

OUTCOMES OF THE 25th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 13 OCTOBER 2021

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 23rd Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT23) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 25th Session, held from 7-11 June 2021, specifically relating to the work of the WPTT.

BACKGROUND

At the 24th Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 3 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (Consisting of 3 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), as detailed below.

Resolutions

- Resolution 21/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC area of competence.*
- Resolution 21/02 *On establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels.*
- Resolution 21/03 *On harvest control rules for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence.*

These Conservation and Management Measures shall become binding 120 days after their distribution to all CPCs should there be no objections. The final versions of the newly agreed CMMs will be made available here in due course: <http://iotc.org/cmms>.

DISCUSSION

The 25th Session of the Commission

The Commission made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2020, which have relevance for the WPTT (IOTC–2021–S25–R):

Report of the 23rd Session of the Scientific Committee (SC23)

(*Para. 23*): The Commission **NOTED** the stock status summaries for species of tuna and tuna-like species under the IOTC mandate, as well as other species impacted by IOTC fisheries (Appendix 5) and considered the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee to the Commission. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2020 list of recommendations as its own.

On the status of tropical and temperate tunas

(*Para. 18*) The Commission **NOTED** that the current status of tropical and temperate tunas is as follows (full details are provided in Appendix 5):

Bigeye tuna

In 2019 a new stock assessment was carried out for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence to update the stock status undertaken in 2016. On the weight-of-evidence available in 2019, the bigeye tuna stock is determined to be not overfished but subject to overfishing.

Yellowfin tuna

No new stock assessment was carried out for yellowfin tuna in 2020, thus, stock status is determined on the basis of the 2018 assessment and other information presented in 2020. On the weight-of-evidence available in 2018, 2019 and 2020, the yellowfin tuna stock is determined to remain overfished and subject to overfishing.

Skipjack tuna

A new stock assessment was carried out for skipjack tuna in 2020 using Stock Synthesis with data up to 2019. The outcome of the 2020 stock assessment model does not differ substantially from the previous assessment (2017) despite the large catches recorded in the period 2018-2019, which exceeded the catch limits established in 2017 for this period. On the weight-of-evidence available in 2020, the skipjack tuna stock is determined to be: (i) above the adopted biomass target reference point; (ii) not overfished ($SB_{2019} > SB_{40\%SB0}$); (iii) with fishing mortality below the adopted target fishing mortality, and; (iv) not subject to overfishing ($E_{2019} < E_{40\%SB0}$)

(Para. 19) The Commission again **NOTED** with concern, the current status of yellowfin tuna. The Commission also **NOTED** that an updated stock assessment for yellowfin tuna is due for October 2021 and that this updated assessment is anticipated to address many of the issues identified in the past assessments for the species, and in particular errors associated with the projections and Kobe II Strategy Matrix (K2SM) developed in 2018. The Commission **AGREED** on the critical importance of this new assessment and the updated management advice that will be produced at that time and **URGED** the SC to address this task as a priority.

Report of the Technical Committee on Management Procedures (TCMP02)

(Para. 44). The Commission **NOTED** that the report from the 4th meeting of the Technical Committee on Management Procedures (TCMP) had not yet been adopted and will be done so by correspondence. The Commission **NOTED**, however, that several Recommendations had been reviewed and agreed during the meeting and these were presented to the Commission by the SC Chair who co-chaired the meeting. The Recommendations were as follows:

- That the WPM and ad-hoc reference points working group continue to have discussions in order to provide advice on the most suitable and robust types of reference points to be used for stock status determination.
- That the Commission take note of this [lag inherent in the MSE processes] issue and provide feedback as to whether this is acceptable or to review different options to reduce this lag in data reporting for management advice.
- That the Commission endorse a request that a revised timetable to be developed by CPCs with assistance from the SC and WPM chairs along with the Secretariat and this could be presented to the SC in 2021.
- The Commission continue to support capacity building initiatives through the TCMP to improve understanding and participation in the MSE process.

(Para 45) The Commission **NOTED** that further work is required on understanding the determination of stock status relative to Reference Points and endorsed the TCMP request continue the deliberations of the ad-hoc working group to continue to work on this matter intersessionally in preparation for the TCMP in 2022.

(Para 46) The Commission **SUPPORTED** the important work conducted by the TCMP and **NOTED** the continued support received from CPCs and the Commission to fund the activities. The Commission further **NOTED** the important platform provided by the TCMP for increasing dialogue between scientists and managers.

(Para 47) The Commission **URGED** the TCMP to continue with capacity building initiatives to facilitate understanding of the process and increase participation by all parties to facilitate smooth implementation of the MSE process.

(Para 48) India requested the Scientific Committee and TCMP consider including simulations which can differentiate between the stock in Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and those on the High Seas to account for the implications of the MPs on these two components of the stocks.

The complete report of the 25th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website: <https://iotc.org/meetings/25th-session-indian-ocean-tuna-commission>

RECOMMENDATION

That the WPTT

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2021–WPTT23–INF01 which outlined the main outcomes of the 25th Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPTT 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 WPTT meeting.