

Advice to implementors. The intended semantics of opaque objects is that opaque objects are separate from one another; each call to allocate such an object copies all the information required for the object. Implementations may avoid excessive copying by substituting referencing for copying. For example, a derived datatype may contain references to its components, rather than copies of its components; a call to `MPI_COMM_GROUP` may return a reference to the group associated with the communicator, rather than a copy of this group. In such cases, the implementation must maintain reference counts, and allocate and deallocate objects in such a way that the visible effect is as if the objects were copied. (*End of advice to implementors.*)

2.5.2 Array Arguments

An MPI call may need an argument that is an array of opaque objects, or an array of handles. The array-of-handles is a regular array with entries that are handles to objects of the same type in consecutive locations in the array. Whenever such an array is used, an additional `len` argument is required to indicate the number of valid entries (unless this number can be derived otherwise). The valid entries are at the beginning of the array; `len` indicates how many of them there are, and need not be the size of the entire array. The same approach is followed for other array arguments. In some cases `NULL` handles are considered valid entries. When a `NULL` argument is desired for an array of statuses, one uses `MPI_STATUSES_IGNORE`.

2.5.3 State

MPI procedures use at various places arguments with *state* types. The values of such a data type are all identified by names, and no operation is defined on them. For example, the `MPI_TYPE_CREATE_SUBARRAY` routine has a state argument `order` with values `MPI_ORDER_C` and `MPI_ORDER_FORTRAN`.

2.5.4 Named Constants

MPI procedures sometimes assign a special meaning to a special value of a basic type argument; e.g., `tag` is an integer-valued argument of point-to-point communication operations, with a special wild-card value, `MPI_ANY_TAG`. Such arguments will have a range of regular values, which is a proper subrange of the range of values of the corresponding basic type; special values (such as `MPI_ANY_TAG`) will be outside the regular range. The range of regular values, such as `tag`, can be queried using environmental inquiry functions (Chapter 7 of the MPI-1 document). The range of other values, such as `source`, depends on values given by other MPI routines (in the case of `source` it is the communicator size).

MPI also provides predefined named constant handles, such as `MPI_COMM_WORLD`.

[All named constants, with the exceptions noted below for Fortran, can be used in initialization expressions or assignments.] All named constants, with the exceptions noted below for Fortran, can be used in initialization expressions or assignments, but not necessarily in array declarations or as labels in C/C++ switch or Fortran select/case statements. This implies named constants to be link-time but not necessarily compile-time constants. The named constants listed below are required to be compile-time constants in both C/C++ and Fortran. These constants do not change values during execution. Opaque objects accessed by constant handles are defined and do not change value between MPI initialization (`MPI_INIT`) and MPI completion (`MPI_FINALIZE`). The handles themselves are constants

and can be also used in initialization expressions or assignments.

The constants that are required to be compile-time constants (and can thus be used for array length declarations and labels in C/C++ switch and Fortran case/select statements) are:

```
MPI_MAX_PROCESSOR_NAME
MPI_MAX_ERROR_STRING
MPI_MAX_DATAREP_STRING
MPI_MAX_INFO_KEY
MPI_MAX_INFO_VAL
MPI_MAX_OBJECT_NAME
MPI_MAX_PORT_NAME
MPI_STATUS_SIZE (Fortran only)
MPI_ADDRESS_KIND (Fortran only)
MPI_INTEGER_KIND (Fortran only)
MPI_OFFSET_KIND (Fortran only)
```

and their C++ counterparts where appropriate.

The constants that cannot be used in initialization expressions or assignments in Fortran are:

```
MPI_BOTTOM
MPI_STATUS_IGNORE
MPI_STATUSES_IGNORE
MPI_ERRCODES_IGNORE
MPI_IN_PLACE
MPI_ARGV_NULL
MPI_ARGVS_NULL
MPI_UNWEIGHTED
```

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Advice to implementors. In Fortran the implementation of these special constants may require the use of language constructs that are outside the Fortran standard. Using special values for the constants (e.g., by defining them through `PARAMETER` statements) is not possible because an implementation cannot distinguish these values from legal data. Typically, these constants are implemented as predefined static variables (e.g., a variable in an MPI-declared `COMMON` block), relying on the fact that the target compiler passes data by address. Inside the subroutine, this address can be extracted by some mechanism outside the Fortran standard (e.g., by Fortran extensions or by implementing the function in C). (*End of advice to implementors.*)

2.5.5 Choice

MPI functions sometimes use arguments with a *choice* (or union) data type. Distinct calls to the same routine may pass by reference actual arguments of different types. The mechanism for providing such arguments will differ from language to language. For Fortran, the document uses `<type>` to represent a choice variable; for C and C++, we use `void *`.

2.5.6 Addresses

Some MPI procedures use *address* arguments that represent an absolute address in the calling program. The datatype of such an argument is `MPI_Aint` in C, `MPI::Aint` in C++