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## OUTCOMES OF THE 23<sup>rd</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 05 NOVEMBER 2019

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### PURPOSE

To inform the Scientific Committee (SC) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 23<sup>rd</sup> Session, held from 17-21 June 2019, specifically relating to the IOTC science process.

### BACKGROUND

At the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 7 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 7 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), as detailed below:

#### Resolutions

- Resolution 19/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC Area of competence.*
- Resolution 19/02 *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.*
- Resolution 19/03 *On the conservation of mobulid species caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC Area of Competence.*
- Resolution 19/04 *Concerning the IOTC Record of Vessels Authorised to operate in the IOTC Area of Competence.*
- Resolution 19/05 *On a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, and non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC Area of Competence.*
- Resolution 19/06 *On establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels.*
- Resolution 19/07 *On vessel chartering in the IOTC Area of Competence.*

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.

The updated *Compendium of Active Conservation and Management Measures for the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission* may be downloaded from the IOTC website at the following link:

English: <http://iotc.org/cmms>

French: <http://iotc.org/fr/mcgs>

## IOTC–2019–SC22–03 [E]

Below is a brief description of the new or revised CMMs adopted at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission, which have most relevance to the IOTC science process:

**Resolution 19/01** *On an Interim Plan for Rebuilding the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock in the IOTC Area of Competence.* This Resolution requires CPCs to reduce their catch of yellowfin tuna. For Purse seine vessels this signifies that CPCs whose purse seine catches of yellowfin reported for 2014 were above 5000 MT to reduce their purse seine catches of yellowfin by 15 % from the 2014 levels. For gillnet fisheries, CPCs whose Gillnet catches of yellowfin reported for 2014 were above 2000 MT to reduce their Gillnet catches of yellowfin by 10 % from the 2014 levels. CPCs whose Longline catches of yellowfin reported for 2014 were above 5000 MT to reduce their Longline catches of yellowfin by 10 % from the 2014 levels. Lastly for all other gears, CPCs whose catches of yellowfin from other gears reported for 2014 were above 5000 MT to reduce their other gear catches of yellowfin by 5 % from the 2014 levels. Exceptions apply to the aforementioned limits as stipulated in the Resolution. The Resolution further stipulates conditions for over catches of the annual limits, reduction in the number of supply vessels and additional requirements for gillnets.

**Resolution 19/02** *Procedures on a Fish Aggregating Devices (FADS) Management Plan.* This Resolution applies to CPCs having purse seine vessels and fishing on Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs), equipped with instrumented buoys for the purpose of aggregating target tuna species, in the IOTC area of competence. Only purse seiners and associated supply or support vessels are allowed to deploy DFADs in the IOTC Area of Competence. This Resolution sets the maximum number of operational buoys followed by any purse seine vessel at 300 at any one time. The number of instrumented buoys that may be acquired annually for each purse seine vessel is set at no more than 500. No purse seine vessel shall have more than 500 instrumented buoys (buoy in stock and operational buoy) at any time. It further provides guidelines for preparation of drifting fish aggregating device (DFAD) management plans, guidelines for preparation of anchored fish aggregating device (AFAD) management plans and principles for design and deployment of FADs including FAD marking, tracking and recovery.

**Resolution 19/03:** *On the conservation of mobulid rays caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC area of competence.* This Resolution aims to mitigate the interactions between mobulid rays and all fishing vessels flying the flag of a Contracting Party or Cooperating Non-Contracting Party. The Resolution prohibits the targeting of these rays and prohibits all vessels retaining onboard, transshipping, landing, storing, any part or whole carcass of mobulid rays caught in the IOTC Area of Competence apart from subsistence vessels. CPCs shall report the information and data collected on interactions (i.e. number of discards and releases) with mobulid rays by vessels through logbooks and/or through observer programs.

**Resolution 19/05:** *On a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, and non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC Area of Competence.* This Resolution specifies that all Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties shall require all purse seine vessels to retain on board and then land all bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, and yellowfin tuna caught, except fish considered unfit for human consumption. In addition the Resolution specifies conditions for the retention of Non-Target species captured by all gears including the procedures for full retention under certain circumstances. This Resolution will be revised, according to the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee resulting from the review of the IOTC Working Party on Tropical Tunas (for bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna) and of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (for non-target species).

## DISCUSSION

### Requests from the Commission

At the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission, Members made several comments regarding the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee, which participants are asked to **NOTE** (extracts from IOTC–2019–S23-R):

1. The Commission NOTED the stock status summaries for species of tuna and tuna-like species under the IOTC mandate, as well as other species impacted by IOTC fisheries (Appendix 6) and considered the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee to the Commission. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2018 list of recommendations as its own. (para 29).

2. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons elected by the Scientific Committee and its subsidiary bodies for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2018 Scientific Committee Report. (para. 30).

#### *IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2020 – 2024*

3. The Commission **NOTED** the IOTC Strategic Science Plan for 2020-2024 (IOTC-2019-S23-11). This plan was first presented to the IOTC Scientific Committee in 2018, then distributed to IOTC Members for final comments during early 2019; before being presented to the Commission for it to consider its endorsement (para 33).
4. The Commission **ADOPTED** the IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2020-2024, but **NOTED** that it was extremely ambitious and that its implementation should be reviewed by the Scientific Committee in 2022 and if necessary, modified (para. 34).
5. The Commission **NOTED** that the adoption of the plan did not include a budget for each component of the plan. Budget allocations for the components of this plan would continue to be made on an annual basis, based on the requests and priorities identified by the Scientific Committee (para 35).

#### *The status of tropical tuna*

6. The Commission **NOTED** the uncertainty in the yellowfin tuna assessment and that the Scientific Committee had not recommended any concrete catch advice due to the uncertainty in the projections and the associated Kobe II strategy matrix (K2SM). The Commission was informed that uncertainty is inherent in all assessments, and is not specific to yellowfin tuna. The Commission **NOTED** that the Scientific Committee has developed a yellowfin tuna workplan which aims to address and reduce many of the uncertainties in the 2019 assessment. This is expected to result in the provision of more robust advice on stock status and catch forecasts for this species in the future (para. 37)

#### *The status of billfish*

7. The Commission **EXPRESSED** concern that catches for all billfish species (except striped marlin in 2017) in both 2016 and 2017 were higher than the limits outlined in Resolution 18/05 (para. 46).

#### *Report of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the IOTC*

The report of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available on the IOTC website.

<http://www.iotc.org/>

#### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Scientific Committee:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2019–SC22–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission, specifically related to the IOTC science process and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the Commission with the information it has requested, throughout the course of the current SC meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** the 7 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) adopted at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission (consisting of 7 Resolutions and 0 Recommendation).