

## Statement of the EU at the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

The EU acknowledges and praises the efforts of the IOTC Secretariat to make possible this 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the IOTC Commission, against the extremely difficult circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemics.

The EU strongly regrets that the virtual format of the meeting and the consequent technical limitations will not allow the Commission to take important deliberations in some crucial areas this year.

The EU strongly supports the definition in this 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the IOTC Commission of an ambitious agenda for 2021. While the practical and logistical arrangements for 2021 will have most probably to be decided at a later stage, depending on the evolution of the pandemics, the EU invites all CPC to agree during the 24<sup>th</sup> Session on a clear calendar for 2021. In particular, the need for the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission to take deliberations on all the issues necessary for an effective and sustainable fisheries management in the IOTC area should be given high priority.

The EU invites all the CPC to make the best possible use of ad hoc **intersessional meetings** to prepare the work of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session in 2021 and thus to be able to timely address and agree on some crucial issues.

In particular, the EU underlines the urgent need to deliberate on the following aspects:

- a) The need to reconsider the **management measures for yellowfin tuna** adopted by the IOTC in 2019 with a view to define an ambitious and effective recovery plan for yellowfin tuna stock, achieving the recommended catch reductions, covering all active fishing vessels regardless of size and area of operation and ensuring that all CPCs/vessels with important catch contributions are bound by the measures, particularly large scale drift nets.
- b) The adoption of **management measures that concern all tropical tuna stocks**. The situation of skipjack tuna stock starts to raise important concerns due to the systematic overfishing of this species. It is therefore essential to task the SC with examining and advising on a number of possible management measures that could reduce mortality of all Tropical Tuna species, such as temporal closures and capacity limitations.
- c) The importance of **adequate monitoring of the implementation** of measures already in place on issues like FAD management and the retention ban for Mobulids for all vessels in all areas of operation.
- d) Strengthening the IOTC **compliance and monitoring scheme (CMS)** with the aim to improve the compliance assessment process, by grading the severity of the infractions, by ensuring proper follow-up and by advancing the work on the establishing a centralised VMS system.

The EU considers that the discussion of these issues is crucial for the future ability of the organisation to reach its goals. As a consequence, the EU will work to promote exchanges in order to facilitate agreements in all these areas by 2021.