

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION  
**PERMANENT WORKING GROUP ON COMPLIANCE**

**10<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA (USA)  
5 JUNE 2009

**DOCUMENT COM-10-05**

**A UNIQUE VESSEL IDENTIFIER (UVI) FOR TUNA FISHING VESSELS AND  
HARMONIZATION OF T-RFMO VESSEL LISTS**

Jointly prepared by the five Secretariats

The attached document was prepared by the Secretariats of the five tuna regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) as part of the implementation of the Course of Actions agreed at the joint meeting of these RFMOs at Kobe (Japan) in January 2007. It will be presented at the second meeting of the tuna RFMOs, to be held in San Sebastian (Spain), June 29-July 3, 2009.

## A UNIQUE VESSEL IDENTIFIER (UVI) FOR TUNA FISHING VESSELS AND HARMONIZATION OF t-RFMO VESSEL LISTS

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### Kobe Course of Actions

1. The Kobe Course of Actions (KCoAs) included, *inter alia*, technical work associated with the:

*“creation of a harmonized list of tuna fishing vessels that is as comprehensive as possible (positive list) including use of a permanent unique identifier for each vessel such as an IMO number. The positive list should include support vessels”.*

2. This paper reports on action by the t-RFMO Secretariats since Kobe1 to progress this task.

### Background

3. 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.
4. In October 2000 the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and FAO convened the first meeting of a “Joint FAO/IMO *ad hoc* Working Group” that recognized the importance of the registration of fishing vessels as a means to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. 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 suggested that consideration be given to how the IMO numbering scheme might be applied to fishing vessels in order to enable vessels to be traced regardless of changes in registration or name over time.
5. 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 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.
6. The first substantive meeting of the Ministerial-led Task Force on IUU Fishing on the High Seas that took place at Paris, France, 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*<sup>1</sup> database.

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<sup>1</sup> An international Conference concerned with the quality of shipping, which involved ship-owners, cargo owners, insurers, brokers, classification societies, agents, ports and terminals, in Lisbon in June 1998, called for information on the ownership and operation of the international shipping fleet more accessible. Subsequently, in 2001, the European Commission and the maritime administration of France, Singapore, Spain, the United Kingdom, the US Coast Guard and Japan initiated the EQUASIS project. Since, maritime authorities from Australia, France, Japan, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), representing the European Commission have affiliated with EQUASIS by Memorandum of Understanding. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the US Coast Guard currently have observer status. EQUASIS is a non-profit making organization and the budget is agreed and provided by the MoU members ([www.equasis.org](http://www.equasis.org)).

7. The 2005 Rome Declaration on IUU Fishing, subsequently adopted by 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”. As a result, the FAO Fisheries Department undertook a Feasibility Study to examine the viability of developing such a comprehensive record - which has since been referred to as the “Global Record”.
8. The twenty seventh FAO Committee on Fisheries, in 2007, received the Feasibility Study report which concluded that there is 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 Feasibility Study recognized the advantages that would accrue from the use of the Lloyds Registry-Fairplay (LR-F) Number (LR 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/IMO Number would allow ready comparison with other databases, such as the European Quality Shipping Information System (*EQUASIS*), RFMOs and such port State control records where the LR/IMO Number is included in the criteria.
9. From February 25-28, 2008, the FAO convened an “Expert Consultation on the Development of a Comprehensive Global Record of Fishing Vessels” at 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 IMO which, in LR-F practice, have been extended to include fishing activity-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 Numbers (within the unique number range of the IMO Ship Numbering Schemes).
10. With regard to the global fleet of fishing vessels of less than 100GT, the Consultation was advised that this could not be accommodated with the LR Number scheme<sup>2</sup>. The Expert Consultation recognized the requirement for a unique vessel and company identifier and recommended their further development taking full account of existing numbering schemes such as those employed by IMO, EC, LR-F, etc. for harmonization purposes. FAO’s support for this process is likely to be in the form of advising standards or formats for UVIs, not assigning the numbers directly.
11. COFI28, 2-6 March 2009, in considering the outcomes of the Expert Consultation, proposed a future programme of work for FAO which included an assessment of user needs, including the needs of developing countries, the establishment of a broad based Steering Committee, the design and implementation of a pilot project and preparing a comprehensive technical report which could lead to a Technical Consultation on the Global Record. It was noted that the tuna RFMO Secretariats were also progressing similar issues for the vessels authorised to fish within each tuna RFMO convention area. FAO was encouraged to work with those organisations as it implements its programme of work - particularly in relation to pilot activities.

#### **Technical work undertaken by the t-RFMO Secretariats since Kobel**

12. Since January 2007, the t-RFMO Secretariats have reviewed the information currently collected for individual vessels for their respective vessel records. This has been reconciled against information required by LR-F to generate a UVI. The information requirements to generate a UVI, and the information currently collected for fishing vessels by each t-RFMO, are summarised at **Attachment 1**. This matrix identifies that information which each t-RFMO currently doesn’t collect but which is required by LR-F to generate a UVI.

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<sup>2</sup> LR-F have since advised that, on the basis that tuna RFMO vessel records will contain a limited number of vessels less than 100 GRT (approximately 14,500 vessels: CCSBT (1,218); ICCAT (1,693); IATTC (3,004); IOTC (2,508) and WCPFC (6,077)) LR-F is able to accommodate the entire vessel records for the t-RFMOs - provided all the details required to generate a UVI for those vessels are provided.

