

Statement
Regional Alert on Destructive and Illegal Fishing by the Chinese Fleet
June 2021

We represent Latin American organizations who are concerned about the negative impacts of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) of Chinese distant water fishing fleets in the region. Our Declaration is intended to alert the authorities of the affected countries and Chinese authorities to take urgent action.

Through this Declaration we highlight the negative environmental, social and economic impacts of IUU fishing by Chinese distant water fleets as well as the impact on the vulnerability of artisanal fisherpersons. We denounce the lack of control over this fleet and the subsidies allocated towards it.

This Declaration World Oceans Day, on June 8, to remind that these ecosystems are vital for life on the planet. Oceans are carbon sinks that absorb around 30% of carbon dioxide produced by humans. We also support the 30X30 Initiative, promoted by the United Nations, which aims to protect 30% of the planet's national and international waters by 2030.

The impact of Chinese fleets on oceans?

Overfishing is one of the most damaging activities for marine ecosystems. In particular IUU fishing catches protected species and does not respect quotas or capture seasons. IUU fishing threatens the food security of communities that depend on fishery resources and affects the livelihoods of artisanal fishers.

The Chinese fishing fleet is the largest in the world and China is the country with the highest rates of illegal fishing. Since 1985, the Chinese government's five-year plans for the fishing industry have expanded their potential through subsidies that put boating safety at risk because they violate and disrespect regulations, health, labor and environmental standards. Around 1,821 vessels in the Chinese fleet are bottom trawlers, harmful due to their serious impact on the ecosystem- the large nets of these vessels cause irreparable destruction of the seabed.

This Chinese fleet deployed to meet the demand for shellfish intended for domestic consumption causes an imbalance in marine ecosystems; increases risks for endangered marine species; increases pollution of the seas; affects umbrella species such as whales, sea turtles, rays and sharks; and causes damage to the economy and employment of developing countries.

Illegal fishing of the Chinese fleet off the coast of South America

The Chinese fleet has a recurring presence in international waters surrounding the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. Chinese vessels engage in

IUU fishing and intentionally operate in stealth mode, turning off their Automatic Identification System (AIS).

Chinese fishing methods and activities are highly controversial within the EEZ of South American countries. In July 2020, a fleet of about 300 vessels, mostly Chinese-flagged, was fishing near the EEZ around Ecuador's Galapagos Marine Reserve. Every year, the Chinese fleet's itinerary is to continue to Peru and Chile, where they have occasionally entered the EEZ. In Peru, between 2014 and 2019, the number of Chinese vessels fishing 'officially' at mile 201, increased by 142%. The average catch of illegal Chinese flag fishing vessels within the Argentine sea in the last 5 years has been 2 per year. Likewise, there is a record of illegal activities such as illegal transshipment within the Uruguayan EEZ and reports of illegal Chinese fishing vessels within the Brazilian EEZ.

Chinese companies have known intentions to invest in ports: in Peru the Port of Chancay, in Chile the port of Corral and in Argentina a shipyard in the port of Comodoro Rivadavia, and in the city of Ushuaia, which would benefit Chinese companies distant water fisheries operating in the region.

Despite the existence of organizations and agreements that defend the rights of peoples over the sea, the affected States have not agreed to control and regulate this activity in an organized and effective manner. The fight against IUU fishing requires strong political will and concerted action, at the national and regional levels.

Necessary actions

Subsidies meant for distant water fleets are the main cause for the proliferation of illegally fishing vessels. The member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are looking for a possible agreement to abolish them. This agreement would be part of the commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14 (6), established by the United Nations in the 2030 agenda, which seeks to conserve life in the oceans through the elimination of harmful fishing subsidies.

There are regional initiatives such as the one promoted by the Permanent Commission of the South Pacific that will prepare a Regional Plan to combat illegal fishing, through a working group chaired by Ecuador. Ecuador is also negotiating bilateral agreements on this issue with Colombia, Peru and Costa Rica, with Panama and Mexico.

It is encouraging that the Chinese authorities have initiated processes to update and create regulations to improve the supervision of the operations of their fleets in distant waters, for example, they are reviewing the Fisheries Law, which seeks to include severe penalties for illegal fishing, such as confiscation of equipment and significant fines, among others.

