

Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying



Central Government approves India's accession to Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

Accession to strengthen India's presence in High Seas fisheries, expand access to high-value marine resources and enhance participation in global fisheries governance

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Central Government has approved India's accession to the **Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)**, representing a strategic milestone that reinforces India's position in global fisheries governance. Subsequent to Guidelines for High Sea Fisheries issued in December, 2025 by Government of India, this initiative would provide a regional framework to expand India's fishing fleet into international waters. Consequently, India will be positioned to safeguard its strategic interests, broaden economic opportunities, and establish legitimate rights for the sustainable harvesting of high-value marine resources under the SIOFA framework. Furthermore, it affirms a recognized presence on the high seas and advances India's Blue Economy in alignment with national economic, scientific, and strategic priorities.

With India's accession to SIOFA, Indian-flagged fishing vessels and enterprises will be able to undertake authorised fishing of squids, toothfish, alfonsino, and other non-migratory fish stocks within SIOFA's jurisdiction.

Accession to SIOFA will further enable India to collaborate with other Cooperating Parties to advance the objectives of the Agreement, *namely*, scientific understanding and sustainable harvest of High Seas resources, participation in the scientific assessments of the resources covered under the Agreement, and prevention of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Accession will also advance India's strategic regional priorities and strengthen national coastal security through active involvement in the High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) Scheme, which has been adopted and is set to be implemented under the SIOFA.

Currently, India, as a Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CNCP) to the SIOFA, has limited participation in decision-making, including in key bodies such as the Scientific Committee and the Compliance Committee. Accession as a Contracting Party would enable India to participate fully in these bodies and provide access to scientific data,

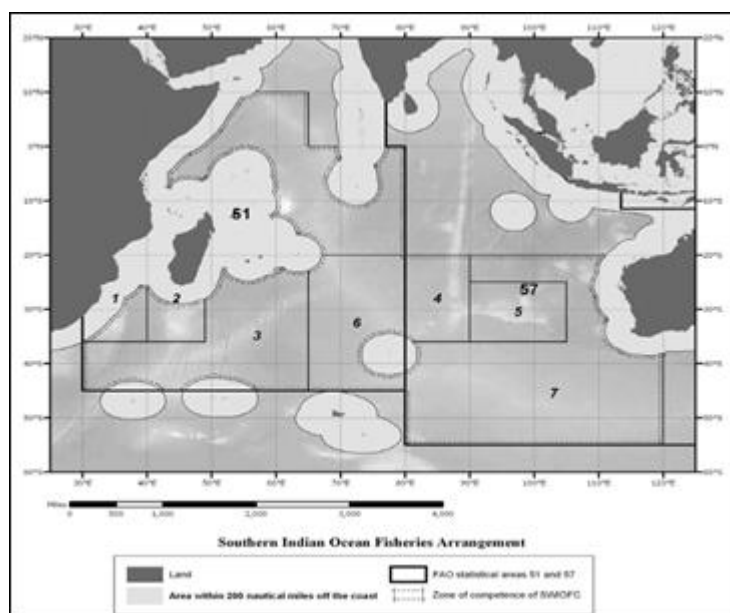
research programmes, and stock assessments. It will open up new fishing opportunities for the Indian fishers and entrepreneurs. India's active contribution to sustainable fishing practices in the SIOFA region will also play a key role in preserving marine resources, ensuring their long-term viability and supporting the livelihoods of Indian fishing communities.

Backgrounder:

The High Seas constitute approximately 65% of the global ocean and are currently dominated by five countries/regions: China (21%), Taiwan (13%), Japan (11%), South Korea (11%), and Spain (8%). There are two major **Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)** in the Indian Ocean, viz. the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA). India has been a Contracting Party to the IOTC since 1996, which regulates highly migratory tuna and tuna-like species.

India has been a cooperating non-Contracting Party (CNCP) of SIOFA, since 2022. With this membership, India secures legitimate fishing rights, access to marine resources in the High Seas under the SIOFA's area of competence, and the opportunity to establish a recognized presence alongside existing global fleets. This Agreement covers fishery resources including fish, molluscs, crustaceans, and other sedentary species within the area, but excludes highly migratory species (Annex I of UNCLOS) and the sedentary species which are subject to the fishery jurisdiction of coastal states (Article 77(4) of UNCLOS).

Indian fishing vessels currently operate largely within 60–80 NM of the EEZ, and India needs to develop and expand its fishing capacity across all possible High Seas areas, including through access agreements in other countries' EEZs, thereby contributing to the national exchequer.



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