
OUTCOMES OF THE 25th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 05 NOVEMBER 2021

PURPOSE

To inform the Scientific Committee (SC) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 25th Session, held from 7-11 June 2021, specifically relating to the IOTC science process.

BACKGROUND

At the 25th Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 3 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 3 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations):

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.*

Pursuant to Article IX.4 of the IOTC Agreement, the above-mentioned Conservation and Management Measures shall become binding on Members, 120 days from the date of the notification communicated by the Secretariat.

The updated *Compendium of Active Conservation and Management Measures for the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission* may be downloaded from the IOTC website at the following link:

English: <http://iotc.org/cmms>

French: <http://iotc.org/fr/mcgs>

Below is a brief description of the CMMs adopted at the 25th Session of the Commission, which have most relevance to the IOTC science process:

Resolution 21/01 *On an Interim Plan for Rebuilding the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock in the IOTC Area of Competence.* This Resolution requires CPCs to reduce their catch of yellowfin tuna. For CPCs whose catches of yellowfin reported for 2014 were above 5000 MT are required to reduce their catches of yellowfin by 21 % from the 2014 levels. Exceptions apply to the aforementioned limits as stipulated in the Resolution. In addition, conditions are in place for fleets that caught under 5000 MT. Procedures are also in place for dealing with over catches of annual limits. Reductions in the numbers of supply vessels are also stipulated. For gillnet fisheries, the phasing out or conversion of gillnet vessels to longliners was encouraged as well as subsurface setting of gillnet gear. The Secretariat are also tasked with preparing a table of allocated catch limits disaggregated as per the conditions set out in paragraphs 5-11 for following year, in December of the current year.

Resolution 21/03 *On Harvest Control Rules for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence.* This Resolution for a Harvest Control Rule (HCR) for skipjack draws on SC recommendations, including the guidance on reference points. It uses the biomass limit reference point of 20% of the unfished level (BLIM = 0.2B0) and the target biomass reference point of 40% of the unfished level (BTARG = 0.4B0), consistent with the SC advice that reference points based on depletion level should be used for stocks where MSY-based reference points cannot be robustly estimated. In addition the Resolution provides guidance on the HCR and incorporates a review and the concept of exceptional circumstances.

DISCUSSION

Requests from the Commission

At the 25th Session of the Commission, Members made several comments regarding the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee, which participants are asked to **NOTE** (extracts from IOTC–2021–S25-R):

1. The Commission **NOTED** that although all scientific meetings had been successfully held virtually in 2020, they were shortened to facilitate the virtual platform. The virtual platforms, however, did result in increased participation to the meetings which the Commission **AGREED** was beneficial. The Commission further **NOTED** that the SC proposed that in the future virtual meetings may still be conducted for certain meetings (such as data preparatory meetings) in order to reduce the expenses travel imposes on CPCs as well as the IOTC Meeting Participation fund (MPF), but for those meetings requiring closer, in-person, collaborations, physical meetings will be continued as required. The Commission **NOTED** that the MPF was not used for science-related meetings in 2020 because they were all convened by videoconference. (Para 16).
2. The Commission **NOTED** that 6 Contracting Parties and 2 Cooperating Non-Contracting Party did not submit a National Report to the Scientific Committee Meeting in 2020, and issues with lack of data and poor-quality data persist. The Commission **NOTED** that this was an improvement over the previous year, but also **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*. (Para 17).

The status of tropical and temperate tunas

3. 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. (Para 19)

Scientific Committee Recommendations

4. 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. (Para 23)

5. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons elected by the Scientific Committee and its subsidiary (scientific) bodies for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2020 Scientific Committee Report. (Para 24)

Report of the 25th Session of the IOTC

The report of the 25th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available on the IOTC website.

<http://www.iotc.org/>

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Scientific Committee:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2021–SC24–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 25th Session of the Commission, specifically related to the IOTC science process and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the Commission with the information it has requested, throughout the course of the current SC meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** that 3 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) were adopted at the 25th Session of the Commission.