

April 28, 2016

Dear Delegates,

This letter is submitted on behalf of the undersigned non-governmental organizations or companies that participate in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (Commission) process, or may seek to do so in the future.

Collectively our organizations engage with national governments, civil society, and RFMOs as well as provide information and advice to suppliers, retailers, buyers and food service sectors regarding improvements in tuna sustainability. The undersigned companies also represent major seafood buyers that source seafood products from a diverse, international supply network, including from the Indian Ocean, a region for which your governments serve as important leaders as members of the Commission. We recognize that the sustainability of tuna stocks is integral to businesses as well as the health of the marine environment.

Our organizations promote, and advocate, for the implementation of best practice management in support of sustainable tuna fisheries management in the Indian Ocean and in countries that are members of the Commission. We recognize that the sustainability of tuna stocks is important for regional food security and is integral to the health of the marine environment and the long-term supply of tuna globally. Therefore, we wish to underscore our strong interest in concrete management actions for the sustainability of tuna stocks under the IOTC's remit at the Commission meeting that is scheduled for May 23-27 in La Reunion.

We appreciate that the Commission has made some progress in recent years to establish basic science-based management measures to ensure the sustainability of the tuna fishery in the Indian Ocean. Specifically, the Commission committed itself to developing and implementing target and limit reference points and a decision framework, in combination with implementing the precautionary approach, and the evaluation of management approaches consistent with the objectives of the Commission. We support this initial action, and encourage the Commission to continue to progress the adoption of harvest strategies, which include harvest control rules and both target and limit reference points.

As governments prepare for the upcoming 20th Session of the Commission, we urge you to support the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) outcomes for skipjack and albacore tuna endorsed by the Scientific Committee in 2015, and adopt an appropriate harvest strategy that follows the decision framework, achieves targets and avoids breaching limits as set out in IOTC Resolution 15/10. In addition, we urge the Commission to adopt measures to reduce the catches of yellowfin tuna and rebuild the stock in accordance with the scientific advice and with the decision framework specified in Resolution 15/10. The Commission should also work towards the development of a robust harvest strategy for yellowfin, which includes harvest control rules and reference points, informed by MSE as outlined in Resolution 15/10. Due to the current status of yellowfin tuna, the schedule outlined in Resolution 15/10 should be fully funded and accelerated.

Further, developing effective and robust conservation and management of tuna stocks requires comprehensive information on fishing activity and effective monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS). We encourage governments to support the development of an integrated MCS strategy as recommended by the second Performance Review Panel. This is particularly important for capacity management, and collecting data on fishing effort and catches of tunas and other non-target species. To that end, we urge governments to support the adoption, on a mandatory basis, of a comprehensive observer coverage program on fishing vessels given that it is a critical component of independent fisheries monitoring, data collection, and therefore management of tuna fisheries. We request that governments support proposals that would require 100% observer coverage on large-scale purse seine vessels; and where human onboard observers are not possible for certain fleets or vessel sizes, we urge the Commission to explore electronic monitoring systems and establish policies and guidelines for their use.

In addition, we request governments to support proposals to strengthen the Commission's compliance assessment process and MCS tools, including exploring options to strengthen the Commission's satellite-based vessel monitoring system and its application and implementation across fleets and the development of mechanisms to further encourage compliance with data reporting obligations of Commission members. Finally, we seek the support of governments for proposals to amend the IOTC's illegal, unreported and unregulated vessel list measure, so it is consistent with best practices.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

Susan Blake

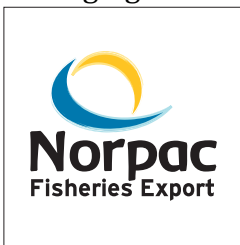


Margaret Spring



Thomas J Kraft

Managing Director



H Factor



Jim Cannon

Jim Cannon
CEO



MELP





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Handwritten signature: Oliver Knowles
Mr Oliver Knowles
Global Project Leader – Tuna
GREENPEACE