

**Federal Law No. (23) of 1999, Concerning the Exploration, Protection, and  
Development of the Live Aquatic Resources in the Waters of the United Arab Emirates**

**We, Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan,                      President of the United Arab Emirates,**

- After taking cognizance of the Constitution,
- The federal Law No. (1) of 1972, regarding the ministries jurisdictions, and the powers of the ministers and the laws made in amendment thereof,
- The federal law number (17) of the year 1972 concerning the nationality and passports and the laws made in amendment thereof,
- The federal Law No. (13) of 1976 regarding cooperative societies,
- The federal Law No. (6) of 1979, regarding the veterinary quarantine and the laws made in amendment thereof,
- The federal Law No. (8) of 1980, as amended, regarding the regulation of labour relations and the laws made in amendment thereof,
- The federal Law no (26) of 1981, as amended, regarding the marine commercial law and the laws made in amendment thereof,
- The federal Law No (3) of 1987, in issuance of the Penal Law,
- Federal Law No (35) of 1992, in issuance of Disciplinary Procedure Code,
- Federal Law No (7) of 1993 for Establishing the Federal Environment Foundation,
- Federal Law No (19) of the year 1993 regarding Demarcation of the Marine Zones of the state of the United Arab Emirates,
- And on the basis of the submission by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the approval of the cabinet and federal National Council and ratification of the Supreme Federal Council of the federation:

**Have issued the following Law:**

## Article (1)

### Definitions

In implementing the provisions of this law, the following words and expressions shall have the meanings assigned against each of them unless the context requires otherwise: -

- State** : The United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- Ministry** : Ministry of Climate Change and Environment.
- Minister** : Minister of Environment and Water.
- Competent Authority** : The local competent authority.
- Living Aquatic resources** : All aquatic living organisms, including microscopic, small, large, migratory, and fishing waters sedentary or visiting organisms such as birds, turtles, crustaceans, molluscs and mammals, and they also include species fossilised in advanced stages.
- Fishing** : All aquatic living organisms, including microscopic, small, large, migratory, and fishing waters sedentary or visiting organisms such as birds, turtles, crustaceans, molluscs and mammals, and they also include species fossilised in advanced stages.
- Fishing boat** : Any floating vessel used for fishing, regardless of the material it is made of.
- Fishing tools and equipment** : Tools and equipment used in fishing, including nets, traps (Qaraqir), drag lines, hooks, and the like.
- Captain (Nukhadha)** : A person licensed and in charge of driving a fishing boat.
- Fisherman** : A person who practices fishing as a profession.
- Fishing waters** : Internal waters, including island and creek coasts, State beaches and coasts, territorial waters, and State exclusive economic zone waters.
- Fishing Licence** : A licence issued by the competent authority.

- Boat Licence** : A licence issued by the Ministry for a fishing boat.
- Registry** : The Ministry general registry of those practising fishing as a profession.
- Executive Regulations** : The Executive Regulations of the Law.
- Aquaculture farms** : A production project in an artificial or natural setting for the cultivation and breeding of fish, crustaceans, molluscs and aquatic plants.

## **Chapter One**

### **Organization of the Fishing Trade**

#### **Article (2)**

Any person may not practice the fishing trade in the fishing waters unless licensed by the Competent Authority and his name entered into the Register. The conditions and procedures of the fishing license will be determined with a decision by the competent authority.

#### **Article (3)**

A general register will be established at the Ministry for enrollment of the fishing trade practitioners and their fishing boats in the state, and the executive by- laws will determine the form of such register and data that must be inserted in it.

#### **Article (4)**

1. A person registered in the Registry shall:
  - a. Be a national.
  - b. Be eighteen years (18) old at the minimum.
  - c. Pass a test to obtain a fishing licence in accordance with the Executive Regulations.
  - d. Be of good conduct.
2. The Executive Regulations shall specify the documents required for registration in the Registry.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Procedures of entering into the register**

#### **Article (5)**

1. By virtue of a decision of the Minister, a committee to be named "The Supreme Committee for Exploitation, Protection and Development of Living Aquatic Resources" shall be formed, headed by the Minister, and with the membership of representatives of the federal authorities determined thereby in addition to a representative of each Emirate based on its nomination.
2. The Committee shall undertake the following:
  - a. Taking the necessary coordination measures to exploit, protect, and develop the State living aquatic resources.
3. Any other relevant functions determined by the Minister.

