

SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION MODEL AND PROGRESS

Delivered by:

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Vice Executive Director of the RPOA-IUU Secretariat

Workshop on Strengthening Regional Fisheries Governance and
Technology Integration to Combat IUU Fishing in the Indo-Pacific



Regional Plan of Action to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices including Combating IUU Fishing in the Region (RPOA-IUU)

1. The RPOA-IUU is a **voluntary instrument** and takes its core principles from international agreements and instruments for promoting responsible fishing practices
2. Agreed on 4 May 2007, Bali-Indonesia, by 11 Ministers related to fisheries **(Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam)**
3. The objective of the RPOA-IUU is to enhance and strengthen the overall level of fisheries management in the region and to optimize the benefit of adopting responsible fishing practices. The actions cover: conservation of fisheries and their environment; managing fishing capacity; and combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

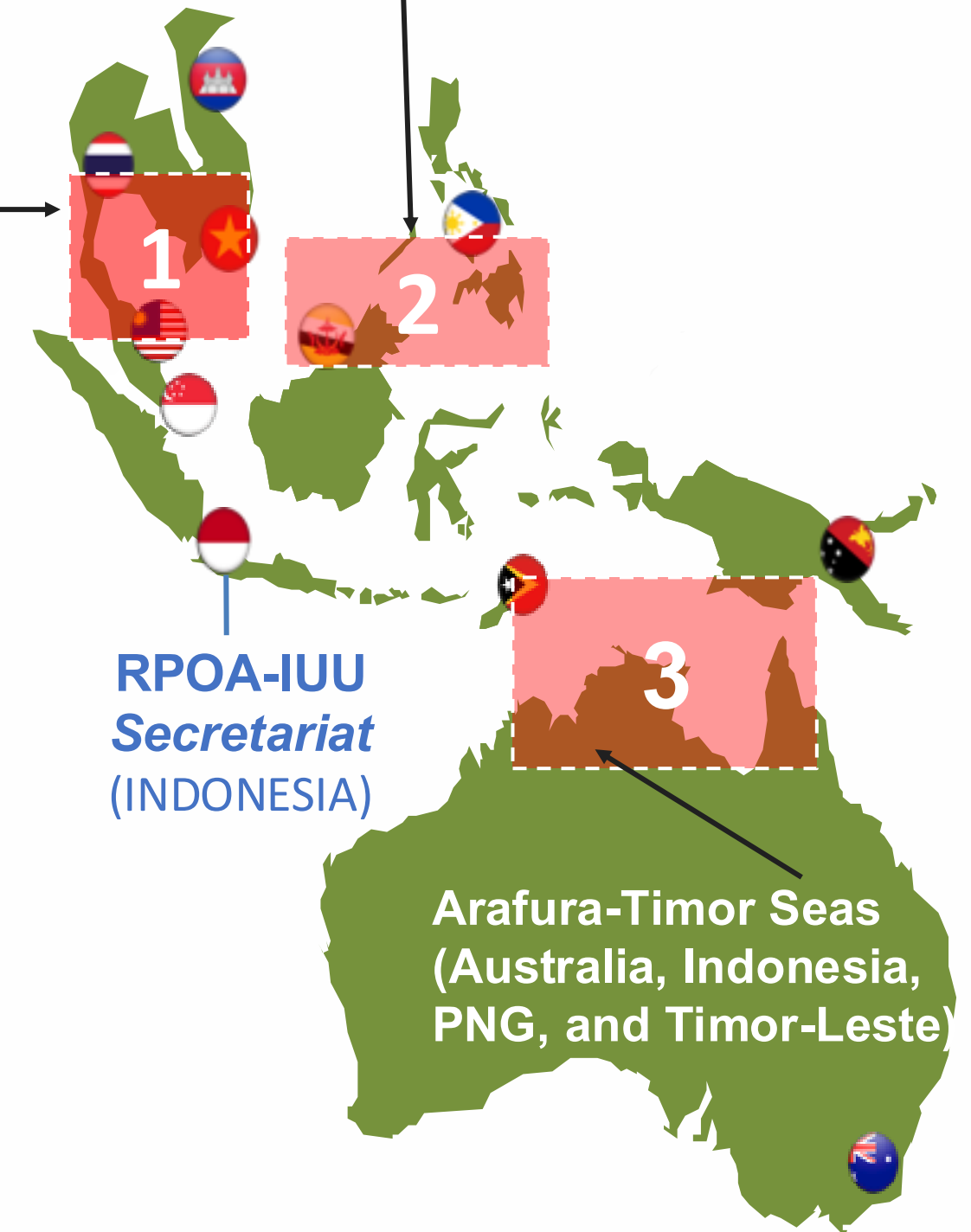
History:

