

Recommendations to Assist with Allocation of the IMO Ship Identification Scheme as Required in the IOTC Convention Area by Resolution 15/04

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. IHS Maritime & Trade, a company based in the U.K., administers the scheme on behalf of the IMO. The unique seven-digit vessel number the company issues to each vessel, preceded by the letters IMO, stays with it until it is scrapped and never changes, regardless of the ship's owner, country of registration or name. The records based on the IMO Number provide an independent audit trail for each vessel.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing worldwide accounts for up to 26 million metric tons of fish annually, worth up to US\$23.5 billion. IMO Numbers are an essential tool in the fight against illegal fishing because they help to improve monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement of fishing operations. They:

- Allow Flag States to accurately manage vessels under their authority.
- Give national authorities information to help them police their waters more effectively.
- Bring clarity and consistency to Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) records, helping governments determine whether vessels are authorized to fish in their waters.
- Help port authorities ensure that they are accepting only legally caught fish, a requirement of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's Port State Measures Agreement.
- Give retailers and seafood buyers a way to identify the vessels catching and landing their fish.

Since fishing vessels became eligible to apply for IMO Numbers in 2013, many major RFMOs and other fisheries bodies, the European Union and some Coastal and Flag States have mandated that vessels above a certain size or tonnage must carry one. Specifically, within IOTC, Resolution 15/04 outlines all vessels 24 metres in length overall or above or all vessels less than 24 metres operating outside the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Flag State shall obtain an IMO Number, and submit this information to the IOTC Executive Secretaryⁱ.

Key Issues

1. Recent changes to the IMO Ship Identification Scheme Eligibility Criteria;
2. Current rates of compliance with Resolution 15/04; and
3. Recommendations to Assist with Allocation of the IMO Number.

1. *Recent changes to the IMO Ship Identification Scheme Eligibility Criteria*

During its 30th Assembly, the IMO approved an extension of the Ship Identification Scheme, to ships of 100 gross tonnage and above, including fishing vessels of all hull types, and to all motorized inboard fishing vessels of less than 100 gross tonnage down to a size limit of 12 meters authorized to operate outside waters under national jurisdiction of the Flag Stateⁱⁱ. **In practice, this means all motorized vessels 12 metres in length overall or above that operate outside the EEZ of the Flag State, within the IOTC convention area, should obtain an IMO Number.** In addition, vessels over 100 gross tonnes can obtain an IMO Number even if they operate exclusively and entirely within the EEZ of the Flag State, should the Flag State choose to require it.

2. *Current rates of compliance with Resolution 15/04*

According to the IOTC Record of Authorised Vessels, there are 2039 vessels 24 metres in length and above. 1089 of these vessels currently report an IMO Number, therefore only **53.4% of authorised vessels comply with Resolution 15/04.**

The recent changes to the IMO Ship Identification Scheme outlined above, mean that an additional 2953 vessels are now eligible to obtain the IMO Number.

The information below was obtained exclusively from the IOTC Record of Authorised Vessels. Any vessels which may be of relevance to compliance with Resolution 15/04 but not reported on the Record of Authorised Vessels have not been included in calculations. All figures accurate as of 30 May 2019.

Total Number of Vessels 24 metres and above	Total Number of Vessels 24 metres and above with an IMO Number	Current Percentage Compliance with Resolution 15/04	Total Number of Vessels 12 metres and above, less than 24 metres
2039	1089	53.4%	2953

3. Recommendations to Assist with Allocation of the IMO Number

3.1 Identify if your flagged vessel is eligible to obtain an IMO Number using Figure 1.

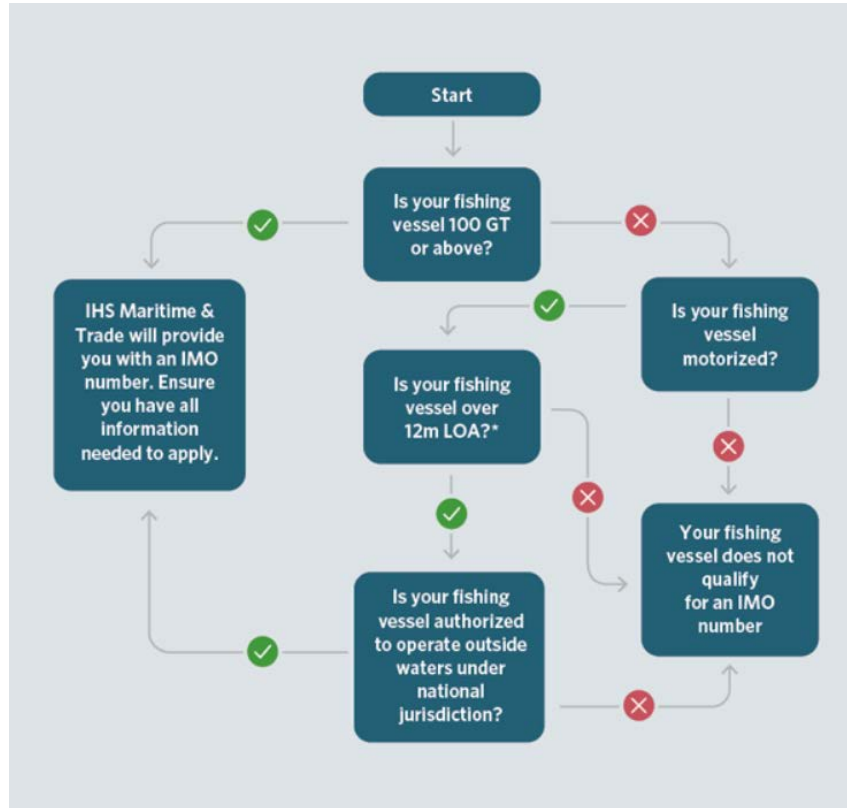


Figure 1: Is your flagged vessel eligible for an IMO Number?

3.2 Prepare the information required to obtain an IMO Number as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: What information is required?

Required Information:	Where to find this information:
Ship Name	Actual name under which the vessel will navigate
Former name(s)	Name(s) the vessel was previously known as. May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate
Current Flag	Nationality of vessel. May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate
Port of registry	May be found on the vessel's registry certificate
Former Flag	Nationality of the vessel before current Flag. May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate
Call sign	May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate
Official number	May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate

Required Information:	Where to find this information:
MMSI number	A Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number is only issued to vessels fitted with Digital Selective Calling (DSC) and/or (Satellite) Ship Earth Station (SES) equipment. In order to obtain an MMSI number vessel owners will need to be in possession of a valid Ship Radio Licence
Fishing number	Fishing registration letters, numbers or combination of both and issued by national fishery licencing authority. May be found displayed on vessel hull or superstructure
Gross tonnage	May be found on the vessel's tonnage certificate and/or Flag or registry certificate
Length overall (m)	Extreme length of vessel's hull. May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate, more often Registered length or Length between perpendiculars will be shown
Moulded depth (m)	Vertical distance measured from the top of the keel to the top of the freeboard deck beam at side. May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate
Extreme breadth (m)	Width of a ship over the outside of all planking or plating at the widest frame. May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate
Date of build	Date of completion/delivered/entered service. May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate
Keel laid date	Date on which construction identifiable to the vessel commenced. May be found on the builder's certificate
Shipbuilder	Name of company/shipbuilder that constructed the vessel. May be found on the builder's certificate, vessel's Flag or registry certificate. Will be found on builder's plate if on vessel
Hull number	Shipbuilder unique reference number for a vessel on order/under construction, often sequential. May be found on builder's plate if on vessel or on the builder's certificate
Country of build	Country in which vessel was built. May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate or on the builder's certificate
Number of main engines	May be found on the vessel's Flag or registry certificate
Engine model	Official designation of the engine given by the manufacturer, often combining model, type and displacement. Will be found on plate affixed to main engine
Type of vessel (e.g. purse-seiner)	Specific details on fishing vessel
Hull material	Specific details on the material of the hull
Registered owner	Name of the person/company to appear in the documents as registered owners
Owner address	Full address of the registered owners as it shall appear in the registration documents
Photograph of vessel	If available

3.3 Request an IMO Number from IHS Maritime & Trade.

Obtaining an IMO Number is free of charge. Requests can be made on an individual basis by the vessel owner, or for an entire vessel registry by the Flag State.

