

Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 040  
8<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
Series: GEN-2022

To: All Ship Owners, Operators, Deputy Registrars, Resident Agents, Representatives, and other Stakeholders

Subject: **MARKING OF FISHING GEARS**

Reference: FAO Proposed System for the Marking of Fishing Gear, FAO Proposed Standard System of Light and Shapes for the Identification and Location of Fishing Gear as well as relevant Resolutions/Recommendations of the Regional Fisheries Management Organization on this topic.

Issued in accordance with Part VIII, Section 50(1)(c) of the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013

Circular Superseded: FVC-08/03

## **BACKGROUND:**

Fishing gears are marked to establish ownership and legality of their use. Gear marking has been considered as an important tool to reduce abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear and to fight IUU fishing. In this regard, this Administration has identified the need for the marking of fishing gears primarily as a means of establishing ownership and nationality of the fishing gear.

## **MANAGEMENT MEASURE**

1. Our system for the marking of fishing gear was developed based on the following:
  - a. A simple and inexpensive system by which marks would be easily attached to fishing gear that would not interfere with the performance of the gear.
  - b. A system, the implementation of which would be at minimal cost to vessel owners/operators, and which would be in the best interest of vessels, their crew, safety at sea as well as responsible fishing and protection of the environment.

## **MARKING AND IDENTIFICATION OF FISHING GEAR TO INDICATE OWNERSHIP AND NATIONALITY**


2. For the purpose of marking specifications, every owner or operator of a Belize licensed fishing vessel shall mark all fishing gear and fishing implements such as long liners, purse seine nets, pots, traps, FADs etc.,

3. The fishing gear shall be marked by using a tag or flag and shall be easily read or always deciphered and displayed permanently and prominently in highly visible colors or in dark and white contrast.
4. Tags must be durable, waterproof and able to stay attached to the fishing gear in all sea conditions.
5. All fishing gears attended and unattended shall be marked with the vessel's call sign and IMO number and if possible, also with vessel's name, nationality (Belize) as well as the name and address of the beneficial owners and operators of the vessel.
6. The fishing gear shall be marked as follows:
  - a. In the case of tags, they must be at least four (4) inches in height and six (6) inches in width and shall be capable of containing all the information detailed in point 5 above as printed or embossed data on both faces.
  - b. Every tag shall be painted using florescent color in black color white background or in white color on black background.
  - c. The tags or markings shall be placed as high as possible above the waterline on both ends of the fishing gear and shall not extend below the waterline.
  - d. Tags shall be so designed and placed that they do not interfere with the operations and performance of the fishing gear.

Examples of the placement of tags and marks are set out in **Annex 1**

## **MARKING AND IDENTIFICATION OF FISHING GEAR TO INDICATE POSITION AT SEA**

7. The Belize Administration requires that:
  - 7.1. Where applicable, all position indicators (buoys, flags, electronic devices, lights, or beacons attached to fishing gear should:
    - a. Be as conspicuous as possible in a clear daytime atmosphere from a distance of at least 2 nautical miles at sea level.
    - b. Carry radar reflectors.
    - c. Carry lights with characteristics which do not conflict with those of the COLREGs or other international navigational marks and which would be visible on a clear night at a distance of at least 2 nautical miles; and
    - d. Be fitted with a colored flag or flags of fluorescent material, as an aid to daytime visibility.