During the MCS Workshop on **March 2008**, the Coordination Committee agreed to establish a regional and sub-regional MCS Networks which

- **Malaysia** is the chair of sub-regional for the Southern and Eastern of SCS and SSS
- **Thailand** is the chair of sub-regional for the Gulf of Thailand Sub Regional Group
- **Australia** is the chair of sub-regional for the Arafura and Timor-Seas

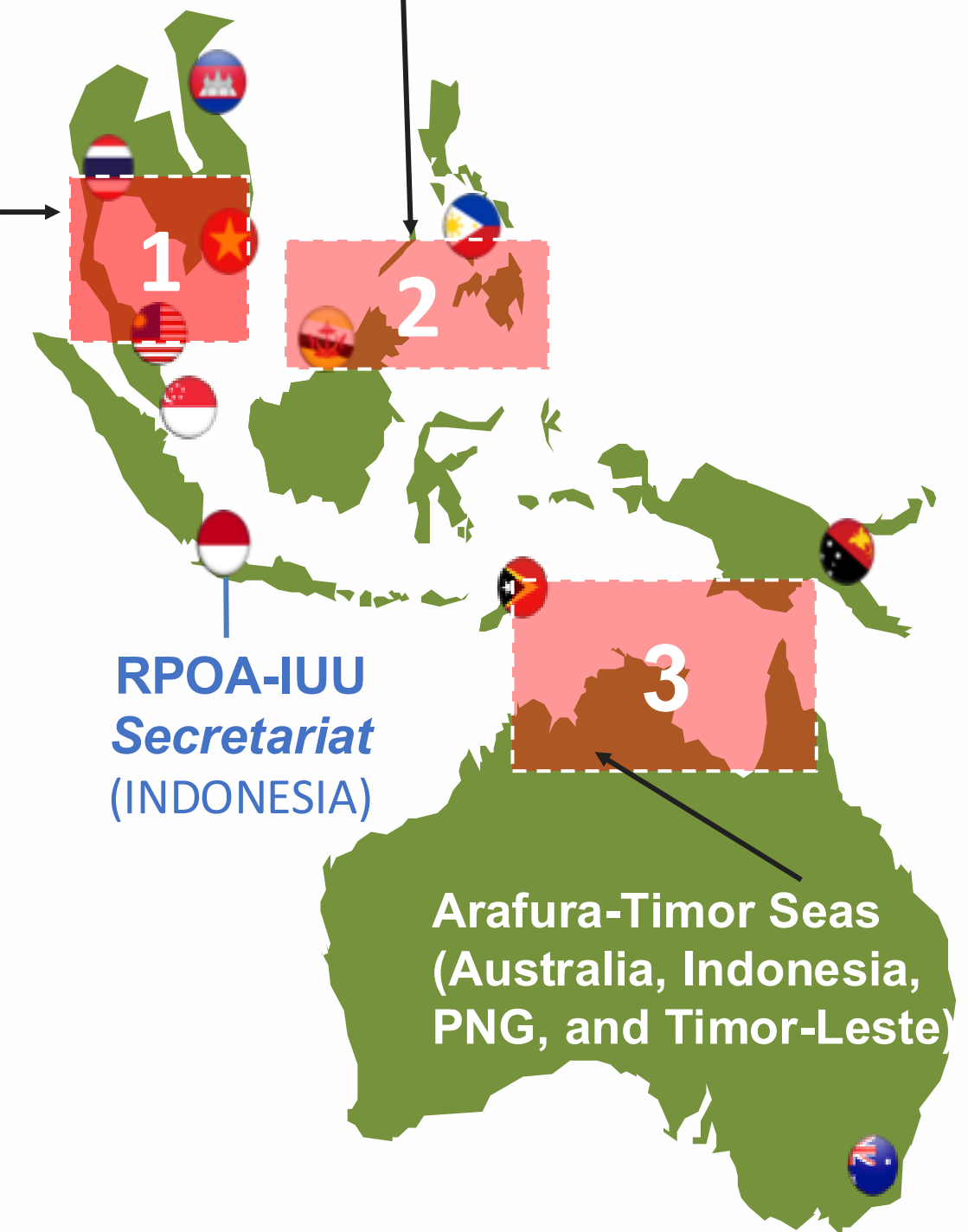
Southern and Eastern of South China Seas and Sulu-Sulawesi Seas
(Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Philippines)

