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SEAFOOD COMPANIES AND NGOs UNITE TO CALL FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN FISHER SAFETY REPORTING

Major tuna processors Bolton Group, BumbleBee and Tri-Marine are joined by seafood industry groups Fedepesca, SEA Alliance, Hong Kong Sustainable Seafood Coalition and Fishing Industry Association and NGOs concerned with fisher safety in a call to create a mechanism that will record and reduce fisher mortality

Rome, Italy – 7 seafood industry and 7 non-government organisations today announce their support of a call made by The Pew Charitable Trusts to the member states of the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations to support the development of a mechanism that can establish a data collection scheme and repository on global fisher accident and mortality rates

The 35th Session of the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has highlighted that new research soon to be published by the Pew Charitable Trust, Lloyds Register Foundation, IMO, FISH Safety Foundation (FSF) and FAO, with contributions from many FAO Members, suggests that the number of fatalities within the fishing sector is likely much greater than 100,000 annually.

Previously, research by the ILO in 1999 and subsequently by [FAO](#) estimated that annual fisher deaths were in the region of 24,000 and 32,000 respectively, or 65 and 87 deaths per day. The safety of fishers has been an enduring problem for the wild capture seafood industry for many years.

Héctor Fernández, Sustainability Manager – Advocacy, Policy & Compliance, Bolton Food Business Unit said:

“Respecting Human Rights along the complex global seafood value chain is a core element of our business. That’s why we have signed a transformational partnership with Oxfam, one of the most reputed NGOs in the defense of human and labour rights, in order to reach new social sustainable standards to transform the sector. As cannot be otherwise, Bolton Group is committed with the improvement of Fisher Safety and welfare. We believe it is a crucial first step to call on FAO members

to urgently improve data collection and analysis of accidents and loss of life on board fishing vessels globally.”

Marcelo Hidalgo, CSR & Sustainability Director, Fishing Industry Association Papua New Guinea said:

“For decades the scientific community, NGOs, governments, and global stakeholders have focused their efforts and care on tuna stocks and their health status. It is time to recognize the importance of the human factor in fisheries and that fisheries cannot exist without people.

Our Tuna Fleet in PNG cares about the safety and welfare of our Crew and Skippers. Since 2019, we have increased assessment and improvement of the decent working and living onboard our fishing vessels aligned with ILOc188 and FISH standard for Crew, as a private sector initiative. It is time that FAO and regulators such as RFMO also request this to global fisheries.”

Matt Owens, Sustainability Director, Tri-Marine said:

“As one of the world’s largest tuna suppliers, Tri Marine takes its responsibility for the health and safety of fishing crew members very seriously. We support improved data collection, enhanced training, comprehensive safety standards for all fishing vessels and the adoption of key regulatory measures, including ILO 188, to monitor and improve crew welfare.”

Andy Hickman, Head of the Seafood Ethics Action Alliance said:

“It’s critically important that workers in seafood supply chains are working safely and treated with respect. This latest research on the death rate in the global fishing industry, highlighted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization Committee on Fisheries, is cause for serious concern. Notwithstanding the important work being around the world to improve safety practices in the seafood sector, there is clearly far more that needs to be done. The SEA Alliance and its members are committed to working with all stakeholders in the seafood sector to better understand the underlying issues that create risks for workers and helping to support improvements where they are needed.”

Amber Madley, Head of Social Responsibility for New England Seafood, and Advocacy Lead for the SEA Alliance said:

“Fishers around the world play a critical role in supporting food security, livelihoods, and sustainable fisheries management. Ensuring that they can carry out their work safely should be a priority for every business involved in the seafood supply chain. We strongly support the creation of a mechanism to improve information on accidents and fatalities at a global level, so that we can improve visibility and understanding of the risks fishers face, and make sure resources are targeted effectively.”

Pew states that the drivers for this very high mortality rate include climate change and Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, which push fishing vessels into unsafe waters, as well as insufficient oversight of vessel construction and operations.

We are committed to ensuring that the seafood we buy, and sell is sourced from responsible producers that have not engaged in activities that expose fishers to unsafe and harmful working conditions. In addition, many of the undersigned organisations already advocate for the ratification and effective implementation of the following key international agreements that will improve fisher safety and welfare: the IMO Cape Town Agreement, the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, the FAO Port State Measures Agreement, and the International Convention on Training, Certification and for Fishing Vessels Personnel.

We believe it is critically important to urgently improve data collection, and analysis of accidents and loss of life in the fishing industry. This will help us to understand the drivers behind these unacceptably high fatality rates and ensure that safety initiatives are developed and implemented based on robust data.

STATEMENT IN ENGLISH & SPANISH WITH LOGOS ATTACHED

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The Fishing Industry Association (FIA) is a non-profit organization founded in 1991, with membership consisting of the fishing companies and seafood processors of Papua New Guinea, all of whom are working to promote responsible management of the fisheries industry. For instance, the FIA PNG members are encouraged to implement practices that drive social responsibility practices related to labor conditions; to mitigate and minimize the impact of marine litter and fishing gear; as well as manage their fishing operations in a responsible manner by preserving biodiversity and conforming to the conservation measures included in the terms of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. Our FIA PNG [Responsible Sourcing Policy \(RSP\)](#) has been recognized by several stakeholders as a holistic and comprehensive approach for maintaining healthy Marine Ecosystems and look after Labour Conditions on-board and Crew Welfare.

The tuna members of the Association are involved in all aspects of the tuna supply chain – fishing, trading, logistics, processing, sales, and marketing. We have a tuna fleet of 48 tuna purse seiners providing direct jobs to more than 2300 Crew onboard, and a total tuna processing capacity of 980 MT/day in 6 tuna processing facilities located in Papua New Guinea;

Bolton Group is an Italian, family-owned, multinational company with a 2.8bln turnover, more than 11.000 employees and present in over 150 countries, that has been producing and distributing fast moving consumer goods for more than 70 years. Its largest Business Unit is the Food Business Unit, a leader in the canned tuna industry, supplying over 60 countries throughout the world with its 11 brands such as Rio Mare, Isabel, Saupiquet and Cuca.

The Seafood Ethics Action (SEA) Alliance is a pre-competitive collaboration of retailers and seafood businesses aiming to strengthen human rights due diligence carried out in the global seafood supply chain and ensure respect for human rights. Members include many of the UK's major retailers and seafood businesses, alongside retail and industry trade bodies.

Tri-Marine has been in the fish business since 1972, building a wealth of knowledge, relationships and experience. Our team of dedicated industry experts combined with strategically located sources of supply and offices worldwide provide customers with both diversified and optimized supply chain solutions. We do this with integrity and respect for the resources and our employees for long-term success.

Our business is driven by our relationships with the communities where we work and with our customers and suppliers who entrust to us the responsibility to do the right thing, to deliver on our promises and to add value every time they deal with Tri Marine.