

## OUTCOMES OF THE 19<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT<sup>1</sup>, 1 JULY 2015

### PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 13<sup>th</sup> Working Party on Billfish (WPB13) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 19<sup>th</sup> Session, held from 27 April – 1 May 2015, specifically relating to the work of the WPB.

### BACKGROUND

At the 19<sup>th</sup> Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 11 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 11 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), as detailed below:

### Resolutions

- Resolution 15/01 *On the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence*
- Resolution 15/02 *On mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)*
- Resolution 15/03 *On the vessel monitoring system (VMS) programme*
- Resolution 15/04 *Concerning the IOTC record of vessels authorised to operate in the IOTC area of competence*
- Resolution 15/05 *On conservation measures for striped marlin, black marlin and blue marlin*
- Resolution 15/06 *On a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, and a recommendation for non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC area of competence*
- Resolution 15/07 *On the use of artificial lights to attract fish to drifting fish aggregating devices*
- Resolution 15/08 *Procedures on a fish aggregating devices (FADs) management plan, including a limitation on the number of FADs, more detailed specifications of catch reporting from FAD sets, and the development of improved FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species*
- Resolution 15/09 *On a fish aggregating devices (FADs) working group*
- Resolution 15/10 *On target and limit reference points and a decision framework*
- Resolution 15/11 *On the implementation of a limitation of fishing capacity of Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties*

Pursuant to Article IX.4 of the IOTC Agreement, the above mentioned Conservation and Management Measures shall become binding on Members, 120 days from the date of the notification communicated by the IOTC Secretariat in IOTC Circular 2015-049 (i.e. 10 September 2015).

### DISCUSSION

The Commission also made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2014, which have relevance for the WPB as follows (paragraph numbers refer to the report of the Commission (IOTC-2015-S19-R):

Para. 10. *The Commission **CONSIDERED** the list of recommendations made by the SC17 (Appendix VI) from its 2014 report (IOTC-2014-SC17-R) that related specifically to the Commission. The Commission **ENDORSED** the list of recommendations as its own, while taking into account the range of issues outlined in this Report (S19)*

<sup>1</sup> [secretariat@iotc.org](mailto:secretariat@iotc.org); Dr. David Wilson: [david.wilson@iotc.org](mailto:david.wilson@iotc.org)

and incorporated within Conservation and Management Measures adopted during the Session and as adopted for implementation as detailed in the approved annual budget and Program of Work.

### **Shortbill spearfish**

Para. 11. The Commission **NOTED** the Scientific Committee recommendation SC17.09, which indicated that shortbill spearfish (*Tetrapturus angustirostris*) should be included in the list of species to be managed by the IOTC considering the ocean-wide distribution of this species, its highly-migratory nature, and that it is a common bycatch in IOTC managed fisheries. However, adding a new species to the official list of those to be covered by the IOTC mandate would require a modification of the IOTC Agreement. Such an inclusion would be considered at that time.

### **Black marlin and blue marlin**

Para. 16. The Commission **NOTED** the advice from the Scientific Committee that indicates that black marlin is currently subject to overfishing, and that blue marlin is currently overfished.

Para. 17. The Commission **NOTED** that CMM proposal IOTC–2015–S19–PropE will provide a discussion point for these species, to address the concerns raised by the Scientific Committee.

### **Striped marlin**

Para. 21. The Commission **NOTED** the advice from the Scientific Committee that indicates the striped marlin stock is currently subject to overfishing and that biomass is below the level which would produce MSY. The stock has been subject to overfishing for some years, and that as a result, the stock biomass is well below the  $B_{MSY}$  level and shows little signs of rebuilding despite the recent declining effort trend.

Para. 22. The Commission **RECALLED** that at its last Session, it agreed that it should take a precautionary approach to the management of striped marlin and consider, at its 19<sup>th</sup> Session, proposals for Conservation and Management Measures to reduce fishing pressure for striped marlin.

Para. 23. The Commission **NOTED** that CMM proposal IOTC–2015–S19–PropE will provide a discussion point for this species, to address the concerns raised by the Scientific Committee.

### **Swordfish**

Para. 26. The Commission **NOTED** that the Scientific Committee had agreed with the advice from the Working Party on Billfish that there is no evidence of a separate genetic stock of swordfish in the southwest Indian Ocean, although this region has been subject to localised depletion over the past decade, or longer. Accordingly, until new evidence becomes available there is no need to conduct a separate stock assessment for this area.

Para. 27. **NOTING** the advice from the Scientific Committee on swordfish stock structure, and that the original concern expressed by the Commission was not about there being a separate stock, but rather, about the documented localised depletion in the southwest Indian Ocean, the Commission **AGREED** that a separate stock assessment is not necessary.

### **Meeting Participation Fund**

Para. 37. The Commission **NOTED** that the MPF was used to fund the participation of a reduced number of national scientists to the Working Parties in 2014 (49 in 2014; 58 in 2013; 42 in 2012), all of which were required to submit and present a working paper at the meeting.

Para. 38. The Commission **NOTED** that at its 2014 meeting, the Scientific Committee had recommended that the Meeting Participation fund be maintained into the future and increased back to its original allocation of \$200,000 per year (see recommendations SC17.34, para. 119). As per the IOTC Rules of Procedure (2014), the SC had reminded the IOTC Secretariat that the MPF budget should be spent at the ratio of 75:25 (science : non-science meetings) which would equate to US\$150,000 science : US\$50,000 non-science meeting.

Para. 39. The Commission **AGREED** that the MPF budget remains important and therefore provisions according to the estimated needs will be integrated into the budget.

### **Consultants**

Para. 40. **NOTING** the Scientific Committee's attempts to prioritise the various projects and consultancies which it had requested funding for in 2016, in particular, that the High priority projects were those which it felt must be undertaken in 2016, the Commission **REQUESTED** that only those High priority projects listed in the Scientific Committee budget be funded by the Commission's regular budget, with exceptions detailed in other areas of the S19 report.

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The complete report of the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website:

- English: [www.iotc.org/documents/report-19th-session-indian-ocean-tuna-commission](http://www.iotc.org/documents/report-19th-session-indian-ocean-tuna-commission)
- French: [www.iotc.org/fr/documents/rapport-de-la-19e-session-de-la-commission-des-thons-de-1%E2%80%99oc%C3%A9an-indien](http://www.iotc.org/fr/documents/rapport-de-la-19e-session-de-la-commission-des-thons-de-1%E2%80%99oc%C3%A9an-indien)

#### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the WPB:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2015–WPB13–04 which outlined the main outcomes of the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPB and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the SC with the information it needs, in order to satisfy the Commission’s requests, throughout the course of the current WPB meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** the 11 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) adopted at the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission (consisting of 11 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), and in particular, Resolution 15/01 *On the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence*; Resolution 15/02 *On mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)* and Resolution 15/05 *On conservation measures for striped marlin, black marlin and blue marlin* which have a direct impact on the work of the WPB.