Action is urgently needed!

Expecting that in the future Chinese companies and investors in Latin America comply with the best environmental and social practices, and are accountable to civil society and the governments of the region, the undersigned organizations:

1. Propose the establishment of a regional multi-actor space that includes the participation of civil society organizations, artisanal fishermen associations, national authorities, universities and delegates of the Chinese government, to evaluate the problem and its impacts, and generate a dialogue on the measures that they can be taken to stop overfishing and IUU fishing.
2. Invite artisanal fishermen organizations to identify the negative impacts they face due to overexploitation of the seas.
3. Urge national authorities to implement the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) to regulate? IUU fishing.
4. Demand that the competent entities in our countries improve their monitoring and early warning systems to protect coastal communities and maritime transport.
5. Demand that the number of marine protected areas be increased to favor conservation, including protected areas on the high seas.
6. Denounce that IUU fishing is a flagrant violation of the rights of nature and therefore its regulation and control are urgent.
7. Urge the Chinese government to make a commitment to reduce fisheries subsidies in the framework of the WTO negotiations.
8. Urge the governments of the region to activate the international treaties available to denounce the capture and / or trafficking of straddling species by the Chinese distant water fishing fleet.
9. Urge domestic and international markets to embrace the highest standards and best practices for traceability and transparency in fisheries to avoid the purchase of catch obtained by unregulated and / or subsidized distant water fishing fleets.
10. Demand that the governments of the region prevent the unloading of catch from reefer / mother ships whose origin cannot be verified by on-board observers and independent monitoring bodies that guarantee compliance with minimum international traceability, environmental, health and labor standards, checked.

Sincerely,

1. Activismo Global, Ecuador
2. Alianza Organizaciones por los Derechos Humanos de Ecuador, Ecuador
3. Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA),
4. ASHIA International, Camerún
5. Asociación Artesanal de Emprendedores y Conservacionistas en la Actividad Pesquera Artesanal- ASAECAPA, Perú
6. Blaubach Consultores, Ecuador
7. Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad, Colombia

8. Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica - CAAAP, Perú
9. Carbone Guinée, Guinée
10. Centro Nicaragüense de Conservación Ambiental CENICA, Nicaragua
11. Censat Agua Viva, Colombia
12. Círculo de Políticas Ambientales, Argentina
13. Ciudadanos y Clima, Chile
14. Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, Ecuador
15. Coordinadora Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones para la Defensa de la Naturaleza y el Medio Ambiente (CEDENMA), Ecuador
16. CooperAcción, Perú
17. Corporación Programa La Caleta, Chile
18. Fondo Animal, Ecuador
19. Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (FARN), Argentina
20. Fundación Banco de Bosques, Argentina
21. Fundación Emprender el Futuro, Ecuador
22. Fundación Maquipucuna, Ecuador
23. Fundación Proyecto Sacha, Ecuador
24. Grupo de Estudios: Desenvolvimento, Modernidade e Meio Ambiente da Universidade Federal do Maranhão (GEDMMA/UFMA), Brasil
25. Hawai'i Institute for Human Rights, Estados Unidos
26. Iniciativa para las Inversiones Sustentables China- América Latina (IISCAL), Ecuador
27. Instituto Natura, Perú
28. International Rivers, Brasil
29. Keiko Conservation Ecuador, Ecuador
30. LATINTERNACIONAL, Ecuador
31. Movimiento Animalista Nacional (M.A.N.), Ecuador
32. Muyu Semilla de Selva, Ecuador
33. Observatorio para la Gobernanza Marino Costera, Colombia
34. Plataforma por la Sostenibilidad de la Pesca Artesanal, Perú
35. QUID, Ecuador
36. Red Muqui, Perú
37. Red Regional Agua Desarrollo y Democracia, Perú
38. Sindicato de pescadores de chimbote y anexos, Perú
39. Sustainable Ocean Alliance- Capítulo Ecuador, Ecuador
40. Sustentarse, Chile
41. Surco Común, Ecuador
42. TANDARI Asamblea de Jóvenes por la Sostenibilidad, Ecuador
43. Tupak Katary Conservación, Ecuador
44. Universidad Nacional José Faustino Sánchez Carrión, Perú
45. Water Justice and Gender, Holanda