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## PREVIOUS DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 25 OCTOBER 2022

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### PURPOSE

To ensure the Scientific Committee (SC) is aware that in addition to the requests made to the SC by the Commission during its 26<sup>th</sup> Session, there are a number of decisions in the form of previous Resolutions that require a response from the Scientific Committee.

### BACKGROUND

The Commission has considered and adopted a range of Conservation and Management Measures (CMM) in the past that provided clear directions to the Scientific Committee (SC). While the SC has responded to most, several remain outstanding or are ongoing. These are outlined below:

#### **Resolution 17/05 On the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by the IOTC**

(para. 9) The IOTC Scientific Committee shall request that the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch continue its work on identifying and monitoring the status of sharks until such time as comprehensive assessments are possible for all relevant shark species/groups. In particular, the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch will establish the Terms of Reference for the Commission to establish a long term-project on sharks in IOTC, with the aim to ensure the collection of data required for performing reliable stock assessments for key shark species. The project will include:

- a) the identification of data gaps for key shark species in IOTC;
- b) the collection of relevant data, including through direct contacts with CPC national administrations, research institutes and stakeholders;
- c) any other activity that could contribute to improving the collection of data required for performing stock assessments of key shark species in IOTC.

The IOTC Scientific Committee will incorporate results of the project in its reports on sharks and based on progress achieved will propose a timeframe for performing stock assessment of key sharks species. CPCs are encouraged to contribute financially to the implementation of the project.

(para. 10) The IOTC Scientific Committee shall review annually the information reported by CPCs pursuant to this Resolution and, as necessary, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen the conservation and management of sharks within IOTC fisheries.

(para 11) CPCs shall undertake research to:

- a) identify ways to make fishing gears more selective, where appropriate, including research into the effectiveness of prohibiting wire leaders;
- b) improve knowledge on key biological/ecological parameters, life-history and behavioural traits, migration patterns of key shark species;
- c) identify key shark mating, pupping and nursery areas; and
- d) improve handling practices for live sharks to maximise post-release survival

#### **Resolution 15/10 On target and limit reference points and a decision framework**

(para.2) Where the IOTC Scientific Committee considers that MSY-based reference points cannot be robustly estimated, biomass limit reference points will be set at a rate of B<sub>0</sub>. Unless the IOTC Scientific Committee advises the Commission of more suitable limit reference point for a particular species, by default, the interim BLIM will be set at 0.2 B<sub>0</sub> and fishing mortality rate limit reference point at F<sub>0.2</sub> B<sub>0</sub> (the value

corresponding to this biomass limit reference point). These interim limit reference points will be reviewed no later than 2018.

(Annex 1: para. 4) The initial assessment described in points 2 and 3 shall be completed, where possible, for:

- b) Assessments for yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna and swordfish to be completed by 2017 and presented to the Commission meeting in 2018.

**Resolution 12/04 *On the conservation of marine turtles***

(para. 17) The IOTC Scientific Committee shall annually review the information reported by CPCs pursuant to this measure and, as necessary, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen efforts to reduce marine turtle interactions with IOTC fisheries.

**Resolution 12/09 *On the conservation of thresher sharks (Family Alopiidae) caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC area of competence***

(para. 7) Scientific observers shall be allowed to collect biological samples (vertebrae, tissues, reproductive tracts, stomachs, skin samples, spiral valves, jaws, whole and skeletonised specimens for taxonomic works and museum collections) from thresher sharks that are dead at haulback, provided that the samples are part of the research project approved by the IOTC Scientific Committee (or IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB)). In order to obtain the approval, a detailed document outlining the purpose of the work, number and type of samples intended to be collected and the spatio-temporal distribution of the sampling work must be included in the proposal. Annual progress of the work and a final report on completion of the project shall be presented to the IOTC WPEB and the IOTC Scientific Committee.

**Resolution 11/04 *On a regional observer scheme***

(para. 15) The elements of the Observer Scheme, notably those regarding its coverage, are subject to review and revision, as appropriate, for application in 2012 and subsequent years. Basing on the experience of other Tuna RFMOs, the IOTC Scientific Committee will elaborate an observer working manual, a template to be used for reporting (including minimum data fields) and a training program.

**Resolution 19/02 *Procedures on a fish aggregating devices (FADs) management plan***

(para. 19) CPCs are encouraged to conduct trials using biodegradable materials to facilitate the transition to the use of only biodegradable material for DFADS construction by their flagged vessels. The results of such trials shall be presented to the Scientific Committee who shall continue to review research results on the use of biodegradable material on FADs and shall provide specific recommendations to the Commission as appropriate

(para. 23) The IOTC Scientific Committee will analyse the information, when available, and provide scientific advice on additional FAD management options for consideration by the Commission, including recommendations on the number of FADs to be operated, the use of biodegradable materials in new and improved FADs design. When assessing the impact of FADs on the dynamic and distribution of targeted fish stocks and associated species and on the ecosystem, the IOTC Scientific Committee will, where relevant, use all available data on abandoned FADs (i.e. FADs without a beacon or which have drifted outside the fishing zone).

(para.27) This resolution shall be reviewed by the Commission, at the latest, at its session in 2022, based on recommendations from the Scientific Committee.

**Resolution 19/03 *On the conservation of mobulid rays caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC area of competence***

(para. 11) CPCs, unless clearly demonstrate that intentional and/or incidental catches of mobulids do not occur in their fisheries, shall develop, with the assistance from the IOTC Secretariat where required, sampling plans for the monitoring of the mobulid rays catches by the subsistence and artisanal fisheries. The sampling plans, including their scientific and operational rationale, shall be reported in the national scientific reports to the Scientific Committee, starting in 2020, which will provide its advice on their

soundness by 2021 at the latest. The sampling plans, where required, will be implemented by the CPCs from 2022 onward taking into account the Scientific Committee advice.

- (para. 13) The IOTC Scientific Committee shall review the status of *Mobula* spp. in the IOTC Area of Competence and provide management advice to the Commission in 2023 also to identify possible hot-spots for conservation and management of mobulids within and beyond EEZs. Moreover, the IOTC Scientific Committee is requested to provide, whenever considered adequate on the basis of evolving knowledge and scientific advice, further improvements to the handling procedures detailed in Annex 1.
- (para. 14) Scientific observers shall be allowed to collect biological samples of mobulid rays caught in the IOTC Area of Competence that are dead at haul-back, provided that the samples are a part of a research project approved by the IOTC Scientific Committee. In order to obtain the approval, a detailed document outlining the purpose of the work, number of samples intended to be collected and the spatio-temporal distribution of the sampling effect must be included in the proposal. Annual progress of the work and a final report on completion shall be presented to the SC.

**Resolution 19/05 *On a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, and non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC area of competence.***

- (para. 6) The IOTC Scientific Committee, the IOTC Working Party on Tropical Tunas, and the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch shall as a matter of priority:
- a) act on its recommendation in the Report of the 18th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee and undertake work to examine the benefits of retaining non-targeted species catches, other than those prohibited via IOTC Resolution, and present its recommendations to the 22nd Annual Session of the Commission. The work should take into account all species that are usually discarded on all major gears (i.e., purse-seines, longlines and gillnets), and should look at fisheries that take place both on the high seas and in coastal countries and the feasibility of both retraining on-board and processing of the associated landings.

