

The ten principles for global transparency



Transparency in the fishing industry is the best weapon we have against the twin tragedies of illegal fishing and human rights abuse in the sector. EJF has collated ten simple principles for states to follow.



1 Give all vessels a unique number

Like cars number plates, but these would stay with vessels from shipyard to scrapyards, regardless of name or flag changes, and should be kept in a global record of fishing vessels.



2 Make vessel tracking data public

This will mean neighbouring countries, non-governmental organisations and others can all help with surveillance.



3 Publish lists of fishing licences and authorisations

Who's allowed to fish where? Combined with vessel tracking data this means anyone can monitor and raise the alarm about illegal fishing.



4 Publish punishments handed out for fisheries crimes

The arrests and sanctions imposed for illegal fishing or human rights abuse on fishing vessels should be public, so offenders can be identified.



5 Ban transferring fish between boats at sea – unless carefully monitored

This practice enables unscrupulous companies to keep workers at sea, unpaid, for months or years. It also makes the source of the fish, once landed, very difficult to trace.



6 Set up a digital database of vessel information

Storing information on fishing vessel registration, licenses, catch and crew is vital, and could eventually enable catches to be certified as fished legally and ethically.



7 Stop the use of flags of convenience for fishing vessels

Some countries let any vessel fly their flags for a fee – but then don't properly monitor them, which allows the owners of illegally fishing vessels to remain unaccountable.



8 Publish details of the true owners of each vessel – who takes home the profit?

False front companies are often used so that the true beneficiaries of illegal fishing are safe from prosecution.



9 Punish anyone involved in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

Countries must ensure that none of their citizens support, engage in or profit from illegal fishing, no matter where they are, or which flag they are flying.



10 Adopt international measures that set clear standards for fishing vessels and the trade in fisheries products

These include the Port State Measures Agreement, the Work in Fishing Convention and the Cape Town Agreement.