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**ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF IOTC BILLFISH**

**SUBMITTED BY: EUROPEAN UNION, 21 APRIL 2017**

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*Explanatory Memorandum*

According to the IOTC Scientific Committee, Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-Pacific Sailfish are subject to overfishing. In addition, Black Marlin and Striped Marlin are overfished, i.e. their stock biomass is below sustainable levels.

Furthermore, the Scientific Committee also recommended implementing the following management measures:

- For Black Marlin: this stock is seriously threatened. The Scientific Committee recommends that catches should be reduced below 9,932 tonnes, from a total of 18,490 tonnes in 2015 and an average of 15,276 tonnes between 2011 and 2015.
- For Striped Marlin: catches should be reduced below 4,000 tonnes in order to rebuild the stock to sustainable levels.
- For Blue Marlin: in order to bring back the stock from overfishing with at least 50% probability, the catches of blue marlin should be reduced by 24% compared to the average catch of 2013-2015, i.e. to a maximum of 11,704 tonnes.
- For Indo-Pacific Sailfish: the same advice as last year is applicable, i.e. to reduce catches below 25,000 tonnes, thereby ensuring the stock biomass does not fall below sustainable levels and becomes overfished.

It is therefore proposed, in point 3 of the Resolution, to implement a reduction of the 2015 level of these billfish catches for the indicated species, which are subject to overfishing.

**Keywords:** billfish, marlins, black marlin, striped marlin, indo-pacific sailfish

**RESOLUTION 17/XX**  
**ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF IOTC BILLFISH**

**The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),**

RECOGNISING that based on past experience in the billfish catches, 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 Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-Pacific Sailfish are subject to overfishing and, in addition, Black Marlin and Stripped Marlin are overfished;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that the 19th IOTC Scientific Committee meeting also recommended implementing management measures or significantly reducing the catches of:

- Black Marlin: catches should be reduced below 9,932 tonnes, from a total of 18,490 tonnes in 2015 and an average of 15,276 tonnes between 2011 and 2015.
- Striped Marlin: catches should be reduced below 4,000 tonnes in order to rebuild the stock to sustainable levels.
- Blue Marlin: in order to bring back the stock from overfishing with at least 50% probability, the catches of blue marlin should be reduced by 24% compared to the average catch of 2013-2015, i.e. to a maximum of 11,704 tonnes.
- Indo-Pacific Sailfish: the same advice as last year is applicable, i.e. to reduce catches below 25,000 tonnes, thereby ensuring the stock biomass does not fall below sustainable levels and becomes overfished.

NOTING the importance of applying the precautionary approach for the management of all above mentioned stocks;

ADOPTS, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, that:

1. This Resolution is applicable until 31 December 2021 within the IOTC area of competence.
2. This Resolution shall apply to the following fishing vessels targeting tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC area of competence:
  - a) Vessels of 24 metres overall length and over; and
  - b) Vessels under 24 metres if they fish outside the EEZ of the State whose flag they fly.
3. With the main objective of decreasing the fishing pressure on Striped Marlin (*Tetrapturus audax*), Black Marlin (*Makaira indica*), Blue Marlin (*Makaira nigricans*) and Indo-Pacific Sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*) in the IOTC area of competence, Contracting Parties and cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) shall adapt future catch levels of those four stocks in 2018, 2019 and 2020 by applying the following mechanism:
  - a) For Black Marlin:
    - For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels are equal to or below 1.5% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, catches shall remain equal to or below 1.5% of those 2015 overall IOTC catches.
    - For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 1.5% and are equal or below 5% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, no increase in catches beyond 2015 catch levels;
    - For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 5% and are equal or below 10% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, a 30% reduction of catches compared to 2015 catch levels;
    - For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 10% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, a 40% reduction of catches compared to 2015 catch levels.



b) For Striped Marlin:

- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels are equal to or below 1.5% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, catches shall remain equal to or below 1.5% of those 2015 overall IOTC catches.
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 1.5% and are equal or below 5% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, no increase in catches beyond 2015 catch levels;
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 5% and are equal or below 10% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, a 10% reduction of catches compared to 2015 catch levels;
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 10% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, a 15% reduction of catches compared to 2015 catch levels.

c) For Blue Marlin:

- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels are equal to or below 1.5% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, catches shall remain equal to or below 1.5% of those 2015 overall IOTC catches.
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 1.5% and are equal or below 5% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, no increase in catches beyond 2015 catch levels;
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 5% and are equal or below 10% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, a 25% reduction of catches compared to 2015 catch levels;
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 10% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, a 37% reduction of catches compared to 2015 catch levels.

d) For Indo-Pacific Sailfish:

- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels are equal to or below 1.5% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, catches shall remain equal to or below 1.5% of those 2015 overall IOTC catches.
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 1.5% and are equal or below 5% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, no increase in catches beyond 2015 catch levels;
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 5% and are equal or below 10% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, a 15% reduction of catches compared to 2015 catch levels;
- For CPCs whose 2015 catch levels exceed 10% of the 2015 overall IOTC catches, a 25% reduction of catches compared to 2015 catch levels.

4. The Scientific Committee will review in its annual session of 2021 the level of catches of the species mentioned in point 3 above for the previous years.
5. If the catch by a CPC in 2018, 2019 or 2020 exceeds the catch levels established in point 3 of this Resolution, that CPC's catch of the species concerned in the following year shall be reduced by the excess catch.
6. The Scientific Committee shall carry out in 2021 an evaluation of the measures described in this Resolution and their impact on each of the four species of billfish mentioned in point 3.
7. This Resolution supersedes Resolution 15/05 on conservation measures for striped marlin, black marlin and blue marlin.