### **Proposed process for implementation**

13. Assuming the t-RFMOs elect to proceed with implementation of UVI, as implied in the KCoAs, the following process would support a means to generate a UVI and produce a current global record of fishing vessels<sup>3</sup>:
- t-RFMOs adopt a decision within their respective organisations to amend the existing requirements regarding individual vessel data required for their respective vessel records.
  - t-RFMO flag State members, cooperating non-members and participating territories provide the additional information (**Attachment 1**) to their respective Secretariats.
  - t-RFMO Secretariats relay individual vessel data to LR-F.
  - LR-F integrates data to existing LR-F databases and generates a UVI.
  - LR-F runs a fleet extract for each t-RFMO.
  - Negotiate with the EQUASIS Supervisory Committee for LR-F to provide a consolidated vessel list to EQUASIS for posting on [www.equasis.org](http://www.equasis.org), for vessel look-up in the free public domain including the UVI – thus serving as a global vessel record for tuna RFMOs.
  - t-RFMOs make the resulting data available to their members in an electronic format.
  - t-RFMOs may also display the information in the public domain on their websites (in a non-downloadable format or in a downloadable format but without the UVI).
  - t-RFMOs use the UVI to regularly merge their vessel lists for display in the tuna-org web site (in a non-downloadable format).
14. LR-F has confirmed that, as an arrangement that provides mutual benefits for both LR-F and the t-RFMOs, this arrangement would incur no financial commitments or obligations. In addition, LR-F has agreed to include vessels <100 GRT on the t-RFMO records in the system – provided all the requisite information for each vessel is provided.

### **Conclusion**

15. As recognised at Kobe1, the consolidation of fishing vessel lists from the five tuna RFMOs, and the introduction of a UVI, is regarded as a practical, positive step towards combating IUU fishing world-wide. The development of a UVI by the t-RFMOs will facilitate the exchange of vessel information among the t-RFMOs, support broader MCS efforts within and between each t-RFMOs (in respect of catch documentation, transshipment verification, port State measures, VMS operations, etc.) and make a positive contribution to related efforts within the FAO towards this goal.

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<sup>3</sup> Some t-RFMOs currently collect significantly less information for carriers and supply vessels than is collected for fishing vessels. In addition LR-F sources data independently on fish carriers and supply vessels as these already come under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

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

<i>Information required</i>	<i>IMO<sup>A</sup></i> <i>For vessels &gt;100GRT</i>	<i>LR-F<sup>B</sup></i>	<i>Required to provide</i> <i>an LR No.</i>	<i>WCPFC</i>	<i>IATTC</i>	<i>IOTC</i>	<i>CCSBT</i>	<i>ICCAT</i>
IMO Unique Company (DOC) No.	X							
IMO Registered Owner Identification No.	X							
IMO Ship Identification Number	X				X	X <sup>4</sup>		
LR Number (when known)	IMO<Company/registered owner><7 digit LR-F No.>	X						
Document of Compliance (DOC) Company	X	X						
Current Company name	X				X			
Date of company registration	X							
Country of registration	X							
Full address details for Company	X							
Previous company name (if known)	X				X			
Registered Owner	X	X	X	X	X	X	X <sup>5</sup>	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	X <sup>6</sup>	X
Bareboat/Demise Charterer	X	X	X					
Group Beneficial Owner		X						
Group Operated Fleet		X						
Flag State	X		X	X	X	X <sup>7</sup>	X <sup>5</sup>	X
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 <sup>8</sup>	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 <sup>9</sup>	X

<sup>4</sup> If available.

<sup>5</sup> It is not known if Owner details submitted by all flags are in accordance with the LR-F definition of the Registered Owner.

<sup>6</sup> It is not known if Operator details submitted by all flags are in accordance with the LR-F definition of the Operator.

<sup>7</sup> This information is not requested but becomes available by virtue of a flag State submitting vessel information to add to the authorized list.

<sup>8</sup> This information is often recorded as "Unknown".

Vessel communication types and numbers (INMARSAT A, B and C numbers and satellite telephone No.)		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	X
Normal crew complement		X		X	X			
Type of fishing method or methods	X	LR-F ship type		X	X	X	X <sup>10</sup>	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		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, capacity and number and fish hold capacity.		X		X	X	X <sup>11</sup>	X <sup>10</sup>	Carriers only
Net tonnage	X		X		X			
Dead weight	X		X					
Shipbuilder	X		X		X			
Nationality of shipbuilder	X		X					
Parallel-in ships true ownership registration details	X		X					
Parallel-out ships true owner details	X		X					
Ship status code	X							
Date ship entered register	X		X		X			
Date ship de-registered (if applicable)	X		X		X			
Fishing authorization period							X	X

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

B. See Attachment A.

<sup>9</sup> This is absent for 11% of vessels over 100 t and 34% of vessels under 100 t.

<sup>10</sup> This is recorded as "Unclassified" for 9% of vessels over 100 t and 23% of vessels under 100 t.

<sup>11</sup> Information on carrying capacity is sought only in relation to carrier (transport) vessels.

**Lloyd's Register – Fairplay: Owner / Manager Definitions**

LR-F 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 organization 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 Organizations, 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.

**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' may appear as the Operator of the ship.

- 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.
9. **Mobile Maritime Station Identifier (MMSI)** is a 9 digit number used to identify vessels in VHF radio communications. The first three digits denote the country of registry. When a flag change is effected this number will also change. Administered by the ITU; issued by the Flag Administration