
OUTCOMES OF THE 18th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 11 NOVEMBER 2014

PURPOSE

To inform the Scientific Committee (SC) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 18th Session, held from 1–5 June 2014, specifically relating to the IOTC science process.

BACKGROUND

At the 18th Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 7 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (7 in total consisting of 6 Resolutions and 1 Recommendation), as detailed below:

Resolutions

- Resolution 14/01 *On the removal of obsolete Conservation and Management Measures*
- Resolution 14/02 *For the conservation and management of tropical tunas stocks in the IOTC area of competence*
- Resolution 14/03 *On enhancing the dialogue between fisheries scientists and managers*
- Resolution 14/04 *Concerning the IOTC record of vessels authorised to operate in the IOTC area of competence*
- Resolution 14/05 *Concerning a record of licensed foreign vessels fishing for IOTC species in the IOTC area of competence and access agreement information*
- Resolution 14/06 *On establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels*

Recommendations

- Recommendation 14/07 *To standardise the presentation of scientific information in the annual Scientific Committee report and in Working Party reports*

Pursuant to Article IX.4 of the IOTC Agreement, the above mentioned Conservation and Management Measures become binding on Members, 120 days from the date of the notification communicated by the Secretariat in IOTC Circular 2014–60 (10 June 2014, i.e. **8 October 2014**).

The updated *Compendium of Active Conservation and Management Measures for the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission* may be downloaded from the IOTC website at the following link, dated **8 October 2014**:

English: <http://iotc.org/cmms>

French: <http://iotc.org/fr/mcgs>

Below is a brief description of the new or revised CMMs adopted at the 18th Session of the Commission, which have most relevance to the IOTC science process:

1) Resolution 14/01 *On the removal of obsolete Conservation and Management Measures*

The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 14/01 *On the removal of obsolete Conservation and Management Measures*). This Resolution supersedes a range of CMMs that have been fulfilled or are obsolete (22 in total), as they have been replaced without being superseded or are no longer relevant to the conservation and management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean. (S18 Report, para. 120)

2) Resolution 14/02 *For the conservation and management of tropical tunas stocks in the IOTC area of competence*

The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 14/02 *For the conservation and management of tropical tunas stocks in the IOTC area of competence*. This Resolution removes obsolete and ineffective elements from the previous Resolution 12/13, in particular the month long closed area following advice from the Scientific Committee that the current closure is likely to be ineffective, as fishing effort will be redirected to other fishing grounds in the Indian Ocean. The positive impacts of the moratorium within the closed area would likely be offset by effort reallocation, as they will result in

similar catch rates and total annual catches. In addition, the area closure includes not only the high seas but also part of the EEZ of Somalia, which may be detrimental to the aspirations of Somalia with respect to granting of fishing rights within its EEZ. The revised Resolution retains only those elements related to the already established process for an allocation system or any other relevant measures to be developed to manage tropical tuna stocks. This Resolution superseded Resolution 12/13. (S18 Report, para. 121)

3) Resolution 14/03 *On enhancing the dialogue between fisheries scientists and managers*

The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 14/03 *On enhancing the dialogue between fisheries scientists and managers*. The Resolution creates a Science and Management Dialogue process dedicated to enhance the decision making response of managers to existing Conservation and Management Measures as well as to the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee. The objective is to enhance communication and to foster mutual understanding between fisheries managers, stakeholders and scientists; and to promote the efficient use of scientific resources and information. (S18 Report, para. 122)

4) Recommendation 14/07 *To standardise the presentation of scientific information in the annual Scientific Committee report and in Working Party reports*

The Commission **ADOPTED** Recommendation 14/07 *To standardise the presentation of scientific information in the annual Scientific Committee report and in Working Party report*. The Recommendation builds upon the excellent work to date by the Scientific Committee, its working parties and the IOTC Secretariat to standardise the presentation of scientific information in their annual reports, including via the '*Executive Summaries*' for each stock. In this context and in order to support scientific advice made available by the IOTC Scientific Committee, the executive summaries of the annual IOTC Scientific Committee report which present the stock assessment results may include, when possible as defined in this proposal, clearly: Stock status; Model outlooks; Data quality and limitations of the assessment models; Alternative approach (data poor stocks). (S18 Report, para. 128)

DISCUSSION

The Commission considered the following proposals as Conservation and Management Measures, but consensus could not be reached and further discussion was deferred until S19, in 2015.

1) On a scientific and management framework on the conservation of shark species and on the protection of silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC

The Commission **CONSIDERED** a proposal on the conservation of silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC area of competence (IOTC–2014–S18–PropB), but agreement could not be reached and the proposal was deferred until the next Session of the Commission. According to the proposal, it aimed to prohibit the retention onboard, transshipment, landing or storing any part or whole carcass of silky sharks by all vessels on the IOTC record of authorised vessels or authorised to fish for tuna or tuna-like species, with the exception of observers. Silky sharks in the Indian Ocean have been classified as "*near threatened*" by the international scientific community, and the continuation of the current fishing pressure on this species could lead to the depletion of silky sharks and have a negative impact on the ecosystem. In addition, according to the proposal, silky sharks have been identified among the most vulnerable species by the IOTC Scientific Committee, based on the results of Ecological Risk Assessment conducted on this species. Several CPCs indicated that there is little data available on this species and requested that proposal is deferred until such a time where data are sufficiently available and the status of these stocks can be properly assessed. It was also suggested that the proposal was not consistent with the provisions of IOTC Resolution 13/06, in particular paragraphs 1 and 2 which call for the Commission to consider the implementation of management measures on the basis of advice from the Scientific Committee. It was further suggested by some CPCs that the proposal adversely affects data collection on silky sharks and dead silky sharks should be fully utilised. (S18 Report, para. 131)

2) On a scientific and management framework on the conservation of shark species and on the protection of hammerhead sharks (Family Sphyrnidae) caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC

The Commission **CONSIDERED** a proposal on the conservation of hammerhead sharks (Family Sphyrnidae) caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC area of competence (IOTC–2014–S18–PropC), but agreement could not be reached and the proposal was deferred until the next meeting of the Commission. According to the proposal, it aimed

to prohibit the retention onboard, transshipment, landing or storing any part or whole carcass of hammerhead sharks by all vessels on the IOTC record of authorised vessels or authorised to fish for tuna or tuna-like species, with the exception of observers. Hammerhead sharks in the Indian Ocean have been classified as "near threatened" by the international scientific community, and, according to the proposal, the continuation of the current fishing pressure on this species could lead to the depletion of hammerhead sharks and have a negative impact on the ecosystem. In addition, according to the proposal, the hammerhead sharks have been identified among the most vulnerable species by the IOTC Scientific Committee, based on the results of Ecological Risk Assessment conducted on these species. The reasons for not adopting this proposal are the same as those for silky sharks, detailed above. (S18 Report, para. 133)

3) On the conservation of sharks

The Commission **CONSIDERED** two proposals on the conservation of sharks (IOTC–2014–S18–PropD and IOTC–2014–S18–PropE), but agreement could not be reached and the proposals was deferred until the next meeting of the Commission. This proposals were to introduce amendments to Resolution 05/05 *On the conservation of sharks*, that require sharks to be landed with their fins attached to their respective carcass, to promote full utilisation of shark protein for food, and to facilitate the collection of critical data by species i.e. nominal catch, required to undertake rigorous assessments of the impact of fishing on these populations. The proposals also encouraged research into the effectiveness of prohibiting the use of wire trace on longline fishing vessels as a proven mitigation measure that will ameliorate the impact of fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species on shark populations throughout the IOTC area of competence. (S18 Report, para. 135)

The Commission **NOTED** that the proposed amendments to Resolution 05/05 aim to promote full utilisation of shark protein for food, to deter shark finning and to facilitate the collection of critical data required to undertake rigorous assessments of the impact of fishing on these populations. Moreover, the Scientific Committee also noted that landing sharks with fins attached would be an important step forward for the identification of shark species and for the gathering of shark statistics. According to the proposals, they specifically require that sharks be landed with their fins attached to their respective carcass when caught in association with fisheries targeting tuna and tuna-like species throughout the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission area of competence. (S18 Report, para. 136)

The Commission **NOTED** some CPCs comments which indicated that 1) Resolution 05/05 is implemented in the framework of other RFMOs; 2) prohibiting the removal of fins onboard vessels has nothing to do with management measures; 3) it adversely affects fishers economics as it prohibits their value adding practice; and 4) it provides no incentive to retain sharks onboard, which may adversely affect data collection on sharks. (S18 Report, para. 137)

The Commission **NOTED** that Australia was generally not in favour of pushing matters to a vote, instead it encouraged respect and cooperation among Commission Members with the aim of achieving consensus on decisions. Consistent with that statement, Australia deferred Proposal E on shark finning until the 19th Session on the understanding that all CPCs would return to the Commission next year to work constructively on agreeing to a legally binding Resolution banning shark finning. (S18 Report, para. 140)

4) On a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna and non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC area of competence

The Commission **CONSIDERED** a proposal to revise IOTC Resolution 13/11 *On a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna and non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC area of competence* (IOTC–2014–S18–PropF), but agreement could not be reached and the proposal was deferred until the next meeting of the Commission. This proposal was to modify the voluntary component of Resolution 13/11 to make it a mandatory, specifically, to ban the discard by purse seiners of non-targeted species catches, other than living sharks, marine turtles and cetaceans protected under IOTC Resolutions 05/05, 09/06, 12/09, 12/04, 13/04 and 13/05, with the aim of improving the supply of seafood to the countries where the catches are landed or transhipped, and to provide more reliable statistics through shore-sampling programmes. The proposal was later revised to include a recommendation for all the other fleets to avoid discards at sea. (S18 Report, para. 141)

The Commission **NOTED** that several CPCs, while agreeing in principle with the spirit of the proposal, indicated that full retention may not be practical for longline fleets, in which the fishing operation is very different for the purse seine fleets. Longline fleets target high quality product, have reduced storage space onboard, and often tranship the majority of the catch on the high seas, which makes unloading of bycatch in coastal countries unfeasible. These CPCs noted that the purpose of this proposal would be better achieved on longliners through release of bycatch, rather than

full retention. In addition, other CPCs indicated that they would only be in a position to adopt this proposal if it is only applicable on the high seas, and excluded the EEZs of coastal States. (S18 Report, para. 142)

NOTING the comment from the authors of the proposal that the lack of data shall not prevent adoption of precautionary management measures, and that the measure is in line with UN Millennium Development Goals and provisions in the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) and may contribute to food security in some of the coastal countries of the IOTC, the Commission **REQUESTED** that the Scientific Committee review proposal IOTC–2014–S18–PropL Rev_1, and to make recommendations on the benefits of retaining non-targeted species catches, other than those prohibited via IOTC Resolutions, for consideration at the 19th Session of the Commission. (S18 Report, para. 143)

5) On the implementation of a harmonized and coordinated scheme of IOTC observers

The Commission **CONSIDERED** a proposal on the implementation of a harmonized and coordinated scheme of IOTC observers (IOTC–2014–S18–PropM), but agreement could not be reached and the proposal was deferred until the next meeting of the Commission. According to the proposal, it aimed to promote the creation of an IOTC pool of scientific observers by facilitating CPCs monitoring of catches and other scientific related activities by fishing vessels ensuring the respect of Conservation and Management Measures and to improve the scientific assessment of those stocks. The proposal also aimed to seek synergies, given the limited space on board fishing vessels, as it is necessary to seek synergies for cooperation, accreditation and mutual recognition of observers. The proposal claimed that for CPCs that have difficulty in sourcing observers locally, the creation of a regional pool of IOTC scientific observers to be used by CPCs in the implementation of the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme, would facilitate the implementation of this scheme. (S18 Report, para. 144)

The Commission **NOTED** the concerns raised by several CPCs that the measure was proposed independently from the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme, and that a financial mechanism to support its provisions is not clearly specified. Some CPCs national laws do not allow the use of foreigners as observers onboard their vessels. The EU expressed its disappointment that its proposal for a pool of scientific observers to be established by the IOTC was not adopted and reminded CPCs that adoption of this proposal will only be beneficial for IOTC CPCs and ship owners, as it allows sharing of observers by CPCs, and would not require a significant increase of the IOTC budget. (S18 Report, para. 145)

6) Procedures on a fish aggregating devices (FADs) management plan, including more detailed specification of catch reporting from FAD sets, and the development of improved FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species

The Commission **CONSIDERED** a proposal to revise IOTC Resolution 13/08 *Procedures on a fish aggregating devices (FADs) management plan, including more detailed specification of catch reporting from FAD sets, and the development of improved FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species* (IOTC–2014–S18–PropL) but agreement could not be reached and the proposal was deferred until the next meeting of the Commission. The proposal included more detailed specifications of catch reporting from FAD sets, and calling for IOTC CPCs having fisheries on FADs to develop improved FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species. In addition, the proposal set the maximum number of DFADs or DFADs' beacon to be deployed by each individual purse seine vessel to the average of DFADs or DFADs' beacon deployed by the purse seiner and its supply vessel(s) (if any) during the years 2013 and 2014 as declared to the Commission according to the Resolutions 12/08 and 13/08. (S18 Report, para. 151)

NOTING the indication from the Chair of the Scientific Committee that it would be premature to adopt a measure of this nature due to a lack of information, and taking into consideration that the revised version proposed to put a freeze on the number of existing FADs being deployed, the Commission **AGREED** that in order to facilitate future consideration of this measure, all CPCs that have not implemented FAD Management Plans to do so as a matter of priority and report data on FADs to the Commission, as specified in IOTC Resolution 13/08. Advice from the Scientific Committee shall include all those fleets/fisheries that use them (i.e. for DFADs and AFADs). (S18 Report, para. 152)



Requests from the Commission

Finally, at the 18th Session of the Commission, Members made several comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee, which participants are asked to **NOTE** (extracts from the S18 report):

- 1) The Commission addressed the list of recommendations made by the SC16 ([Appendix V](#)) from its 2013 report (IOTC–2013–SC16–R) that related specifically to the Commission. The Commission **ENDORSED** the list of recommendations, taking into account the range of issues outlined in this Report (S18) and incorporated within adopted Conservation and Management Measures. (S18 Report, para. 10)

Albacore

- 2) The Commission **AGREED** that pending the results of the 2014 albacore stock assessment, it should take a precautionary approach to the management of albacore and consider, at its 19th Session, proposals for Conservation and Management Measure to reduce fishing pressure for albacore; including the consideration of zone-based management of fishing effort. (S18 Report, para. 13)

Skipjack tuna

- 3) **NOTING** that the SC expressed concerns on the ability of both the pole and line CPUE and the purse seine CPUE to reflect the dynamics of the stock, and given their major role in driving the current stock assessment results, the Commission **REQUESTED** that further investigation is carried out for both CPUE series. (S18 Report, para. 14)

Striped marlin

- 4) The Commission **AGREED** that it should take a precautionary approach to the management of striped marlin and consider, at its 19th Session, proposals for Conservation and Management Measures to reduce fishing pressure for striped marlin; including the consideration of zone-based management of fishing effort. (S18 Report, para. 16)
- 5) The Commission **AGREED** that all CPCs should take a precautionary approach and immediately reduce their impact on striped marlin in the IOTC area of competence. (S18 Report, para. 17)

Outlook on time-area closures

- 6) **NOTING** that the objective of Resolution 12/13 was to decrease the overall pressure on the main targeted stocks in the Indian Ocean, in particular yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna, and also to evaluate the impact of the current time/area closure and any alternative scenarios on tropical tuna populations, the Commission **REQUESTED** that the SC (via the WPTT in 2014) undertake an analysis of the combined impacts of the two closed areas in the Indian Ocean (contained in Resolution 12/13 and the UK(OT) MPA), with the objective of determining the utility of closed areas in managing highly migratory species. (S18 Report, para. 23)

National Reports

- 7) The Commission **REMINDED** CPCs that the purpose of the National Reports is to provide relevant information to the SC on fishing activities of Contracting Parties (Members) and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties operating in the IOTC area of competence. The report should include all fishing activities for species under the IOTC mandate as well as sharks and other byproduct / bycatch species as required by the IOTC Agreement and decisions by the Commission. The submission of a National Report is mandatory, irrespective if a CPC intends on attending the annual meeting of the SC and shall be made no later than 15 days prior to the SC meeting. The National Report does not replace the need for submission of data according to the IOTC Mandatory Data Requirements listed in the relevant IOTC Resolution [currently 10/02]. (S18 Report, para. 34)

Resolution 11/04 On a regional observer scheme

- 8) The Commission **NOTED** the recommendation from the SC that the total number of days-at-sea covered by observers versus the total number of days-at-sea for each fleet over a year is used instead of the number of sets/operations. However, this was not endorsed as it was felt that observer coverage rates were better calculated on the actual effort observed (i.e. number of hooks, number of sets). (S18 Report, para. 42)

Employment of a Fisheries Officer (Bycatch)

- 9) The Commission **NOTED** the request from the SC that the Commission approve the hiring of a Fishery Officer (Bycatch) to work on bycatch matters in support of the scientific process given the rapidly increasing scientific workload at the IOTC Secretariat, including a wide range of additional duties on ecosystems and bycatch assigned to it by the SC and the Commission. However, at this point in time, it was not considered a financial priority. (S18 Report, para. 46)

Report of the 18th Session of the IOTC

The complete report of the 18th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website:

- English: <http://iotc.org/documents/report-eighteenth-session-indian-ocean-tuna-commission>
- French: <http://iotc.org/fr/documents/rapport-de-la-dix-huitieme-session-de-la-commission-des-thons-de-l%E2%80%99oc%C3%A9an-indien>

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Scientific Committee:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2014–SC17–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 18th Session of the Commission, specifically related to the IOTC science process and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the Commission with the information it has requested, throughout the course of the current SC meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** the 7 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) adopted at the 18th Session of the Commission (consisting of 6 Resolutions and 1 Recommendation).