

## An Assessment of Shark Finning in Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Fisheries

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### PURPOSE

To assist participants at the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM) to review and provide comments on the report “An Assessment of Shark Finning in Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Fisheries”, specifically section 3 “Request to the Compliance Committee” and make recommendations to the Compliance Committee.

### BACKGROUND

This study was conducted in response to a request from the Commission in 2018 (IOTC-2018-S22-R):

*(Para. 39) The Commission AGREED to the requests made to the Compliance Committee and Scientific Committee in working paper IOTC-2018-S22-06Rev1:*

- *to analyse and document, wherever possible, whether the practice of shark finning still takes place in IOTC and to what extent, despite the adoption of Resolution 17/05, and to review the compliance with the requirements contained in Res 17/05, including the shark finning prohibition and the fins naturally attached requirement adopted by IOTC (Compliance Committee);*
- *to identify possible means to improve the submission of complete, accurate and timely catch records for sharks, as well as the collection of species-specific data on catch, biology, discards and trade. (Scientific Committee).*

With the support of the Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Project, which is funded by the *Global Environment Facility (GEF)* with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), an independent consultant was recruited to undertake this study. The report of the consultant was presented at the meeting of the IOTC’s 14th Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics; reference IOTC-2018-WPDCS14-37.

### DISCUSSION

Section 3.1 “Review of compliance with IOTC shark finning measures” of the report provide the following summary:

*... only five CPCs report implementing a requirement that shark fins must remain naturally attached to carcasses (or not be removed). Only two CPCs report applying the 5% fins-to-carcass ratio but do not provide details. The majority of CPCs do not report specifically on what handling practices they require for fins and carcasses. As a result, from the reporting requirements for Res. 17/05 (and Res. 05/05 before it), it is difficult to evaluate for most CPCs whether and how a prohibition on shark finning is being maintained.*

Section 3.2.2 “Scientific Observer Programme (ROS)” of the report provide the following summary:

*...the scientific observer (ROS) data collected in the IOTC represents a small proportion of the total fishing effort in the area, and a portion of the collected data--including some information pertinent to shark finning--is either not required to be submitted to the Commission or has been simplified when uploaded to the consolidated ROS database. As of 22 October 2018, slightly less than 30,000 sharks from 2005-2017 are represented in the database, and none are recorded using any of the codes that pertain to finning activities.*

Section 3.2.3 “Transshipment Observer Programme (ROP)” of the report provide the following summary:

*...the IOTC transshipment database a) is limited in its coverage to large-scale tuna longline vessels; b) cannot be reliably and precisely converted to live weights for the purpose of reconciling fin*

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*and carcass product quantities; and c) was not designed to match or tally product quantities over an entire vessel-trip and even if so would not account for quantities remaining onboard. For these reasons, the IOTC transshipment database has substantial limitations as a tool for assessing the incidence of shark finning and at present does not provide any definitive evidence that finning has occurred.*

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the WPICMM02:

1. **NOTE** paper IOTC–2019–WPICMM02–15 and paper IOTC-2018-WPDCS14-37,
2. Make **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Compliance Committee on a way forward.