

OUTCOMES OF THE 21st SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT¹, 9 AUGUST 2017

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 13th Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB13) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 21st Session, held from 22 – 26 May 2017, specifically relating to the work of the WPEB.

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 WPEB.

Status of sharks

The Commission noted the current status of the following sharks:

Blue shark

A stock assessment for blue shark was carried out in 2016, however, the population status remains uncertain. A precautionary approach to the management of blue shark should be considered by the Commission, by ensuring that future catches do not exceed current catches.

Oceanic whitetip shark

No quantitative stock assessment is currently available for oceanic whitetip shark. The population status

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remains uncertain. A precautionary approach to the management of oceanic whitetip shark should be considered by the Commission, noting that recent studies suggest that longline mortality at haulback is high (50%) in the Indian Ocean, while mortality rates for interactions with other gear types such as purse seines and gillnets may be higher.

The Commission noted that although a number of CPCs are currently incorporating a ban on the retention of oceanic whitetip sharks into national legislation in accordance with Resolution 13/06, it is currently too early for the Scientific Committee to be able to evaluate impacts of the retention ban and provide this advice to the Commission.

Consideration of management measures related to ecosystems, bycatch and sharks

The Commission noted Resolution 12/06 (*On reducing the incidental bycatch of seabirds in longline fisheries*), which called for an analysis of the impact of the measures on seabird bycatch to be prepared by S20 (2016).

The Commission acknowledged that there was little information available in 2016 for the SC to fully review the effectiveness of the mitigation measures outlined in Resolution 12/06, and **AGREED** to extend the due date until such a time that more information is available.

The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 17/07 On the prohibition to use large-scale driftnets in the IOTC Area.

The Commission noted the following statement from Japan: “Although Japan does not consider that there is enough scientific justification to prohibit large-scale drift nets within EEZs, Japan does not block consensus. Japan stresses, however, that this does not prejudice the future position of Japan on the same subject in other oceans”.

The Commission **ADOPTED** Resolution 17/05 On the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by the IOTC.

The Commission **ADOPTED** 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.

The Commission **AGREED** to defer IOTC–2017–S21–PropC *On the conservation of Mobula and Manta rays caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC Area of competence*. Three CPCs did not agree with this proposal. Those CPCs noted that there was no scientific recommendation from the SC to support this proposal and that there were practical difficulties associated with avoiding Mobula and manta rays during setting of the purse seine nets. Furthermore, the proposed measure also needed to consider the impact of others such as gillnets and longlines. These matters were not resolved during the session. One CPC highlighted the need for data to be collected and submitted to the SC.

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>

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WPEB:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2017–WPEB13–04 which outlined the outcomes of the 21st Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPEB 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 WPEB 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).