#### **Article (6)**

The Competent Authority shall undertake the following:

1. Verifying the conformity of the data recorded in the application for registration in the Registry and comparing it with the required documents.
2. Conducting a technical examination and inspection of the boat owned by the applicant and recording its data, such as measuring its length, width, draft, year of manufacture, material, engine type and power, assigned tonnage, name, and number. Additionally, recording details about the fishing, navigation, and safety equipment on the boat in accordance with Executive Regulations. The Competent Authority shall exercise the powers contained in this clause in cooperation with the Federal Authority for Land and Maritime Transport.
3. Determining the permitted fishing areas in the Emirate and the fishing tools and equipment permitted to be used in such areas.
4. Studying requests for registration in the Registry in accordance with the Executive Regulations.

5. Submitting to the Ministry proposals and recommendations that contribute to the protection and development of living aquatic resources.
6. Cooperating with the Ministry in educating fishermen with the aim of preserving and developing fish wealth in light of the legislation in force.

### **Article (7)**

Repealed by Federal Law No. (7) of 2016 Amending Certain Provisions of Federal Law No. (23) of 1999.

### **Article (8)**

Repealed by Federal Law No. (7) of 2016 Amending Certain Provisions of Federal Law No. (23) of 1999.

### **Article (9)**

The Fishermen, Fishing Boats, number and types of the Fishing equipments will be entered into the register subject to a certificate approved by the Committee and attached with documents supporting hereto.

### **Article (10)**

Repealed by Federal Law No. (7) of 2016 Amending Certain Provisions of Federal Law No. (23) of 1999.

### **Article (11)**

Registration in the registry shall be for a period of two years as of the date of the decision approving the registration of the fisherman name, and shall be renewed in accordance with the conditions and controls specified by the Executive Regulations.

### **Article (12)**

The Fishing gear and Equipments licensed for use on the licensed Fishing Boat shall bear

numbers that are unified, clear and conforming to the number of the boat as to be specified by the by-laws.

### **Article (13)**

Persons practising the fishing profession whose names are on the registry shall notify the Competent Authority of any modification or change of the registration application details or the documents attached thereto, within one month of the amendment or change occurring. The notification shall be upon a signed application submitted to the Competent Authority in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Executive Regulations.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Licenses of fishing boats**

#### **Article (14)**

No fisherman on the registry may use a fishing boat unless the boat is registered in the registry and has a boat licence.

#### **Article (15)**

The Ministry, in coordination with the Competent Authority, shall determine the number of fishing boats allowed for fishing, the method and seasons, the number of boats that a single fisherman may own, and the number of authorised fishing equipment.

#### **Article (16)**

The boat's License and the Fishing License will be valid for a two-year period and renewed within a period not exceeding sixty days as from the date of their expiry.

#### **Article (17)**

The boat licence shall include the details specified by the Executive Regulations.

### **Article (18)**

The boat's License and the Fishing License will be always kept on boat to be produced on demand.

### **Article (19)**

A boat licence or fishing licence may be granted to replace a lost or damaged licence, provided that the damaged licence or proof of the loss of the original licence shall be submitted with the application.

### **Article (20)**

An application to renew a boat licence shall be submitted by the owner thereof, and an application to renew a fishing licence shall be submitted by the holder thereof, to the Competent Authority, in accordance with the Executive Regulations.

### **Article (20) BIS**

A boat may be delisted from the registry if the licence thereof has not been renewed for a period exceeding six months from the date of its expiration. Moreover, a boat may be delisted from the registry if it has not sailed for two years.

### **Article (21)**

The national fisherman who is running his own fishing boat by himself shall have the right to fish in any fishing ground in the country.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Protection and Development**

### **Article (22)**

It is impermissible to anchor or sail the fishing boat in the prohibited fishing grounds except in compelling cases resulting from weather conditions, a breakdown therein or for rescuing

souls or properties.

### **Article (23)**

It is impermissible to practice Fishing using absolutely banned Fishing gear or Equipments which are prohibited either in specific times or grounds or according to some particular specifications or with respect to specific species of the live Aquatic Wealth.

