

OUTCOMES OF THE 21st SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT¹, 26 SEPTEMBER 2017

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 19th Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT19) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 21st Session, held from 22-26 May 2017, specifically relating to the work of the WPTT.

BACKGROUND

At the 21st Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 8 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 8 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), as detailed below:

Resolutions

- Resolution 17/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC Area of Competence.*
- Resolution 17/02 *Working party on the implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM).*
- Resolution 17/03 *On establishing a list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the IOTC Area of competence.*
- Resolution 17/04 *On a ban on discards of Bigeye tuna, Skipjack tuna, Yellowfin tuna, and non-targeted species caught by vessels in the IOTC Area of Competence.*
- Resolution 17/05 *On the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by the IOTC.*
- Resolution 17/06 *On establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels*
- Resolution 17/07. *On the prohibition to use large-scale driftnets in the IOTC Area.*
- Resolution 17/08 *Proposal for amendment of 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.*

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 Secretariat

DISCUSSION

The Commission also made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2016, which have relevance for the WPTT (IOTC–2017–S21–R):

Report of the 19th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC19)

(Para. 22): The Commission noted the status summaries for species of tuna and tuna-like species under the IOTC mandate, as well as other species impacted by IOTC fisheries (Appendix 6) and considered the recommendations made by the SC19 in its 2016 report (IOTC–2016–SC19–R, Appendix XXXVII) 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 (S21) 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.

On the status of tropical and temperate tunas

(Para. 23) The Commission noted that the current status of tropical and temperate tunas is as follows:

Bigeye tuna

¹ secretariat@iotc.org

A bigeye assessment was carried out in 2016. The stock is not overfished and not subject to overfishing. If catch remains below the estimated MSY levels estimated for the current mix of fisheries, then immediate management measures are not required.

Yellowfin tuna

A yellowfin assessment was carried out in 2016. The stock is overfished and subject to overfishing. The stock status is driven by unsustainable catches of yellowfin tuna taken over the last four years, and the relatively low recruitment levels estimated by the model in recent years. The Commission has an interim plan for the rebuilding of this stock (Resolution 16/01), with catch limitations beginning January 1 2017. The possible effect of this measure can only be assessed once estimates of abundance in 2017 would be available at the 2019 assessment.

Skipjack tuna

A skipjack assessment was carried out in 2014. The stock is not overfished and not subject to overfishing. The adoption of Resolution 16/02 requires that an estimate of spawning biomass relative to virgin spawning biomass from future skipjack assessments is used to parameterise the Harvest Control Rule (HCR). The next assessment for skipjack will be conducted in 2017, at which time the HCR will be applied and a total allowable catch for skipjack will be established for 2018. No additional management measures are required at this time, however continued monitoring and improvement in data collection, reporting and analysis (including fishery indicators) is required to reduce the uncertainty in assessments.

Albacore tuna

An albacore assessment was carried out in 2016. The stock is not overfished and not subject to overfishing. A precautionary approach to the management of albacore tuna should be applied by capping total catch levels to MSY levels.

Consideration of management measures to tropical and temperate tunas

(Para. 24) The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 17/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC Area of Competence*

(Para. 25) The Commission noted the following statement from Seychelles: “A number of compromises were made to reach a consensus, which include: 1) changing the number of FADs from 300 to 350 and 2) move to a gradual reduction of supply vessels to accommodate the concerns of some CPCs.”

(Para. 26) The Commission noted the statement from the Republic of Korea on the final revision of IOTC-2017-S21-PropE as given in Appendix 8a.

(Para. 27) The Commission also noted the statement from the European Union on the final revision of IOTC-2017-S21-PropE as given in Appendix 8b.

(Para. 28) The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 17/08 *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*

Consideration of management measures related to all species

(Para. 42) The Commission **AGREED** to defer IOTC-2017-S21-PropN *On the Allocation of Fishing Opportunities for IOTC species*. This proposal included allocation principles and their criteria, that received support of the majority of coastal States. Some CPCs noted their concerns with elements of both the procedure and substance of the proposal. In particular, that the technical elements of the proposal were not discussed by the Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria. There was debate on the extent to which the proposal reflected international legal principles.

(Para. 43) The invited experts informed the Commission that the distant-water fishing fleets they represent also shared the concerns of the CPCs as mentioned above.

(Para. 44) The Commission **AGREED** to continue its deliberations on allocation according to the following plan: (1) Feedback by CPCs on the latest version of IOTC-2017-S21-PropN is to be received by the IOTC Secretariat within 40 days of the end of S21, then to be provided to the proponents of proposal; (2) The Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria (TCAC) will meet as soon as possible, preferably within three (3) months, to continue its deliberations on, inter alia, the above proposal; and (4) The IOTC Secretariat to consider requesting FAO legal support for the TCAC meeting.

(Para. 45) The coastal States in support of the proposal noted their preference for this proposal to be the basis for the discussions on allocation during the next TCAC meeting.

(Para. 46) The Commission noted the generous offer from South Africa to host the TCAC and TCPR meetings in the 3rd or 4th week of October 2017, with the final dates to be confirmed (after taking into account the existing commitments CPCs might have).

Development of management procedures

Report of the Technical Committee on Management Procedures

(Para. 53) The Commission noted the Chair's report (IOTC-2017-TCMP-01-R) from the 1st meeting of the Technical Committee on Management Procedures (TCMP) and **ENDORSED** its recommendations in principle.

(Para. 54) The Commission noted in particular, the intention of the TCMP to add elements of the data collection process to the Management Procedure, and the need for the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics to be involved in this.

(Para. 55) The Commission noted that, although it was not reflected in the Chair's report, the schedule of work for the development of Management Procedures for key species in the IOTC area was presented to the TCMP and that the feedback provided was incorporated into the version presented to the Commission.

(Para. 56) The Commission **AGREED** that when establishing a catch limit for skipjack tuna using the Harvest Control Rule (HCR) adopted in Resolution 16/02, the following procedure will be applied: after the review of the assessment of skipjack tuna by the SC, the result of the assessment will be used by the SC in the calculation of a catch limit using the adopted HCR. The Secretariat will then notify to CPC's of the new catch limit for skipjack tuna that will apply for 2018.

(Para. 57) The Commission acknowledged the need for capacity building to improve understanding of Management Procedure concepts and their application by CPCs; and to improve the communication of information between scientists and managers. To accommodate these elements, the Commission **AGREED** that the TCMP meeting could be increased to two (2) days.

Schedule of work for the development of management procedures for key species in the IOTC Area

(Para. 58) The Commission noted the presentation by Australia on the schedule of work for the development of management procedures for key species in the IOTC Area (IOTC-2017-S21-14). The schedule provides information on when and how the Commission ought to be engaged in the management procedures process, and was developed with inputs from CPC's, relevant IOTC working parties, the Scientific Committee, and uses, as its basis, the work plan of the Scientific Committee.

(Para. 59) The Commission **ENDORSED** the schedule that was revised during S21 (provided in Appendix 9), noting it is a 'living document' to guide the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies in the future. The Commission also **REQUESTED** that a budget for implementation of the schedule be reviewed by the SCAF in 2018.

The complete report of the 20th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website: <http://www.iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2017/07/IOTC-2017-S21-RE.pdf>

RECOMMENDATION

That the WPTT

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC-2017-WPTT19-04 which outlined the main outcomes of the 21st Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPTT 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 WPTT meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** the 8 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) adopted at the 21st Session of the Commission (consisting of 8 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), and in particular those Resolutions which have a direct impact on the work of the WPTT.