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## Main features, obligations and benefits under the *Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Treaty*

### OVERVIEW

The sustainable management and conservation of migratory fish and associated species, which constantly move across different maritime zones, within and beyond national jurisdiction, greatly rely on interstate cooperation. States cooperate directly or through regional fishery bodies (RFBs) for the development and adoption of conservation and management measures. About 50 RFBs have been established around the world, including regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) that have competence to adopt legally binding measures. The RFMO competent for the sustainable use of tuna and tuna-like resources in the Indian Ocean is the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (“IOTC” or “the Commission”).

The IOTC was established in 1993 through the adoption of the [Agreement for the Establishment of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission](#) (“the Agreement”) by the FAO Council. The Agreement entered into force on 27 March 1996. There are currently 29 Members of the Commission. There is also one cooperating non-contracting party.

### OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the Agreement is the conservation of tuna and tuna-like species and the sustainable and rational utilization of tuna resources in the Indian Ocean. It achieves this by establishing cooperative measures by both the coastal states of the Indian Ocean and other States whose nationals harvest tuna and tuna-like species in the region.

Membership of the Agreement is open to:

- Coastal States situated wholly or partly within the Indian Ocean;
- States whose vessels engage in fishing in the Indian Ocean for stocks covered by the Agreement; and
- Regional Economic Integration Organizations (REIOs) whose Member States meet the above criteria and have transferred competence over relevant matters to the REIO.

### MAIN OBLIGATIONS FOR MEMBERS

Members’ obligations include:

#### A. ADHERENCE TO CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

- Members must comply with the conservation and management measures adopted by the IOTC. These measures are designed to ensure the sustainable use of tuna stocks and include regulations on fishing quotas, gear restrictions, and seasonal closures (Article IX).
- Members are also required to implement these measures as well as the provisions of the Agreement through its national legislation and enforce penalties for violations to ensure compliance (Article X).

#### B. DATA PROVISION AND REPORTING

- Members must provide statistical and other relevant data to the IOTC as requested. This includes catch and effort statistics, scientific information, and any other data necessary for the conservation and management of tuna stocks (Article XI).
- Members shall provide to the IOTC copies or summaries of laws, regulations and administrative instructions in force relating to the conservation and management of stocks covered by the Agreement and shall inform the Commission of their amendments or repeals (Article XI).



365 days of action



- Annual statements detailing the actions taken to implement the conservation and management measures must be submitted to the IOTC (Article X).

### C. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- Members must contribute annually to the autonomous budget of the IOTC, based on a scale adopted by the IOTC, which considers factors such as the total catch and landings of species covered by the treaty and the per capita income of the member country (Article XIII).

Other fishing entities, such as cooperating non-contracting parties, fishing companies, associations, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can contribute by adhering to conservation measures, providing data, participating in research, and supporting sustainable fishing practices.

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR PARTIES

On becoming a party to the Agreement and implementing its provisions effectively, States and REIOs stand to gain numerous benefits, including:

#### A. EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FISHERY RESOURCES

Developing countries gain equitable access to fishery resources, contributing to their economic development and food security. Furthermore, being part of the Agreement strengthens a member's voice in regional and international fisheries management, allowing it to influence decisions and policies that affect its interests.

#### B. COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM AND ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The IOTC provides access to a collaborative platform focused on the sustainable management and conservation of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean. This cooperation ensures that members' fishing activities are aligned with international standards, promoting long-term ecological and economic sustainability.

#### C. SHARED RESEARCH, DATA AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

Additionally, membership in the IOTC allows parties to benefit from shared scientific research, data, and technological advancements, enhancing their fishing practices and resource management.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** on the Agreement and treaty processes in FAO, please contact: [treaties@fao.org](mailto:treaties@fao.org).

