



POSITION

APRIL  
2015

## Smart Fishing Initiative

# 19<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION (IOTC): WWF POSITION

Busan, Korea

April 27 - 1 May 2015

The goals of the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) are to ensure the long-term viability of the tuna industry operating throughout the Indian Ocean region and support and promote the development of sustainable tuna fisheries on which this industry depends. We believe that the members of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission can work together with WWF and other NGOs and industry stakeholders to achieve these goals while maintaining a healthy ecosystem and safeguarding the rich biodiversity of the region.

At this time, as the Commission continues to evolve toward effective management of their tuna and tuna-like species, WWF wish to emphasise the following key issues and associated recommendations to the IOTC 19th Session.

### Develop Harvest Control Rules using appropriate Reference Points

No fishery of any significant scale can claim to be effectively managed in the absence of pre-agreed mandatory actions to be taken in response to changes in indicators of stock status. These changes in stock status can be measured against defined Reference Points. The actions to be taken by fisheries management bodies in relation to fluctuations by stocks are defined by Harvest Control Rules (HCR) which incorporate the Reference Points as triggers for these

actions. HCRs are a fundamental fisheries management tool.

WWF welcomed the adoption, at the 17th Session of the IOTC, of Resolution 13/10 regarding Interim Biological Reference Points and a Decision Framework. Now, two years later, it is time to respond to recommendations from the Scientific Committee and begin the process of adopting appropriate reference points, and using them in the development of HCRs for all tuna stocks. The members of the Commission are urged to recognise the potential of the measures within proposals put forward for consideration at this 19th Session to safeguard the health and profitability of their fisheries.

WWF accords the development of effective Harvest Control Rules for Indian Ocean tuna fisheries the highest priority, and fully supports the IOTC in these efforts, including the facilitation of regional capacity building activities to improve the dialogue among scientists, managers and other stakeholders.

Finally, it should be noted by states with fisheries that are considering certification of their fisheries as sustainable in order to ensure market access or improve profitability, that credible third party certification schemes require Harvest Control Rules and appropriate Reference Points to be implemented. It would be expected these states would give strong consideration to supporting their own fishing industries by actively supporting proposals contributing to achieving these outcomes.

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## Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) procedures and processes form the basis for well-managed fisheries and Indian Ocean coastal states face many challenges in implementing these. Strengthened MCS capability is key to combating illegal fishing, an activity occurring on a large scale in the region which threatens and undermines the social and economic benefits of healthy tuna stocks in Indian Ocean waters. WWF endorse the following actions in support of MCS:

### 1. Strengthen the reporting and reliability of scientific data

WWF strongly encourages all CPCs to note that effective management of their valuable stocks through stock assessments and production of effective management options by the IOTC Scientific Committee relies primarily on the production and timely reporting of Catch Statistics. Of significant concern, the quality of data collection and levels of reporting with regard to Coastal and/or Artisanal Tuna Fisheries is generally low throughout the region.

WWF encourages all relevant CPCs to commit to full compliance with IOTC resolutions relating to data collection and reporting of catch related information. Acknowledging the complexity and difficulty of many of the requirements, WWF is pleased to offer

support for any Indian Ocean coastal state wishing to improve these aspects of their fisheries and welcome contact from these states to discuss possible options for improvement.

## 2. Improve the Observers scheme

Levels of observer coverage within the IOTC are currently very low relative to levels achieved in other tuna RFMOs. Appropriate observer coverage is essential in ensuring that IOTC management arrangements in place to safeguard the tuna resources of all CPCs are implemented. WWF strongly recommends development and adoption of plans to increase observer coverage to at least the minimum levels required by IOTC resolution.

## 3. Implementing a Vessel Tracking System

An important tool to assist in combating IUU fishing, in conjunction with unique vessel identifiers, is a mechanism ensuring adequate coverage of the location and fishing activities of vessels operating in the Indian Ocean region. WWF supports proposals which strengthen the requirement relating to the implementation of VMS systems, and also supports initiatives by coastal states with regards to independent or ancillary costs-effective systems such as Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) for vessels. CPCs wishing to implement any vessel tracking systems are welcome to discuss capacity building support with WWF.

### Compliance

IOTC members have adopted many highly desirable and necessary Conservation Management Measures. Unfortunately, compliance with a large proportion of these has been low.

