

**ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BILLFISH:
STRIPED MARLIN, BLACK MARLIN, BLUE MARLIN AND INDO-PACIFIC
SAILFISH**

SUBMITTED BY: EUROPEAN UNION

Explanatory Memorandum

As reported by the 20th Scientific Committee, all four stocks of IOTC billfishes (Black marlin, Blue marlin, Striped marlin and Indo-Pacific sailfish) are considered subject to overfishing and some stocks are even highly overfished. Recent reported catches have been substantially higher (mostly around 30-40%) than the reference level stipulated by Resolution 15/05. The scientific advice indicates that a substantial reduction of catches is needed in order to repositioning the stocks in the green zone of the Kobe plot and thus a management framework is needed that is more stringent and focussed than that established by Resolution 15/05.

The proposal establishes an overall unallocated catch limit in line with the MSY and stipulates that if this is exceeded over two consecutive two years as from 2019 additional measures will be called for. A minimum size is established to improve the exploitation pattern of the different fisheries with a view to arrive at a reduction in the overall fishing mortality. This collective approach should be complemented by national measures to be chosen and implemented by the CPCs. The effectiveness of those measures will be subject to regular evaluations by the Scientific Committee.

RESOLUTION 18/XX

ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE BILLFISHES: STRIPED MARLIN, BLACK MARLIN, BLUE MARLIN AND INDO-PACIFIC SAILFISH

Keywords: Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin, Indo-pacific Sailfish, Catch limits, scientific research, reference points, data collection, catch reporting

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING Resolution 15/05 on conservation measures for striped marlin, black marlin and blue marlin aiming to reduce the fishing pressure on the marlin species;

RECALLING the available scientific information and advice, in particular the IOTC Scientific Committee conclusions, according to which Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and/or Indo-pacific Sailfish are subject to overfishing and, in some cases, overfished with catches in recent years exceeding by far the average catches of the baseline period 2009/2014;

RECALLING Resolution 12/01 on the implementation of the precautionary approach that calls on IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) to apply the precautionary approach in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and further recalling that Article 6.2 therein stipulates that the absence of adequate scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures;

RECALLING that Resolution 15/01 on the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence fixes the IOTC data record system;

RECALLING Resolution 15/02 on the Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) that defines the catch and catch related information to be provided by CPCs to the IOTC secretariat;

CONSIDERING that the SC noted that, catches have increased in 2015 and in 2016 from the average level of 2009-2014 and that the SC therefore recommended that substantial reduction of current catches should be agreed to end overfishing and, whenever possible, to enable the stocks to rebuild ;

ADOPTS, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, the following:

1. To ensure the conservation of the Striped Marlin (*Tetrapturus audax*), Black Marlin (*Makaira indica*), Blue Marlin (*Makaira nigricans*) and Indo-pacific Sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*) stocks in the Indian Ocean, Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, ~~Entities or Fishing Entities~~ (CPCs) whose vessels catch those species in the IOTC ~~Convention~~ Area of Competence shall ~~ensure~~undertake at least the following that national management measures as described below are in place to support the sustainable exploitation of these stocks in line with the IOTC ~~Convention Agreement~~ objectives of ensuring the conservation and optimum utilization of stocks by undertaking the following:

Management Measures: Catch limits

2. CPCs shall endeavour to collectively ensure that the overall catches, ~~including recreational fisheries~~, of the Indian Ocean Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo Pacific Sailfish in any given year do not exceed either the MSY level or, in its absence, the lower limit of the MSY range of central values as estimated by the Scientific Committee.

3. The limits referred to in paragraph 2 correspond to the following:

- a. Striped Marlin: 3,260 t
- b. Black Marlin: 9,932 t
- c. Blue Marlin: 11,930 t
- d. Indo Pacific Sailfish: 25,000 t

4. If the average annual total catch of any of the species referred to in paragraph 2 in any two consecutive years period from ~~2019-2020~~ onward exceeds the limits referred to in paragraph 3, the Commission shall review the implementation and effectiveness of the measures contained in this Resolution and consider the adoption of additional conservation and management measures, as appropriate, by also taking into account the advice of the Scientific Committee referred to in paragraph 14.

