# IMCS Network Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029

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| Version | Date | Status | Author |
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| V0.1 | 21 November 2023 | Draft | IMCS Network |

## Introduction

The IMCS Network is an informal, voluntary organization that includes a growing number of members from national and regional fisheries agencies and organizations. The Network also includes IGOs, NGOs and academic institutions as observers that play a key role in strengthening and enhancing responses to IUU fishing and focusing collective MCS efforts. The Network is supported by dedicated staff and partnerships that promote and facilitate effective communication, collaboration, coordination, and capacity development for our members and across the broader fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement community. The IMCS Network Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029 provides a roadmap to guide and strengthen the Network to ensure that we deliver results and add value to the work of our members and work effectively with our observers and partners.

## Vision

A globally connected and capable fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement community that works collectively to achieve and maintain optimal levels of compliance that effectively support marine conservation and fisheries management objectives.

## Mission

To strengthen and enhance fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement by promoting and facilitating effective communication, collaboration, coordination, and capacity development across our community.

## Objectives

1. Improved fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement approaches that optimize levels of compliance and effectively combat IUU fishing and associated activities.
2. Effective collaboration and cooperation established and maintained across the global fisheries MCS and compliance community.
3. Empowered, informed and capable fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement practitioners.

## Outcome Areas

The Objectives will be achieved through several Outcome Areas that describe the priority areas of work for the Network.

| Objectives | | |
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| 1. Improved fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement approaches that optimize levels of compliance and effectively combat IUU fishing and associated activities. | 2. Effective collaboration and cooperation established and maintained across the global fisheries MCS and compliance community. | 3. Empowered, informed and capable fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement practitioners. |
| **Outcome Areas** | | |
| 1.1 Members have greater access to, and an understanding of, tools, technologies, and approaches, including new and emerging technologies. | 2.1 Enhanced and strengthened networks are established, maintained and fully utilized by members, observers and partners. | 3.1 Effective needs driven capacity development initiatives that strengthen national and regional MCS, compliance and enforcement approaches are developed and delivered. |
| 1.2 Members can effectively apply and integrate tools, technologies, and approaches, , including new and emerging technologies, to strengthen and enhance compliance. | 2.2 Effective mechanisms for communication and information sharing are established, maintained and supported. | 3.2 Access to capacity development, education and training opportunities are coordinated and supported. |
| 1.3 Members have greater access to relevant data and information and can more effectively use, integrate and apply this data and information. | 2.3 Mechanisms for communication and information exchange are promoted and fully utilized. | 3.3 MCS, compliance and enforcement practitioners can easily access information, research, contacts and support they need to improve their work. |
| 1.4 National and regional compliance frameworks are developed fit-for purpose and support appropriate responses to non-compliance and IUU fishing. | 2.4 Effective partnerships that support the work of the Network are developed and maintained for the benefit of members. | 3.4 New approaches to support, strengthen and enhance capacity are developed, supported and maintained. |

## Implementation

The success of the Strategic Plan relies on effective implementation. The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be guided by an annual work plan developed by Network staff. The work plan will include outputs and activities that will deliver on the Outcome Areas and Objectives. The work plan will be developed for the calendar year and identify persons responsible, resources and timeframes.

The work plan will document all Network projects and initiatives, the selection of which will be guided by the relevance to the Outcome Areas and Objectives, benefits to members, feasibility, cost-effectiveness and impact.

A Communication and Engagement Plan will be developed to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and to ensure we that our communications are consistent, effective, relevant and impactful.

## Guiding Principles

Guiding principles have been developed to provide simple, clear, robust, and practical guidance on how we implement our Strategic Plan to ensure its success.

