Country Presentation on Law and Regulation Reform to Support Combating IUU Fishing

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Contact

- National legal framework
- Measures currently used to control IUU fishing
- Legal reform and regulatory priorities
- International instruments and regional cooperation
- Enforcement challenges and practical responses
- Proposed next steps

Introduction

- Myanmar's fisheries are managed through national laws, licensing conditions and Department of Fisheries measures.
- Monitoring tools are already in use, including vessel monitoring and catch certification.
- The current reform process provides an opportunity to bring these measures into a clearer and more consistent legal framework.
- This presentation outlines the existing system, international cooperation and practical priorities for stronger implementation.

National Legal Framework And Recent Regulatory Reforms

- The main marine fisheries laws include the Myanmar Marine Fisheries Law (1990), amended in 1993, and the law on fishing rights of foreign fishing vessels (1989), also amended in 1993.
- The Freshwater Fisheries Law was enacted in 1991, while freshwater management responsibilities also involve regional and state authorities.
- These laws provide the basis for licensing, regulating fishing activities, setting conditions and taking action against violations.
- The Department of Fisheries administers fisheries management measures, while vessel registration is also linked to the Department of Marine Administration.

Measures currently used to control IUU fishing

- The Department of Fisheries supervises vessel and gear licensing, vessel marking, fishing areas, closed seasons and prohibited fishing methods.
- Offshore fishing vessels and fish carrier vessels are required to use the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS).
- VMS monitoring is supported by control centres, while check-in/check-out procedures, logbooks and sailing orders provide additional operational records.
- Catch certificates are issued for marine capture products to help verify that exported products were legally obtained.

Legal reform and regulatory priorities

- Already informed to SEAFDEC' in 2025 that work is under way to combine the marine fisheries law and the law on foreign fishing rights into a unified Union Fisheries Law.
- The draft Union Fisheries Law was reported to be under review by the Ministry of Legal Affairs, so it should not be described as and enacted law.
- The reform is an opportunity to set out clearer legal powers for VMS, inspection, information sharing, catch traceability and action against serious violations.
- Detailed procedures, responsibilities and proportionate penalties should be clear enough for officer to apply consistently in the field.

International instruments and regional cooperation

- Myanmar is listed by FAO as a party to the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA), which helps prevent IUU vessels from using ports to land or move catches.
- The Department of Fisheries has implemented catch certification and has participated in work on the ASEAN electronic Catch Documentation Scheme (eACDS).
- Myanmar also shares information through the ASEAN Network for Combating IUU Fishing (AN-IUU), including information on suspected IUU fishing vessels.
- Continued implementation depends on linking these commitments with domestic procedures, reliable records and timely cooperation with neighboring countries.

Enforcement challenges and practical responses

- Effective enforcement requires timely coordination among the Department of Fisheries, the Department of Marine Administration and maritime enforcement agencies.
- VMS alerts are most useful when they can be checked against licences, logbooks, catch records and inspection findings.
- Different record formats and gaps in information exchange can make it harder to trace a vessel's activity from fishing grounds to landing and export.
- Joint risk-based inspections, standard case files, trained officers and clear evidence-handling procedures can help address these gaps.

Proposed next steps

- Complete the review of the unified fisheries law and consult the relevant agencies on workable implementation rules.
- Clarify responsibilities and procedures for vessel monitoring, port inspections, catch documentation and follow-up action on suspected offences.
- Strengthen routine information exchange with ASEAN partners and use eACDS and AN-IUU channels where applicable.
- A practical goal is to make the legal rules easier to enforce, the evidence easier to verify and the origin of fishery products easier to trace.

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