



IMCS Network

Operational Framework



1. Purpose

The IMCS Network Operational Framework sets out the practical arrangements through which we operate. It describes how the Network is structured, how decisions are made and how our members plus partners engage in our work.

This Framework provides contemporary guidance on implementing the IMCS Network’s 2012 Governing Framework. It reflects the Network’s evolution as a voluntary, practitioner-led international community of fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), compliance, and enforcement agencies and organisations.

The Operational Framework builds upon and gives practical effect to the 2012 Governing Framework. It should be read alongside it, with the Governing Framework continuing to articulate the Network’s core principles, roles and structures.

The Operational Framework serves as the authoritative guide to how those principles are interpreted and applied in current practice within the IMCS Network, ensuring clarity, coherence and alignment with the Network’s ongoing evolution.



2. Nature of the Network

- The IMCS Network is a technical, practitioner-driven community of practice and is not a treaty-based body or an intergovernmental organisation.
- The IMCS Network is supported by a small professional team led by the Executive Director.
- Participation is voluntary and self-initiated, but members and partners commit to pro-active, effective, conscientious and collaborative engagement.
- The Network has no legal personality; either under domestic or international law and it operates through a fiscal sponsor or equivalent hosting arrangement.

3. Vision and strategic objectives

Vision:

A globally connected and capable fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement community. A community that works collectively to achieve and maintain optimal levels of compliance that effectively support marine conservation and fisheries management objectives.

Mission:

To strengthen and enhance fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement by promoting and facilitating effective communication, collaboration, coordination, and capacity development across our community.

Strategic objectives:

- Improve fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement approaches that combat IUU fishing and optimise fisheries compliance.
- Establish and maintain effective collaboration and cooperation between members, partners and across the global fisheries MCS and compliance community.
- Empower, inform and strengthen the capacity of fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement professionals.

4. Members

4.1 Definition

Members are national fisheries agencies and regional fisheries organisations with a mandate for MCS, compliance and enforcement.

Members participate as institutions, not as sovereign states.

Engagement is technical and operational, not diplomatic or political.

4.2 Member criteria

To become a member, an institution must:

- Hold a formal mandate for MCS, compliance or enforcement in fisheries.
- Commit to active participation in Network activities.
- Agree to the principles and processes in this Framework.

4.3 Process for submission of requests for membership in the IMCS Network

Applications for membership must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the IMCS Network. **The application must demonstrate the formal mandate for MCS, compliance or enforcement in fisheries and include:**

- Name and role of a point of contact.
- Role of the agency or organisation in fisheries and fisheries-related MCS, compliance and enforcement activities.
- A statement of commitment to active participation in Network activities.
- Confirmation that the agency or organisation gives permission to use its logo on the IMCS Network website and other communication material.
- The Chair of the IMCS Network will assess the application for membership, upon a recommendation of the Executive Director and Executive Committee.

5. Partners

5.1 Definition

Partners are IGOs, NGOs, academic institutions and other technical bodies whose work directly supports fisheries MCS, compliance and enforcement.

Partners are also national fisheries agencies with a mandate for MCS, compliance and enforcement in jurisdictions that are not recognised or are disputed.

5.2 Criteria

To become an IGO, NGO or academic institution partner, partners must:

- Provide tangible technical value to the Network (expertise, tools, training, data, operational support).
- Share the Network's commitment to practical, needs-driven solutions.
- Maintain a technical and/or operational focus rather than an advocacy or campaigning focus.

To become a national fisheries agency partner an institution must:

- Hold a formal mandate for MCS, compliance or enforcement in fisheries.
- Commit to active participation in Network activities.
- Agree to the principles and processes in this Framework

5.3 Process for submission of requests for partner status in the IMCS Network

Applications for IGO, NGO or academic institution partner status must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the IMCS Network. **The application must demonstrate the tangible technical value to the Network and include:**

- Name and role of a point of contact.
- Technical or operational role of the organisation in fisheries MCS activities.
- A statement of commitment to practical, needs-driven solutions.
- Confirmation that the organisation gives permission to use its logo on IMCS Network.

Applications for national fisheries agency partner status must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the IMCS Network. **The application must demonstrate the formal mandate for MCS, compliance or enforcement in fisheries and include:**

- Name and role of a point of contact.
- Role of the agency or organisation in fisheries and fisheries-related MCS, compliance and enforcement activities.
- A statement of commitment to active participation in Network activities.
- Confirmation that the agency or organisation gives permission to use its logo on the IMCS Network website and other communication material.

The Chair of the IMCS Network will assess applications for partnership status, upon a recommendation of the Executive Director and Executive Committee.

6. Decision-making

6.1 Members role in decision-making

Members have an important role in shaping the Network's identity and direction. The Chair, at times, may require members to take a decision. Decisions are to be taken by consensus.