As an owner of a single vessel:

Applications can be made online at <http://imonumbers.ihs.com> using the free registration system, or the vessel owner can download a form and send it to IHS Maritime & Trade at the following address:

IHS Maritime & Trade
Sentinel House
163 Brighton Road
Coulsdon
Surrey
CR5 2YH
United Kingdom
Email: ship.imo@ihs.com
Telephone: +44 (0)1344 328300

As a Flag State for multiple vessels:

It may be easier as a Flag State to apply for IMO Numbers for multiple vessels on a specific Flag State registry at one time. It will give the Flag State more control and will ensure more accurate records. Should Flag States require this, contact the IHS Maritime & Trade IMO Ship Numbering Department at ship.imo@ihs.com for a multiple IMO request form in spreadsheet format.

3.4 Submit this information to IOTC

To ensure compliance with Resolution 15/04, each Contracting Party and Cooperating Non-Contracting Party information must submit this information to the IOTC Executive Secretary as part of its list of vessels that are authorised to operate in the IOTC area of competence.

3.5 Displaying the IMO Number

In line with Regulation XI-1/3 of The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, seagoing vessels of 100 gross tonnes and above are required to display identification numbers clearly and permanently in a visible place, either on the vessel's hull or superstructure. The IMO Number should be inserted on a vessel's Certificate of Registry, which includes information identifying the vessel, and on all certificates issued under IMO Conventions when and where appropriate. It could also be included on classification certificates. It should preferably be included in the box headed "Distinctive number or letters" in addition to the call sign.

Smaller fishing vessels may mark the IMO Number either on the stern or stern quarter with the name and port, avoiding the part of the hull where nets may obscure them. Alternatively, vessels may display the number on the hull or superstructure sides, with the call sign and/or fishing number. Fishing vessels should also insert the IMO Number on the certificates outlined above, as is required for large seagoing vessels. Vessel Flag State administrations or class society can provide further guidance for displaying IMO Numbers.

Conclusion

The IMO Number is a simple, cost effective way to ensure fishing vessels can be uniquely identified. To effectively combat IUU fishing, full compliance with Resolution 15/04 is needed within the IOTC Convention Area. This paper provides recommendations to assist with the implementation of Resolution 15/04, following the recent changes in eligibility outlined by the IMO.

Endnotes

ⁱ According to the IOTC Resolution 15/04:

The Commission shall maintain an IOTC Record of fishing vessels that are:

- a) 24 metres in length overall or above; or*
- b) in case of vessels less than 24 meters, those operating in waters outside the Economic Exclusive Zone of the Flag State; and that are authorised to fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC area of competence (hereinafter referred to as “authorised fishing vessels”, or AFVs).*

For the purpose of this Resolution, fishing vessels including auxiliary, supply and support vessels that are not entered in the IOTC Record are deemed not to be authorised to fish for, retain on board, tranship or land tuna and tuna-like species or supporting any fishing activity or set drifting fish aggregation devices (DFADs) in the IOTC area of competence. This provision shall not apply to vessels less than 24 m in length overall operating inside the EEZ of the flag state.

Each Contracting Party and Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (hereinafter referred to as "CPC") shall submit electronically, where possible, to the IOTC Executive Secretary for those vessels referred to 1.a) and for those vessels referred to 1.b), the list of its AFVs that are authorised to operate in the IOTC area of competence. This list shall include the following information:

IMO number (if eligible); To allow the necessary time for CPCs to obtain an IMO number for eligible vessels that do not already have one, paragraph 2.b on IMO number is effective as of 1 January 2016. As of this date, CPCs shall ensure that all their fishing vessels that are registered on the IOTC Record of fishing vessels have IMO numbers issued to them. Paragraph 2.b on IMO number does not apply to vessels which are not eligible to receive IMO numbers.

ii According to IMO Assembly Resolution A.1117(30) - IMO SHIP IDENTIFICATION NUMBER SCHEME:

The Scheme applies to ships of 100 gross tonnage and above, including fishing vessels of steel and non-steel hull construction; passenger ships of less than 100 gross tonnage, high-speed passenger craft and mobile offshore drilling units engaged on international voyages (SOLAS regulation V/19-1); and to all motorized inboard fishing vessels of less than 100 gross tonnage down to a size limit of 12 metres in length overall (LOA) authorized to operate outside waters under the national jurisdiction of the flag State, with the exception of the following:

- 1. Ships without mechanical means of propulsion;*
- 2. Pleasure yachts;*
- 3. Ships engaged on special service;¹*
- 4. Hopper barges;*
- 5. Floating docks and structures classified in a similar manner;*
- 6. Ships of war and troop ships; and*
- 7. Wooden ships, other than fishing vessels.*