Gulf of Thailand
(Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Viet Nam)



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Gulf of Thailand
(Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Viet Nam)



Rationales:

- **Article 123 of UNCLOS:** states bordering an **enclosed or semi-enclosed sea should cooperate with each other** in the exercise of their rights and in the performance of their duties under this Convention. To this end they shall endeavour, directly or through an appropriate regional organization: (b) to coordinate the implementation of their rights and duties with respect to the protection and preservation of the marine environment
- Shared ocean and fish stocks
- Cross-border *illegal fishing* incidents

MCS SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS ROLES



Roles :

- Strengthen cooperation among sub-regional member countries.
- Facilitate information exchange and coordination of MCS operations.
- Support joint risk analysis and collective action to address transboundary IUUF hotspots.
- Nominate and select candidates for MCS training courses to support targeted capacity building.



GULF OF THAILAND MCS SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS



- The latest sub-regional meeting was held on 20 June 2024 to discuss Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) needs and gaps under the RPOA-IUU framework.
- Participating countries exchanged views and experiences to strengthen cooperation in the Gulf of Thailand.
- The meeting produced the “2025 Recommendations and Way Forward for the Sub-Regional Gulf of Thailand.” The document outlines priority actions to improve coordinated MCS implementation and combat IUU fishing.

GULF OF THAILAND MCS SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS



PROGRESS

Key MCS Issues/ Challenges Identified	Way Forward
4. Information on stock assessment of transboundary species and harmonized framework of transboundary management	Participate + implement the activity under the GoTFish Project.

The GoTFish project focussed on regional transboundary fisheries governance and management. The GoTFish Project is currently in its Inception Phase, has obtained country signatures from Thailand and Cambodia and is awaiting from Malaysia and Viet Nam.

GULF OF THAILAND MCS SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS



PROGRESS

Key MCS Issues/ Challenges Identified	Way Forward
7. Enhance knowledge on MCS for Fisheries Officers	Participate in MCS training or officer exchange component under the SEA-IUU Program.

Fisheries Officer Exchange program was held in Bangkok, from June 23 to 27, 2025, supported by the Australia’s Combating IUU fishing program and attended by five RPOA-IUU countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam).

Key MCS Issues/ Challenges Identified	Way Forward
8. Estimation of losses due to IUU fishing	Propose estimation study on the losses in all aspect due to IUU fishing with possibility assistance from experts under the SEA-IUU program or other possibility donors

This proposal has included in the RPOA-IUU Work Plan endorsed at the 17th CCM in November 2024. The RPOA-IUU Secretariat, in coordination with Australia, agreed to proceed with a pilot study in the Gulf of Thailand to develop a methodology for future assessments, with Malaysia considering participation.

SOUTHERN AND EASTERN OF SOUTH CHINA SEAS AND SULU-SULAWESI SEAS MCS SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS

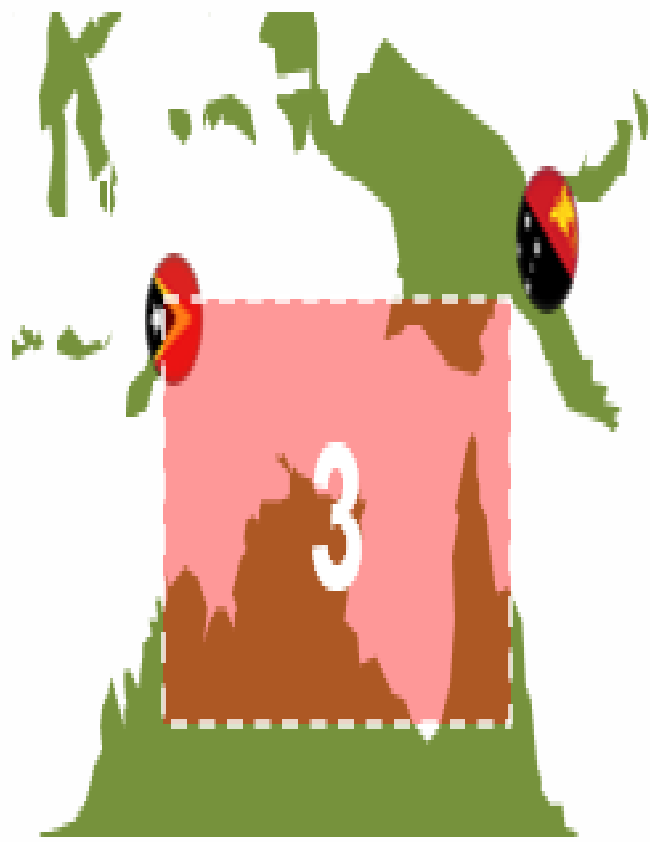
Based on presentations from each member country in the 8th Sub-Regional Meeting on the SESCO SSS which is held in 13 November 2025, six main IUU fishing issues were identified within the sub-region:

