

## OUTCOMES OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT<sup>1</sup>, 23 SEPTEMBER 2016

### PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 18<sup>th</sup> Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT18) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 20<sup>th</sup> Session, held from 23 to 27 April 2015, specifically relating to the work of the WPTT.

### BACKGROUND

At the 20<sup>th</sup> Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 12 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 12 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations<sup>2</sup>), as detailed below:

### Resolutions

- Resolution 16/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock*
- Resolution 16/02 *On harvest control rules for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence*
- Resolution 16/03 *On the second performance review follow-up*
- Resolution 16/04 *On the implementation of a Pilot Project in view of Promoting the Regional Observer Scheme of IOTC*
- Resolution 16/05 *On vessels without nationality*
- Resolution 16/06 *On measures applicable in case of non-fulfilment of reporting obligations in the IOTC*
- Resolution 16/07 *On the use of artificial lights to attract fish*
- Resolution 16/08 *On the prohibition of the use of aircrafts and unmanned aerial vehicles as fishing aids*
- Resolution 16/09 *On establishing a Technical Committee on Management Procedures*
- Resolution 16/10 *To promote the implementation of IOTC Conservation and Management Measures*
- Resolution 16/11 *On port state measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing*
- Resolution 16/12 *Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM)*

Pursuant to Article IX.4 of the IOTC Agreement, the above mentioned Conservation and Management Measures shall become binding on Members, 120 days from the date of the notification communicated by the Secretariat in IOTC Circular 2016–054 (i.e., **27 September 2016**).

### DISCUSSION

The Commission also made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2015, which have relevance for the WPTT. At the time of writing, the final report has not been approved so all text and paragraph numbers refer to the **draft** report of the Commission pending final agreement by all parties (IOTC–2016–S20–R):

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<sup>2</sup> Provisional until approval of the final version of the S20 report

## ***Report of the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the Scientific Committee***

*Para 14.* The Commission **CONSIDERED** the list of recommendations made by the SC18 (Appendix VI) from its 2015 report (IOTC–2015–SC18–R) that related specifically to the Commission. The Commission **ENDORSED** the list of recommendations as its own, while taking into account the range of issues outlined in this Report (S20) and incorporated within Conservation and Management Measures adopted during the Session and as adopted for implementation as detailed in the approved annual budget and Program of Work.

### ***Yellowfin tuna***

*Para 17.* The Commission **NOTED** that, based on the assessment carried out in 2015, yellowfin stock biomass is below the level that will support the MSY and that fishing mortality is above the level that will produce the MSY. Thus, on the weight-of-evidence available in 2015, the yellowfin tuna stock is determined to be overfished and subject to overfishing.

*Para 18.* The Commission **NOTED** that there is a very high risk of continuing to exceed the biomass MSY-based reference point if catches increase further or are maintained at current levels (2014) until 2017 (>99% risk that  $SB_{2017} < SB_{MSY}$ ), and similarly a very high risk that  $F_{2017} > F_{MSY}$  ( $\approx 100\%$ ). The modelled probabilities of the stock achieving levels consistent with the Commission's current management objective (e.g.  $SB > SB_{MSY}$ ) are 50% for a future constant catch at 80% of current catch levels by 2024.

*Para 19.* The Commission **NOTED** the following management advice provided by the SC “*Projections show that current levels of catch would exacerbate the decline of this stock in the short term. The modelled probabilities of the stock achieving levels consistent with the interim target reference points (i.e.  $SB > SB_{MSY}$  and  $F < F_{MSY}$ ) in 2024 are 50% for a future constant catch at 80% of the catch levels in 2014. If the Commission wishes to recover the stock to levels above the interim target reference points with 50% probability by 2024, the Scientific Committee recommends that catches be reduced by 20% of current levels*”.

*Para 20.* The Commission **NOTED** concerns about the status of yellowfin and **AGREED** that management measures should be taken urgently to reduce the fishing pressure on the stock. The Commission also **DISCUSSED** the possibility of an update to the yellowfin stock assessment in 2016 to follow the status of the stock closely.

*Para 21.* The Commission **NOTED** the advice of the Chair of the SC, that it would be premature to conduct another stock assessment on yellowfin in 2016.

### ***On an Interim Plan for Rebuilding the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock***

*Para 109.* The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 16/01 *On an Interim Plan for Rebuilding the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock* (Appendix XVI). This Resolution introduces a scheme for reduction of catches of yellowfin (from 2014 levels), by fishery, for all fishing vessels targeting tuna and tuna like species in the Indian Ocean of 24 meters overall length and over, and those under 24 meters if they fish outside the EEZ of their flag State, within the IOTC area of competence.

*Para 110.* The Commission **AGREED** that the provisions of paragraph 7 of Resolution 15/08 are now superseded by paragraph 3b of this resolution, which limits the number of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) at no more than 425 active instrumented buoys and that 850 instrumented buoys may be acquired annually per vessel.

### ***On harvest control rules for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence***

*Para 111.* The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 16/02 *On harvest control rules for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence* (Appendix XVII). This proposal for a Harvest Control Rule (HCR) for IO SKJ draws on SC recommendations, including the new guidance on reference points in cases where MSY-based reference points are difficult to estimate. This proposal uses the biomass limit reference point of 20% of the unfished level ( $BLIM = 0.2B_0$ ) and the target biomass reference point of 40% of the unfished level ( $BTARG = 0.4B_0$ ), consistent with the SC advice that reference points based on depletion level should be used for stocks where MSY-based reference points cannot be robustly estimated and with international conventions and current practices followed in other tRFMOs.

### ***On the implementation of a pilot project in view of promoting the Regional Observer Scheme of IOTC***

*Para. 113.* The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 16/04 *On the implementation of a pilot project in view of promoting the Regional Observer Scheme of IOTC. This Resolution creates a pilot project aiming to enhance the implementation of the Resolution 11/04 on a Regional Observer Scheme and to raise the level of compliance to the implementation of Resolutions 15/01 and 15/02, respectively on the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence and on mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting parties (CPCs).*

***On the use of artificial lights to attract fish***

*Para. 116. The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 16/07 On the use of artificial lights to attract fish. This Resolution prohibits fishing vessels and other vessels including support, supply and auxiliary vessels flying the flag of an IOTC Contracting Party or Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (collectively CPCs) from using, installing or operating surface or submerged artificial lights for the purpose of aggregating tuna and tuna-like species beyond territorial waters.*

***On the prohibition of the use of aircrafts and unmanned aerial vehicles as fishing aids***

*Para. 117. The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 16/08 On the prohibition of the use of aircrafts and unmanned aerial vehicles as fishing aids. This Resolution prohibits the use of aircrafts and unmanned aerial vehicles as fishing aids on flagged fishing vessels, support and supply vessels by Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (collectively CPCs).*

The complete report of the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is not yet available for download from the IOTC website but will be made publically available shortly after the final version has been agreed by correspondence.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the WPTT

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2016–WPTT18–04 which outlined the main outcomes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPTT and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the SC with the information it needs, in order to satisfy the Commission’s requests, throughout the course of the current WPTT meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** the 12 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) adopted at the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission (consisting of 12 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), and in particular those Resolutions which have a direct impact on the work of the WPTT.