



Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources, and Agriculture

Male', Republic of Maldives

No. 30-D/PRIV/2019/426

05 August 2019

Susna Imende,
Chairperson,
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),
Le Chantier Mall,
Victoria Mahé,
Seychelles.

Dear Ms. Imende,

I take this opportunity to respond to the *Feedback Regarding Compliance Issues* of the Maldives (dated 21 June 2019) issued after the 16th Session of the IOTC Compliance Committee. The Committee raised fifteen outstanding issues which clarifications were provided for during the Session. However, as requested by the Commission Chair, I take this opportunity to put forward our comments and clarification in writing.

1. Has no fully implemented the requirement on IMO number for eligible vessels, as required by Resolution 15/04.

Measures have been put in place to ensure IMO numbers are reported to the secretariat in a timely and efficient manner. This information is now collected during the licensing stage for eligible vessels and are reported with information on AFVs. With the help of PEW. As of now the IMO number is not available for only one vessel eligible for the IMO numbering scheme. Ministry is trying to find solution to this issue in consultation with the vessel owners.

2. Has not fully implemented the reduction of nominal catch of YFT (Handline +1% increase).

The reduction of nominal catches for yellowfin tuna as required by the relevant resolution was fully implemented and observed by the Maldives. The catch reductions as stipulated by the Resolution only applies to the vessels larger than LOA 24m, and the required reduction of 5% was achieved for this segment of the fleet for handline and pole and line fishing vessels. As indicated during the Commission and captured in the report of the annual session Maldives is fully committed to the implementation of the Resolution as a major fishing nation of the Indian Ocean.

3. Has not reported size frequency for the coastal fisheries to IOTC standard, as required by Resolution 15/02.

4. Has not reported size frequency for the surface fisheries to IOTC standard, as required by Resolution 15/02.

5. Has not reported size frequency for longline fisheries to IOTC standard, as required by Resolution 15/02.

Maldives size sampling programme is implemented at key landing sites as well as by fishermen samplers. Additionally, scientific observers also contribute data. However, these data are not segregated by fleet so far. Steps have been taken to ensure future data are reported by fleet and 2018 data was reported by fleet.

Maldives size sampling program has been widened with aid from the World Bank's Sustainable Fisheries Resources Development Project. Further, it is expected that the change to the data reporting requirements for processors and exporters will result in full compliance in the future.

Maldives implements a size sampling program at key tuna landing sites through port samplers and fishermen samplers. The program covers vessels from the coastal and commercial fleets. In addition, changes have also been brought to the data reporting requirements for fish processors and purchasers to mandate the recording of size frequency according to IOTC standards. It is anticipated that Maldives will fully comply with the size data reporting requirements for the next assessment cycle.

6. **Has not reported Nominal catch on sharks to IOTC Standard, as required by Resolution 17/05.**
7. **Has not reported Catch and effort on sharks to IOTC Standard, as required by Resolution 17/05.**
8. **Has not reported Size frequency on sharks to IOTC Standard, as required by Resolution 17/05.**

Shark species are protected by law in the Maldives and thus retention of all species of sharks is also prohibited. All sharks that are caught have to be released alive whenever possible. Hence, catch and effort data is non-existent for sharks caught by the Maldivian fishing fleet. Furthermore, it is not feasible for the longline fishing vessels to record size of sharks that are caught incidentally as sharks are immediately released when they are brought alongside the fishing vessel using de-hookers or line cutters. Maldives is looking at other way of addressing this recurrent issue of "non-compliance".

9. **Has not provided the Report on progress of implementation of the FAO Guidelines and this Resolution to IOTC standard: some section of FAO guideline not covered, as required by Resolution 12/04.**

Similar to sharks, all species of turtles are also protected in the Maldives. In addition, due to the nature of fishing methods practiced in the Maldives turtle interactions are minimal. Hence, the implementation of this Resolution and the subsequent reporting of the implementation of this resolution has always been of low priority to the Maldives. However, Maldives will take measures during the intersessional period to identify the shortcomings in the implementation of this Resolution to ensure compliance.

10. **Has not fully implemented the observer scheme, coverage at sea < 1%, as required by Resolution 11/04.**
11. **Has not implemented the observer scheme, coverage at sea < 1%, as required by Resolution 11/04.**
12. **Has not implemented the observer scheme for artisanal landing, as required by Resolution 11/04.**
13. **Has not provided observer report, as required by Resolution 11/04.**

Maldives has had difficulties in recruiting observers to meet the specific requirement. Currently, two observers report from pole-and-line and handline tuna trips. One observer report was submitted in 2017 and 2 in 2018. Since, observer coverage has been increased and is expected to be better for 2019. It is also noted that Maldives is exploring alternatives avenues to meet the requirements of this resolution.

- 14. Has not provided the 1st semester report (2018) of the Statistical Document programme, as required by Resolution 01/06.**
- 15. Has not provided the 2nd semester report (2018) of the Statistical Document programme, as required by Resolution 01/06**

In order to objectively implement this Resolution, changes have to be brought to the regulatory framework to mandate catch documentation for import of tuna and tuna like species into the Maldives. Ministry is working on a regulation to address this issue and it is expected that such a regulation will be put in place in future.

I also take this opportunity to reaffirm to you and the Secretariat of our commitments to the work of the Commission.

Yours sincerely,



M Shiham Adam
Director General