



OFFSHORE FISHERIES FACTSHEET

UNITED NATIONS FISH STOCKS AGREEMENT

WHAT IS THE UNITED NATIONS FISH STOCKS AGREEMENT (UNFSA)?

"The United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks" is commonly referred to as the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA).

The UNFSA builds on the basic principle set out in UNCLOS, which declares that States should cooperate to ensure conservation and promote the best utilization of fisheries resources both within and beyond the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) based on the precautionary approach and best scientific evidence available.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THE AGREEMENT:

To ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks occurring within areas under national jurisdiction and on the high seas.

Under the Agreement, regional fisheries management organizations (RFMO's) are the primary vehicle for cooperation between coastal States and high seas fishing States in the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. The Agreement also ensures cooperation in international, regional and sub-regional enforcement is also addressed, along with boarding and inspection procedures and port State measures.



As of September 2019 the treaty has been ratified by 90 parties, which includes 89 states and the European Union (EU)



HISTORY OF THE AGREEMENT

The 1982 UNCLOS sets out legal rules for the conservation and management of marine living resources within areas under national jurisdiction and on the high seas. It includes provisions for straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks found in the coastal States EEZ and the nearby high seas.

However, there were still global issues regarding the conservation and management of these fish stocks resulting mainly from overfishing and the prevalence of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The root cause of the crisis was linked to the inconsistencies of the 1982 Convention which gave rise to the formation of the UNFSA.



- **Adopted: 4 August 1995**
- **Signed: 4 December 1995 – 4 December 1996**
- **Entry into Force: 11 December 2001**
- **Signatories: 59 States**
- **Current parties: 90 Parties inclusive of the EU**

RESPONSE TO THE ISSUES

- The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) called for an intergovernmental conference to promote effective implementations of the provisions under UNCLOS.
- In 1993, UN General Assembly responded by convening the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks which ended in 1995.
- In 1995, adoption of the United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (the UN Fish Stocks Agreement).
- The UN Fish Stocks Agreement came into force on 11 December 2001.

KNOWING YOUR TERMS:

- ▶ **EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE** – a maritime zone over which the coastal state has sovereign rights over the exploration and use of marine resources. It usually extends to a distance of 200 nautical miles out from the coast.
- ▶ **HIGH SEAS** – the open ocean which is not within the territorial waters or jurisdiction of any particular country.
- ▶ **HIGHLY MIGRATORY STOCKS** – fish species that regularly travel long distances across international waters. The term usually refers to tuna and tuna-like species.
- ▶ **PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH** – a decision-making procedure to take action to prevent possible environmental damage even before there is scientific evidence that damage will certainly occur.
- ▶ **STRADDLING STOCKS** – fish species that move through or exist in more than one exclusive economic zone and in the adjacent high seas.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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