
**FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF TROPICAL TUNAS
STOCKS IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE**

SUBMITTED BY EUROPEAN UNION

Background

The IOTC, through its Scientific Committee (SC), has been repeatedly pointing out that fishing levels of yellowfin tuna stock have exceeded Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) in recent years.

The current estimate of MSY is 300,000 tonnes, lower than the average catches sustained over the 1992-2002 period of around 343,000 tonnes. The high catches of the 2003-2006 period appear to have accelerated the decline of biomass in the stock, which might be currently unable to sustain the 1992-2002 level of catches. The catches in 2008 exceeded 318,000 tonnes; the SC recommended that catches of yellowfin tuna should not exceed the estimated MSY of 300,000 tonnes,

Concerning bigeye tuna, the 2009 stock assessment indicate that the indices of abundance of this stock present divergent trend over the last few years, the estimated values of fishing mortality and Spawning Stock Biomass for 2008 are also close to MSY-related values, indicating a fully exploited stock.

However, the current outlook could revert to a more pessimistic one, if the exploitation pattern is to return to the pre-2003 levels. Changes in the fishery occurred in 2003 and 2004, but these were due to the exceptional catches of yellowfin, which seem to be the result of anomalous conditions. In view of the most current assessment, the SC recommended that catches should not exceed the MSY of 110,000 tonnes.

Taking account of these evaluations of the stock status of the two major tuna species caught in the IOTC area of competence and the consequent IOTC Scientific Committee advices, and despite the adoption of the IOTC Resolution 09/02, limiting the fishing capacity in terms of number of vessels and corresponding GT on highly migratory species in international waters, the EU opinion is that further measures to ensure the conservation and the long term sustainability of IOTC main fisheries are needed, in line with the internationally recognised application of the precautionary approach.

In order to ensure coherence with the practice already implemented in other RFMOs, and with the view of protecting the resources as well as to ensure the long stand profitability of the industrial fishing activities in the Indian Ocean, the EU is proposing a temporary seasonal closure of the fisheries on tropical tunas from 15 January to the 1 March in the IOTC Area of competence, as well as, an action plan to develop a catch limitation system (TAC and quota) or any other relevant measures based on the scientific recommendations for the main IOTC targeted species and notably for Yellowfin and Bigeye Tunas to be adopted at the latest in 2012.

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECOGNISING that based on past experience in the fishery, the potential production from the resource can be negatively impacted by excessive fishing effort;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the available scientific information and advice, in particular the IOTC Scientific Committee conclusions whereby the yellowfin and bigeye tuna stocks might have been over or fully exploited in recent years;

CONSIDERING that yellowfin catches are evaluated at a level above that which would produce the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) and bigeye is caught at a level near its MSY;

CONSIDERING that the during the 12th IOTC Scientific Committee meeting held in Seychelles from 30 November to 04 December 2009, the Scientific Committee recommended that yellowfin and bigeye

tuna catches should not exceed the estimated MSYs and for the yellowfin the monitoring and data collection should be strengthened in order to more closely follow the stock situation;

RECOGNISING the importance of applying the precautionary approach for the management of the tropical tuna and swordfish stocks in the Indian Ocean;

ADOPTS, in accordance with the provisions of Article IX, paragraph 1 of the Agreement establishing the IOTC, the following:

1. This resolution is applicable in 2011 and 2012 to all vessels over 24 meters overall length and over, and under 24 meters if they fish outside their EEZ, fishing within the IOTC area of competence.
2. With the view of decreasing the pressure on the main targeted stocks and in particular on the yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, in the IOTC area of competence for the years 2011 and 2012, the area defined by the following coordinates (Annex1) will be closed in each year from 0000 hours on 15 January to 2400 hours on 1 March :

 0 ° - 10° North

 40° and 60° East.
3. All vessels fishing within the IOTC area of competence in 2011 and 2012, regardless of the flag under which it operates or whether it changes flag during the year, shall observe the area and period closure.
4. CPCs flag states shall monitor the compliance of their vessels with this Resolution, notably through VMS, and will provide a summary of VMS records related to their fleet operation in the previous year at the 2011 Compliance Committee meeting.
5. Fishing vessels that do not comply with IOTC Resolution 06/03 "On establishing a vessel monitoring system programme" are not allowed to be active in the IOTC area of competence.
6. Landings, transshipments and commercial transactions of yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna, and their products, that have been positively identified as originating from fishing activities that contravene this resolution, are prohibited.
7. Each CPC shall no later than 45 days before the date of entry into force of a closure:
 - a) take the necessary legal and administrative measures to implement the closure;
 - b) inform all interested parties in its national tuna and tuna-like species industries of the closure;
 - c) inform the IOTC Secretary that these steps have been taken.
8. The IOTC Scientific Committee will analyse, in 2011, the effect of the closure on the stocks, and will propose, if necessary, appropriate measures to the Commission for its

consideration at its 2012 Plenary session and if necessary, provide proposals for consideration to revise this Resolution.

9. The Scientific Committee will examine at its 2010 Plenary session appropriate and additional measures for the consideration of the Commission, in particular focusing on:
- a) an evaluation of the area closure, specifying in its advice if a modification is necessary, its basic scientific rationale with an assessment on the impact of such a closure on the tropical tuna stocks, notably yellowfin and bigeye;
 - b) an evaluation of the closure time period, specifying in its advice if a modification is necessary, its basic scientific rationale with an assessment on the impact of such a closure on the tropical tuna stocks, notably yellowfin and bigeye;
 - c) any other eventual advice on possible different management measures based on targets specified for each species, including swordfish and albacore tuna, and presenting advice and options on specific management measures that would achieve the intended management target with a certain probability by a certain time.
10. CPCs, on the basis the IOTC Scientific Committee advices, shall develop an action plan in order to establish a catch limitation system (TAC and quota) or any other relevant measures based on the scientific recommendations for the main targeted species, notably for yellowfin and bigeye tuna to be submitted to the IOTC consideration during the 2012 Plenary session.

This action plan should namely include and/or take into account:

- discussion and adoption of allocation criteria, notably based on the similar experiences of other RFMOs;
- verification of the gathering and providing to the IOTC of comprehensive catch data, including analysis of relevant recommendations of the Compliance Committee;
- discussion and adoption of a TAC and quota system or any other relevant measures based on the scientific recommendations by the year 2012.

Annex 1