The executive by-laws will specify the gear and the equipments which are used in fishing and the gear and equipment the use of which is restricted or banned.

### **Article (24)**

Fishing is impermissible during fertilization or reproduction seasons or in the grounds where fishing is banned temporarily or permanently. Catching small size aquatics below the permitted length is also impermissible. The ministry will, in cooperation with the Competent Authority in each emirate, determine these seasons, species and sizes and announce the same in the mass media and through the Ministry's offices in the regions as well as through the fishermen's cooperatives.

### **Article (25)**

1. The following activities may be practised only upon a permit obtained from the competent authority:
  - a. Diving for the purpose of fishing and exploiting living aquatic resources.
  - b. Practising marine sports with the aim of holding fishing competitions and using marine sports tools related to aquatic resources.
2. Aquaculture farms may be established and invested in upon obtaining a licence from the Competent Authority and the approval of the Ministry.
3. The Executive Regulations shall specify the licence and permission conditions.

### **Article (26)**

The following shall be prohibited:

1. Fishing, using bottom trawl nets, bottom posts, lights, nets made of nylon, or any fishing materials or methods specified by a decision of the Ministry.



2. Establishing barriers in fishing waters that change the water currents pattern or hinder the movement of aquatic organisms; filling or bulldozing the seabed or beaches; or removing, exploiting, or bulldozing aquatic weeds, unless warranted by the public interest upon a licence issued by the Competent Authority in coordination with the Ministry in accordance with other regulating legislation.
3. Abandoning boats in fishing ports in accordance with the Executive Regulations.
4. The captain violating sailing for fishing security instructions.

### **Article (27)**

Artificial coral reefs may not be set up unless for scientific research purposes or for developing certain species of the living Aquatic Wealth and after obtaining a license from the Ministry and the Competent Authority.

### **Article (28)**

1. It is prohibited to hunt sea turtles of all types, sizes, and ages, or to collect their eggs, or to tamper with their locations and breeding areas in fishing waters. It is also prohibited to hunt dolphins, whales, dugongs, and other marine mammals of all types and sizes, or to extract shellfish, sponges, and coral reefs, except for purposes of scientific research and upon obtaining a permission by the Competent Authority in accordance with the controls specified by the Executive regulations.
2. As an exception to what was stated in the previous clause, a permit may be issued for the extraction of some types of shellfish in accordance with the controls specified by the Executive Regulations.

### **Article (29)**

The Minister will determine the species of fish and marine creatures the catch of which is prohibited for the purpose of extracting their eggs, skins or fins, or for any other purposes.

### **Article (30)**

It is impermissible to import, possess , sell and circulate nets, gear or equipments which are unauthorized or banned for fishing and which the executive bylaws will specify.

### **Article (31)**

1. No fishing boat may be sailed without its licensed owner as captain (Nukhadha).
2. The boat owner may deputise a licensed national captain to operate the boat and work on it as a captain in accordance with the controls specified by the Executive Regulations.
3. In case of the death of the boat owner, their heirs who depend on the fishing profession as their primary source of livelihood may appoint a national licensed captain (Nukhadha) to manage and operate the fishing boat in accordance with the controls specified by the Executive Regulations.

### **Article (32)**

1. All workers on the boat shall be sponsored by its owner in accordance with the provisions of the laws in force in the State.
2. Expatriate workers may travel on fishing boats owned by first- and second-degree relatives.

### **Article (33)**

A decision shall be issued by the Minister to determine the number of workers on fishing boats based on its size, technical specifications, and conditions of use.

### **Article (34)**

Fishing may not be with explosives, crackers, or materials that are harmful, toxic or anesthetic to aquatics.

### **Article (35)**

Body Remains of whales and fish may not be dumped in the fishing waters.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Circulation processing and Marketing**

#### **Article (36)**

It is impermissible to Circulate sell, market , consume , exploit or benefit in any aspect of Fish and other aquatics the fishing of which is prohibited entirely or in a specific season. The Competent Authority in each emirate shall set the appropriate control means for implementing the provisions herein.

#### **Article (37)**

Fishing boats and means of transporting living aquatic resources shall be equipped with refrigerators or insulated boxes cooled with ice and with means and techniques that achieve their indented purpose. Hygiene and health conditions shall be observed in the same in accordance with the rules stipulated in the Executive Regulations in coordination with the Competent Authority.