- 7.2. Lights and shapes should also indicate the direction and extent of set and drifting gear.
- 7.3. Electronic devices, such as transponders and radio beacons which automatically and continuously indicate their position by means of signal may be used in addition to the lights and shapes. Such devices, however, must not operate at frequencies that would conflict with other devices used for navigation and search and rescue purposes.
- 7.4. An individual pot, trap, fyke net, stake net and other similar gear, should be marked with a buoy or other device at the surface to indicate its position. Gear set in series, such as several pots connected are on line, should be marked at each end with a buoy.
- 7.5. Anchored or drifting fishing gears with the upper continuous edge of the gear at a depth of more than 2 meters below the surface should be marked in the following manner:
- a. Fishing gear set below the level of the sea and extending from an anchor or parent vessel, should be marked at both extremities by a spar buoy and at intermediate positions. The distance between the intermediate marks, and between the intermediate marks closest to the extremities and the extremity markers should not exceed one kilometer. In the case of fishing gear attached to a vessel, the extremity of the gear nearest to the vessel need not carry a marker.
  - b. For recognition in daytime, the westernmost end spar buoy of such gear extending horizontally in the sea should be fitted with two flags one above the other or one flag and a radar reflector. The end spar buoy at the most sternly extremity should be fitted with one flag or a radar reflector, and
  - c. For the nighttime recognition, the most westerly end spar buoy should have two white lights one above the other; the most easterly end spar buoy to have one white light.
- 7.6. Fishing gear set within the upper two meters of the water column, and therefore a hazard to transmitting vessels, should be marked in the following manner:
- a. For daytime recognition, the extremities of the gear should have spar buoys carrying top marks consisting of two spherical shapes, one above the other at no more than one meter apart, the diameter of the upper of the two spheres to be smaller but no less than one half the diameter of the lower one.
  - b. For nighttime recognition, the spar buoys placed at the extremity of the gear should have two yellow lights, one above the other at no less than one meter apart and a different characteristic to lights fitted to intermediate buoys.
  - c. Gear extending more than one kilometer should have intermediate buoys placed at distances of not more than one kilometer; intermediate spar buoys should have one spherical shape for daytime recognition and one yellow light for nighttime.
- 

- d. "Gates" should be provided for the free passage of surface vessels. Each side of the gate should be marked by spar buoys; the closest intermediate float should not be more than 10 meters from these spar buoys; and
- e. Attended gear need not be marked at the extremity attached to a fishing vessel.

7.7. Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) should be marked in accordance with the requirements as indicated in our Management Plan for FADs.

## **TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION**

- 8. A spar buoy should meet the following specifications. Where practicable, all position indicators attached to fishing gear should:
  - 8.1. The pole of a spar buoy extending above the floatation buoy should have a height of at least 2 meters; the height of the spar buoy may be less than 2 meters once it will not be a hazard to navigation.
  - 8.2. Where radar reflectors are required, they should be fitted at the top of the pole.
  - 8.3. The size of flags should not be less than 25 centimeters in height and 35 centimeters in width; when two flags are required, the distance between them should not be less than 10 centimeters; flags should be made of waterproof material in fluorescent colors.
  - 8.4. Lights should be attached to the pole in such a way that they will not be obscured by a flag.
  - 8.5. For shapes that give the appearance of being spherical when viewed from a distance, the lower of the spherical shapes and the shape if only one is fitted, should have a diameter of not less than 30 centimeters, the upper shape should be smaller in diameter but not less than half that of the lower shape; and when two shapes are required, they should not be less than 10 centimeters apart.
  - 8.6. Intermediate floats should have a diameter of not less than 50 centimeters.
  - 8.7. Radar reflector should be:
    - a. As light as possible.
    - b. Octahedral in shape; and
    - c. Of metal plate or wire mesh construction.
  - 8.8. Lights should be visible at a distance of at least 2 nautical miles; and preferably of a type that are fitted with sensors that automatically switch the light on at dusk and off at daylight.
  - 8.9. Radio beacons may be of a type that can be attached to the pole of the spar buoy or FAD, if they are of the free-floating type, they should be linked to the spar buoy.

## **LOST OR DISGARDED GEAR**

9. In the event of loss or abandonment of fishing gear, the master, owners or operators are required to inform the BHSFU immediately.

Every effort should be made by the crew, owners or operators to retrieve lost or abandoned gear particularly if the gear:

- a. Presents a hazard to the navigation of surface and sub-surface vessels.
- b. Fouls reefs.
- c. Fouls spawning beds.
- d. Becomes an impediment to fishing; or
- e. Would continue to ghost fish.

Where gear lost or abandoned, may be or become a danger to navigation, the master, owners or operators of the vessel concerned should immediately warn other vessels in the vicinity and inform the BHSFU as well as the competent local authority if fishing in an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), giving details of the gear as well as its last known positions so as to enable the competent authority to use the most effective local means to give a general warning to mariners.

The details of the lost gear as well as its last known position must be entered in the vessel's official logbook.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The above measures should have been implemented in accordance with previous circular, however as this is an updated revision thereto, owners/operators will be given a grace period of three months to implement this measure and send to our Administration a completed copy of Annex II for each vessel.

## **INSPECTIONS**

All Belize licensed fishing vessels may be inspected by a Flag State Inspector, a BHSFU inspector or an authorized observer with or without prior notice. Also, the Resolutions/Recommendations of the RFMOs permit the boarding and inspection of fishing vessels by authorized inspectors of other member States of the RFMO to which Belize subscribes.

## **APPLICABILITY**

This Fishing Vessel Circular applies to **ALL** Belize licensed fishing vessels.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Stakeholders shall ensure that this Circular is acknowledged and observed.

## **COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT**

Failure to comply with any Circular shall result in disciplinary actions taken in accordance with Belize's Sanction Regulations S.I. 32 of 2014

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

This Circular shall take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information direct all inquiries about this Circular to the Director of High Seas Fisheries of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, Ministry of Finance, Government of Belize.

---

Issued by



**VALARIE LANZA**

Director of High Seas Fisheries

[Director@bhsfu.gov.bz](mailto:Director@bhsfu.gov.bz)

[Valerie\\_lanza@bhsfu.gov.bz](mailto:Valerie_lanza@bhsfu.gov.bz)

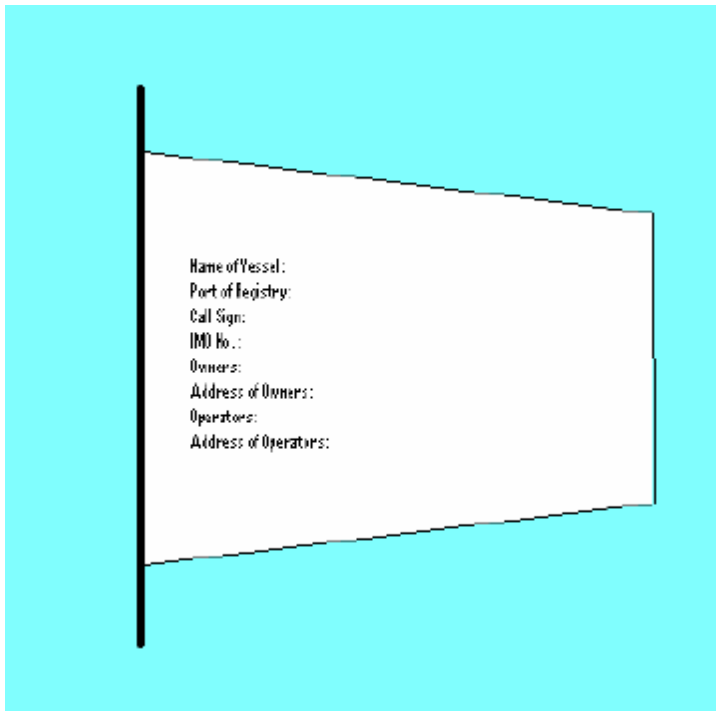
## ANNEX 1

### EXAMPLES OF MARKING OF FISHING GEAR

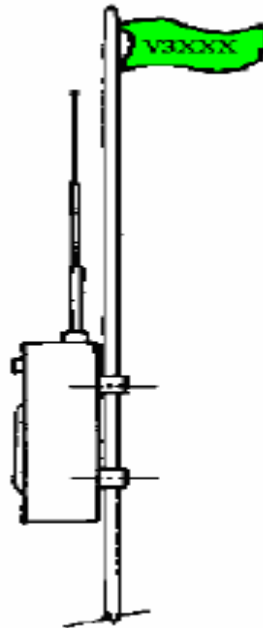
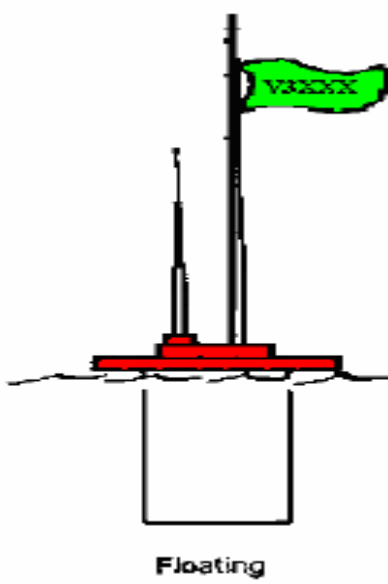
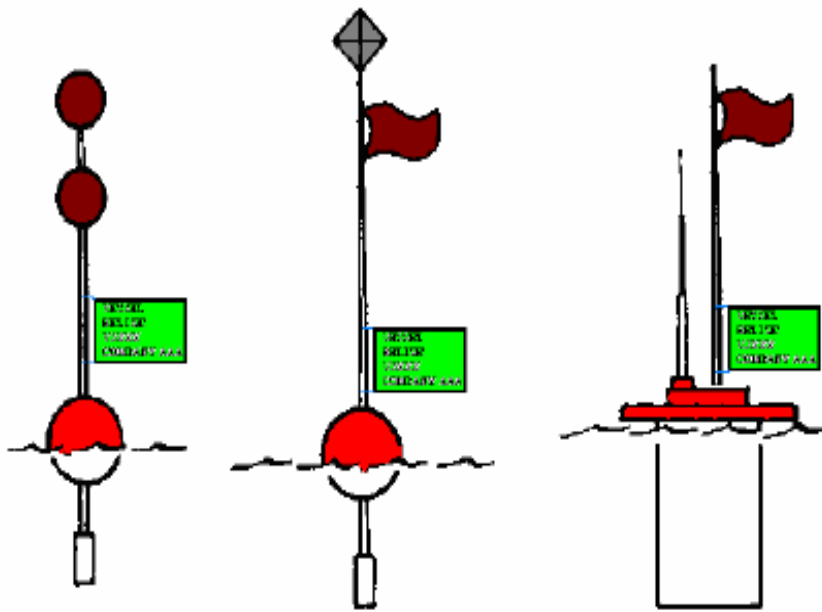
#### 1. Tags

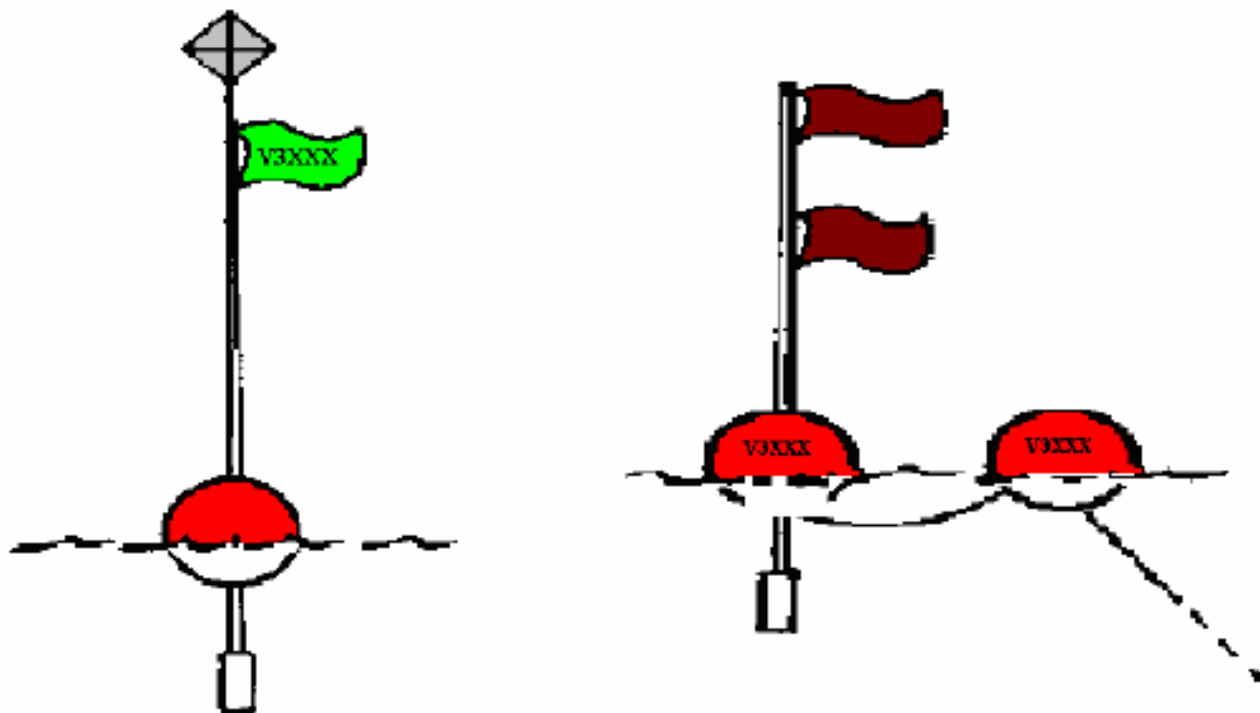
Vessel Name:	XXXXX
Port of Registry	BELIZE
Call Sign:	V3.....
IMO No.:	XXXXX
Owners:	Company AAAA
Address:	XXXXX
Operators:	Company BBBB
Address:	XXXXX