Other Management Measures

5. Pending advice from the Scientific Committee on a [joint and/or a species specific minimum conservation size](#), CPCs shall not ~~fish~~, retain on board, trans-ship, land, ~~transfer, store, sell, display or offer for sale~~ any specimen smaller than 60 cm [Lower Jaw Fork Length \(LJFL\)](#) of any of the species referred to in paragraph 2, but shall return them immediately to the sea [in a manner that maximizes post-release survival potential without compromising the safety of crew](#).

6. In addition, CPCs may consider the adoption of additional fisheries management measures to limit fishing mortality such as: releasing any specimen brought alive on-board or alongside for taking on board the vessel; ~~modify~~ fishing practices and/or fishing gears to reduce juveniles catches; adopting spatial/temporal management measures to reduce fishing in nursery grounds; limiting days at sea and/or fishing vessels exploiting billfishes.

Recording, Reporting, and Use of the Catch Information

7. CPCs shall ensure that their vessels catching Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish in the IOTC ~~Convention a~~ [Area of Competence](#) record their catch in accordance with the requirements set out in Resolution 15/01 on the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence or any Resolution superseding it. ~~Moreover, the shipmaster shall record the number and estimated weight/size of specimens released alive and/or discarded in the vessel logbook.~~

8. CPCs shall implement data collection programmes to ensure accurate reporting of Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish catches, released alive and/or discarded, together with effort, size and discard data to IOTC in full accordance with the Resolution 15/02 on the Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs), or any Resolution superseding it.

9. CPCs shall include in their Annual Reports to the Scientific Committee information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches and to manage fisheries for sustainable exploitation and conservation of Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish.

10. The Commission, ~~also through the Secretariat,~~ shall consider appropriate assistance to developing CPCs for the collection of data on the above-mentioned species.

Scientific Research and Scientific Committee

11. CPCs are encouraged to undertake scientific research on key biological/ecological/behavioural characteristics, life-history, migrations, post-release survival and guidelines for safe release, identification of nursery grounds, improving selectivity of fishing practices and fishing gears, for Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish. The results of such researches shall be made available to the [Working Party on Billfishes and the Scientific Committee](#) through [working documents and their](#) national Annual Reports.
12. The IOTC Working Party on Billfish [and the Scientific Committee](#) shall continue ~~its~~ [their](#) work on assessing and monitoring the status of Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish and provide advice to ~~the Scientific Committee and~~ the Commission.
13. The Scientific Committee [and the Compliance Committee](#) shall annually review the information provided and assess the effectiveness of the fisheries management measures reported by CPCs on Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish and, as appropriate, provide advice to the Commission.
14. For each of the four species covered by this Resolution, the Scientific Committee shall provide advice ~~on the following~~:
- a. ~~Options for management measures~~ to reduce fishing mortality [with a view to recover and/or maintain the stocks in the Green zone of the Kobe Plot at or below FMSY](#) with levels of probability ranging from 60 to 90% by ~~2025~~2026 at latest. [The advice shall be provided on the basis of the current exploitation pattern as well as of its likely change to take into account the advice under point c. below](#);
 - b. Options for candidate reference points for their conservation and management in the IOTC ~~Convention a~~ [Area of Competence](#);
 - c. [Species specific Minimum-minimum](#) conservation sizes ~~as appropriate~~ [by taking into account the size at maturity and the recruitment size to the fishery by gear as well as its practicability. Where adequate, due to considerations on technical interaction of fisheries, advice shall provide also a minimum conservation size common to the four species.](#)

Final Provision

15. This Resolution supersedes the Resolution 15/05 on conservation measures for striped marlin, black marlin and blue marlin.