

OUTCOMES OF THE 21st SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 9TH AUGUST 2017

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 15th Working Party on Billfish (WPB15) of the decision and requests made by the Commission at its 21st Session, held from 22 – 26 May 2017, specifically relating to the work of the WPB.

BACKGROUND

At the 21st Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 8 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 8 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), as detailed below:

Resolutions

- Resolution 17/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC Area of Competence.*
- Resolution 17/02 *Working party on the implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM).*
- Resolution 17/03 *On establishing a list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the IOTC Area of competence.*
- Resolution 17/04 *On a ban on discards of Bigeye tuna, Skipjack tuna, Yellowfin tuna, and non-targeted species caught by vessels in the IOTC Area of Competence.*
- Resolution 17/05 *On the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by the IOTC.*
- Resolution 17/06 *On establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels*
- Resolution 17/07. *On the prohibition to use large-scale driftnets in the IOTC Area.*
- Resolution 17/08 *Proposal for amendment of Resolution 15/08: Procedures on a fish aggregating devices (FADs) management plan, including a limitation on the number of FADs, more detailed specifications of catch reporting from FAD sets, and the development of improved FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species.*

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.

DISCUSSION

The Commission also made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2016, which have relevance for the WPB (IOTC–2017–S21–R):

Status of billfish

Swordfish

A swordfish assessment was carried out in 2014. The stock is not overfished and not subject to overfishing. The most recent catches (41,760 t in 2015) are 2,360 t above the MSY level (39,400 t). Hence catches in 2017 should be reduced to less than MSY (39,400 t).

Striped Marlin

A striped marlin assessment was carried out in 2015. The stock is overfished and subject to overfishing. Precautionary approach to the management of striped marlin should be considered by the Commission to reduce catches below 4,000 t thereby ensuring the stock may rebuild to sustainable levels.

Blue Marlin

A blue marlin assessment was carried out in 2016. The stock is not overfished but subject to overfishing. In order to achieve Commission objectives, catches would have to be reduced by 24% compared to the average catch of 2013-2015, to a maximum value of 11704 t.

Black Marlin

A black marlin assessment was carried out in 2016. The stock is overfished and subject to overfishing. The maximum catch limit should be lower than MSY of 9932 t.

Indo-Pacific sailfish

An Indo-Pacific sailfish assessment was carried out in 2015. The stock is not overfished but subject to overfishing. The same management advice for 2016 (catches below a MSY of 25,000 t) is kept for 2017

The Commission noted that the development of a MSE of swordfish is considered as a high priority in the revised WPM Program of Work, and that possible funding has been identified to begin this activity.

Consideration of management measures related to Billfish

The Commission noted that IOTC-2017-S21-PropJ *On the conservation and management of IOTC Billfish* was withdrawn. There was only limited agreement with this proposal, even after a gear or management-based approach was explored. Some CPCs highlighted that implementation and effectiveness of this measure could be limited due to billfish being taken as bycatch by many CPCs; furthermore some billfish species are difficult to identify. Some CPCs expressed their concern that the proposal could set an unacceptable precedent for allocation by seeking to cap catches.

The complete report of the 21st Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website: <http://www.iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2017/07/IOTC-2017-S21-RE.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the WPB

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC-2017-WPB15-04 which outlined the outcomes of the 21st Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPB 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 WPB meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** the 8 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) adopted at the 21st Session of the Commission (consisting of 8 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations).