Centre approves India's accession to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) as a full Contracting Party

International Relations · 16 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/16



News

The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying announced on 14 Oct 2026 that the Centre has approved India's accession to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA). India, a Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CNCP) since 2022, will become a full Contracting Party (formal deposit of accession is a separate step). Indian-flagged vessels can then carry out authorised fishing of non-migratory stocks such as squid, toothfish and alfonsino in the SIOFA area, and India can join scientific assessments, action against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and the High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) scheme.

Key facts

Agreement	Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) – a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO)
Signed / in force	7 July 2006, Rome (FAO) / 21 June 2012
Secretariat	La Réunion island (France)
Coverage	Non-migratory high-seas stocks – toothfish, alfonsino, orange roughy, squid; not tuna-like highly migratory species
India's status	CNCP since 2022 → Oct 2026 approval: full Contracting Party

Related body	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) – India a member (accepted 1995; agreement in force 1996)

Background

- International law: UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982) – territorial sea 12 nautical miles; Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) up to 200 nm. Beyond lie the 'high seas', where RFMOs regulate fisheries.
- IOTC: the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission set up in 1993 under FAO; HQ Victoria (Seychelles). Highly migratory tunas come under IOTC; non-migratory high-seas stocks under SIOFA.
- Economy: India is the world's 2nd largest producer of fish and of aquaculture. About 65% of the ocean is high seas, dominated by China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Spain. India issued 'Guidelines for High Seas Fisheries' in Dec 2025. Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) – 2020.

Tamil Nadu link: a Centre–State scheme began in 2017 (G.O. 139, 14 July 2017) to cut trawlers in Palk Bay and shift fishers to deep-sea tuna long-liners – unit cost ₹80 lakh per vessel with ₹56 lakh subsidy. Wider high-seas access can benefit Tamil Nadu's fishers too.

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