#### 2. Flags



### 3. Placement of identification Markings, Tags and Flags on buoys and beacons

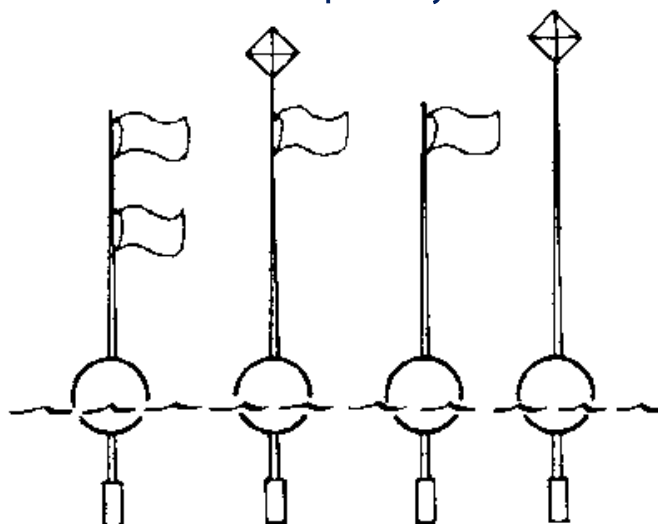




EXAMPLES OF THE STANDARD SYSTEM OF LIGHTS, BEACONS AND SHAPES FOR THE IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION OF FISHING GEAR AT SEA

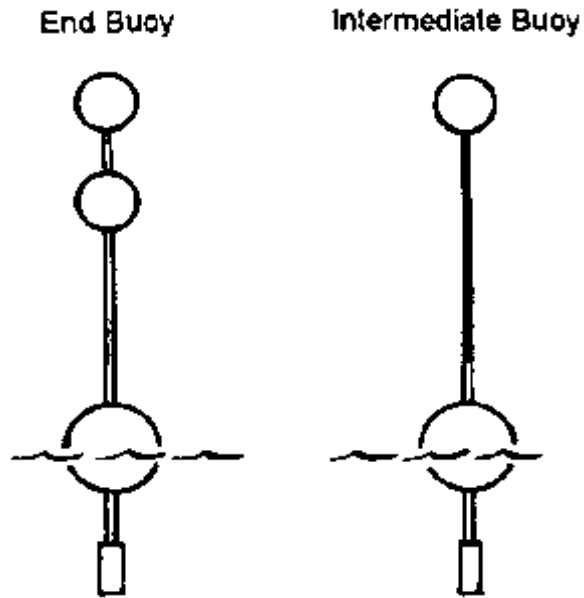
1. Use of flags for fishing gear that drifts and is set below the upper 2 meters in the water column

Spar Buoys



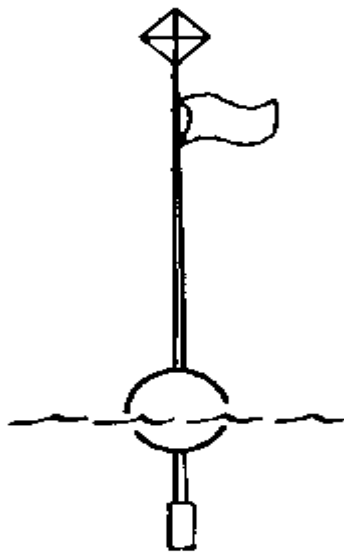
2. Use of spherical shapes when drifting gear is set in the upper 2m of the water column

