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## OUTCOMES OF THE 25th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 10 MAY 2022

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### PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 24<sup>th</sup> Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT24) Data Preparatory Meeting of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 25<sup>th</sup> session, held from 7-11 June 2021, specifically relating to the work of the WPTT.

### BACKGROUND

At the 25<sup>th</sup> 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*

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.

### DISCUSSION

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 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Scientific Committee (SC23)**

*(Para. 16):* 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. 17):* 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

#### **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
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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).

### **Scientific Committee Recommendations**

(*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.

(*Para. 24*) 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.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the WPTT

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2022–WPTT24(DP)–04 which outlined the main outcomes of the 25<sup>th</sup> 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.