- encroachment by foreign fishing vessels
- fishing without valid licenses or with misused gear licenses/violated fishing conditions
- the use of prohibited gears such as cyanide and blast fishing, or illegal mesh sizes and fishing techniques
- fishing in restricted zones
- unauthorized use and placement of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)
- illicit fish transshipment to/from foreign fishing vessels.

As follow-up actions, the Secretariat of the SESCO and SSS RPOA-IUU Sub-regional Groups will establish a discussion platform (e.g., WhatsApp group) to improve coordination. Member countries are also encouraged to seek technical assistance and capacity building from partners such as Australia's SEA-IUU Program to address key issues.



ARAFURA AND TIMOR SEAS MCS SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS



- The Arafura and Timor Seas (ATS) Sub-regional Group noted that illegal fishing in the ATS is largely driven by economic pressure.
- Member countries are working to better understand prosecution requirements among countries, including strengthening information sharing and regularly updating focal points.
- In 2025, progress included the Indonesia–Australia Fisheries Surveillance Forum for information exchange and joint patrols under Operation Jawline Arafura in September 2025, followed by high-level meetings.
- For 2026, the Action Plan includes holding the next Sub-regional Group meeting in Indonesia, continuing coordinated patrols, sustaining education initiatives, enhancing information sharing, and exploring new capacity-building opportunities.

REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT: COLLABORATIVE FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT AGAINST FV. RUN ZENG 03 & RUN ZENG 05



IUU Fishing Violations by two Foreign-flagged Trawlers (undary in ATS region)

WIB
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Cc:
RPOA-IUU Secretariat RPOA-IUU Secretariat

SEMUNYIKAN

Dear RPOA-IUU MCS Subregional (Arafura and Timor Seas) Group Focal Points

I am writing this email to inform you that MMAF is investigating an IUU case allegedly conducted by an Indonesian fish carrier vessel **MV MUS** (initial) (289 GT). This vessel was arrested by Fisheries Patrol Vessel **ORCA 06** on 14 April 2024 with a charge of **unauthorized transshipment**.

During the initial investigation, we found sufficient evidence that this carrier vessel received about 100 tonnes of fish from and supplied fuel for two foreign-flagged fishing vessels **MV. RUN ZENG 03** and **MV. RUN ZENG 05** in Arafura Sea (FMA 718) on 6 to 10 April 2024. Unfortunately, we are still searching for the two foreign trawlers for more than one week of operation of a patrol aircraft and four fisheries patrol vessels around the Arafura Sea. These vessels have been switching off their AIS, and it is a possibility that these vessels are fleeing and operating illegally in your waters.

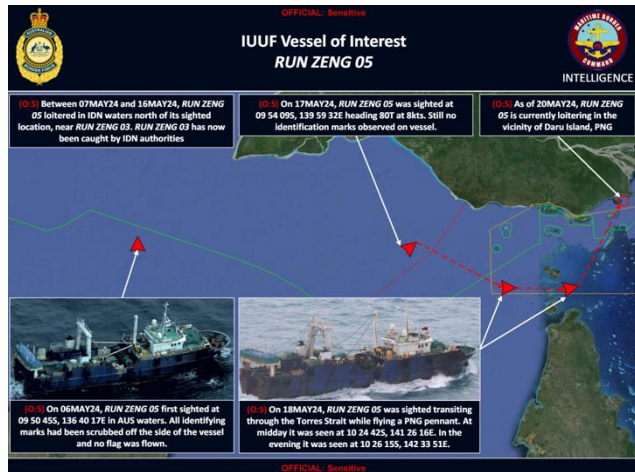
We have charged the skipper of MV MUS with multiple allegations, i.e. supporting two foreign trawlers that fished illegally in Indonesian Fisheries Management Areas, as well as transporting the illegal catches from **MV. RUN ZENG 03** and **MV. RUN ZENG 05**. We have also found an indication of other fisheries-related crimes, i.e. **poor working conditions for crews (potential human trafficking)** and **illegal trade of fuels**. The legal construction of this case will be more apparent if we can arrest these fishing vessels.

