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Answer given by Mr Kadis
on behalf of the European Commission
(8.5.2025)

The Commission takes its obligations under international fisheries law, including Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) resolutions seriously. On the alleged non-compliance with fish aggregating devices (FADs) design rules by EU vessels in 2022 and 2023, the Commission formally requested further information (i.e. buoy identifiers) from the IOTC Contracting Party that made the claim in order to verify the origin of the FADs. Unfortunately, no response was received. In 2024, the IOTC adopted Resolution 24/02¹, which significantly improves FAD traceability, assigns responsibility for deployment and strengthens marking requirements. These requirements will allow for the follow up on potential future allegations of non-compliance.

On the issue of FAD closures, the EU is, in principle, not opposed to closures, provided they are based on robust scientific evidence. In the IOTC region, only about one-third of tropical tuna catches are made by purse seine vessels using FADs, with the remainder being caught by other gears. As such, a closure limited to FADs would have limited impact. The IOTC Scientific Committee has instead recommended broader closures across all gear types as more effective. Moreover, most other tuna regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) have scaled back their FAD closures due to limited effectiveness. At present, there is no conclusive scientific basis for imposing a FAD-specific closure in the IOTC area.

¹ <https://iotc.org/cmm/resolution-2402-management-drifting-fish-aggregating-devices-fads-iotc-area-competence>