



Pew Applauds Milestone Ratification of International Treaty to Improve Safety at Sea

Descrizione

COMUNICATO STAMPA - CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

International Maritime Organization's Cape Town Agreement will help save lives and fight illegal fishing—protecting the ocean and the people who depend on it

LONDON, Feb. 24, 2026 /PRNewswire/ — The Pew Charitable Trusts today welcomed the news that the Cape Town Agreement (CTA) has received sufficient support from major fishing nations across the globe—including Argentina, which acceded to the treaty today—to begin to be enforced starting next year. This binding international treaty will improve fishing vessel standards to ensure crew and observer safety and is an important step forward for the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The CTA will protect fishers' lives by establishing standards for industrial vessel construction and related seaworthiness, decking, heating, emergency procedures and other safety and life-saving measures. Before this landmark treaty, few global standards or international legal obligations protected fishers at sea. Research from the FISH Safety Foundation, commissioned by Pew, estimates that more than 100,000 people in the fishing sector are killed each year. The CTA's focus on safety could help prevent many deaths.

Importantly, increasing safety standards on fishing vessels will also help efforts to fight IUU fishing. In an effort to maximize profits, operators who fish illegally often cut corners with how they manage their vessels, further endangering workers in one of the world's most hazardous professions. More governance, and standardized control over vessel safety provisions, will increase opportunities to detect and prevent IUU fishing.

Adopted by the International Maritime Organization in 2012, the CTA, which applies primarily to new vessels 24 meters or longer, will enter into force next year now that 28 States (several more than the 22 required) have ratified it. To enter into force, the agreement also had to cover at least 3,600 vessels, and that benchmark has also been exceeded with the latest round of ratifications.

The CTA joins two longstanding international agreements that make it more difficult for unscrupulous operators to exploit gaps in fishing regulations. These include the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which requires parties to strengthen and harmonize port controls, and the International Labor Organization's Work in Fishing Convention, which establishes binding safety and labor standards at sea.

Momentum for stronger ocean governance has accelerated. Since 2022, four major international agreements have been adopted or entered into force, including the Convention on Biological Diversity Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022, the World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies in 2025, the high seas treaty, or United Nations Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, in January 2026, and now the CTA. Together, they mark a decisive shift towards efforts to secure the long-term health of marine ecosystems and people alike.

Peter Horn, who directs efforts to end illegal fishing at The Pew Charitable Trusts, issued the following statement:

“With activation of the Cape Town Agreement, governments have taken a momentous step towards improving fishers’ safety at sea; strengthening efforts to end illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; and increasing the sustainability of fisheries through better oversight and governance of fishing fleets.

“Until now, fishers lacked the same safety protections as other seafarers. And with more than 100,000 people killed each year in the global fishing sector, protective action was critical. When this treaty enters into force next year, it will dramatically improve the standards of life in the fishing industry—and, in turn, reduce fishing-related deaths.

“The Cape Town Agreement comes on the heels of other important ocean treaties. But these ambitious plans for sustainable governance are only as good as their implementation. States must now do their part to turn words into action and deliver protections not only for global fisheries and fishers themselves, but for the entire ocean ecosystem.”•

Founded in 1948, The Pew Charitable Trusts uses data to make a difference. Pew addresses the challenges of a changing world by illuminating issues, creating common ground, and advancing ambitious projects that lead to tangible progress.

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