Member focused - *We will ensure that our priorities are member driven.*

Transparent - *We will have open and impartial decision-making in all aspects of our work and communicate effectively with our community.*

Inclusive - *We will be inclusive and representative of our community, seek opportunities to engage with, support and promote the voices of our members equitably.*

Collaborative - *We will work collaboratively with our members, observers and partners, leverage the strengths of our Network and build on our successes.*

Adaptable - *We will drive action, be adaptable and respond effectively to change, emerging priorities and new opportunities.*

Capable - *We will ensure that the Network continues to provide consistent, well-informed and fit-for-purpose advice and support to meet our objectives.*

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be evaluated annually by Network staff and reported to the Executive Committee. Network staff will provide updates on work plan progress, potential issues and emerging opportunities to the meetings of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will be responsible for providing guidance on work plan progress and to evaluate the relevance of the Outcome Areas to ensure that progress towards the Objectives and Vision is achieved.

Fishing is one of the most widespread human activities at sea. Fishing supports the livelihoods of almost 60 million people and provides the primary source of protein for almost 3 billion people. Fish and fish products are the most valuable traded food commodity with a global market value of US$620 billion. Global marine conservation, sustainable and socially responsible fisheries management efforts have been developing over the last couple of decades and they are essential to ensure that the world's oceans are protected from the negative impacts that fishing and fishing related activities. Fishing operations are complicated and dynamic. Fishing vessels can operate across vast ocean areas and across a range of jurisdictions. Improvements and changes in fishing operations, subsidies that promote overcapacity and declines in fish stocks means that fishing vessels are staying out at-sea for longer periods of time, often operating far from their flag State. Fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) and compliance responses must be developed to respond to marine conservation objectives and sustainable fisheries management needs to effectively address these ongoing and emerging challenges.

Over the last two decades, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing has been identified as a significant threat to marine conservation and fisheries management efforts. While there have been many advancements to combat IUU fishing at the international, regional and national level, IUU fishing continues to be a persistent threat and continues to evolve as fishing pressure increases and regulation and control develop. In recent years, research has identified a direct link between IUU fishing, transnational organized crime and human rights abuses making IUU fishing even more complex and in some cases, more organized. Therefore, identifying and responding to different forms of IUU fishing and related activities is getting more difficult and requires more sophisticated and coordinated MCS and compliance responses.

At the national level, many countries, particularly developing countries, struggle to develop and effectively implement the legal, institutional, and operational frameworks needed to ensure that fishing vessel owners and operators comply with relevant legal obligations. Countries are required to meet a growing number of regional and international obligations and to understand and apply the rapid development of technology used to monitor fishing activity and to detect potential IUU fishing. Beneficial ownership of vessels is often hidden behind complex structures of ownership and control that can cross jurisdictional boundaries. This makes it much more difficult to identify and hold to account the individuals that benefit from non-compliant behavior and IUU fishing. Fisheries agencies are generally data and information rich and intelligence poor and this means that it can be hard for countries to target compliance, and enforcement activities in the most cost-effective and efficient way. MCS regimes must be comprehensive, integrated and provide real-time, accurate, fit-for-purpose, verifiable information in a cost-effective and non-discriminatory manner. MCS regimes must also be flexible and risk-based in order to effectively respond to the evolving nature of IUU fishing. This can all be challenging, particularly for developing countries that have limited resources and competing priorities.

At the regional level, regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and regional fisheries bodies (RFBs) must ensure that their members can effectively implement and comply with their RFMO obligations to ensure that conservation and fisheries management objectives are met. RFMOs and RFBs however face significant challenges in achieving this. Those responsible for compliance within these organizations are vital in ensuring effective implementation relevant legal obligations and can provide insights to strengthen national implementation of, and compliance with, these obligations. However, they can face a range of challenges and resource limitations in their efforts to do this. They work largely in isolation and have ineffective mechanisms to share information to support the development and implementation of effective MCS processes and to promote compliance best practices.

Strategic and cohesive approaches to fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement at the national and regional level offers the best chance to achieve ocean conservation and sustainable fisheries management objectives. However, the mechanisms to promote and facilitate effective

communication, collaboration, and coordination need to support this are often lacking or ineffectively implemented. Access to information and expertise on a range of MCS tools and approaches may be limited and capacity development can be lacking, ineffective or not fit-for-purpose.