

OUTCOMES OF THE 24th and 25th SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 13TH AUGUST 2021

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 19th Working Party on Billfish (WPB19) of the decision and requests made by the Commission at its 24th session, held from 2–6 November 2020, specifically relating to the work of the WPB. The 25th Session of the Commission was held from the 7 – 11 June 2021, however the report from that meeting has yet to be adopted. The Commission discussion on billfish was very limited in 2020 and 2021 although the Commission did endorse the Recommendations from the 22nd and 23rd Sessions of the Scientific Committee (SC22 and SC23).

BACKGROUND

Due to the shortened nature of the meeting, as well as its virtual format, Members agreed not to discuss or adopt any new management measures in 2020. Therefore, at the 24th Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 0 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures. At the 25th Session, 3 proposals were adopted (consisting of 3 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations)

Conservation and Management Measures become binding 120 days after their distribution to all CPCs. The final versions of the newly agreed CMMs will be made available in due course at <http://iotc.org/cmms>

DISCUSSION

The Commission also made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2019 (SC22), which have relevance for the WPB (IOTC–2019–S24–R):

From S24:

Status of billfish

Swordfish

No new stock assessment was carried out for swordfish 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 available in 2019, the stock is determined to be not overfished and not subject to overfishing.

Striped Marlin

No new stock assessment for striped marlin was carried out in 2019, thus, the stock status is determined on the basis of the 2018 assessment and other indicators presented in 2019. On the weight-of-evidence available in 2019, the stock status of striped marlin is determined to be overfished and subject to overfishing.

Blue Marlin

Stock status based on the Bayesian State-Space Surplus Production model JABBA suggests that there is an 87% probability that the Indian Ocean blue marlin stock in 2017 is in the red zone of the Kobe plot, indicating the stock is overfished and subject to overfishing.

Black Marlin

No new stock assessment for black marlin was carried out in 2019, thus, the stock status is determined on the basis of the 2018 assessment based on JABBA and other indicators presented in 2019. The Kobe plot from the

JABBA model indicated that the stock is not subject to overfishing and is currently not overfished, however these status estimates are subject to a high degree of uncertainty.

Indo-Pacific sailfish

A new stock assessment was carried out for Indo-Pacific sailfish in 2019 using the C-MSY model. The data poor stock assessment techniques indicated that F was above F_{MSY} ($F/F_{MSY}=1.22$) and B above B_{MSY} ($B/B_{MSY}=1.14$). On the weight-of-evidence available in 2019, the stock status cannot be assessed and is determined to be uncertain.

(Para 30.) The Commission **EXPRESSED** concern that catches for several billfish species in both 2017 and 2018 were higher than the limits outlined in Resolution 18/05. The Commission further **NOTED** that several billfish species are assessed to be overfished and subject to overfishing and that measures should be taken to address this problem.

The complete report of the 24th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website: <https://iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020/12/IOTC-2020-S24-RE.pdf>

From S25

The report for the 25th Session of the Commission has yet to be adopted. The CMMs adopted during S25 can be viewed [here](#). None of the new Resolutions are specifically relevant to the WPB.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the WPB

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2021–WPB19–04 which outlined the outcomes of the 24th Session of the Commission (as well as the CMMs adopted at the 25th Session), specifically related to the work of the WPB 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 WPB meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** that no new Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) were adopted at the 24th Session of the Commission (consisting of 0 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations) and that 3 new CMMs were adopted during S25 (consisting of 3 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations).