

19 March 2020

## IOTC CIRCULAR 2020-14

Dear Sir/Madam

### TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF OBSERVER DEPLOYMENTS UNDER THE IOTC REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME

As you are aware, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to escalate and disrupt all aspects of normal life. More countries are closing their ports of entry, thus making travel more difficult, if not impossible, for people from many parts of the world.

Following discussions with the Consortium's technical team which is responsible for the IOTC Regional Observer Programme (ROP), the Secretariats Compliance Team and the IOTC Chairperson, we conclude that the pandemic has unquestionably derailed the Consortium's ability to deploy and repatriate ROP observers in a safe and cost-effective manner. We also feel that it would go against all the health and safety advice being currently dispensed and the efforts to limit the spread of the virus, to allow new deployments of observers under the current circumstances.

Given this, I have requested the ROP Consortium to suspend further deployments of ROP observers, until further notice, and/or such time that the dangers posed by COVID-19 have abated and travel become workable.

Although an IOTC Observer will not be present aboard some carrier vessels during this period, this exceptional circumstance, which is considered to be a *force majeure*, shall not prevent the continuation of at-sea transshipment activities under the established structure of the ROP.

The fleets participating in the ROP will continue to submit their requests/revised requests for their fishing vessels which will tranship at sea to the IOTC Secretariat, as they have been doing over the years. And as usual, an approval/acknowledgement will be communicated back to the concerned fleet(s) by the Secretariat.

The fleets which are authorising their fishing vessels to tranship at sea will also ensure that the masters of carrier vessels continue to submit completed transshipment declaration forms to the IOTC Secretariat, in accordance with the requirements of the Programme.

Yours sincerely



Christopher O'Brien  
Executive Secretary

**Attachments:**

- None

Distribution

**IOTC Contracting Parties:** Australia, Bangladesh, China, Comoros, Eritrea, European Union, France (Territories), India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Rep of), Japan, Kenya, Rep. of Korea, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, United Rep. of Tanzania, Thailand, United Kingdom ("BIOT"), Yemen. **Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties:** Liberia, Senegal.

**Intergovernmental Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations. Chairperson IOTC. Copy to:** FAO Headquarters, FAO Representatives to CPCs.

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