order to maintain its participation rights within the Commission, Panama timely submitted its application for renewal of its Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) status, reaffirming its commitment to the objectives of the Convention and to the sustainable management and conservation of fisheries resources in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

10. Status of the Tuna Fishery data collection systems

Refrigerated carrier vessels and bunker vessels authorized to conduct transshipment and fuel supply operations within the WCPFC Convention Area are required to maintain onboard operational records documenting the activities carried out during their operations.

Panamanian-flagged vessels authorized to operate within the WCPFC Convention Area and in ports under the jurisdiction of Members or Cooperating Non-Members (CNMs) of the Commission must obtain prior authorization from the flag State before conducting transshipment, landing, or fuel supply operations.

As part of this authorization process, vessel operators are required to submit to Panama's Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC) an application accompanied by all relevant documentation and information related to the proposed operation. This includes, as applicable, details of the vessels involved, relevant authorizations, information concerning the catches subject to transshipment or landing, and any other documentation required under national legislation and applicable conservation and management measures.

The FMC reviews and verifies the information submitted to ensure that the proposed operation complies with applicable national legislation, the conservation and management measures adopted by the WCPFC, and other relevant international obligations. Upon satisfactory completion of the documentary review, the corresponding authorization is issued for the operation to proceed. Where inconsistencies, incomplete information, or potential non-compliance issues are identified, authorization may be denied or made conditional upon the correction of the identified deficiencies prior to the commencement of the activity.

Carrier vessels are required to comply with the requirements of the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP), ensuring the presence of a regional observer during all transshipment operations conducted on the high seas within the Convention Area.

In addition, in accordance with applicable national regulations, Panamanian-flagged vessels conducting transshipment of fishery products within the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of third States or in ports where WCPFC regional observer coverage is not required must carry an observer from Panama's National Observer Programme.

Authorized vessels are required to submit operational information using the formats prescribed by the Commission and applicable national regulations, including prior transshipment notifications, flag State authorizations, post-transshipment declarations, landing information, and, where applicable, fuel supply reports.

All information is submitted through the official communication channels to both the WCPFC and the competent national authority. The data collected contribute to the monitoring of authorized operations, compliance with conservation and management measures, and the strengthening of databases used for the sustainable management of fisheries resources.

11. Research Activities Covering Target and non-Target species

Panama collects and reports statistical information related to the transshipment, landing, transportation, and supply of fishery products regulated by the WCPFC within the Convention Area, including operations conducted in ports, exclusive economic zones, and the high seas, in accordance with applicable national and international measures.

The Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (ARAP) is responsible for verifying and consolidating information related to the harvesting, transshipment, transportation, landing, export, and import of fishery products, including available biological and statistical information on regulated species, in support of fisheries management and the sustainable development of the fisheries sector.

During the reporting period, Panama did not conduct scientific research activities targeting or covering target and non-target species within the WCPFC Convention Area.

CMM 2009-03 [Swordfish], Para 8

Not applicable (N/A)

OBSERVER COVERAGE [WCPFC 11 decision – para 484(b)]

Panama informs the Commission that, in accordance with the applicable conservation and management measures governing transshipment operations, all authorized and active Panamanian-flagged carrier vessels operating within the WCPFC Convention Area were subject to 100 percent observer coverage during 2025.

This coverage was achieved through the deployment of observers under the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP) during all high seas transshipment operations conducted by authorized carrier vessels.

