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Proposal to require the use of the IMO numbering scheme for NAFO vessels

Explanatory Memorandum:

Unique vessel identifiers (UVIs) are useful to quickly and accurately identify vessels and trace and verify their activity over time, irrespective of change of name, ownership, or flag. For that reason, there is a wide recognition that UVIs can be useful in helping combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing (e.g., see <http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/166301/en>).

There is broad recognition that perhaps the most effective approach to expanding the use of UVIs into the fishery sector is to build on the well-established IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme (<http://www.imo.org/ourwork/safety/implementation/pages/imo-identification-number-scheme.aspx>), operated by IHS-Maritime (IHS-M). Under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), UVIs, in the form of IMO numbers, are required for all merchant vessels 300 gross tons (GT) or above and all passenger vessels 100 GT and larger, but vessels solely engaged in fishing are exempt from the requirement, and until recently such vessels were excluded from the IMO numbering scheme altogether. However, in an effort to enable and encourage the use of IMO numbers as UVIs on fishing vessels, in December 2013 the IMO adopted Resolution A.1078(28) specifically to amend the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme to remove its exclusion of fishing vessels, making it available to fishing vessels at least 100 GT/GRT in size. IHS-M estimates they have issued numbers to more than 23,000 fishing and related vessels globally. Of the 195 NAFO authorized vessels for 2014, only 4 vessels were under 100GT/GRT.

Currently, NAFO does not require vessels to obtain IMO numbers, although the CEM mandates reporting vessels' IMO numbers, if available, under several vessel register forms. Requiring NAFO vessels to obtain an IMO number would enhance NAFO's strong counter-IUU management regime and support effective fisheries management.

Various other RFMOs, including CCAMLR, ICCAT, IATTC, SPRFMO and WCPFC, have recently adopted new or strengthened existing regulations to require that eligible vessels obtain an IMO number or a number in the seven-digit numbering sequence allocated by IHS (which have been referred to as Lloyds Register or LR numbers). Furthermore, IMO numbers for fishing vessels has been identified as essential element to the success of the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record), an FAO initiative to improve transparency in the fisheries sector. While participation in the FAO Global Record is voluntary, many NAFO members have noted the importance of such a tool in improving fisheries management globally. Requiring that all NAFO eligible fishing vessels obtain IMO numbers will assist in the effective implementation of the Global Record.

To that end, the United States and the European Union proposes the following, from January 1, 2016:

Amend Chapter II, Article 25.2 “Notification of Fishing Vessels” to read:

No fishing vessel shall conduct fishing activities in the Regulatory Area unless:

- a. It is listed as a notified vessel; and
- b. Eligible vessels have been issued an IMO number.

This would have consequential changes as follows:

- In Article 1 “Definitions”, add the following:
17. “IMO Number” means a 7-digit number, which is assigned by IHS-Maritime;
- In Chapter II, Article 25, paragraph 8, “Vessel Documents to be Carried on Board”, add a new sub-paragraph:
“c.bis. the IMO number”
- In Chapter II, Article 26, paragraph 7 amend sub-paragraph (a) to read:
“(a) the name, flag State registration, IMO number, and flag State of the vessel”
- In Annex I.E, amend chapter II to include a bullet point requiring reporting of the IMO number of the vessel
- In Annex II A, “Recording of Catch (Logbook Entries)”, under “Item of Information”, add a new sub-item:
“3.bis. IMO number”
- In Annex II.C “Vessel Notification and Authorization”, paragraph 1. “Format for register of vessels”, delete footnote 3 and under the section entitled “Vessel IMO Number”, amend the remarks to read “IMO number”, thereby deleting the phrase “in the absence of a side number”.
- Also in Annex II.C, paragraph 2 “Format for withdrawal of vessels from the register”, delete footnote 4 and under the section entitled “Vessel IMO Number”, amend the remarks to read “IMO number”, thereby deleting the phrase “in the absence of a side number”.
- Also in Annex II.C, paragraph 3 “Format for authorization to conduct fishing activities”, delete footnote 5 and under the section entitled “Vessel IMO Number”, amend the remarks to read “IMO number”, thereby deleting the phrase “in the absence of a side number”.
- Also in Annex II.C, paragraph 4 “Format to suspend the authorization to conduct fishing activities”, delete footnote 7 and under the section entitled “Vessel IMO Number”, amend the remarks to read “IMO number”, thereby deleting the phrase “in the absence of a side number”.