

## IPNLF POSITION STATEMENT

**21<sup>st</sup> Annual Session of the  
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission  
Yogyakarta, Indonesia 22-26 May 2017**



*One-by-one fishers celebrate their catch, Indonesia © Paul Hilton & IPNLF*

The International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF) is an international NGO, working to develop and demonstrate the value of one-by-one tuna fisheries to thriving coastal communities. Our organisation's principal aim is to improve the wellbeing of coastal fisheries, and the people and seas connected with them through environmentally and socially responsible one-by-one fishing methods, such as pole-and-line, troll, and handline. We work across science, policy and the seafood supply chain to achieve this.

At this year's Annual Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (S21), IPNLF urges Members to build on the successes from last year, and **further develop harvest strategies** for tuna fisheries in the convention area. This will safeguard these vitally important fisheries by implementing pre-defined management actions to keep the stock at, or above, established target levels. Coastal communities throughout the region depend on tuna fisheries for food security and livelihoods. Significant progress was achieved with the adoption of the skipjack harvest control rule in 2016 (Resolution 16/02) and IPNLF encourages CPCs apply these precautionary management principles across the range of species under IOTC.

IPNLF also encourages the Commission to **end overfishing and unsustainable fishing practices**. Notably, yellowfin tuna is overfished, and the rebuilding plan adopted under Resolution 16/01 was initiated in January 2017. IPNLF strongly discourages any backtracking on the rebuilding plan, and welcomes further voluntary reductions by fleets to speed up the recovery of the stock.

As noted by the latest Scientific Committee (SC) report, **non-compliant gillnet use is another serious threat** to vulnerable marine species in the Indian Ocean (paragraph 59). According to the SC19 report, gillnets up to seven km in length are regularly being used, including on the high seas. This is in contravention with IOTC Resolution 12/12 as well as with the UN high seas large-scale driftnet moratorium. The Commission should adopt a remedy that would apply throughout the convention area to safeguard populations of marine mammals, sharks, and turtles.

Additionally, the excessive use of drifting fish aggregating devices (FADs) continues to threaten endangered, threatened, and protected species (ETP), as well as the broader marine environment in the form of marine litter and abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). IOTC **should strengthen measures on FADs**, including by reducing the amount of FAD fishing, reducing overall FAD numbers, and requiring operators to retrieve all drifting FADs deployed to minimize overfishing, bycatch, and damage to marine and coastal habitats.



Troll tuna fishing at sunrise, Fuvahmulah, Maldives, 2016 © IPNLF

To complement stronger FAD measures, CPCs should also address the largely unregulated use of supply vessels in the Indian Ocean, which contributes to increased fishing efficiency and effort (effort creep), yellowfin overfishing, marine litter, and bycatch of vulnerable marine species. The primary function of supply vessels is to deploy and maintain drifting FADs, to build drifting FADs, to check the quantities of tunas under FADs, to search for drifting FADs belonging to other vessels and to search for free schools of tuna. They also can act as FADs themselves by anchoring on seamounts. All of these activities facilitate higher catches. In recent years, the number of supply vessels operating in the Indian Ocean purse seine fishery has increased dramatically – more than four fold since 2000. In recognition of the unmanaged additional fishing effort and conservation challenges, supply vessels were prohibited in the eastern Pacific Ocean since 1999 (IATTC Resolution C-99-07). We therefore encourage IOTC delegates to pursue a similar course of action to the approach followed at IATTC by **prohibiting the use of supply vessels**, thereby enhancing the management of Indian Ocean tuna stocks.

IPNLF also recognises the challenges unique to Indian Ocean tuna fisheries – chiefly that a large proportion of the Indian Ocean catch is taken by artisanal fisheries in developing coastal states. These catches are critical to local food security and livelihoods in coastal communities. In the Maldives, for instance, the average consumption of tuna is over 150kg per person per year, while the fishery supports over 20% of the total workforce. It should also be recognised that Article V of the IOTC Agreement, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, points to the need to evaluate the economic and social aspects of these fisheries in developing coastal states. In this regard, **agreed allocation principles that account for the rights and aspirations of coastal developing states** should be adopted as a matter of priority, in line with Resolution 14/02 For the conservation and management of tropical tunas stocks in the IOTC area of competence.

**Improvements in monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS)** are equally important throughout the IOTC convention area. While progress is being made via the IOTC Compliance Missions, further strengthening of measures will allow members to better monitor fishing activities so that management actions can be evaluated and enforced. One measure that would improve both the data and the MCS of the fishery would be the requirement for 100% observer coverage on large purse seine vessels. This is a widely-accepted practice, and most large purse seiners operating in the IOTC already carry observers. Observer coverage on longliners should also be addressed as catches from these vessels are difficult to verify as are the impacts on endangered, threatened, and protected species.



Lastly, IPNLF calls on CPCs that currently do not meet the IOTC data requirements to **address data gaps as a matter of urgency**. Improved data will strengthen stock assessments as well as the overall management of the shared tuna resources throughout the region. All feasible efforts should be made to further incentivize compliance and to build necessary capacity in developing coastal states.

Collaboration and coordination are needed for IOTC to live up to its commitment to responsibly manage the shared tuna resources in the Indian Ocean. While recent progress has been achieved, there is more to be done. A number of practical improvements have been identified and can be agreed upon at the 21st Annual Session of the IOTC to ensure the long-lasting vitality of the fisheries and the communities that depend on them. IPNLF and our member network wish all CPC's a successful meeting, and look forward to working with all to further strengthen the management of IOTC fisheries.



Transferring catch to the hold on a pole-and-line *dhoni*, Maldives, 2013 © IPNLF

## ABOUT IPNLF

The International Pole & Line Foundation works to develop, support and promote socially and environmentally responsible pole-and-line and handline tuna fisheries around the world. IPNLF's ambition is to contribute to thriving coastal fisheries, including the people, communities, businesses and seas connected with them. As a hub for sustainably-minded organisations, we use the influence of the market to forge change through practical fishery projects and stakeholder cooperation. IPNLF membership is open to organisations involved in the one-by-one tuna supply chain. Allied with [our Members](#), IPNLF demonstrates the value of one-by-one caught tuna to consumers, policymakers and throughout the supply chain. We work across science, policy and the seafood sector, using an evidence-based, solutions-focused approach with guidance from our Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees.

IPNLF was officially registered in the United Kingdom in 2012 (Charity 1145586), with branch offices in London and the Maldives, and a staff presence in Indonesia.

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Keep informed about the latest developments in one-by-one tuna fisheries through our website and by connecting with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).