



**ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NERITIC TUNAS IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE**

**SUBMITTED BY: TANZANIA, 23 APRIL 2016**

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*Explanatory Memorandum*

There remains a high level of scientific uncertainty in stock assessments for neritic tuna species, due to uncertainty in historical catch estimates, effort and size data from many fleets. At the recent 18<sup>th</sup> Scientific Committee meeting held in Bali, Indonesia, 23–27 November 2015, it was recommended that the catches of longtail tuna should be reduced by 30% of the 2013 levels in order to recover the status of the stock to levels above those that would produce maximum sustainable yield with high probability by 2023. Similarly, the Scientific Committee also recommended that the catches of narrow-barred Spanish mackerel should be reduced by 20-30% of the 2013 levels in order to recover the status of the stock to levels above those that would produce maximum sustainable yield with high probability by 2023.

Thus, there is an immediate need to implement measures to reduce catches of these two neritic tuna species, which are recognized as being important to the food security of Indian Ocean coastal States, and that fishing for these species contributes greatly to the livelihoods of coastal communities throughout the region.

**RESOLUTION 16/XX**  
**ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NERITIC TUNAS IN THE IOTC AREA OF  
COMPETENCE**

**Keywords:** Neritic tuna; data reporting; catch limitation; overfishing; overfished.

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

RECOGNISING the importance of neritic tuna species to the food security of Indian Ocean coastal States and the crucial role that fishing for these species contributes to the livelihoods of coastal communities throughout the region;

RECALLING Article III of the IOTC Agreement that specifies that neritic tuna species are under the Commission's mandate and must be effectively managed throughout the IOTC area of competence, including in adjacent seas;

FURTHER RECALLING Articles 24–26 inclusive of the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas that recognise the special requirements of developing States, particularly Article 25 that describes the types of cooperation required with developing States;

NOTING that States individually and collectively through Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) have a duty to cooperate regarding the management of highly migratory fisheries resources throughout their range and that coastal States in the IOTC area of competence have a duty to implement compatible measures for waters under their national jurisdiction;

RECOLLECTING that the Commission decided in 2012 to implement the precautionary approach through Resolution 12/01 *On the implementation of the precautionary approach*;

ACKNOWLEDGING that in 2011 the Commission held its first Working Party on Neritic Tunas, in Chennai, India, with the objective of providing scientific advice for the conservation and management of the six (6) neritic tuna species under the IOTC mandate;

CONCERNED at the high levels of scientific uncertainty in stock assessments for neritic tuna species, due to uncertainty in historical catch estimates, effort and size data from many fleets;

CONSIDERING the recommendations of the 18<sup>th</sup> Scientific Committee held in Bali, Indonesia, 23 – 27 November 2015 that the catches of longtail tuna should be reduced by 30% of the 2013 levels in order to recover the status of the stock to levels above those that would produce maximum sustainable yield with high probability by 2023;

FURTHER CONSIDERING the recommendations of the 18<sup>th</sup> Scientific Committee that the catches of narrow-barred Spanish mackerel should be reduced by 20-30% of the 2013 levels in order to recover the status of the stock to levels above those that would produce maximum sustainable yield with high probability by 2023;

HIGHLIGHTING the advice of the Scientific Committee in 2015 that there remains considerable uncertainty about stock structure and about the total catches, and that due to a lack of fishery data for several gears, only data poor assessment approaches have been used for neritic tuna species, with the exception of longtail tuna;

FURTHER HIGHLIGHTING the advice of the Scientific Committee in 2015 that the continued increase of annual catches for longtail tuna in recent years has further increased the pressure on the Indian Ocean stock as a whole, and that the apparent fidelity of longtail tuna to particular areas/regions is a matter for concern as overfishing in these areas can lead to localised depletion. Thus, research emphasis on improving indicators and exploration of stock structure and stock assessment approaches for data poor fisheries are warranted;



DESIRING to ensure the long-term sustainability of neritic tuna species for both food security and economic development opportunities in the region;

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

**Objective**

1. The Commission, via the IOTC Scientific Committee, implements a multi-year program of work for neritic tuna species listed in Annex 1 of the IOTC Agreement (**Table 1**). The program of work will have as its main objective:

*“To support the ongoing scientific understanding of the stock status of neritic tuna species to enable the development of rigorous stock assessments and enhancement of coastal States’ ability to implement the measures, thereby facilitating the management of fisheries targeting neritic tuna species in the Indian Ocean”*

**Table 1.** Neritic tuna species under the IOTC mandate

<b>IOTC code</b>	<b>English name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
BLT	Bullet tuna	<i>Auxis rochei</i>
COM	Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>
FRI	Frigate tuna	<i>Auxis thazard</i>
GUT	Indo-Pacific king mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus guttatus</i>
KAW	Kawakawa	<i>Euthynnus affinis</i>
LOT	Longtail tuna	<i>Thunnus tonggol</i>

**Data collection and reporting**

2. In accordance with Resolution 15/01 *On the recording of catch and effort by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence* and 15/02 *On mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)* (including any subsequent revisions), CPCs shall undertake a review of all historical catch, effort and size data on neritic tuna species, effort and size data, and submit to the IOTC Secretariat no later than 30 June 2017.
3. Developing coastal State CPCs shall request assistance to meet the obligations set out in paragraph 2 directly through the IOTC Secretariat as required. The IOTC Secretariat shall facilitate the capacity building program for these states including seeking external funds from all relevant international organisations and non-government organisations.
4. CPCs shall also take measures to implement supplementary fishery data collection programs, including, *inter alia*, tagging programs, biological sampling programs, to support regional efforts to further understand the biology and ecology of neritic tuna species throughout their range.
5. The IOTC Secretariat shall take measures to facilitate the integration of national scientific programs across all CPCs throughout the spatial distribution of the species such that the results enhance meeting the objective of this measure.

**Interim management measures: Longtail tuna and narrow-barred Spanish mackerel**

6. CPCs shall limit their catch of both longtail tuna and narrow-barred Spanish mackerel for the years 2017, 2018, and 2019, to 70% of the levels taken in 2013. The Executive Secretary shall communicate the catch levels for 2013 by CPC, to the Commission no later than 01 September 2016.

**Interim management measures: Bullet tuna, Frigate tuna, Kawakawa, Indo-Pacific King mackerel**

7. As a precautionary measure, CPCs shall limit their catch of bullet tuna, frigate tuna, kawakawa, and Indo-Pacific king mackerel for 2017 and subsequent years, to the average levels taken for the years 2011–2014, while the



Scientific Committee, via the Working Party on Neritic Tunas, undertakes further stock status indicator work. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall communicate the average catch levels for 2011–2014 by CPC, to the Commission no later than 01 September 2016.

**Final Clause**

8. The Commission shall review this measure at its annual session in 2019, or before if there is reason and/or evidence to suggest that the neritic tuna stocks are at high risk of dropping below sustainable levels, either the biomass level required to maintain MSY, or an agreed alternative.
9. This Resolution shall expire on 1 January 2020, unless the Commission revises it in accordance with paragraph 8.