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NOAA Will Work With Six Identified Nations to Address Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing

Six previously identified nations take corrective action

NOAA today submitted a report to Congress identifying six nations – Colombia, Ecuador, Italy, Panama, Portugal, and Venezuela – whose fishing vessels engaged in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in 2009 and/or 2010.

This opens the way for continued consultations between the U.S. government and each of the nations to encourage them to take action to stop IUU fishing by their vessels.

In this report, NOAA also announces that the six previously identified nations (China, France, Italy, Libya, Panama, and Tunisia) have addressed the instances of illegal fishing described by the United States in the 2009 report to Congress. These nations applied penalties to the vessels in question or adopted laws to strengthen control of their fishing fleets or both. Each has received a positive certification as a result of their actions.

The nations identified in today's report had fishing vessels that did not comply with measures agreed to under various international fishery management organizations, such as closed fishing seasons, vessel registry lists, and a ban on the use of driftnets. Other violations included illegal gear modifications, fishing without authorization, and possession of undersized bluefin tuna.

While Italy and Panama took corrective actions for illegal fishing identified in the 2009 report, other vessels from these countries still engaged in IUU fishing, which included illegal use of driftnets and fishing in an area when it was closed to purse seine nets.

If a nation fails to take appropriate action to address the instances of illegal fishing described in the report, that nation's vessels may be denied entry into U.S. ports and the President may prohibit imports of certain fish products from that nation or take other measures.

"We are encouraged that the nations identified in 2009 have taken significant actions to address illegal fishing by their vessels, and we are now reaching out to the six countries identified in today's report," said Russell Smith, NOAA deputy assistant secretary for international fisheries. "Illegal fishing must be stopped as it subjects our fishermen to unfair competition and undermines efforts to sustainably manage the valuable fish stocks around the world that so many communities depend on for food and jobs."

Annual global economic losses due to IUU fishing are estimated to be as high as \$23 billion.

Today's decisions follow two years in which NOAA's Fisheries Service, working with the U.S. Department of State, conducted extensive outreach at bilateral and multilateral meetings to inform fishing nations of potential U.S. actions to combat IUU fishing. NOAA is addressing the problem of IUU fishing through the international provisions of the U.S. Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act.

The act amends the High Seas Driftnet Moratorium Protection Act, which requires the United States to strengthen international fishery management organizations and address IUU fishing activities and the unintended catch, or bycatch, of protected living marine resources. Specifically, the Moratorium Protection Act requires the Secretary of Commerce to identify those foreign nations whose fishing vessels are engaged in IUU fishing, and what actions those nations have taken to end the practice.

Today's identifications of countries will be followed by consultations to urge these nations to adopt effective measures to combat IUU fishing. Following consultations, NOAA will formally certify whether each of the six nations have addressed the IUU fishing activities of their vessels.

The latest report to Congress also includes information on multilateral efforts to improve stewardship of international marine resources. To read the report, go to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/msa2007/intlprovisions.html>

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