

## **Belize's Report of Internal Action Review In accordance with Res. C-11-05 Para. 5**

**16<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

Belize had only one long line fishing vessel which operated during 2020, This vessel commenced operations in late September 2019 within the IATTC Convention region.


The Registration of fishing vessels is carried out by the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE) in accordance with the Registration of Merchant Ships Act 2010. The management of fishing vessels to ensure compliance with conservation and management measures and other MCS measures is carried out by the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) under the Ministry of Finance in accordance with our High Seas Fisheries Act 2013 and its subsidiary regulations. Matters of policy regarding fishing vessels are determined jointly by both institutions.

### **Currently;**

1. Belize's domestic fishing fleet operates within the jurisdictional waters of Belize only and is managed by the Belize Fisheries Department. The commercial fleet which operates on the high seas is managed by the BHSFU. Pursuant to our HSFA, 2013, it is not mandatory for owners of the high seas fleet to be citizens of Belize for registration purposes. However, for the purpose of ensuring that control or punitive actions can be effectively taken against appropriate entities, an applicant for fishing license must provide beneficial ownership information on the owners of the vessel as well as a legal representative located in Belize in accordance with our national regulations.
2. The Registration and Licensing of vessels to operate in the IATTC area is granted only after the BHSFU has established that the vessel has no previous IUU history or is affiliated with IUU vessel owners and have met the requirements for the obtainment of a fishing license, which inter alia, includes the installation of a mobile transceiver unit (MTU) in accordance with standard RFMO specifications and national regulations.
3. Vessels are required to always maintain a functional MTU, failure of which results in the imposition of disciplinary measures or the denial of a fishing authorization or withdrawal thereto.
4. At the time of licensing, vessel owners/operators/ charterers/master are provided with all relevant conservation and management measures applicable to the IATTC area of competence. These are normally issued through legally binding circulars or form part of the conditions of their license authorization.

5. Vessels are required to report their catches on a monthly basis on the required forms. Catch data can also be uploaded to the vessel's electronic catch reporting system where data is received at the FMC in real time. Maintaining a manual fishing logbook on board at all times is also a mandatory requirement for all our vessels.
6. It is a mandatory requirement that all vessels keep on board valid original or copies of their registration documents and fishing authorizations in hard copies and/or electronic copies. Pre-arranged inspections are carried out to ensure compliance with these measures, inter alia.
7. Pursuant to the HSFA 2013, sanctions are administered in accordance with our Sanctions Regulations.
8. All our vessels authorized to operate in the IATTC or changes thereto are reported to the Secretariat.

**Actions that have been taken or are being taken as a result of our internal review;**

1. Since the adoption of our revised HSFA in 2013, no additional changes have been made to our legislation. However, as part of our strategic objective, the review and amendment of all our legislation shall take place every five years from the date of their adoption.
  2. Our VMS requirements and standards are in line with relevant RFMO measures. Apart from the minimum standards required, our VMS has been updated to ensure 24 hours reporting, geo fencing for RFMO areas, restricted fishing areas or areas of interest, designated port areas, fisheries closure zones as well as EEZ zones. New features have been added for position data to be sorted by statistical area for Catch/effort data to be matched with VMS history, estimates of fishing (compared to vessel movement i.e. speed, course variations), Port to port trip recording, effort management system, fish stock traceability and catch certification and most importantly a new platform has been created for an electronic catch reporting system. In addition, we are also in the process of further developing our VMS compliance and measures in line with new and more advanced technologies. Belize has recently signed an MOU with Global Fishing Watch establishing a framework for cooperation and collaboration for sharing of vessel monitoring system (VMS) and auto identification system (AIS) data. Through this new agreement we will be able to increase our vessel monitoring transparency efforts to better detect and prevent IUU fishing by utilizing additional platforms for vessel monitoring.
  3. The implementation of our e-log system allows for the ease of transmission of daily catch and effort reports. The new system, includes, among others, trip reports, daily catch activity report, area entry/exit reports, transshipment reports, unloading reports etc.
  4. Our NPOA IUU for the high seas fleet was adopted on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014. This document outlines Belize's NPOA-IUU for its distant water fisheries. It is intended to support the effective implementation of the FAO's International Plan
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of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU. Belize's NPOA-IUU focuses on the general measures indicated in FAO-IPOA and reflects only those measures that are applicable to the High Seas fleet. This document focuses on the long- and short-term measures that Belize has and will adopt to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing by its High Seas fleet. Additionally, this document will be reviewed bi-annually or may be updated intercessional as may be appropriate.

5. We have contracted the services of Capricorn Fisheries Monitoring Company (CAPFISH) to utilize their services for the deployment of observers to our vessels. It is also our intention to utilize CAPFISH for the provision of training in the future to our nationally appointed observers. This agreement with CAPFISH was signed on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Our first observer deployment on our IATTC fleet was conducted on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015, and there was a total of two official deployments done in 2015, one in 2016, one in 2017 and none in 2018, 2019 and 2020. We have developed a national observer policy, which now provides the framework for our National Observer Program.
6. In accordance with our MSC Regulations, Belize flagged fishing vessels are no longer authorized to carry out transshipment at sea. All transshipment operations must now be conducted at a port, under a Regional Observer Program or as authorized by the Director.
7. We have developed a fleet policy in respect to our fleet capacity which will allow for the improved management and control of our fleet.
8. In accordance with our MCS Regulations, Belize has developed a Belize High Seas Inspection Plan on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, for the inspection of Belize flagged vessels and their products. The focus of the Plan is to ensure compliance with national and international obligations. Inspections shall be conducted by Belize appointed inspectors or by appropriately qualified organizations in accordance with agreements between Belize and other parties or States.
9. Belize adopted its National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks for its high seas fishery on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015. This plan is in the context of the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing and its general objectives for sustainable fishing and follows the guidelines of the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks). We are currently collaborating with the Belize Fisheries Department for the adoption of a consolidated NPOA-Sharks which will include both domestic and high seas fisheries.
10. Belize has adopted its National Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in its Long-Line High Seas Fisheries on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016. This plan is developed in accordance with the provisions of the International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds), as developed by United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The objective of this plan is to implement full mitigation



measures to reduce incidental catch of seabirds by our high seas fishing fleet. Our aim is to promptly adopt any new mitigation measures that have been introduced by regional fisheries management organizations.

11. In 2016, through legally binding circular, Belize also implemented measures to mitigate the impact of fishing for all fish stocks on sea turtles and have issued revised sea turtle handling guidelines
12. Through legally binding circulars we have implemented all relevant Resolutions adopted by IATTC as it pertains to the operations of our fleet in the EPO.