### Spar Buoys



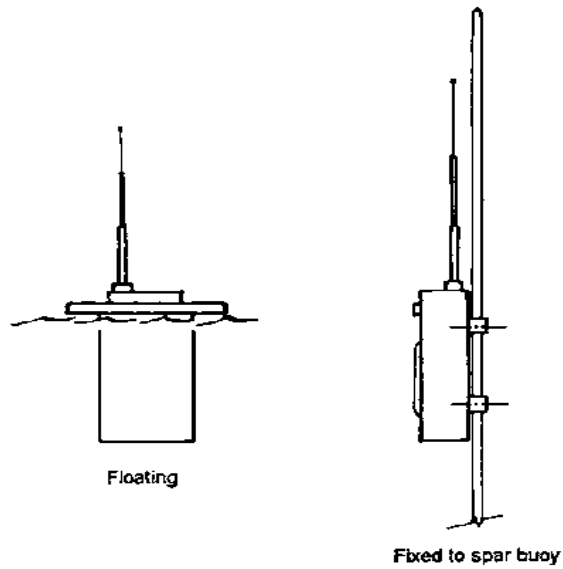
3. The Dhan buoy as used with active gear such as anchor seining, dragging and purse seining.

### Dhan Buoy



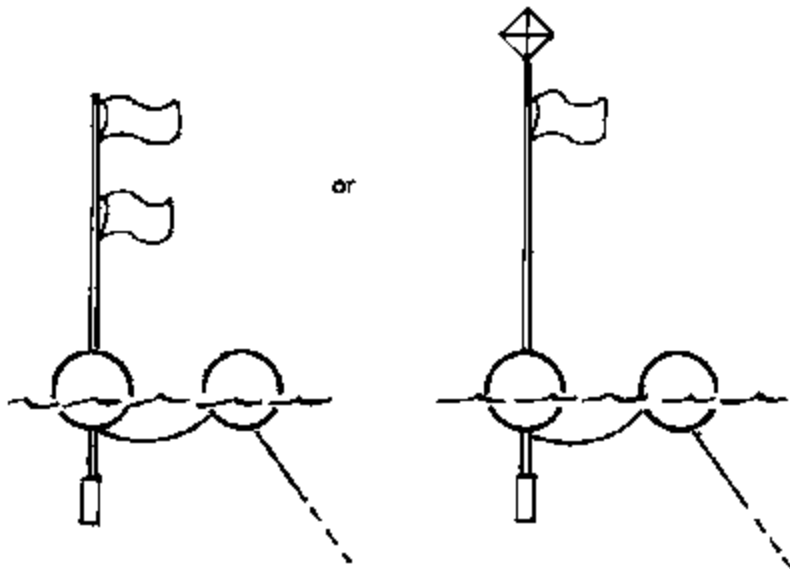
#### 4. Use of Radio Beacons

##### Float Free Beacons Tied to the Spar Buoy



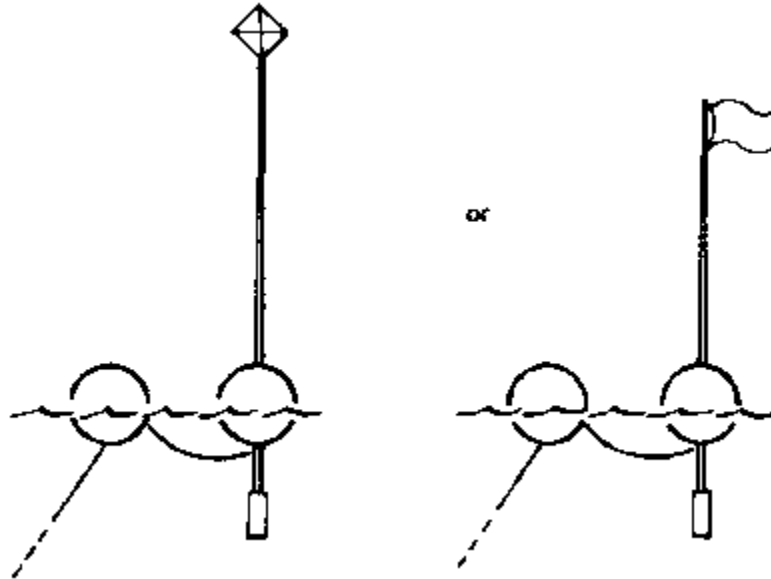
#### 5. Spar buoy indicating fishing gear lying to the east of the buoy

