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Are private initiatives a possible way forward?

Actions taken by private stake holders to eliminate IUU tuna fishing activities

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This paper has been prepared by Mr. Hiroya Sano of OPRT.

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**ARE PRIVATE INITIATIVES A POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD?
ACTIONS TAKEN BY PRIVATE STAKE HOLDERS TO ELIMINATE IUU TUNA FISHING
ACTIVITIES.¹**

1. The principal goal of the Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT) is to solve the problem of IUU tuna fishing. OPRT was established December 2000 in Japan. OPRT aims to contribute to the development of tuna fisheries in accordance with international and social responsibility, to promote the sustainable use of tuna resources through measures to reinforce the conservation and management of tunas, to foster healthy tuna markets, and to further international cooperation among fishermen.
2. The initial members of OPRT were the tuna longline fishing industries in Japan and Chinese Taipei, along with organizations of traders, distributors and consumers in Japan. The tuna longline fishing industries in Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, the Peoples Republic of China, and Ecuador later joined. As of the end of March this year, 1,460 large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels were registered with OPRT. This number represents almost all of the large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels around the world.
3. The initiative to establish OPRT was taken by the Japanese tuna fishing industry with good reason. The industry scrapped 132 large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels, equivalent to 20% of its total, in accordance with instructions and the financial support of the Japanese government based on the United Nations FAO's International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity.
4. Before the OPRT initiative began, there were reportedly 250 flag-of-convenience tuna longline vessels, and an analysis of trade statistics showed that they exported all of their catch to the Japanese market.
5. Since it was known that the effective source of IUU fishing was Chinese Taipei vessel owners using Japanese second-hand tuna longline fishing vessels, the Japanese tuna industry proposed consultations with the Chinese Taipei tuna fishing industry. After two years, both industries agreed to a Joint Action Plan to eliminate IUU tuna fishing vessels. The plan consists of projects to scrap Japanese second-hand IUU tuna longline fishing vessels, and also to re-register Chinese Taipei built fishing vessels to Chinese Taipei registry. The OPRT was established to implement the project to scrap the IUU tuna fishing vessels. A compensation fund was established for vessel scrapping and an anti-IUU tuna fishing vessel campaign was launched to support this initiative. Forty-three vessels were scrapped during the project period of 3 years, from 2001 to 2003.
6. The issue was brought before the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA). ICFA was founded in 1988 as a non-governmental organization with membership open to national fishery organizations. ICFA is actually another example of a private initiative that is working to combat IUU fishing. ICFA adopted a resolution supporting OPRT's activities against IUU fishing.

¹ This paper has been prepared by Mr. Hiroya Sano of the Organisation for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT).

7. With the introduction of the Positive List Scheme on a global scale towards the end of last year, tunas caught by IUU tuna longline fishing vessels can no longer be traded in international markets, and thus ensuring that in the case of tunas caught by large-scale longliners, IUU fishing cannot survive.
8. It became apparent to OPRT that the elimination of IUU fishing activities was not possible with only the efforts of tuna fishermen, but that it was necessary to have the cooperation of all stakeholders. However, it was not easy to secure the support of different sectors having different interests.
9. We learned that the activities of IUU tuna fishing vessels must be closely monitored in a timely manner. It was found that IUU fishing operators changed the names of vessels, and changed registration countries in order to circumvent sanctions imposed by regional fishery management organizations. Also, IUU vessels transported their products to legally licensed vessels. Through such findings, the urgent need to introduce the Positive List Scheme was recognized and supported by OPRT members.
10. Private initiatives can play a very important role in the fight against illegal fishing but, cannot by themselves be successful. Private initiatives must be part of a broad mosaic, most of which is composed of government and international elements. Also, all of the private sectors participants of all nations involved must work together. Actions by the private sector cannot flourish unless they operate within a legal framework and international rules supported by governments.
11. OPRT continues to work to ensure that IUU tuna fishing activities will not reappear and plans to extend the scope of its work of ensuring responsible tuna fisheries.