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## OUTCOMES OF THE 26th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 25 OCTOBER 2022

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### PURPOSE

To inform the Scientific Committee (SC) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 26<sup>th</sup> Session, held from 16-20 May 2022, specifically relating to the IOTC science process.

### BACKGROUND

At the 26<sup>th</sup> Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 4 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 4 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations):

### Resolutions

- [Resolution 22/01](#) *On climate change as it relates to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission* [[download here](#)].
- [Resolution 22/02](#) *On establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels* [[download here](#)].
- [Resolution 22/03](#) *On a Management Procedure for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence* [[download here](#)].
- [Resolution 22/04](#) *On a Regional Observer Scheme* [[download here](#)]

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 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, which have most relevance to the IOTC science process:

**Resolution 22/01** *On climate change as it relates to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.* This Resolution call on the Commission, in its deliberations and development of conservation and management measures, to take into account scientific information available from the Scientific Committee and other relevant international processes on the potential impacts of climate change on tuna stocks, bycatch and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent on or associated with tuna stocks. The IOTC Scientific Committee, when requested by the Commission, shall consider and where possible, advise on the potential impacts of climate change on highly migratory fish stocks and any related impacts on the economies, food security and livelihood of CPCs in particular developing States among them Least Developing States and Small Island Developing States. In addition, the IOTC Scientific Committee shall consider how climate change and fishing activities may be related and provide advice to the Commission on the potential implications for these relationships for the conservation and management of tuna and associated stocks

**Resolution 22/03** *On a Management Procedure for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence.* This Resolution for a Management Procedure (MP) for bigeye tuna draws on SC recommendations and TCMP deliberations and outlines a fully specified MP for setting a TAC for bigeye tuna, with a view of maintaining the stock biomass in the green zone of the Kobe plot (not overfished and not subject to overfishing) while maximizing the average catch from the fishery and reducing the variation in the total allowable catch (TAC) between management periods. The first TAC derived from the MP shall apply in 2024 and 2025. After 2025, the TAC shall apply in each of the subsequent three years following the year it is set by the Commission. A review of performance of the MP by the Commission and its subcommittees is to occur in 2030. The Scientific Committee is requested to review, and if necessary, further develop and refine (not later than 2024), the exceptional circumstances guidelines (adopted by SC24 and S26), taking into account, inter alia, the need for an appropriate balance between specificity versus flexibility in defining exceptional circumstances, and the appropriate level of robustness to ensure that exceptional circumstances are triggered only when necessary.

## DISCUSSION

### Requests from the Commission

At the 26<sup>th</sup> 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–2022–S26-R):

1. The Commission **NOTED** that all scientific meetings had been successfully held in 2021, utilising videoconference platforms and a shortened format. The Commission also **NOTED** that the MPF was not used for science-related meetings in 2021 because they were all convened by videoconference. (Para 25).
2. The Commission **NOTED** that 21 National Reports were submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2021 by CPCs. Of the 21 National Reports submitted, 6 were submitted after the deadline (Para 26).
3. The Commission **ENDORSED** a data support mission to Oman, by the IOTC Secretariat. This visit would facilitate information sharing to better understand the development of Oman’s fisheries which have shown a significant growth in recent years (Para 27).
4. The Commission **NOTED** the recommendation by the SC to endorse the continuation of the WGEMS in the future and for the Commission to discuss if the WGEMS should remain under the WPDCS or report directly to the SC or CoC. The Commission also **NOTED** that the Terms of Reference and Plan of Work for the WGEMS as endorsed by the SC. The Commission **AGREED** that the WGEMS should continue to work under the WPDCS at this time (Para 28).

#### *The status of tropical and temperate tunas*

5. The Commission **REITERATED** its concern over the status of the yellowfin tuna stock and **NOTED** the SC observation that some of the fisheries subject to catch reductions have achieved a decrease in catches in 2020 in accordance with the levels of reductions specified in the Resolution; however, these reductions were offset by increases in the catches of yellowfin tuna by some CPCs, including some that were subject to limitations (Para 31).

6. The Commission **NOTED** that different fishing gears and fleets have differing impacts on the yellowfin tuna population. The Commission **REQUESTED** that the SC conduct a fisheries impact assessment to determine the individual gear/fleet effects on the yellowfin tuna stock status, and productivity (Para 32).
7. The Commission **NOTED** the TORs and Workplan endorsed by the SC for an external Peer review process for the yellowfin tuna stock assessment. One CPC requested clarification on the timelines provided in the workplan and whether these could be reduced in order to provide advice in a shorter timeframe. Other CPCs expressed their opinion that the current timeline was necessary to provide a thorough review of the yellowfin tuna stock assessment and that reducing the timeframe could be detrimental. The SC Chair explained that the availability of experts, the logistics in organising a face-to-face review meeting and the time required for the SC to review and discuss the outputs of the review were taken into account when developing the presented workplan and that a shortened timeframe will need to be discussed by the SC to determine its feasibility. The Executive Secretary informed the Commission that, the Secretariat will endeavour to expedite the procedure to appoint the reviewers. (Para 33)

***Matters related to ecosystems, bycatch and the status of sharks***

8. The Commission **NOTED** the status of sharks presented in the Scientific Committee report and **REQUESTED** the SC, via its Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch, to develop research plans for the species most vulnerable and/or data deficient (such as shortfin mako, oceanic whitetip), to inform future decisions on action required to address data deficiencies, declining stocks, and the overall need for improved management of interactions with those species in IOTC fisheries (Para 40).

***Scientific Committee Recommendations***

9. 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 and considered the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee to the Commission. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2021 list of recommendations as its own (Para 41).
10. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Chairperson (Prof. Kitakado from Japan) and Vice-Chairperson (Dr Denham Parker from South Africa) elected by the Scientific Committee and those officials elected for its subsidiary (scientific) bodies for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2021 Scientific Committee Report (Para 42).

***Report of the 26th Session of the IOTC***

The report of the 26<sup>th</sup> 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–2022–SC25–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 26<sup>th</sup> 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 4 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) were adopted at the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission.