

From pledges to action: Why the IUU Action Alliance Members must prioritise the FAO Global Record

Summary

The Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Action Alliance (IUU-AA), founded at the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) by Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US), is an important alliance between flag, coastal, market, and port States with the aim of leading global dialogues on action against IUU fishing. One of their overarching priorities is improving transparency and data sharing, where Member countries (Members) specifically committed to fully utilise the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (the Global Record).

The Global Record is a centralised, publicly accessible repository that enhances vessel traceability and transparency, and supports stakeholders across the seafood supply chain in verifying vessel legitimacy. Uploading information regularly to the Global Record is a critical step that Members must take to meet their transparency and data sharing pledge. As such, the EU IUU Fishing Coalition—comprised of Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), Oceana, The Nature Conservancy, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and WWF—as supporters and partners of the IUU-AA, have analysed the IUU-AA Member usage of the Global Record.

Regrettably, most IUU-AA Members are failing to make consistent use of this resource. According to the Global Record Dashboard at the time of publication, two of the three founding Members of the IUU-AA (Canada and the UK) had

not uploaded Global Record data since before the founding of the IUU-AA.¹ Furthermore, only 4 of the 31 States with active fishing fleets (including individual EU Member States with fishing fleets only) uploaded data in the most recent quarter: Iceland, Norway, Republic of Korea, and the US.

Of the 31 IUU-AA individual States, only 11 uploaded information on nearly all of their active fishing vessels. Just 6 had uploaded more than half of this vessel data with authorisation information.

As the third UNOC approaches, we urge IUU-AA Members to start cementing their place as leaders in international efforts to end IUU fishing by taking immediate action to uphold their commitments under the IUU-AA pledge and fully utilise the Global Record.

To prioritise action and improve fisheries transparency we call upon the IUU-AA to:

1. Conduct a review of data submission processes for the Global Record to then provide targeted support for Members in overcoming barriers to regular data uploads.
2. Ensure completeness and accuracy of the data submitted to the six main information modules within the Global Record, including beneficial ownership information.
3. Establish and uphold regular data uploads every quarter, as recommended by the FAO.
4. Set specific, measurable, and time bound goals on Member performance on uploads to the Global Record.
5. Establish a monitoring mechanism within the IUU-AA to track Member contributions to be published annually.

Context

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (the Global Record) is designed to enhance transparency and traceability in fisheries, helping to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.² It serves as a central and publicly accessible database where States can upload details of their registered fishing and fishing-related vessels and port information to six categories: vessels, authorisations, ports, port denials, historical details, and inspections and surveillance information.³ The mandatory information for uploading a vessel to the Global Record includes: unique vessel identifier, current flag, length overall, vessel name, and gross tonnage or gross registered tonnage.

The Global Record allows flag States to review the history of a vessel before issuing a flag and gives non-state interested parties, including insurance providers, supply chain actors, researchers, NGOs, and others, the capacity to delve into vessels that may be under scrutiny. As a critical tool for implementing the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures⁴ (PSMA)—the first and only binding international agreement specifically targeting IUU fishing—and the FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (Compliance Agreement),⁵ the Global Record also supports efforts to end IUU fishing globally.⁶ The record is central to two of the principles within the Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency, which is a guiding framework for governments to implement fisheries transparency.⁷

As States already collect the required information for the Global Record in national registries and are required to share similar information with regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), contributing to this record should be a simple yet impactful way of supporting the implementation of the PSMA and the

Compliance Agreement, as well as aiding the global fight against IUU fishing.

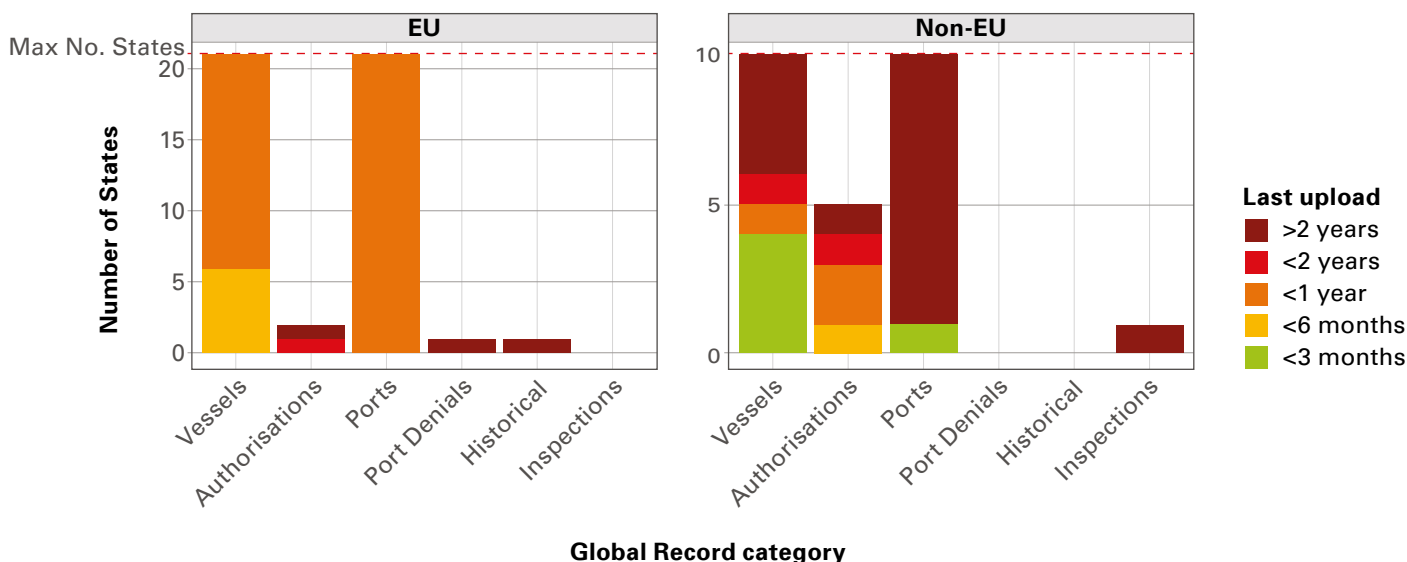
Formed at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) the IUU Fishing Action Alliance (IUU-AA) pledged to prioritise greater fisheries transparency as one of their three overarching goals. As the next UNOC is approaching, the EU IUU Fishing Coalition has evaluated whether IUU-AA Member countries (Members)⁸ are acting on their transparency commitments by effectively using the Global Record. We report IUU-AA Member usage until 7 May 2025, when this analysis was conducted.

A missed opportunity? The IUU-AA's use of the Global Record

The IUU-AA Pledge explicitly references the importance of the Global Record.⁹ Its seventh commitment calls on Members to “Fully utilising the FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels and the Global Information Exchange System as flagship fisheries transparency initiatives.” Additionally, the fourth commitment states the IUU-AA will implement the PSMA. The Global Record is therefore a key tool for IUU-AA Members to use to fulfil their commitments. **Unfortunately, this is not reflected in how Members engage with the Global Record.**

Out of the six Global Record data categories—vessels, authorisations, ports, port denials, historical details, and inspections and surveillance information—most IUU-AA Members had uploaded some vessel and port data. **However, for many of the IUU-AA Members, this information is out of date.** Of the Members to upload information, four had not done this for over two years, or in some cases much longer (see table below), this includes two of the three founding Members, Canada and the UK.

The number of IUU-AA Members to upload data to the six Global Record categories



Breakdown of IUU-AA Member usage of the Global Record

IUU-AA Member	Categories uploaded (maximum of 6)	Most recent upload to any category
Canada (founding member)	2	May 2021
UK (founding member)	2	July 2020
US (founding member)	2	March 2025
France (and on behalf of its overseas territories)	3	November 2024
Belgium	2	November 2024
Bulgaria	2	November 2024
Croatia	2	November 2024
Cyprus	2	November 2024
Denmark	2	November 2024
Estonia	2	November 2024
Finland	2	November 2024
Germany	2	November 2024
Greece	2	November 2024
Ireland	2	November 2024
Italy	2	November 2024
Latvia	2	November 2024
Lithuania	2	November 2024
Malta	2	November 2024
Netherlands	2	November 2024
Poland	2	November 2024
Portugal	2	November 2024
Romania	2	November 2024
Spain	5	November 2024
Sweden	2	November 2024
Chile	2	December 2022
Panama	4	May 2024
New Zealand	3	February 2024
Norway	2	March 2025
Iceland	3	March 2025
Republic of Korea	3	March 2025
Ghana	3	April 2020

Colour key

■	>2 years
■	<2 years
■	<1 year
■	<6 months
■	<3 months

The information in this table was collected on the 7th of May 2025. As a result, the most recent upload (e.g. in November 2024) splits some EU Member States between different categories (< 6 months and < 1 year) depending on when in November their last upload was.

Some IUU-AA Members uploaded nearly all their registered vessels, including New Zealand, Panama, the US, and 8 EU Member States.¹⁰ Although small discrepancies in numbers were likely to indicate potential mismatches in the timings of data uploads,¹¹ we estimate that **many IUU-AA Member are not uploading even half of the eligible vessels (i.e. those with an IMO number) they have registered under their flag as active on SeaWeb to the Global Record.**¹² These countries include Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Italy, and the Republic of Korea.

It is important to note that only 7 of the total 31 IUU-AA countries with fishing vessel fleets had uploaded any authorisation information to the Global Record. Of these, 5 Members had uploaded more than half of the relevant authorisations. These countries are Ghana, Iceland, Panama, the Republic of Korea, and Spain. **It is crucial that authorisations are updated regularly.** The Republic of Korea was the only country to upload authorisations in 2025. Conversely, France, and New Zealand uploaded authorisation data for less than two fifths of their flagged vessels on the Global Record, where France, for example, only uploaded authorisation details for 3 of their 543 vessels on the Global Record.

From pledges to action: Recommendations

A well-populated, accurate, and up-to-date Global Record stands to become a vital tool in the fight against IUU fishing. It provides a free-to-access, centralised database of vessel information and fishing authorisations, both current and historic, that can be used to support the implementation of international agreements such as the PSMA and Compliance Agreement, and by stakeholders across the industry. **The IUU-AA has the potential to be a promising alliance between important flag, coastal, market, and port States that could take substantive action in the fight against IUU fishing. We, the EU IUU Fishing Coalition, fully support this initiative but urge its Members to deliver their pledges.** By enacting their commitments and beginning to regularly upload comprehensive information to the Global Record, the IUU-AA Members will cement their place as leaders in international efforts to end IUU fishing.

We call upon Members of the IUU-AA to:

- 1. Conduct a review of data submission processes for the Global Record to then provide targeted support for Members in overcoming barriers to regular data uploads.** The IUU-AA can establish capacity building and support for States that are struggling to meet these data entry requirements or collect this information at the national level. The IUU-AA could look to involve the FAO in this process to help troubleshoot any issues and ensure that each Member can comply with this commitment.
- 2. Ensure completeness and accuracy of the data submitted to the six main information modules within the Global Record, including beneficial ownership information.** To ensure the Global Record functions as an effective tool for transparency, IUU-AA Members must meet a baseline standard of data submission. This includes uploading the mandatory information—unique vessel identifier, current flag, length overall, vessel name, and gross tonnage or gross registered tonnage—of all active fishing vessels. We also recommend including beneficial ownership data as this allows understanding of who is profiting from IUU fishing.
- 3. Establish and uphold regular data uploads every quarter, as recommended by the FAO.** Regular updates are essential to maintaining the accuracy and integrity of the Global Record.
- 4. Set specific, measurable, and time bound goals on Member performance on uploads to the Global Record.** IUU-AA Members should consider the development of mechanisms that allow for automatic updates of information uploaded to the Global Record.
- 5. Establish a monitoring mechanism within the IUU-AA to track Member contributions to be published annually.** A structured reporting timeline could be established to help Members plan and track their updates, with technical support offered to those struggling with compliance. Encouraging peer accountability and publicly tracking update frequencies could further reinforce commitment to this initiative.



The Environmental Justice Foundation, Oceana, The Nature Conservancy, The Pew Charitable Trusts and WWF are working together to promote EU leadership in improving global fisheries transparency and governance to end illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

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For more news, updates and documents supporting the EU to end IUU fishing, visit: www.iuuwatch.eu or contact: info@iuuwatch.eu



Endnotes

- ¹ In March 2025, the UK government answered a parliamentary question where it was stated the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) had updated the UK fishing vessel data on the Global Record on the 24 March 2025. The Global Record Dashboard has not reflected this reported change and prior to this the UK had not updated vessel information since 2020. Parliamentary question available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-20/40050>.
- ² FAO. Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/global-record/tool/extended-search/en/>. Accessed 06.02.25.
- ³ States can also upload information on IUU listing information for individual vessels. This used to feature on the Global Record dashboard with the other six categories, but it is no longer present. Available at: <https://globalrecord.fao.org/>. Accessed 07.05.25
- ⁴ FAO. (2016). Agreement on port state measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/port-state-measures/resources/detail/en/c/1111616/>. Accessed 04.03.25.
- ⁵ FAO. (1993). Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (Compliance Agreement). Rome. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/iuu-fishing/international-framework/fao-compliance-agreement/en/>. Accessed on 14.03.25.
- ⁶ EU IUU Fishing Coalition (2022) The FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels: A tool for the EU to champion fisheries transparency globally. Available at: <https://www.iuuwatch.eu/resources/>.
- ⁷ The Coalition for Fisheries Transparency (2024) A Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency. A framework for collaboration, justice, and sustainability. <https://fisheriestransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-Charter-Report-EN.pdf>. Accessed 04.03.25.
- ⁸ IUU-AA pledge Member countries include: Canada, Chile, European Union, France on behalf of its overseas territories, Ghana, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States. IUU-AA pledge supporters include: Environmental Justice Foundation, Global Fishing Watch, Global Tuna Alliance, Oceana, The International Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Network, The Pew Charitable Trusts, TM-Tracking, Seafood ethics Action Alliance, Skylight.
- ⁹ Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Action Alliance (2024) Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Action Alliance Pledge. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing-action-alliance-pledge/illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing-action-alliance-pledge>. Accessed 04.03.25.
- ¹⁰ We have given States a 10% discrepancy allowance, where if there is less than 10% difference between the Global Record and SeaWeb registered fishing vessels, they have been counted as uploading all their registered vessels. These States are Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Panama, Portugal, Spain, and the United States.
- ¹¹ Small discrepancies in the numbers of uploads on SeaWeb vs the Global Record may indicate recently commissioned or decommissioned vessels that are uploaded to SeaWeb more frequently than needed on the Global Record.
- ¹² S&P Global (2025). SeaWeb Ships. To establish an approximate number of eligible vessels that could be uploaded to the Global Record, we used SeaWeb, a comprehensive global maritime database, to give an estimate of the total active fishing vessels—including both fishing vessels and refrigerated container vessels—registered to a flag State. We compared this to the total number of fishing vessels registered on the Global Record. Find more information on SeaWeb at: <https://www.spglobal.com/market-intelligence/en/solutions/products/sea-web-vessel-search>.