WWF encourages all CPCs to recognise the importance of these measures in ensuring the future of their fisheries and the health of the ecosystems, from which they gain tremendous economic wealth, and urge them to work toward strengthening national and regional compliance with the adopted IOTC Conservation and Management Measures.

The work of the IOTC Secretariat in conducting many Compliance Support Missions throughout the region has resulted in notable and in some cases remarkable improvement in compliance with a number of measures. WWF urges all states which have benefited from this program to maintain or improve these levels of compliance and to work further on improving the quality of the information returned to the Secretariat in order to facilitate effective monitoring and assessment of the tuna stocks.

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## Conservation of Other Vulnerable Species

WWF is committed to stronger conservation measures for sharks, rays, sea turtles, seabirds and cetaceans and will support proposals improving the protection for these key ecosystem

species.

WWF strongly supports all measures to prohibit the removal of fins from carcasses of retained shark species that are consistent with the 2014 United Nations General Assembly's Sustainable Fisheries Resolution, which calls on States to take immediate action to implement and ensure compliance with shark conservation and management measures and to consider measures requiring that all sharks be landed with each fin naturally attached. WWF supports proposed conservation measures that are inclusive of both high seas and EEZ's and require all fins remain naturally attached until the initial point of landing.

A number of species under the management mandate of the IOTC require some immediate and appropriate management response. These include striped marlin, black marlin, blue marlin, and longtail tuna.

We urge states that are considering certification of their tuna fisheries as sustainable, in order to ensure market access or improve profitability, to note that credible third party certification schemes utilise evidence that Harvest Control Rules have been effectively used in some other fisheries under the control of the IOTC. Acting in a timely and responsible fashion on these other fisheries which are overfished or subject to overfishing may expedite and reduce the cost of certification of main tuna fisheries. It would be expected these states would give strong consideration to supporting their own fishing industries by actively supporting proposals contributing to the recovery of these other species.

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### Establish Effective Management of FADs

The region lacks effective management of FADs in terms of effort and verification. It is critical to agree, at the IOTC level, precautionary limits for the numbers of deployed FADs per vessel. WWF support the use of limited numbers of instrumented FADs by purse seine fleets operating in the Indian Ocean but also urge the consideration of limiting overall effort which simple limitation of FAD numbers does not address. The creation of a FAD working group to consider and advise on the issues of effective FAD management is supported by WWF.

WWF encourages the Commission to consider proposals which act to improve the management of overall FAD effort in conjunction with per vessel limits of FAD numbers and encourage the CPCs to establish precautionary measures in order to properly manage and monitor FAD fishing activity.

Again, we urge states that are considering certification of their purse-seine tuna fisheries as sustainable to note that the current lack of effective FAD measures has restricted past certifications to free school fish only, a relatively small subset of their catch. It would be expected these states would give strong consideration to supporting their own fishing industries by actively supporting proposals contributing to the effective management of FADs.

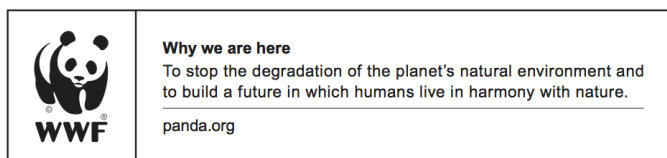
## Allocation

Discussing the issue of catch quotas for member countries has not been an easy task. The IOTC should maintain efforts to determine the appropriate criteria for identifying equitable quotas. WWF urges members to persist with their support for the objectives of the IOTC Technical Committee of Allocation Criteria, to work towards addressing their differences and eventually reach a common stand. Given the characteristics of Indian Ocean tuna fisheries, special attention must be given to the needs of small-scale fisheries and fishing dependent communities. Coastal States will not be able to benefit from the true value of their tuna resources unless an equitable system of allocation is implemented for the Indian Ocean region.

### Our Smart Fishing Vision and Goals:

**Vision:** The world's oceans are healthy, well-managed and full of life, providing valuable resources for the welfare of humanity.

**2020 Goals:** The responsible management and trade of four key fishery populations results in recovering and resilient marine eco-systems, improved livelihoods for coastal communities and strengthened food security for the Planet



#### For more information

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