6.2 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee serves as the Network's primary governing body, providing strategic guidance and advice on priorities, partnerships, and resourcing. Its composition reflects the global diversity of the Network and includes representatives from member agencies and organisations plus appointed advisors, as appropriate.

Chair

- Provides governance leadership for the Network.
- Presides over meetings of the Executive Committee and members.
- Represents the Network externally, as agreed by the Executive Committee.
- Works closely with the Executive Director to ensure alignment between strategic priorities and operations.

Vice-Chair(s)

- Support the Chair in fulfilling their responsibilities.
- May lead specific initiatives or areas of work as delegated by the Executive Committee.
- Acts as Interim Chair when the Chair is unavailable or the position is vacant, until a new Chair is appointed.

6.2.1 Nomination process

Nominations for the position of Chair and Vice-Chairs may be made by any member.

The Secretariat will invite nominations no later than three months before the conclusion of the current Chair or Vice-Chair's term.

Nominations should include a statement of support from the nominating member and a short biography outlining the nominee's experience, leadership within the MCS community, and familiarity with the IMCS Network's objectives.

6.2.2 Selection and appointment

The Executive Committee will review nominations and seek consensus from members in selecting the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Where consensus cannot be reached, selection will be determined by a confidential vote of the Executive Committee.

The nominating member will be excluded from the confidential vote if one is required.

The appointments will be recorded in the meeting minutes and announced to the full membership.

6.2.3 Term of appointment

The Chair and Vice-Chair shall each serve a four-year term, with eligibility for one further consecutive term of four years or as agreed by the Executive Committee.

Terms should be aligned, where possible, with the broader Executive Committee cycle to maintain continuity.

In the event that the Chair steps down before the end of a term, the Vice-Chair shall assume the role of Acting Chair until a new Chair is appointed.

6.2.4 Continuity and succession

The outgoing Chair, at the request of the Executive Committee, may continue to serve in an advisory capacity for up to two years to support knowledge transfer and transition.

The Executive Director will maintain records of all appointments and ensure an orderly handover of responsibilities.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee provides operational and strategic guidance within the boundaries of the Strategic Plan and this Framework

The Executive Committee supports the setting of the Network's strategic direction and oversees governance.

6.2.5 Nomination process

Nominations for Executive Committee membership may be made by any member.

The Executive Director will issue a call for nominations at least three months prior to the expiration of a member's term or when a vacancy arises.

Nominations should include a short statement of support from the nominating agency and a brief biography of the nominee outlining relevant MCS experience and engagement with the Network.

The Executive Director will collate nominations and provide them to the current Executive Committee for review.

6.2.6 Selection and appointment

The Executive Committee will review all nominations to ensure balanced representation across regions, fisheries sectors, and expertise.

Final selections will be made by consensus of members, with input from the Executive Committee and Executive Director where relevant.

The outcome of the selection process will be communicated to all members and formally recorded in the meeting minutes.

6.2.7 Term of appointment

Executive Committee members will serve a four-year term, commencing from the date of appointment.

Members may be reappointed for one additional term of four years.

Terms should be staggered, where possible, to promote continuity and renewal.

Should a member step down before the end of their term, the Executive Committee may appoint an interim replacement to serve the remainder of the term.

6.2.8 Review and renewal

Prior to reappointment, the Executive Committee will review each member's participation and contributions to ensure continued alignment with the Network's goals and values.

6.3 Executive Director

The Executive Director provides strategic and operational oversight of the Network.

The Executive Director is responsible for delivering its strategy, programmes and operations.

The Executive Director is accountable to the Chair for performance and progress against the Strategic Plan and annual work programme.

The Executive Director has authority over day-to-day management, including staff and advisor appointments and supervision, financial administration within approved budgets and operational decision-making.

Members and partners engage with staff through the Executive Director or delegated points of contact.

The Executive Director represents the Network in external engagements, partnerships and media, in line with the agreed strategy and policies.

6.4 Staff

The Executive Director manages Network staff and advisors that deliver the Network's work in consultation with the Chair and within the agreed strategy and budget.

7. Meetings

The Network holds a General Meeting of members at least once every two years, in person or virtually.

Additional thematic or regional meetings may be held as required.

The Executive Committee meets at least quarterly.

8. Transparency and communication

Decisions, meeting outcomes and major initiatives will be shared with all members and partners.

Information shared within the Network will be treated according to agreed confidentiality protocols.

9. Amendments to the Operational Framework

Any member may propose amendments. Proposed changes must be circulated at least 30 days before discussion and require consensus or a two-thirds majority of members present to adopt.



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**International Monitoring,
Control & Surveillance
Network**

mcs.network@imcsnet.org | imcsnet.org