

## MEDAC ADVICE ON THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN IMO NUMBER STANDARDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) introduced its Ship Identification Number Scheme in 1987 to help prevent maritime fraud and enhance the security of merchant vessels. It is recognized by regional fisheries organizations and most governments and is considered the best available global identification system for ships. Since 2013, fishing vessels became eligible to apply for International Maritime Organisation (IMO) numbers, and since 2017, the Organization has urged governments to implement the IMO ship identification number scheme for fishing vessels of 12 metres and above.<sup>i</sup> This seven-digit identifier is issued to each vessel by the IMO and is globally recognised as an invaluable tool for vessels identification, providing a consistent and permanent record throughout a vessel's lifecycle. IMO numbers stay with the vessel until it is scrapped and never changes, regardless of the ship's owner, country of registration or name. Moreover, IMO numbers are free to obtain, and play a crucial role in monitoring and controlling efforts by the authorities of flag, coastal and port states, and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs).

Concerning the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Resolution GFCM/44/2021/64<sup>ii</sup> recommends IMO numbers on a voluntary basis, for fishing vessels 20 metres and above in length overall (LOA). This Resolution constitutes an uneven playing field compared to European regulations affecting the European Mediterranean sector, which requires IMO numbers for all EU vessels of more than 24 metres in LOA (or 100 GT and above) fishing in EU waters, and for all EU vessels of more than 15 metres of LOA fishing outside of European waters.<sup>iii</sup>

At the moment, 1600 vessels (mostly from EU countries) provide IMO information from the total 8780 vessels included in the GFCM Authorised Vessel List<sup>iv</sup> - which lists all vessels of 15 m LOA or above that are authorized to operate in the GFCM area.

To create a level playing field between the EU and non-EU fleets, the MEDAC emphasizes the need to expand the requirement for an IMO number in the GFCM. **MEDAC advises the EU to table a Recommendation to the GFCM to harmonise this requirements on the IMO number in line with the European standards, to require the GFCM authorized vessels to have an IMO number, extending the requirement to all eligible fishing vessels of 15 metres or above, operating outside water under national jurisdiction in the Mediterranean.**

This approach is consistent with other advisory councils, such as the Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC), which issued an advice to the European Commission to implement measures aimed at

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aligning the EU's IMO number requirements for both EU and non-EU vessels that market their seafood products within the EU.<sup>v</sup>

Moreover, making the allocation of IMO numbers a binding requirement would bring the GFCM requirement closer to most other RFMOs, which have already established IMO number requirements for vessels above 12 metres of LOA (see Table 1).

Table 1. Compilation of IMO number requirements in the different RFMOs.

RFMO	Minimum vessel size required to have an IMO number	Does the IMO number requirement follow 2017 IMO Assembly Resolution <a href="#">A.1117(30)</a> ?	Link
CCAMLR	12 m	YES	<a href="#">Conservation Measure 10-02 (2022)</a>
CCSBT	12 m	YES	<a href="#">Resolution on a CCSBT Record of Vessels of Authorised to Fish for Southern Bluefin Tuna</a>
GFCM	20 m	NO	(non-binding) <a href="#">Resolution GFCM 44/2021/6</a> on the Application of an International Maritime Organisation number on the application of the International Maritime Organisation number, amending Resolution GFCM/41/2017/6
IATTC	12 m	YES	<a href="#">Resolution (amended) on a regional vessel register</a>

ICCAT	20 m	NO	<a href="#">Recommendation by ICCAT amending recommendation 13-13 concerning the establishment of an ICCAT record of vessels 20 metres in length overall or greater authorised to operate in the convention area</a>
IOTC	12 m	YES	<a href="#">Resolution 19/04 concerning the IOTC record of vessels authorised to operate in the IOTC area of competence</a>
NAFO	12 m	YES	<a href="#">NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures 2023</a>
NEAFC	12m	YES	<a href="#">NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement</a>
NPFC	12 m	YES	<a href="#">Conservation and management measure on information requirements for vessel registration</a>
SEAFO	> 100 GT	NO	<a href="#">System of observation, inspection NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures 2023, compliance and enforcement 2019</a>
SIOFA	12 m	YES	<a href="#">Conservation and Management Measure for Vessel Authorisation and Notification to Fish (Vessel Authorisation)</a>

SPRFMO	12 m	YES	<a href="#">CMM 05-2022 Conservation and Management Measure for the Establishment of the Commission Record of Vessels Authorised to Fish in the Convention Area</a>
WCPFC	12 m	YES	<a href="#">CMM 2018-06 – Conservation and Management Measure on the Record of Fishing Vessels and Authorisation to Fish</a>

<sup>i</sup> IMO (2017). Resolution A.1117 (30). [A 30-Res.1117 - Imo Ship Identification Number Scheme.pdf](#)

<sup>ii</sup> GFCM. (2021). Resolution GFCM/44/2021/6 on the application of an International Maritime Organization number, amending Resolution GFCM/41/2017/6. 5 IMO (2017). Resolution A.1117 (30)

<sup>iii</sup> Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 2015/1962 of 28 October 2015 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 404/2011 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1224/2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy.

<sup>iv</sup> GFCM. (2022). Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/17 on information contained in the GFCM record of authorized vessels over 15 metres in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/6 and repealing Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/18

<sup>v</sup> LDAC. (2017). LDAC Advice on the requirement for IMO numbers for importing seafood products into the EU market from non-EU vessels.