

European social partners welcome upcoming entry into force of the IMO Cape Town Agreement, paving the way for a safer global fishing industry

The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), Europêche and Copa-Cogeca warmly welcome the formal accession of Argentina to the 2012 Cape Town Agreement (CTA). This decisive step officially triggers the conditions for the global treaty to enter into force in February 2027, marking a historic milestone for global safety at sea.

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The 2012 Cape Town Agreement, adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), is a landmark international treaty that outlines mandatory safety standards for fishing vessels of 24 meters in length and over. It regulates vital aspects such as vessel design, construction, life-saving appliances, fire protection, and communications equipment.

Operating as the fourth pillar of international maritime regulation, alongside with the following Conventions, the entry into force of the CTA closes a longstanding gap in the global safety framework for the fishing industry.

- IMO's [STCW-F Convention](#) on training and certification of fishers.
- ILO's [Work in Fishing Convention](#), which sets international standards to ensure decent living and working conditions on commercial fishing vessels.
- FAO's [Agreement on Port State Measures](#) to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing.

The European Social Partners in the fisheries sector, ETF, Europêche and Copa-Cogeca, welcome the latest ratification, which allowed the treaty to hit the required threshold of 22 States with a combined fleet of 3,600 qualifying vessels. Consequently, the treaty is now officially set to enter into force in 12 months.

Several key EU Member States — including Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain — had already ratified the CTA. The EU had also ensured that the Convention's provisions are reflected in EU legislation, providing common safety standards for fishing vessels across Europe.

Commercial fishing remains a high-risk profession in many parts of the world though. The adoption, ratification, and robust implementation of international standards and instruments, such as the ILO C188, the STCW-F, and now the Cape Town Agreement, are absolutely fundamental to improving occupational health and safety in the sector. In this context, the Social Partners strongly support the ongoing initiative of the European Commission to transpose the STCW-F standards into European legislation. Aligning EU law with international benchmarks for the training and certification of fishers is a vital step toward a more modern, competitive and safer European fleet.

Cor Blonk, representing Europêche, stated: *"The entry into force of the Cape Town Agreement is a monumental achievement for the global fishing sector. This treaty is crucial not only to protect the lives of fishers at sea, but also to consolidate a true global level playing field, eradicating substandard practices and unfair competition in other parts of the world."*

Juan Manuel Trujillo, ETF Fisheries Section Chair, emphasized the vital social impact: *"Every year, too many fishers lose their lives trying to supply the world with seafood. The enforcement of the Cape Town Agreement, alongside ILO C188 and STCW-F, is a crucial victory for the social and safety rights of fishers everywhere. This is ultimately about saving lives, radically improving working conditions on board, and ensuring that every fisher can do their job safely and return home to their families."*

ETF, Europêche and Copa-Cogeca sincerely hope that Argentina's accession to the Treaty will serve as a catalyst for global action. The European Social Partners urge other fishing countries worldwide to promptly ratify this fundamental IMO treaty. Enlarging the coverage of the CTA to even more fishing vessels is the only way to exponentially increase safety across the global fleet and ensure a secure future for the men and women working at sea.

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