



Defending our Oceans
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Pirates of the Pacific

Armed and masked, scouring the oceans, stealing food from hungry families – modern day pirates are a far cry from the glamour of Hollywood movies. But they are a multi billion-dollar reality for many communities that can least afford to be robbed.

Known by their more technical, but less colourful name, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishers, or pirates, steal valuable resources and threaten long-term sustainability of the world's fisheries. They exploit depleted resources, fish in restricted areas, ignore required authorisations, waste fish caught by accident, use banned fishing gear and destroy vital fisheries. They run from authority when challenged, destroy evidence and endanger those in pursuit. The pirate fishing industry is a complex web of deceit and disguise and it is in their interests to keep it so.

Globally, up to US \$9 billion a year is lost to pirate fishing, and estimates in the Pacific range from US \$134 million to US \$400 million. This is up to 4 times more than Pacific Island states earn in access fees and licences.

The majority of pirate fishing in the Western and Central Pacific happens in national waters by fishing vessels that, ironically despite their illegal activities, are signatories to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (Tuna Commission), a body whose stated purpose is to conserve tuna stocks. Pirate vessels will often illegally fish the rich grounds inside a country's national waters, but claim the catch came from the high seas areas between states exclusive economic zones (EEZ) – areas known as donut holes.

Illegal fishing is:

- Fishing activities that violate or ignore national and/or international rules governing fisheries
- Fishing activities by vessels flagged to states that are parties to the relevant regional fisheries management organisation but are breaking the rules of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and/or other relevant laws.

Unreported fishing is:

Fishing activities that have not been reported or have been misreported to the relevant national authority in contravention of national laws and regulations; and/or in contravention of the reporting procedures of the relevant regional fisheries management organisation, in this case the Pacific Tuna Commission.

Unregulated fishing is:

Fishing activities on the high seas in areas with no regulation (essentially open access).

- Fishing activities by vessels using flags of convenience that are not members of the relevant regional fisheries management organisation, In this case, the Pacific Tuna Commission.

Flags of convenience allow a vessel to fish virtually anywhere on the high seas with impunity. Pirates buy flags of convenience from “open registries” that have few or no limitations on accepting foreign vessels and make little pretence of any genuine link to the vessel. These registries offer a loophole around many regulations. Because flag states do not usually belong to regional fisheries commissions, they are not bound by their decisions and regulations. Therefore, they allow pirates fling their flags to continue their destructive activities.

Obtaining a flag of convenience is as easy and quick as a few taps on the keyboard. Any notion of genuine link is cynically put aside for a few dollars and registration is sometimes provided within 24 hours.

In order to Make Piracy History, Greenpeace has developed the following plan:

Plan to address Pirate Fishing

- Ports must refuse to launder pirate fish or service pirate fishing boats – if they cannot land their catch or service their boats then the whole dirty business falls apart.
- All supermarkets, fish markets and fishmongers need to be able to prove they are not handling stolen goods, by being able to trace the history of the fish they sell. Suppliers who cannot should not be allowed to sell the fish on to consumers.
- Fishing boats should be controlled through electronic surveillance and governments must take responsibility for the activities of their boats. The authorities must immediately share information to stop pirate catches getting into the market.
- Often illegal boats never come into port and instead tranship - offload their catch - at sea. If this practice was made illegal it would be harder for pirates to move their illegal catches around the globe

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- Some boats and companies are caught time and again breaking the rules. These boats should be named on a single, publicly available list so all nations are able to refuse them services or prevent them from laundering their catches.
- International aid and assistance should be given to developing nations to protect their rich fishing grounds from the pirate fleets. As fishing grounds in the Northern hemisphere have been fished out, fishing boats have moved further South, into the waters of poorer countries that are not fully equipped to protect their fisheries.

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