

# FISHERIES

**Fisheries need to be sustainable to conserve the world's stock of fish and to protect the marine**

**environment, and so secure the livelihood of millions of responsible fishers.**

## IS REGULATION WEAK OR STRONG?

Sustainable fishing is undermined because too many of the world's fishing vessels sail with very weak regulations over their fishing – or conditions for fishers. Even where vessels are properly flagged, enforcement of regulations is often weak, especially for workers of third world countries. This situation is aggravated on the vessels registered under Flags of Convenience (FOC).

The result is that we see exploited fishers, polluted waters and fish stocks plundered, as fishing fleets travel the seas unchallenged by effective regulation.

## WHY ARE WORKING CONDITIONS OFTEN BAD IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY?

The fishing industry has some of the worst examples of workplace abuse.

The dominance of FOC vessels means that many fishing crews are exposed to physical abuse and callous treatment by employers and lack the protection of the most basic contract of employment. Crew have been cheated out of wages, worked for months on end without pay or abandoned in foreign ports if they complain. In the most extreme cases, crew members have been used as forced labour and locked in their quarters or in chains. Such abuses have even resulted in the death of fishers.

Without the security of a monthly income and poor working conditions, fishers are under an extreme vulnerable situation where their incomes depend mostly on unclear systems of catch shares.



## WHAT IS THE ITF DOING?

The ITF is seeking to secure decent working and living conditions in fisheries through:

- Backing ratification and implementation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Work in Fishing Convention (C-188), this was adopted in June 2007. This landmark Convention sets out a basic framework of obligations on employers – and legislative requirements on governments – to raise standards and to establish minimum decent working and living conditions.
- A model collective bargaining agreement and policy on non-domiciled fishers.
- Campaigning to end the Flag of Convenience system and establish a ‘genuine link’ between the vessel owner/company and the flag.
- Training ITF inspectors and dock workers on the inspection of fishing vessels.
- The creation of a coordinated ITF inspector team to protect fishers against the violation of their human and labour rights.

## WHAT IS IUU FISHING?

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a serious threat to the health of the world’s fisheries and oceans, and the secure and safe employment of fishers. Many unscrupulous owners benefit from the anonymity provided by Flags of Convenience. Across all oceans, IUU fishing accounts for 20% of the value of the global catch – amounting to between \$4 billion and \$9 billion per year. And approximately 15% of the world’s large-scale fishing fleet are either FOCs or the flag identity is unknown.

## ITF IS FIGHTING IUU FISHING AS THESE SHIPS:

- Evade high seas fisheries conservation and management regulations – with adverse effects on fish stocks and a sustainable fishing industry;
- Are often dangerously substandard;
- Are known to violate human and labour rights for crews.

The ITF Flags of Convenience campaign aims to end illegal fishing and protect the seas and all seafarers.



## WHY ARE FOC FISHING VESSELS A PROBLEM?

The fishing industry is dangerous enough, but the FOC system makes things worse. FOC fishing vessels are too often ageing and badly maintained. They can lack essential life-saving equipment. There have been extreme cases where crew have drowned because they have been locked in cabins. Unregulated and illegal vessels have higher maritime casualties and greater risks of oil pollution.

## WHAT IS THE ITF DOING ABOUT FOCs?

The ITF is seeking to improve safety in fisheries through campaigning for:

- An end to the FOC system.
  - Proper international regulation of the fishing industry and implementation of port state control on working and living conditions of fishers.
  - Ratification and implementation of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C-188) to protect health and safety and the rights of all workers in fisheries.
  - Safety coverage for small decked and undecked fishing vessels through new safety recommendations from FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)/ILO/IMO (International Maritime Organisation). This follows on from the campaign to adopt the FAO/ILO/IMO Code of Safety for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels, 2005 and the Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels, 2005.
- Ratification and full implementation of the IMO International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) on qualifications of fishers and IMO Torremolinos Protocol for the Safety of Fishing vessels of 24 metres in length and above.

If you would like more information, please email [fishsupport@itf.org.uk](mailto:fishsupport@itf.org.uk).

**If any of the issues identified are affecting your well-being you have the right to contact your trade union, an ITF Inspector or the ITF Seafarers Support team for assistance. Don't wait until it's too late.**

