

**ON THE BIODEGRADABILITY OF DRIFTING FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (DFADS)  
IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE**

SUBMITTED BY: EUROPEAN UNION, SEYCHELLES

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**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

The European Union is proposing a new Resolution on the biodegradability of drifting fish aggregating devices.

The proposal intends to give full implementation to the recommendations adopted by the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the IOTC Working Group on FADs, endorsed by Scientific Committee at its 26<sup>th</sup> Session in December, urging the Commission to initiate an ambitious step-wise approach for the implementation of biodegradable FADs as soon as possible.

A similar proposal, with an identical implementation time-line, has already been adopted by the IATTC and is being discussed in other RFMOs.

**RESOLUTION 24/XX  
ON THE BIODEGRADABILITY OF DRIFTING FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES  
(DFADS) IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE**

**The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),**

BEARING IN MIND that the Agreement for the implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) was adopted in conscience of the need to avoid adverse impacts on the marine environment, preserve biodiversity, maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems and minimise the risk of long-term or irreversible effects of fishing operations;

RECALLING that Articles 192 and 194 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) require States to protect and preserve the marine environment and to take, individually or jointly as appropriate, all measures consistent with UNCLOS that are necessary to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment from any source, and that these measures shall include those necessary to protect and preserve rare or fragile ecosystems as well as the habitat of depleted, threatened or endangered species and other forms of marine life;

CONCERNED of the impact of Abandoned, Lost or Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) and plastic residues in the ocean greatly affecting marine life and the need to facilitate the identification and recovery of such gear;

RECOGNISING that the use of natural origin biodegradable materials in the construction of FADs could contribute to the reduction of marine litter;

ACKNOWLEDGING the important contribution provided by the BIOFAD experimental project to the understanding and development of biodegradable FADs;

UNDERLINING in particular the specific recommendations adopted by the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the IOTC Working Group on FADs, endorsed by Scientific Committee at its 26<sup>th</sup> Session in December 2023 urging the Commission to initiate an ambitious step-wise approach for the implementation of biodegradable FADs as soon as possible.

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

1. For the purpose of this Resolution:
  - a) “biodegradable” means non-synthetic materials<sup>1</sup> and/or bio- based alternatives that are consistent with international standards<sup>2</sup> for materials that are biodegradable in marine environments. The components resulting from the degradation of these materials should not be damaging to the marine and coastal ecosystems or include heavy metals or plastics in their composition.
2. To reduce the amount of synthetic marine debris, CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels:
  - a) as of 1 January 2026, use only DFADs of biodegradability categories I, II, III and IV, as defined in Annex I;
  - b) as of 1 January 2029, use only DFADs of categories I and II, as defined in Annex I;
  - c) at the annual meeting in 2030, the Commission shall decide whether to require by 2031 CPCs to only allow vessels to deploy or redeploy only DFADs of category I, as defined in Annex I.
3. Notwithstanding paragraph 2, the use of non-biodegradable materials, can be used exclusively to strengthen the structure of the floating or underwater component of the FAD categories I & II, as a temporary solution and only provided no biodegradable alternative is available.
4. CPCs are encouraged to share their experiences and scientific knowledge on the use of biodegradable materials in DFADs.
5. CPCs shall submit information concerning the status of implementation of paragraph 2 in their annual Implementation Report, and this information shall be made available for analysis to the IOTC Scientific Committee or any relevant subsidiary body.
6. CPCs are encouraged to continue trialing biodegradable FAD designs in a continued effort of design improvement and to share the results with the IOTC Scientific Committee or any relevant subsidiary body.
7. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall annually review the information reported by CPCs and will, as necessary, provide recommendations on additional DFAD management options for consideration by the Commission, including recommendations on improved DFAD designs.
8. The Commission shall consider appropriate assistance to developing CPCs for the full implementation of this resolution.
9. Resolution 18/04 *On BIOFAD experimental project* is superseded by this Resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, plant-based materials such as cotton, jute, manila hemp (abaca), bamboo, natural rubber, or animal- based such as leather, wool, lard.

<sup>2</sup> International standards such as ASTM D6691, D7881, TUV Austria, European or any such standards approved by the Members of the IOTC.

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## **ANNEX I – CATEGORISATION OF DFAD ACCORDING TO THEIR LEVEL OF BIODEGRADABILITY**

1. For the purposes of this Resolution, the following are DFAD categories are identified, on the basis of their degree of biodegradability (from non- biodegradable to 100% biodegradable), with the understanding that the respective definitions do not apply the electronic buoys that are attached to DFADs in order to track them:

*Category I.* The DFAD is made of fully biodegradable materials.

*Category II.* The DFAD is made of fully biodegradable materials except for flotation components (e.g. buoys, foam, purse-seine corks).

*Category III.* The subsurface part of the DFAD is made of fully biodegradable materials, whereas the surface part and any flotation components contain non-biodegradable materials (e.g., synthetic raffia, metallic frame, plastic floats, nylon ropes).

*Category IV.* The subsurface part of the DFAD contains non-biodegradable materials, whereas the surface part is made of fully biodegradable materials, except for, possibly, flotation components.

*Category V.* The surface and subsurface parts of the DFAD contain non-biodegradable materials.