#### **Article (38)**

Live Aquatic wealth may not be sold out at markets or stores where hygienic and trade conditions prescribed by the laws, regulations and decisions issued by the Competent Authority are not observed.

#### **Article (39)**

Basic health standards shall be considered in processing and drying living aquatic wealth prior to its marketing. All ships or vehicles carrying imported products prepared out of living aquatic take into consideration the provisions of the laws and regulations and decisions of the customs, veterinary quarantine and the general health, whether these products are fresh, dried, canned, salted or smoked.

#### **Article (40)**

Foreign ships may not fish living aquatic wealth in the fishing waters in the country.

### **Article (41)**

Ships of Scientific research ,marine surveys ships, or other ships may not conduct any researches or explorations or taking samples or conducting any studies in the fishing waters unless by a private licensed from the ministry and approval of the competent authority.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Grants and Loans of fishermen**

#### **Article (42)**

The ministry will give out grants , loans, and services to the fishermen who practice or desire to practice the fishing trade , and the priority in availing these privileges will be for those who had fishing as their unique trade, their source of sustenance and carry on it by themselves.

#### **Article (43)**

The grants and loans which the ministry extends to fishermen will be in kind ,And the cabinet may issue a decision to release the fishermen from the value of the loans or part thereof.

The Minister will issue a decision for the system of loans and grants of fishermen containing the terms and conditions of granting and using such loans and the procedures of obtaining them.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Exporting Live aquatic wealth**

#### **Article (44)**

Exportation of living aquatic resources caught in fishing waters shall be prohibited, unless in accordance with a decision of the Cabinet and for the categories specified by Article (45) hereof. Such decision shall specify the times, seasons, quantities and types that may be exported. The prohibition stipulated in this article shall include transportation, transition or exportation of aquatic resources caught in fishing waters by any means.

### **Article (45)**

The categories referred to in Article (44) of this Law shall be as follows:

1. Fishermen cooperative societies.
2. National fishermen who own fishing boats and depend on the fishing profession as their primary source of livelihood. The names of such category of fishermen shall be determined by a resolution of the Minister.
3. Natural or legal persons who practice fish farming regarding fish extracted from fish farms.

### **Article (46)**

Export operations regarding the categories referred to in Article (45) hereof shall be carried out in accordance with the Executive Regulations.

### **Article (47)**

Repealed by Federal Law No. (7) of 2016 Amending Certain Provisions of Federal Law No. (23) of 1999.

### **Article (48)**

The usage of the certificate of origin will be by its owner or whoever represents him subject to a power of attorney. And the certificate of origin will be valid for one operation of export. It shall be sealed by the competent authority with the expression land, sea and air freight as per the request of the fish exporting fisherman after producing a proof of his application.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Re-export and Transit**

### **Article (49)**

The executive by-laws shall determine the conditions and procedures of transit and re-export of the live aquatic wealth being caught outside the state.

### **Article (50)**

The competent authority may not grant license to the companies and individuals for doing import and re-export of the live aquatic wealth being caught outside the fishing waters unless after the applicant for licensing had obtained a private permit from the ministry.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Penalties**

### **Article (51)**

A person who violates the provisions of Articles (28), (34), (40), and (44) hereof shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than six months and a fine ranging from fifty thousand Dirhams to one hundred thousand Dirhams, or one of the two penalties.

In the event of recidivism, the penalty shall be imprisonment for a period of not less than three years and a fine ranging from one hundred thousand Dirhams to two hundred thousand Dirhams, or one of the two penalties.

In all cases, the boats and fishing tools included in the violation shall be seized, and the seized items shall be confiscated.

### **Article (52)**

A person who violates the provisions of Articles (23), (24), (26), and (27) hereof shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than three months and a fine ranging from twenty-five thousand Dirhams to fifty thousand Dirhams, or one of the two penalties.

In the event of recidivism, the penalty shall be imprisonment for a period of not less than one year and a fine ranging from fifty thousand Dirhams to one hundred thousand Dirhams, or one of the two penalties.

In all cases, the boats and fishing tools included in the violation shall be seized, and the seized items shall be confiscated.

### **Article (53)**

A person who violates the provisions of Articles (2), (14), (21), (22), (25), (29), (30), (31), and

(36) hereof shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than two months and a fine ranging from ten thousand Dirhams to twenty thousand Dirhams, or one of the two penalties.

In the event of recidivism, the penalty shall be imprisonment for a period of not less than four months and a fine ranging from twenty thousand Dirhams to forty thousand Dirhams, or one of the two penalties. The fishing tools included with eh violating person shall be seized, and a decision to confiscate such tools shall be issued.

The court may withdraw the boat licence for a period not exceeding six months.

#### **Article (54)**

A person who violates the provisions of Articles (32), (35), (37), (38), (39), and (41) hereof shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than month and a fine ranging from five thousand Dirhams to twenty thousand Dirhams, or one of the two penalties.

#### **Article (55)**

1. The imposition of the penalties stipulated herein shall be without prejudice to any more severe penalty stipulated in any other law.
2. The confiscation penalty stipulated herein may not prejudice the rights of bona fide third parties.

#### **Article (55) BIS**

1. Upon a Cabinet Resolution, a list of violations and penalties shall be issued against any person who violates any of the provisions of this Law, its Executive Regulations, and resolutions issued in implementation thereof, provided that the value of the fine shall not exceed ten thousand Dirhams for each violation.
2. In the event of refusal to reconcile the fine by payment, the violator shall be referred to the Public Prosecution.
3. The reconciliation controls shall be issued upon a resolution of the Cabinet.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **General and Exclusive Provisions**

#### **Article (56)**

All the fishermen , persons and craftsmen provided for hereby shall adjust their statuses subject to its provisions and the decisions executing thereof during a year as from the date of its enforcement, and the cabinet is entitled to extend such period for similar periods.

The Ministry shall evaluate the efficiency of implementing federal living aquatic resources legislation at the local level according to the law issued by the Ministry.

The Ministry, in coordination with the committee and the Competent Authority, shall establish a national system for living aquatic resources information to store information and analyse statistics related to fisheries and the spread of living aquatic resources.

Provisions of this Law shall be applicable to the free zones.

#### **Article (56) BIS**

The Ministry shall evaluate the efficiency of implementing federal living aquatic resources legislation at the local level according to the law issued by the Ministry.

The Ministry, in coordination with the committee and the Competent Authority, shall establish a national system for living aquatic resources information to store information and analyse statistics related to fisheries and the spread of living aquatic resources.

#### **Article (56) BIS (1)**

Provisions of this Law shall be applicable to the free zones.

#### **Article (57)**

The employees designated by virtue of a decision issued by the Minister of Justice in agreement with the Minister or the head of the Competent Authority shall have the capacity of judicial police officers to prove violations of the provisions hereof and the decisions issued in implementation thereof.



### **Article (58)**

The exporting fishermen and craftsmen associating with exporting , re-exporting or processing the live aquatic wealth shall keep proper records for registering the data and information relating to the live aquatic wealth associated to their activity. A decision by the minister will determine the form of such registers and the types of the data and information which must be registered in each register. The ministry must be supplied with a copy of each record at least once a year. The law officers will view periodically these registers to ascertain being kept properly and met the conditions stipulated in the decision of the Minister.

### **Article (59)**

The due fees will be determined subject to the provisions hereby under a decision from the cabinet upon a proposal of the minister after coordination with the competent authorities.

### **Article (60)**

The following licences shall be exempted from licensing and renewal fees:

1. Licences for fishermen and boats thereof.
2. Boat licences owned by scientific research entities and entities concerned with living aquatic resources.

### **Article (61)**

The minister will issue the decisions of regulating fishing and diving for hobbyists subject to what the executing by-laws determine.

### **Article (62)**

The Minister will issue the regulations hereby after coordination with the competent authorities in the Emirates. The Minister will also issue the decisions necessary to execute the provisions of the law.

### **Article (63)**

Each provision that contravenes or contradicts the provisions hereby will be void and nil.

### **Article (64)**

This law will be published in the official Gazette and effected after six months as from the date of its publication.

**Zayed Bin Sultan AL Nahyan**

**President of the United Arab Emirates**

Issued by us in the presidential palace in Abu Dhabi

On: 8/Rajab/ 1420 Hijri

Corresponding to: 17/October 1999 AD