CMM 2009-06 [Transshipment], Para 11 (ANNEX II)

Annex II (a): Total quantities, by weight, of highly migratory fish stocks that were transshipped by carrier vessels:

a) offloaded and received;	b) transshipped in port, transshipped at sea in areas of national jurisdiction, and transshipped beyond areas of national jurisdiction	c) transshipped inside the Convention Area and transshipped outside the Convention Area;	d) caught inside the Convention Area and caught outside the Convention Area;	e) Species	f) Product Form	g) Fishing gear
offloaded	1,387,953.00	1,604,891.00		ALB		
	28,731,729.00	7,134,820.00		BET		
	128,742,070.00	4,989,536.00		YFT		
	83,930.00	701,095.00		SWO		
	459,076,850.00	165,610.00		SKJ		
	17,931.00	115,123.00		MLS		
	0.00	106,622.00		BUM		
	1,482,602.00	204,198.00		OTH		
received	373,808.00	987,470.00		ALB		
	23,805,283.00	5,967,094.00		BET		
	131,573,982.00	4,249,730.00		YFT		
	30,540.00	506,560.00		SWO		
	480,523,515.00	109,011.00		SKJ		
	2,951.00	44,546.00		MLS		
	16,593.00	88,238.00		BUM		
	648,084.00	193,897.00		OTH		

Annex II (b): Number of transshipment involving highly migratory fish stocks covered by this measure by carrier vessels ... broken down by

a) offloaded and received	b) transshipped in port, transshipped at sea in areas of national jurisdiction, and transshipped beyond areas of national jurisdiction	c) transshipped inside the Convention Area and transshipped outside the Convention Area	d) caught inside the Convention Area and caught outside the Convention Area	e) fishing gear
offloaded	199	14		
received	961	146		

CMM 2011-03 [Impact of PS fishing on cetaceans], Para 5

N/A

CMM 2011-04 [Oceanic whitetip sharks], Para 3

N/A

CMM 2012-04 [Whale sharks], Para 06

N/A

CMM 2013-08 [Silky sharks], Para 3

N/A

CMM 2015-02 [South Pacific Albacore] Para 4

N/A

CMM 2018-03 [Seabirds] Para 13

N/A

CMM 2019-03 [North Pacific Albacore], Para 3

N/A

CMM 2019-04 [Sharks], Para 4

N/A

**CMM 2019-04 CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE FOR SHARKS
Annex 2**

The Republic of Panama, as a Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) of the WCPFC, maintained participation rights during the reporting period primarily related to fishing support vessels, including carrier vessels and bunker vessels, without the participation of fishing vessels engaged in harvesting activities within the Convention Area.

Nevertheless, Panama has adopted and implemented national measures for the conservation and management of sharks and rays, as well as specific provisions aimed at preventing the practice of shark finning.

Through Resolution ADM/ARAP No. 052 of 5 October 2021, Panama adopted the conservation and management measures in force within the WCPFC, including CMM 2019-04 on Sharks. Furthermore, Article 3 of this Resolution establishes that any future measure adopted by the Commission that amends, replaces, or updates existing measures shall be automatically incorporated into the national regulatory framework.

In addition, through Resolution ADM/ARAP No. 014 of 7 May 2018, Panama adopted the National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays (NPOA-Sharks and Rays 2017), with the objective of ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable use of these species. The Plan applies to directed and incidental shark fisheries, as well as the incidental catch of rays, and is aligned with the principles and objectives of the FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks).

The NPOA-Sharks and Rays recognizes the biological vulnerability of these species and establishes a strategic framework based on the following objectives:

1. To promote knowledge generation, scientific research, and monitoring of shark and ray populations, involving technical institutions, academia, non-governmental organizations, and the productive sector.
2. To strengthen regulatory and management capacity to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of these species and their critical habitats.
3. To implement monitoring, control, and surveillance programmes to ensure compliance with applicable regulations.
4. To promote awareness and dissemination of conservation and sustainable use initiatives through inter-institutional and multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms.
5. To secure the financial and institutional resources necessary for the effective implementation of the actions and projects contemplated under the Plan.

In accordance with paragraph 8 of CMM 2019-04, Panama adopted Law No. 9 of 16 March 2006, which prohibits the practice of shark finning in waters under national jurisdiction. This legislation expressly prohibits the removal of shark fins and the discarding of shark carcasses at sea, promotes the full utilization of sharks legally caught, and contributes to the conservation of shark populations.