

## BELIZE'S REPORT FOR 2008 TO THE INTERIM SECRETARIAT OF SPRFMO

By

**Angelo Mouzouropoulos**<sup>1</sup>

Belize is progressing in attaining its objective of becoming a Contracting Party of all RFMOs in whose Convention areas its fishing vessels are operating. Currently, Belize is a Contracting Party of ICCAT and IOTC. We are a Cooperating non-Contracting Party of IATTC and will become a Contracting Party thereof latest by when the "Antigua Convention" to which we have acceded on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007 comes into force, which is expected in 2009. We are a Cooperating non-Contracting Party of NEAFC and a Cooperating non -Member of WCPFC.

The fleet which fishes on the high seas is registered by the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE) and is licensed by the Fisheries Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Matters of Policy are determined jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Director General of IMMARBE. IMMARBE is dedicated to providing **"an efficient, cost effective quality ship registration service and to enforce national laws and international conventions which have been ratified by Belize in the interests of safety at sea and the protection of the environment"**. It is Gold Corporate Sponsor of Belize's Audubon Society which became the first Belize Member of the World Conservation Union, the world's largest environment organization based in Switzerland.

For your guidance, Belize has ratified the FAO "Compliance Agreement", the "Fish Stocks" Agreement and the "IPOA-IUU", the provisions of which have been incorporated into our High Seas Fishing Act, 2003. This serves to formalize our commitment to the elimination of activities which diminish the effectiveness of conservation measures.

### **PART I (Information on Fisheries, Research and Statistics)**

#### **Section I: Annual Fisheries Information**

We have only one mid-water trawler presently operating in the SPRFMO Convention Area which is targeting Horse Mackerel and Chub Mackerel. Its catches for 2007 were submitted to the Commission on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008. Currently we have 8 other mid-water trawlers which are licensed to operate within the Convention Area . On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008, we provided the Commission with copies of all Licenses issued to the aforementioned vessels. The fishing vessels operating in the SPRFMO Area from 2001-2006 together with their historical catches were submitted to the Commission on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008 as envisaged by the Interim Measures adopted by participants in the negotiation to establish a South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization, dated 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007. We also indicated that the we had other vessels that operated in the area prior to 2001 but the data/information for these vessels are not readily accessible but we are

---

<sup>1</sup> Director General, International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize, Head Delegate of Belize to SPRFMO

continuing our search in our archives as we had no detailed reporting system and vessel monitoring prior to 2001.

In our email dated 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008, we informed the Interim Secretariat that the bottom trawler “**Chang Xing**” will be deregistered from Belize. You may recall that the delegate from China had stated at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Meeting of SPRFMO that this would be the case and that this vessel will be registered in China. In the meantime, the vessel has been laid up in Suva, Fiji since 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Furthermore, on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2008, we had issued a Prohibition from Sailing Notice (PSN) in order to ensure that it does not sail from Suva until it is deregistered from Belize. Also, its Fishing Vessel License expired on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2008 and will not be renewed. At the same time, we wish to confirm our email of 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008, wherein we informed the Interim Secretariat that Belize does not intend to replace the F/V”Chang Xing” by another Belize registered bottom trawler after its deregistration. However, we reserve our rights thereto and will enter into negotiations with other States for the transfer of our fishing rights appertaining to one bottom trawler in the SRPFMO Convention Area.

For your guidance, none of our vessels have fished in waters within any EEZ or under national jurisdiction adjacent to the Convention Area.

- **Fishing Vessel Licensing**

In addition to compliance with the requirements of the Registration of Merchant Ships Act as amended in 1996, the Registration of Merchant Ships (Fishing Vessels of 24 meters in length and above) Safety Regulations, all new registrations as well as fishing vessels which are already registered are required to apply for a High Seas Fishing License by completing the relevant Application Form detailing, inter alia, a description of the vessel, its fishing gear, area of fishing, the species to be targeted, method of processing etc. Vessels which wish to fish in breach of conservation measures or for species for which Belize has no catch quotas in areas where quotas apply, are not registered or licensed. Furthermore, the High Seas Fishing License itself specifies as a condition that “Vessel has not and shall not engage in any activities which may undermine the effectiveness of International Conservation and Management Measures applicable to the authorized area of fishing”.

- **Vessel Monitoring**

We have successfully implemented VMS Reporting on all our High Seas fishing vessels which operate outside the territorial waters of Belize, irrespective of size, i.e. both below and above 24 meters. It is based on Inmarsat, utilizing Inmarsat C, Inmarsat Mini C and Inmarsat D+ equipment. Our provider is Pole Star Space Applications Limited who utilizes an automatic, real time internet based service called Purplefinder Vessel Management Solutions. This reporting system complies with 03-14 Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning Minimum Standards for the Establishment of a Vessel Monitoring System in the ICCAT Convention Area. For example, the margin of error is +/- 20 meters with a confidence level of 99% and it

is tamper proof. This reporting system complies with the 03-14/04 Recommendation by ICCAT concerning Minimum Standards for the Establishment of a Vessel Monitoring System in the ICCAT Convention Area- as well as SPRFMO's Vessel Monitoring, Minimum Standards for the Collection, Reporting and Verification of Data, dated September 2007.

The VMS position reports for the vessel "VIKTORIYA", which is currently operating in the Convention Area, were submitted to the Commission on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008. The monitoring is carried out by the Fishing Administration Department at IMMARBE's Head Office in Belize. It enables us, inter alia, to track a fishing vessel's compliance with the geographical limits contained in its Fishing License and to check the position data contained in the Fishing Logs and Fishing Vessel Voyage reports.

## **Section II: Research and Statistics**

- **Inspection Schemes and Compliance**

For the purpose of ensuring compliance, surveillance is conducted on a regular basis or as a result of an investigation by boarding at sea or in port, plant checks, observer teams, and requesting assistance from other Government/Organizations as necessary. We do not currently have any at sea observer program in the SPRFMO Area.

- **Research Activities**

We do not currently conduct any research activities within the Convention Area.

- **Statistical Data Collection System in Use**

Fishing vessel Owners/Operators are required to submit data of their fishing operations based on our format for such reporting which includes a detailed Fishing Log and Fishing Vessel Voyage Report showing information regarding positions, times/dates, sets, catches by species including weights and sizes, start times, number of hooks etc., details of discards, by-catches etc., species unloaded, names of ports or details of transshipments.

Our commitment and effective policies in combating IUU fishing are well known to all in the industry. In view of our achievements, in November 2006, the FAO requested us to write a case study on the reform of our fishing activities on the High Seas for use as a template to assist other developing nations. We were also invited/participated in the Expert Consultation on the Development of a Comprehensive Global Record of Fishing Vessels in Italy, Rome - 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> February 2008 and the Expert Workshop on Flag State Responsibilities in Vancouver, Canada - 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> March 2008. Furthermore, for your guidance, our Registry re-qualified for the third year in succession for the U.S. Coast Guard's Quality Shipping for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (QUALISHIP 21) Program. The three year detention percentage for Belize registered vessels calling at U.S. Ports is 0.00%. It is one of

14 Flag States in the world holding this qualification in 2008. Furthermore, our Quality Management System which encompasses Ship Registration, Endorsement Certification of Seafarers, Statutory Certification and Fishing Vessel Administration is certified in accordance with the latest Quality System Standard ISO 9001:2000 and is audited annually by external auditors.

As a small developing nation, all we in Belize are requesting is to secure a meaningful/viable fishing presence/participation in the SPRFMO in accordance with the provisions of the Interim Measures dated 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007.