

Resolution GFCM/41/2017/6
on the application of an International Maritime Organization number

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

RECALLING that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

EMPHASIZING that the identification of fishing vessels is a necessary step in the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and for the management of fishing activities, and that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) number, assigned under the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, is an established and reliable unique vessel identifier (UVI), which stays permanently assigned to a vessel irrespective of change of name, ownership, flag or marking;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the decision by the IMO Assembly, at its twenty-eighth session, in 2013, to adopt Resolution A.1078(28) extending the application of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme to fishing vessels of 100 gross tonnage (GT) and above, and the decision by the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), at its thirty-first session, in 2014, to use the IMO number as the UVI for vessels of 100 GT and above to be included in the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record);

NOTING the IMO Circular Letter No. 1886/Rev. 6, of 8 August 2016, which extends the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme to all motorized fishing vessels of less than 100 GT down to a size limit of 12 metres in length overall (LOA) that are authorized to operate outside waters under national jurisdiction, and fishing vessels of non-steel hull construction of 100 GT and above;

CONSIDERING that most regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) mandate the use of IMO numbers by large fishing vessels authorized to fish in their respective convention areas and that the United Nations General Assembly has encouraged several times, most recently in its Resolution 71/123 of 7 December 2016, those RFMOs which have not yet done so to make the IMO number compulsory in their convention areas for all eligible vessels;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/6 concerning the establishment of a GFCM record of vessels over 15 metres authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application, amending Recommendation GFCM/29/2005/2;

RECALLING that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration states that “by 2020, [Ministers, heads of national delegations and the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries] ensure the allocation of a unique vessel identifier (IMO number) to commercial fishing vessels of 24 meters and above (with the exemption of wooden vessels) in line with the applicable international rules”;

ACKNOWLEDGING the rapid development of requirements for fishing vessels to acquire an IMO number and the need to provide clarity to fishing vessel operators and flag states in this regard;

ADOPTS, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the GFCM Agreement, the following resolution:

Identification of vessels with an IMO number

1. Effective from 1 January 2019, contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) flag states shall authorize their fishing vessels of 24 meters or above to operate, only if eligible

vessels have an IMO number allocated by the manager of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme. Eligible vessels under the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme which are not identified with this number shall not be included in the record of vessels over 15 metres authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application (GFCM-AVL).

2. Eligible vessels under the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme which are not identified with this number shall not be included in the GFCM-AVL.

3. CPC flag states shall be encouraged to authorize any other fishing vessel, eligible to obtain an IMO number, in accordance with the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, to operate in the GFCM area of application, only if the vessel has an IMO number allocated by the manager of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, as described in the Annex.

4. A vessel without IMO number could exceptionally be included in the GFCM-AVL on the condition that the CPC flag state provides an explanation of its inability to obtain an IMO number in its submission of information to the GFCM Secretariat. The GFCM Secretariat shall report such explanation to the Compliance Committee.

5. Paragraphs 1 and 2 shall not apply to wooden vessels.

6. The IMO number shall be included in all relevant data related to the implementation of GFCM recommendations concerning the establishment of a record of vessels authorized to operate in the GFCM area of application.

7. Each CPC shall, in its capacity, apply this resolution to vessels that are flying its flag.

8. This resolution is without prejudice to the implementation of stricter national measures.

Eligibility criteria to obtain an IMO number

With a view to implementing paragraph 3, criteria to determine whether a fishing vessel is eligible to obtain an IMO number are based on the scheme established by the IMO and may be updated in the future. Based on Resolution A.1078 (28), as amended, on the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme, and on the IMO Circular Letter No. 1886/Rev. 6, of 8 August 2016, the following fishing vessels are eligible for an IMO number:

- fishing vessels, including fishing vessels with a non-steel hull (i.e. wooden vessels), of 100 GT and above; and
- motorized inboard fishing vessels of less than 100 GT up to a size limit of 12 metres LOA authorized to operate outside waters under national jurisdiction.

Requesting an IMO number

The IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme is currently managed on behalf of the IMO by IHS Maritime & Trade, a UK based company. Requests for an IMO number can be made directly to IHS Maritime & Trade, online or in writing as follows: online requests for ship numbering (<http://imonumbers.ihs.com>); written requests (to IHS Maritime & Trade; Sentinel House, 163 Brighton Road - Surrey, CR5 2YH, United Kingdom).

Requests for IMO numbers can be made by flag States, vessel owners/operators, classification societies or shipyards; requests for multiple IMO numbers can also be addressed to the managers of the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme at the following e-mail address: ship.imo@ihs.com.