



POSITION for the 18th session of the Compliance Committee

WWF POSITION for the 18th Session of the Compliance Committee of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

WWF Ocean Practice

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IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) have not been able to effectively use the RFMO framework to ensure the sustainable management of the fisheries resources, including highly migratory and straddling stocks. To date, the effectiveness of key provisions to ensure compliance by CPCs has been largely limited due to challenges in reporting. The lack of compliance with Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) is a fundamental and persistent challenge, particularly for developing coastal states due to their lack of capacity to implement the measures. The management measures adopted by the Commission are only as good as their implementation. While WWF acknowledges the task of the Working Party on the Implementation of CMMs, and IOTC's support to CPCs for better compliance, including through capacity building, significant efforts still need to be done to ensure CPCs meet their obligations and fully implement CMMs.

WWF notes with concern significant gaps in compliance, including with reporting requirements. As highlighted in the Summary Report, gaps and delays in data on nominal catches, catch and effort and size frequency data compromise the quality of data available for stock assessments, such as those for Skipjack harvest control rules and Yellowfin tuna catch reductions. Also worrisome are widespread gaps in reporting data on sharks, particularly shark finning, and on the regional observer scheme.

More generally, WWF is concerned with the level of compliance achieved by CPCs on the interim plan for rebuilding yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean, and weaknesses in reporting requirements for small-scale fisheries (vessels less than 24 m) and artisanal fisheries, which are not clearly articulated.

WWF urges members of the Compliance Committee of the IOTC, at their 18th Session, to recommend to the Commission to take effective measures that lead to improved compliance by CPCs, in particular:

1. Adopt an improved and transparent compliance mechanism by amending Appendix V of the IOTC Rules of Procedure (2014)

As stated in the 2016 Report of the 2nd IOTC Performance Review, “the sense of accountability within IOTC seems to be very low; therefore, more accountability is required.” Reinforcing compliance reporting by CPCs as well as timely evaluation by the Compliance Committee is an urgent priority, as we see a failure to comply with many resolutions, such as Resolutions 18/01, 15/01, 15/02, 16/02, among others. This lack of compliance is considerably undermining the mandate of the IOTC to sustainably manage fish stocks effectively based on informed decisions.

In this regard, the Compliance Committee should recommend:

- The annual meeting report includes greater details on compliance status; recommendations to the Commission regarding any remedial actions taken or proposed to be taken by the concerned CPCs; and priority obligations to be monitored and reviewed.
- Compliance analysis is reported not only country-by-country but also measure-by-measure. WWF welcomes the summary report on the level of compliance, but greater detail by measure would allow the Compliance Committee to treat non-compliance issues in accordance with their seriousness and reflect the diversity of situations to provide specific support in enforcement if needed.
- CPCs create a mechanism to take appropriate sanctions against CPCs, whether they are in the form of lost fishing opportunities or other trade and financial mechanisms in repeated cases of lack of compliance with relevant CMMs.

2. Adopt a new recommendation to improve traceability through an electronic catch documentation scheme

Traceability tools such as electronic catch documentation schemes (CDS) are necessary to give coastal States a means to protect their fishery resources while enabling market States to ensure IUU fishing products do not enter their markets. RFMOs are the right fora to implement these tools and, together with increased transparency in procedures to improve compliance with regards to adopted measures, could effectively contribute to the fight against IUU fishing. WWF welcomes the task of the Catch Documentation Scheme Working Group. In this regard, the Compliance Committee should:

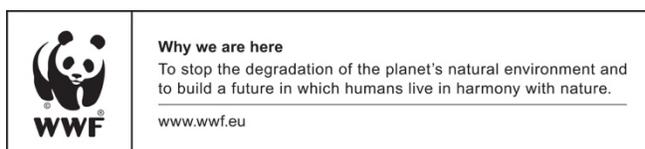
- Prioritize the continued development and subsequent adoption of an electronic CDS for all IOTC species and all size of vessels. A phased approach must be defined to initially prioritize large-scale vessels and overfished species as identified by the Scientific Committee.
- Ensure a minimum level of compatibility of CDS standards with those of other RFMOs (CCSBT, ICCAT, and CCAMLR) to facilitate information sharing, better integration and monitoring of such systems worldwide.

Conclusion

WWF is concerned with the level of compliance achieved by CPCs in meeting their substantive and reporting obligations. Considering the current state of play, WWF urges that binding resolutions of the IOTC must have penalty mechanisms embedded and applied through the Compliance Committee, ensuring there is transparency and accountability by CPCs on resolutions they adopt. These include the most urgent and relevant CMMs such as the rebuilding plan for yellowfin tuna (Resolution 19/01), improved FAD management and reporting (Resolution 19/02) and delimiting/ban the use of drift gillnets of more than 2.5 km in the IOTC area of competence (Resolution 17/07). Breach of core rules such as total allowable catches need to be prioritized by the Compliance Committee, ensuring there are traceability and validation mechanisms in place.

WWF described in its 2020 report [Unregulated fishing on the high seas of the Indian Ocean](#), the impacts of unregulated fishing on threatened species. WWF encourages CPCs to consider developing a joint working group between SIOFA, IORA and IOTC to overcome the challenge of unregulated fishing, improving management of neritic tunas, and adopt joint CMMs, taking into account an ecosystem-based fisheries management approach.

WWF remains committed to supporting CPCs, and particularly developing coastal states in improving their compliance, including data collection and reporting.



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