



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Kingdom of Thailand

Press Releases: Thailand's Progress in Combating IUU Fishing

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On 15 January 2016, the Command Center for Combatting Illegal Fishing (CCCIF) held a press conference to provide latest updates on the government's efforts in combating IUU fishing. Several concrete results and progress have been highlighted in the following 5 areas, including restructuring of the legal framework, development of key systems, law enforcement, enhancing international cooperation, and assistance to victims of illegal fishing.

1. Restructuring of Legal framework

The Royal Ordinance on Fisheries B.E. 2558 (2015) has entered into force since 14 November 2015. The law has two main objectives; namely, elimination of illegal fishing and promotion of sustainable fishing industry. These goals can be achieved through five mechanisms including licensing system, vessel monitoring system, vessel inspection, traceability system and effective law enforcement. The law is being implemented by 28 port-in-port-out (PiPo) Centers and officers from the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Labour, Marine Department and Mobile Team units. To promote understanding about these major legal changes, a "fishermen's" legal handbook has been published.

2. Development of key systems

Two main systems have been set up. First, Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) system has been established at the CCCIF and the Department of Fisheries. This system will soon be integrated with all the local centers. Moreover, vessel monitoring systems (VMS) have also been installed in 2,076 out of 2,216 fishing vessels of 60 gross tonnage or more (93.7 percent). The installation of this particular system has led to more effective monitoring and detecting of vessels that engage in illegal fishing. Second, traceability system has also been launched which enable relevant officers and consumers to detect whether fishery products originate from illegal fishing. The components of this mechanism include: a) E-License system which will be operational by 30 March 2016, b) Real-time and online vessel registration system that has been operational since December 2015, c) training course for observers on board fishing vessels (the first batch has finished their training on 4 December 2015, and will be ready for deployment in January 2016), and d) capacity building programme such as training courses and operational manuals for officers involved.

3. Law enforcement

Law enforcement in fishing vessels and marine products processing plants have been implemented. With regard to fishing vessels, special task force units comprising several agencies have been set up to inspect vessels and enforce the law. To date, 474 fishing vessels of 60 gross tonnage or more operating in Thai waters (215 percent of the E.U.'s recommendations) and 73 of those operating outside Thai waters have been inspected. In total, 90 were found to violate the laws and are being prosecuted. In addition, a temporary ban on transshipment at sea has been

imposed for a period of 180 days starting from 25 December 2015. The ban is designed to eliminate the possibility of transshipment of IUU fish and illegal labour by Thai-flagged vessels operating in high seas and territorial waters of foreign states. In our effort to legalise foreign workforce, employers are urged to register their foreign workers in order to get work permits by February 2016. At the moment, over 35,000 have done so. Moreover, on 12 January 2016 the Cabinet has approved in principle two additional measures aiming to boost worker's rights. These are (1) a draft Ministerial Regulation on Prohibition on hiring of labor ages less than 18 years old B.E..... and (2) a Bill on Human Trafficking Case Procedure B.E.

4. International cooperation

Thailand realizes that the combat against illegal fishing requires close collaboration with international partners both governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. First, MoUs on fisheries and labour have been signed or in process of negotiation with 13 countries ranging from our immediate neighbours to pacific island nations as well as a European member state. For instance, Thailand has signed bilateral MoUs on labour importation with Cambodia and Vietnam, and another one on Agriculture and Fisheries with Fiji. Second, international organizations such as Green Peace, EJJ (Environmental Justice Foundation) and ILO (International Labor Organization) have also recognised Thailand's effort in tackling illegal fishing and have thus extended valuable and continued support in enhancing vessel monitoring system as well as in promoting labour standards.

5. Assistance for affected fishermen and fisheries workers

The Royal Thai Government is determined to help victims of human trafficking in the industry. For instance, 1,398 of Thai fishing seamen have returned to Thailand, among whom 54 are victims of trafficking. Zoning distinguishing commercial and artisanal fishing vessels will also be introduced, in consultation with all those involved. This will assist small scale local fishermen to stay in the business. Furthermore, 70 percent of 873 fishing vessels that have submitted their requests have been granted financial assistance, and the remaining ones are being expedited. All of these measures will ensure that legal, legitimate and sustainable fisheries will not be affected by our fight against the illegal fishing.

In conclusion, the Royal Thai Government is committed to work closely with all the relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and civil societies in order to combat illegal fishing and to foster a sense of collective responsibility on this issue on all parts. The result of the EU evaluation is beyond the Government's control. Nevertheless, whatever the outcome of the EU's decision shall be, Thailand reiterates its unwavering efforts to fight illegal fishing in order to protect and preserve the marine resources and promote sustainable fishing for our future generations

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