Information that we have so far about these fishing vessels' identity:

Name: MV RUN ZENG 03
Known Flag: Russia
Gross tonnage: about 800
IMO Number: 9835549



Intelligence Report from Australia



RZ 03 was apprehended by MMAF Indonesia

Collaborative Fisheries Enforcement

IUUF Alert on RZ 03 & 05 from Indonesia to FP of ATS Sub-regional Group

Re: Follow-up Email on IUU Alert

Senin, Mei 20, 2024 17:03 WIB

Glenda Barry <gbarry@fisheries.gov.pg>

Good evening Sir,
The FV Run Zeng 05 arrived in Daru port in the morning today seeking anchorage for provisioning.

Report from our Daru Fishery officer is that the said vessel is not yet cleared to anchor at Daru wharf due to lack of documentation and so boarding was restricted by port Authority. The officials are awaiting arrival of the vessel agent for port call clearance formalities.

We appreciate you sharing this information and any other details that will assist us in this matter. We will disseminate this information to Daru officials and should be able to provide some feedback on vessel status tomorrow.

Thank you,
Glenda

Get Outlook for Android: <https://aka.ms/AAb2yagp>

From: YUDHISTIRA RIZKY ABDILLAH <yudhistirizky@kko.go.id>
Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2024 12:14:44 pm
To: WOODHOUSE, Lydia <Lydia.Woodhouse@afma.gov.au>; lamarat@maf.gov.tl <lamarat@maf.gov.tl>; pamrodrigues@maf.gov.tl <pamrodrigues@maf.gov.tl>; Gisa Komangin <gkomangin@fisheries.gov.pg>; Glenda Barry <gbarry@fisheries.gov.pg>; edalle@fisheries.gov.pg <edalle@fisheries.gov.pg>
Subject: Follow-up Email on IUU Alert

Dear RPOA-IUU ATS Subregional Group Focal Points

We have sent you an email regarding an alert on IUU. Unfortunately, the system send this email back to us due to exceed of size limit. Therefore, I send the PDF version of original email as attached. Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

PNG Confirmation on RZ 05

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
(IN THE DISTRICT COURT)
AT WAIGANI
NFA-15-17 OF 2024

BETWEEN:
CHARLIE JOHN (INFORMANT)
AND:
YANG HAJMING (DEFENDANT)

ORDER

The Court Orders that:

1. Defendant is convicted on all charges.
2. Defendant is court fined K55,000 per each charge to be paid within 30 days.
3. In default K2,000 per day for each charge.
4. The foreign vessel RUN ZENG 05 and its gears and all its instruments as well as, all fishery products on-board of about 100 metric tonnes is forfeited to the State, National Fisheries Authority to take custody for and behalf of the State.
5. The Owners of the vessel or the Charterer of the vessel, whichever case maybe ordered to pay costs in the sum of K895,721.88 to National Fisheries Authority.
6. Warrant of Remand is extended for the next 30 days