**Resolution 21/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC area of competence.***

- (para. 13) Any CPC who submits updated catch histories of yellowfin tuna in accordance with IOTC resolution 15/01 and verified by the secretariat and the IOTC Scientific Committee, shall have a right to access yellowfin tuna in accordance with the limits prescribed in the Resolution.
- (para. 17) The tropical tuna data submitted by CPCs in accordance with Resolution 15/01 “On the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence” and Resolution 15/02 “Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)” shall be reviewed by the Secretariat and discussed by the Scientific Committee for possible inconsistencies. In such cases, the Scientific Committee shall provide the rationale of the detected inconsistencies and justify the choice of the best solution available with regard the scientific analysis to be carried out. Data used for catch limit calculations shall be based on the data reviewed, including possible estimates, by the Secretariat.
- (para. 23) CPCs are encouraged to increase their observer coverage or field sampling in gillnet fishing vessels by 10% using alternative data collection methodologies (electronic or human) verified by the IOTC Scientific Committee by 2023.
- (para. 25) The IOTC Secretariat under advice of the Scientific Committee shall prepare and 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.
- (para. 30) The IOTC Scientific Committee via its Working Party on Tropical Tunas shall implement the “Workplan to improve current assessment of yellowfin tuna” and shall advise the Commission the financial and administrative requirements to further strengthen the work undertaken to minimize the issues and complexities regarding yellowfin tuna stock assessment.
- (para. 31) The IOTC Scientific Committee and its Working Parties shall prioritise the work on the yellowfin tuna management procedure and to provide advice to the Technical Committee on Management Procedures

and to enable the Commission to adopt the yellowfin tuna management procedure at the earliest opportunity.

- (para. 32) The Scientific Committee via its Working Party on Tropical Tunas shall undertake evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures detailed in this Resolution, taking into account all sources of fishing mortality possible aiming at returning and maintaining biomass levels at the Commission's target level.

**Resolution 21/03 On Harvest Control Rules for Skipjack Tuna in the IOTC Area of Competence**

- (para. 6) The skipjack tuna stock assessment shall be conducted every three (3) years, with the next stock assessment to occur in 2023. Estimates of 7(a-c) shall be taken from a model-based stock assessment that has been reviewed by the Working Party on Tropical Tunas and endorsed by the Scientific Committee via its advice to the Commission.

- (para. 14) The recommended total annual catch produced by the HCR will be applied continuously as set forth in paragraph 11 above, except in case of exceptional circumstances, such as caused by severe environmental perturbations. In such circumstances, the Scientific Committee shall advise on appropriate measures.

- (para. 15) The IOTC Scientific Committee shall:
- a) Include the LRP and TRP as part of any analysis when undertaking all future assessments of the status of the IOTC skipjack tuna stock.
  - b) Undertake and report to the Commission a model-based skipjack tuna stock assessment every three (3) years, commencing with the next stock assessment in 2023.
  - c) Undertake a programme of work to further refine Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the IOTC skipjack tuna fishery as required in paragraph 12 including, but not limited to,
    - i. Refinement of operating model(s)/ used,
    - ii. Alternative management procedures,
    - iii. Refining performance statistics.

**Resolution 22/01 On Climate Change as it Relates to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission**

- (para. 1) The Commission shall in its deliberations, to the extent possible, including in the development of conservation and management measures, 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.

- (para.3) 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.

- (para. 4) 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.

- (para. 5) The IOTC Executive Secretary, with the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee, upon the availability of supplementary funds, shall undertake capacity-building programs in particular in the developing coastal States among them the Least Developed States and Small Island Developing States, to improve climate change science and the understanding of climate change impacts on tuna stocks, bycatch and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent on or associated with the tuna stocks.

**Resolution 22/03 On a Management Procedure for Bigeye Tuna in the IOTC Area of Competence**

- (para. 4) The Scientific Committee shall run the MP and advise the Commission of the outcome, including a recommended TAC and any advice on exceptional circumstances in accordance with the Commission endorsed Guidelines for the Provisions of Exceptional Circumstances for IOTC MPs as documented in Appendix 6a of IOTC-2021-SC24-R.

- (para. 12) 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

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circumstances, and the appropriate level of robustness to ensure that exceptional circumstances are triggered only when necessary.

**DISCUSSION**

The Scientific Committee should address each of the requirements detailed above by providing advice, or alternative commentary for the Commission's consideration at its 27<sup>th</sup> Session to be held in 2023.

**RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Scientific Committee **NOTE** the requests made by the Commission in each of the Conservation and Management Measures detailed in this paper, and to develop advice to the Commission in response to each request.