

RESOLUTION 17/07
ON THE PROHIBITION TO USE LARGE-SCALE DRIFTNETS IN THE IOTC AREA

Keywords: large-scale driftnets, gillnets, EEZ, cetaceans, marine mammals

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING that the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 46/215 calls for a global moratorium on large-scale high seas driftnet fishing and that IOTC Resolution 12/12 prohibits the use of large-scale driftnets on the high seas in the IOTC; and also that both texts recognize the negative impact of such fishing gears;

NOTING that a high number of vessels are engaged in large scale driftnet fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and offshore waters;

MINDFUL that large scale driftnet fisheries have a major impact in the ecosystems, the capacity to catch species of concern to the IOTC, and also that they are likely to undermine the effectiveness of IOTC Conservation and Management Measures;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the available scientific information and advice, in particular the IOTC Scientific Committee conclusions establishing that billfishes and Spanish mackerels are overexploited;

NOTING that large scale driftnets are regularly being used with lengths in excess of 4,000 m (and up to 7,000 m) within the EEZs and that those used within the EEZ may sometimes drift onto the high seas in contravention of Resolution 12/12;

Furthermore, NOTING that the Scientific Committee reiterated its previous recommendation that the Commission should consider whether a ban on large scale driftnets should also apply within the EEZs given the negative ecological impacts of large scale driftnets in areas frequented by marine mammals and turtles;

ADOPTS, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, that:

1. This Resolution applies to vessels registered on the IOTC Record of Authorised vessels that use driftnets for the purpose of targeting tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC Area of competence.
2. The use of large-scale driftnets¹ on the high seas within the IOTC area of competence shall be prohibited. The use of large-scale driftnets in the entire IOTC area of competence shall be prohibited by 1 January 2022.
3. Each Contracting Party and Cooperating Non-Contracting party (hereinafter referred to as CPCs) shall take all measures necessary to prohibit their fishing vessels from using large-scale driftnets while on the high seas in the IOTC area of competence. They shall take all measures necessary to prohibit their fishing vessels from using large-scale driftnets in the entire IOTC area of competence by 1 January 2022.
4. A CPC-flagged fishing vessel will be presumed to have used large-scale driftnets in the IOTC area of competence if it is found operating in the IOTC area of competence and is configured² to use large-scale driftnets.
5. For the purposes of monitoring the implementation of this Resolution, CPCs must notify the Secretariat of any CPC-flagged vessel using large-scale driftnets in their EEZs before the 31st of December 2020.

¹“Large-scale driftnets” are defined as gillnets or other nets or a combination of nets that are more than 2.5 kilometres in length whose purpose is to enmesh, entrap, or entangle fish by drifting on the surface of, or in, the water column.

²“Configured” to use large-scale drift-nets meaning having on board assembled gear that collectively would allow the vessel to deploy and retrieve large-scale driftnets.

6. CPCs shall include in their Annual Reports of implementation a summary of monitoring, control, and surveillance actions related to large-scale driftnet fishing in the IOTC area of competence.
7. The Commission shall periodically assess whether additional measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure that large-scale driftnets are not used in the IOTC area of competence and to take into account the latest advice of the Scientific Committee. The first such assessment shall take place in 2023.
8. Nothing in this measure shall prevent CPCs from applying more stringent measures to regulate the use of large-scale driftnets.
9. This Resolution supersedes Resolution 12/12 *to prohibit the use of large-scale driftnets on the high seas in the IOTC area.*