

National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) Seminar  
on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing  
Message by Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan  
Mr. YAMADA Kenji

I am YAMADA Kenji, Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. I am honored to have this opportunity to deliver a message today. I would like to extend my appreciation to both the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) for hosting this important event as well as to all the speakers.

The theme of today's seminar is IUU fishing countermeasures in the Indo-Pacific region. IUU fishing is a global issue targeted by the SDGs. As a responsible fishing country, Japan has led discussions on the issue in the international community. Furthermore, IUU fishing is an issue of diplomatic significance that I am personally deeply concerned by.

Today, through my speech, I would like to address the issue of IUU fishing, an important diplomatic item for the agenda of the international community as well as Japan.

IUU fishing refers to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing which violates domestic and international laws and rules. Examples include poaching, under-reporting, stateless fishing vessels and fishing by unauthorized vessels in waters of regional fisheries management organizations.

IUU fishing is not only a threat to sustainable fisheries but also a multifaceted problem related to a variety of issues including maritime security, forced labor and transnational organized crime.

Recently, poaching and illegal fishing by foreign fishing vessels has become increasingly serious in many parts of the world, bringing negative impacts to the sound and steady development of local economies and fishing industries. IUU fishing could undermine the foundations of people's lives and growth for developing countries, especially those whose national economies are heavily dependent on fishing industries.

Leaders from African coastal countries with whom I have met have told me that IUU fishing is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Discussing with them made me realize that this is truly a global issue.

In today's seminar, the expert from the FAO will explain the Agreement on Port State Measures which is important in the fight against IUU fishing. Experts from Malaysia and Australia will also introduce issues in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region, as well as their efforts to address them.

Now, I would like to briefly introduce Japan's efforts to address IUU fishing.

Japan is a major fishing country surrounded by sea on all sides. As a responsible fishing country, Japan has been cooperating with the international community on various initiatives.

First, Japan has been making efforts to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures in waters adjacent to the Japanese EEZ, including proactively conducting enforcement activities on the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean.

Japan has also been advocating the importance of IUU fishing countermeasures and leading discussions at various meetings at international fora, including the G7, G20, and APEC. This year, Japan will lead the discussions as the chair of the G7.

When it comes to bilateral assistance, we have been utilizing ODA to provide seamless support.

For example, we have provided equipment such as patrol vessels to countries in Southeast Asia, the Pacific region and Africa for maritime security including IUU fishing countermeasures.

We have furthermore been working to improve the maritime monitoring and enforcement capacities of developing countries by providing capacity-building assistance, including training programs.

For example, Japan has been dispatching the Japan Coast Guard's Mobile Corporation Team to countries in Southeast Asia and other regions to improve the capacities of foreign coast guard agencies.

The Mobile Corporation Team has been sharing Japan's knowledge and expertise by providing training regarding arresting techniques and on-site inspections for coast guard officials in these countries.

As for multilateral cooperation, we continue to lead discussions on resource management based on scientific evidence at RFMOs and contribute to rulemaking and their compliance, as well as make lists of fishing vessels that have engaged in IUU fishing.

For instance, Japan has been providing RFMOs with detailed information on IUU vessels in the North Pacific Ocean, such as their names, external appearances and their fishing activities.

In this way, Japan has been contributing to IUU fishing deterrence by providing capacity-building assistance, sharing information on IUU vessels with other countries, and cooperating with the international community.

Japan is also a signatory to the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent Illegal Fishing led by the FAO.

This agreement obliges its parties to deny port entry or other kinds of assistance to fishing vessels involved in IUU fishing or to conduct on-site inspections of them.

Japan holds this agreement in high regard as a powerful tool for IUU fishing countermeasures. The expert from the FAO will explain this agreement with more details later on.

Currently, 73 countries and one organization including Japan are signatories to the agreement, but there are still countries and regions that have not yet joined.

We are concerned that ports in these countries and regions may become loopholes in IUU fishing countermeasures.

Therefore, Japan believes that the expansion of its membership needs to be encouraged with a united international front. Japan, as the chair of the G7, is also willing to lead the international community in this regard.

In 2022, the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies was adopted at the WTO.

This Agreement includes a prohibition on government subsidies contributing to IUU fishing. We place high importance on this Agreement as it contributes to IUU fishing countermeasures and sustainable fisheries, which are also targeted in SDG 14.

Japan, ahead of other donor Members, has contributed approximately 760,000 Swiss Francs to a trust fund to support fisheries resource management in developing member states through the WTO.

Japan aims for the early conclusion of the Agreement and is committed to calling on the international community for the same.

Many challenges still exist in ending IUU fishing as it is difficult to monitor. Japan will not overlook the issue as our livelihood and food culture are based on marine resources and the ocean.

Japan is convinced that, in order to enhance deterrence against IUU fishing, countries and international organizations need to cooperate and make every possible effort.

Before concluding my speech, I once again thank the speakers and everyone at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) for hosting this seminar. I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my hope that through the explanations of the experts and fruitful discussions at this seminar, participants' understanding of the issue of IUU fishing will be deepened and international countermeasures will be further promoted. Thank you very much.