

Original: English

**COVER NOTE ON PROPOSED RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A PROCESS TO ADDRESS THE USE OF
FORCED LABOR IN ICCAT FISHERIES**
(a new proposal by the United States)

The issue of the use of forced labor on fishing vessels has been gaining increased attention internationally. The United States believes it is time to begin a serious conversation in ICCAT on this important matter and raised it for discussion at the 2021 IMM Working Group meeting. We were pleased to find that there was broad agreement that ICCAT needed to work to address this issue with some urgency. As we noted at that meeting, reported incidents of forced labor on fishing vessels have increased in recent years, including in ICCAT fisheries, and recent analyses indicate some ICCAT fisheries may be at high risk for this practice. Beyond the obvious devastating human toll, forced labor, like IUU fishing, allows fishers to avoid the true operational costs of responsible fisheries, leading to negative consequences for the status of the fish stocks and unfair competition on the fishing grounds and in the marketplace. The United States is proposing this measure to condemn the use of forced labor in ICCAT fisheries and to establish an appropriate forum and timeframe within which the Commission can fully explore how ICCAT might approach the issue with a view to eliminating this abhorrent practice from ICCAT fisheries.

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DRAFT RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A PROCESS TO ADDRESS THE USE OF FORCED LABOR IN ICCAT FISHERIES

(a new proposal by the United States)

RECOGNIZING that various international instruments speak to the issue of forced labor and other labor abuses;

RECALLING that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO's) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides that "States should ensure that fishing facilities and equipment as well as all fisheries activities allow for safe, healthy and fair working and living conditions and meet internationally agreed standards adopted by relevant international organizations";

AWARE OF work being done to address the issue of forced labor in the seafood sector in other relevant international organizations and fora, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and the recommendations from the fourth meeting of the Joint FAO/ILO/International Maritime Organization (IMO) Ad Hoc Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Related Matters;

ACKNOWLEDGING that ICCAT fisheries are at risk of problematic labor practices and greatly concerned by reports of forced labor on vessels operating within the ICCAT Convention area;

WELCOMING the initial exchange on the issue of forced labor during the 2021 Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) Working Group meeting, during which CPCs expressed their concern about the practice and stressed the urgency of addressing it;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that forced labor is a dire problem in international fisheries that must be both condemned in the strongest way possible and eliminated through effective CPC actions, taken collectively and individually;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT)
RESOLVES THAT

1. An *ad hoc* Working Group on forced labor is established to identify actions that CPCs can take, individually and collectively, to eliminate the use of forced labor in ICCAT fisheries, including through cooperation with other relevant international organizations.
2. The *ad hoc* Working Group will meet intersessionally beginning in 2022, preferably in conjunction with another ICCAT intersessional meeting. All CPCs are encouraged to participate in the Working Group. At its first meeting, the Working Group will elect its chair.
3. The *ad hoc* Working Group will report on the progress of its deliberations at the 2022 ICCAT Annual Meeting as well as provide its recommendations regarding the need for additional intersessional meetings. The Commission will consider this report and decide on next steps.
4. CPCs are strongly encouraged to immediately take all appropriate actions under domestic and international law to prevent the use of forced labor on their vessels that participate in ICCAT fisheries or in fishing-related activities that support such fishing.