DATE at WAIGANI this 20th day of NOVEMBER 2024

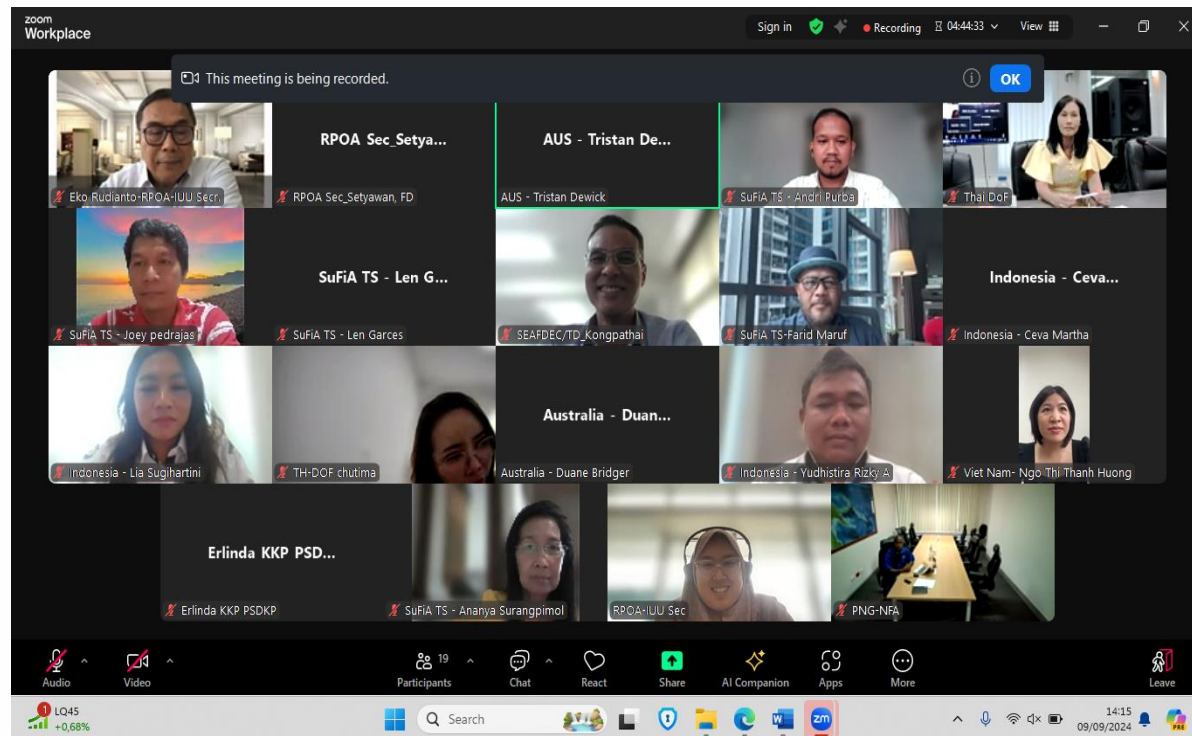
RZ 05 was seized by the NFA PNG



REGIONAL INITIATIVES



Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) on Market Measures and Traceability (CDS_CDT)



- RPOA-IUU, in collaboration with the USAID-SuFia TS, organized the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Market Measures and Traceability held on September 9 - 10, 2024 via Zoom Platform
- The FGD aimed to exchange experiences on market measure traceability, promote the inclusion of small-scale fisheries in traceability systems, and develop a lesson-learned book documenting best practices and implementation status among RPOA-IUU participating countries.
- Countries are encouraged to strengthen traceability systems, develop capacity-building proposals for Australia's SEA RIFF Program, while the RPOA-IUU Secretariat will collect CDT/CDS updates and continue regional traceability initiatives.

- The workshop is part of SEA-IUU fishing program support organized by the Australian Government and RPOA-IUU Secretariat and aims to improve and strengthen MCS sub-regional capacity
- One of the key lessons learned from the activity is that advanced technology can help countries strengthen their MCS capacity.
- Strengthening MCS Sub-Regional Groups can be supported through virtual engagement, national budget commitments, standardized coordination, and facilitation by the RPOA-IUU Secretariat to enhance collaboration and partner support.

RPOA-IUU MCS Sub-Regional Workshop



REGIONAL INITIATIVES



Advanced Fisheries Intelligence Training

- The training, held from February 20 to 23, 2024, was attended by 42 participants from 11 countries, including 3 speakers from Canada's DFO, 4 speakers from the Joint Analytical Cell, and 2 speakers from INTERPOL
- The training successfully achieved its objectives, strengthening countries' intelligence capabilities for fisheries data analysis, enhancing practical skills of fisheries officers for intelligence-led actions against IUU fishing, supporting effective decision-making through intelligence-led approaches, and establishing an information-exchange platform for sharing effective measures to combat IUU fishing.



WAY FORWARD



- **Strengthen sub-regional cooperation mechanisms** to enhance coordination in Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS)
- **Promote capacity building and technical collaboration** with regional and international partners.
- **Sustain regular sub-regional engagement** to review progress and address emerging IUU fishing challenges.

THANK YOU

**Regional Plan of Action to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices
including Combating IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU)**

RPOA-IUU Secretariat

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“The most effective weapon
against crime [IUU Fishing] is
cooperation”

J. Edgar Hoover- First FBI
Director