



**TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE  
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**UNITED STATES PROPOSAL: WCPFC IMPLEMENTATION OF A UNIQUE VESSEL  
IDENTIFIER (UVI)**

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**WCPFC-TCC9-2013-DP03**

**24 August 2013**

**WCPFC Implementation of a Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI)**  
**Proposal by the United States of America**  
**to the Ninth Regular Session of the Technical and Compliance Committee**

**August 23, 2013**

**Explanatory Note**

Unique vessel identifiers (UVI) are useful to quickly and accurately identify vessels and trace and verify their activity over time, irrespective of change of name, ownership, or flag. For that reason, there is a wide recognition that UVIs can be useful in helping combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing (e.g., see <http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/166301/en>).

The International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Ship Identification Number Scheme involves the use of UVIs that are widely used in the merchant shipping sector. IMO numbers are required for passenger and cargo vessels larger than a certain size, but fishing vessels are exempt. Fishing vessels may apply for IMO numbers, but the administering agency will not, without an explicit agreement, issue them to smaller vessels (vessels < 100 gross tons (GT) or gross registered tons (GRT)) or non-steel-hulled vessels, even if applied for. Thus, if all vessels under the purview of the WCPFC are to be assigned UVIs, further action is necessary by the WCPFC and/or through other international initiatives. The deliberations of the WCPFC on the issue of UVIs to date, along with progress in related international initiatives, are summarized below.

**Global Initiatives**

**FAO and the Global Record**

The Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record) is an FAO initiative to improve transparency and traceability in the fisheries sector by providing a reliable identification tool for vessels through their lifespan (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/18051/en>). The FAO has identified an essential element of the Global Record to be the assignment of UVIs to every vessel on the Record. Participation in the FAO Global Record is voluntary.

The twenty-ninth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) agreed that the FAO would take responsibility for managing the Global Record and that the Global Record would eventually include all fishing vessels of sizes greater than or equal to 10 GT, 10 GRT, or 12 m length overall (LOA) regardless of where the vessels operate. The FAO intends to implement this initiative using a three-phase approach, starting with vessels at least 24 m, 100 GT, or 100 GRT in size. It has been agreed that the IMO numbering scheme will be used for the Global Record for vessels at least 100 GT in size.

## **International Maritime Organization**

There is broad recognition that perhaps the most effective approach to expanding the use of UVIs into the fishery sector is to build on the well established IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme (<http://www.imo.org/ourwork/safety/implementation/pages/imo-identification-number-scheme.aspx>), operated by IHS-Fairplay. Under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), UVIs, in the form of IMO numbers, are required for all merchant vessels in excess of 300 GT and all passenger vessels 100 GT and larger, but vessels solely engaged in fishing are exempt from the requirement.

In addition to the mandatory requirements under SOLAS, there is a non-binding instrument, IMO Resolution A.600(15), that calls for the application of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme to vessels at least 100 GT in size. However, it also exempts fishing vessels. In June 2013, a subsidiary body of the IMO endorsed a proposal to remove the exemption for fishing vessels. The proposal will be sent to the IMO Assembly in November 2013 for approval. If approved, the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme would apply on a non-binding basis to fishing vessels greater than or equal to 100 GT.

Despite the exemptions for fishing vessels under the SOLAS requirements and the non-binding IMO resolution, IHS-Fairplay has issued IMO numbers to a large number of fishing vessels (about 23,500; see <http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/18021/en>).<sup>1</sup> In some of these cases the number is issued upon application by the vessel owner, and in others it is issued automatically by IHS-Fairplay in response to vessel data it has received from flag States.

## **Tuna RFMOs and the Consolidated List of Authorized Vessels**

The tuna RFMOs (t-RFMO), through the Kobe process, have endorsed the need to create a harmonized global record of tuna vessels, including UVIs, and for this to be coordinated with the Global Record. The list, known as the CLAV, would facilitate the exchange of vessel information and support broader monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) efforts, such as port State measures, catch documentation, transshipment verification, and vessel monitoring systems. In 2009, the five t-RFMO secretariats, in collaboration with the IMO, IHS-Fairplay, and the FAO, identified for each t-RFMO the specific pieces of information that would have to be collected for vessels (smaller than 100 GT) in order to be able to generate and assign UVIs through the process administered by IHS-Fairplay. However, it is not clear whether IHS-Fairplay is able to assign UVIs to all fishing vessels operating under the purview of the t-RFMOs, even if provided with all the identified pieces of information.

## **WCPFC Progress**

The WCPFC has considered implementing a UVI scheme for several years. At TCC6 CCMs expressed concern about the difficulty that many CCMs had with respect to providing all the information required under CMM 2009-01 (Record of Fishing Vessels (RFV)) and noted that a UVI would require additional information to be provided. Some CCMs indicated that improving the maintenance and utility of the RFV should precede work on a UVI. By TCC7, several CCMs,

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<sup>1</sup> For vessels not covered by the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, the numbers are actually “Lloyd’s Register” numbers, or LR numbers, but they are part of the same unique numbering scheme.

including FFA members, voiced their support for expanding the WCPFC RFV data requirements toward those that would be needed to assign UVIs. The FFA members noted that the FFA Vessel Register had been revised to be compatible with a UVI scheme. At WCPFC9, suggestions were made that: (1) the RFV should include the IMO numbers of vessels that have them, and (2) the Commission could take an immediate step of requiring that all vessels that are eligible for IMO numbers (i.e., steel-hulled vessels  $\geq 100$  GT) obtain them.

The following table identifies the number of vessels on the RFV, by size, as of April 2013.

Size of Vessel	Number of Vessels
$\geq 100$ GRT	2,671
50 – 99 GRT	1,364
10 – 49 GRT	1,831

### **Proposed Commission Decisions**

For the purpose of improving the Commission’s MCS programs, the Commission agrees that it should establish a scheme in which all vessels on the Record of Fishing Vessels have globally unique vessel identifiers (UVIs). Further work is needed to determine how to accomplish this for small vessels. For large vessels, the existing IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme can be taken advantage of immediately. To do so, the Commission takes the following decisions:

1. Effective 1 January 2015, flag CCMs shall ensure that all their fishing vessels that are required to be on the Record of Fishing Vessels and that are steel-hulled and at least 100 GT or 100 GRT in size have IMO or LR numbers issued to them.
2. In assessing compliance with the preceding paragraph, the Commission shall take into account extraordinary circumstances in which a vessel owner is not able to obtain an IMO or LR number despite following the appropriate procedures. Flag CCMs shall report any such extraordinary situations in Part 2 of their annual reports.
3. Paragraph 6 of CMM 2009-01 is revised by removing the original submission deadline, which has passed, and adding a new sub-paragraph (s), with footnote, as follows:
  - (s) International Maritime Organization (IMO) number or Lloyd’s Register (LR) number, if issued.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Effective 1 January 2015, flag CCMs shall ensure that all their fishing vessels that are required to be on the Record of Fishing Vessels and that are steel-hulled and at least 100 GT or 100 GRT in size have IMO or LR numbers issued to them.
4. The Commission will continue to explore how to ensure that all vessels on the Record of Fishing Vessels have UVIs.