Fishing gear set below the upper 2 meters in the water Column

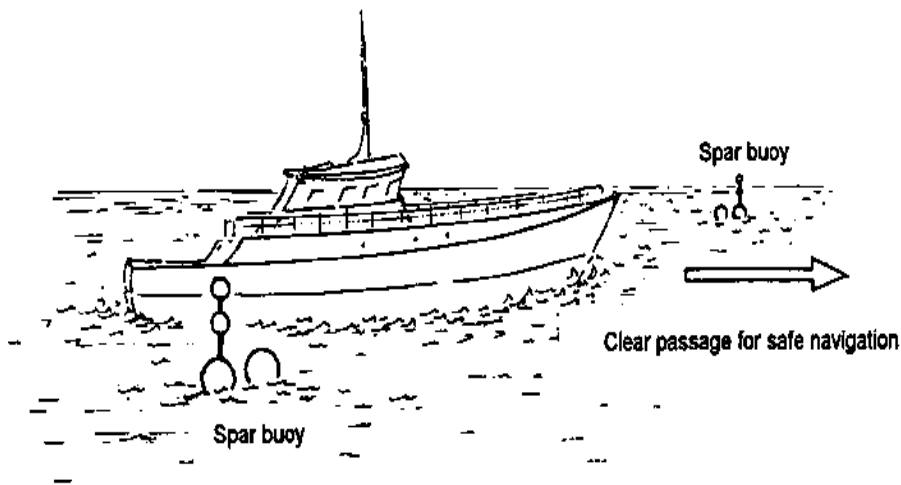


6. Spar buoy indicating fishing gear lying to the west of the buoy

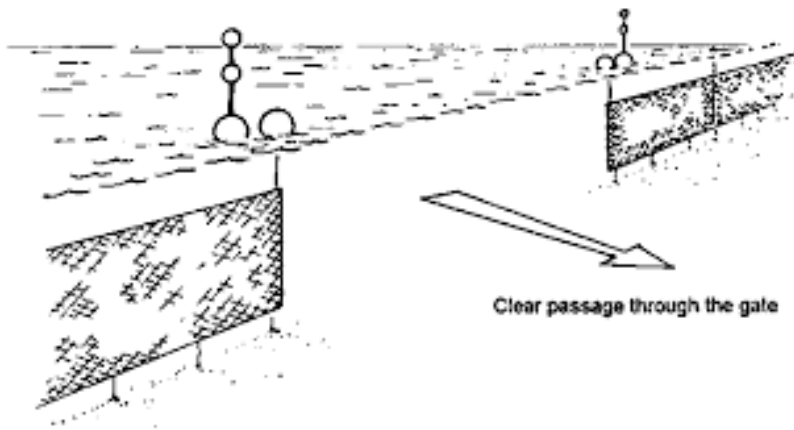
Fishing gear set below the upper 2 meters in the water Column



7. Gate in fishing gear in upper 2m of the water column

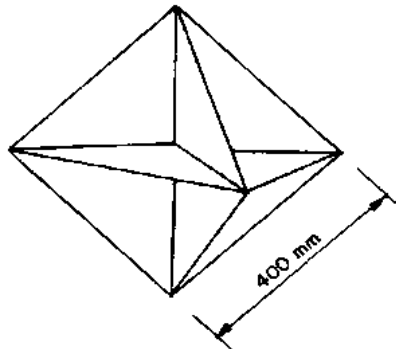


## 8. Gate in fishing gear set in the upper 2m of the water column



## 9. Radar Reflectors

Aluminum plate or wire mesh is suitable. To provide a good radar target, the reflector should be of a reasonable size; however, if it is too large, the windage effect could cause the buoy to heel excessively.



## ANNEX II

### CONFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH FISHING VESSEL CIRCULAR LETTER NO.040

VESSEL NAME:

\_\_\_\_\_

CALL SIGN:

\_\_\_\_\_

This is to confirm that the fishing gear on board the above-mentioned vessel has been marked in accordance with the requirements and specifications detailed in Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No.040.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
For and on behalf of vessel owners

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Company

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of signatory

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position

