
OUTCOMES OF THE 24TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY IOTC SECRETARIAT, 23 MARCH 2021

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 17th Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch Data Preparatory meeting (WPEB17(DP)) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 24th Session, held from 2-6 November 2020, specifically relating to the work of the WPEB.

BACKGROUND

At the 24th Session, the Commission did not **CONSIDER** any new proposals for Conservation and Management Measures.

DISCUSSION

The Commission made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2019, which have relevance for the WPEB.

Status of sharks

The Commission **NOTED** the current status of the following sharks:

Blue shark

No new stock assessment for blue sharks was carried out in 2019, thus, the stock status is determined on the basis of the 2017 assessment and other indicators presented in 2019. On the weight-of-evidence currently available, the stock status is determined to be not overfished and not subject to overfishing.

Oceanic whitetip shark

There is no quantitative stock assessment and limited basic fishery indicators currently available. Therefore the stock status is highly uncertain.

Other issues related to WPEB

The Commission **NOTED** a proposal for a Letter of Understanding to reconfirm the collaboration between IOTC and the Secretariat for the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) which has been ongoing since 2009. The Commission **AGREED IN PRINCIPLE** to continue a collaborative arrangement with ACAP and **REQUESTED** that the document be relabelled as a Letter of Intent with some other editorial revisions and maintain the text from the 2015 agreement. The Commission **REQUESTED** Executive Secretary to confirm the acceptability of the revised ACAP Letter of Intent with Heads of Delegation before the Chairperson of the Commission signs the letter on behalf of the Commission and sends it to ACAP for signature.

Scientific Committee Recommendations

The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2019 list of recommendations as its own. The Commission **AGREED** to interpret Recommendation 22.22 as a request and **NOTED** that any purse seine fleets reporting effort as fishing hours or fishing days should begin to submit this information as 'number of sets', in accordance with the reporting requirements of Resolutions 15/01 and 15/02.

Japan stated that it would not oppose the endorsement of the recommendations on the understanding that many of the recommendations require the Commission to note the advice provided by the Scientific Committee and endorsement of the recommendations would not imply that the Commission shall strictly follow them.

The Commission **NOTED** that 9 Contracting Parties and 1 Cooperating Non-Contracting Party did not submit a National Report to the Scientific Committee in 2019, and issues with lack of data and poor-quality data persist. The Commission **REITERATED** its concerns about the lack and poor quality of data, and again, strongly **ENCOURAGED** CPCs to take immediate steps to review, and where necessary, improve their performance with respect to the provision of data through improved compliance with Resolutions 15/01 *On the recording of catch*

and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence, and 15/02 Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties.

The complete report of the 24th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WPEB:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–20201–WPEB17(DP)–03 which outlined the outcomes of the 24th 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.