



Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources, and Agriculture

Male', Republic of Maldives

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12 September 2022

Kim Jung-re
Chairperson,
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),
Le Chantier Mall,
Victoria, Mahé,
Seychelles.

Dear Ms. Kim Jung-re,

I take this opportunity to respond to the *Feedback Regarding Compliance Issues* of the Maldives (dated 24 May 2022) issued following the 19th Session of the IOTC Compliance Committee. The Committee raised fifteen outstanding issues which clarifications were provided for during the Session. However, as requested by the Commission Chair, I take this opportunity to put forward our comments and clarification in writing.

1. Has not adopted the VMS for all vessels > 24 m, and for vessels < 24 m fishing outside flag State's EEZ, as required by Resolution 15/03.

Maldives is progressively increasing VMS coverage of the fishing fleet above 24m and above. Presently, Maldives has achieved 65% coverage of the 370 vessels which require VMS to be fitted. The ongoing project which started in early 2020 for the installation of VMS has been delayed due to COVID related travel restrictions.

2. Has not reported size frequency data to the IOTC Standard for coastal fisheries (incorrect grid codes, no information reported for some gear/species combinations, or less than 1 fish sampled per ton of catch retained), as required by Resolution 15/02.

3. Has not reported size frequency data to the IOTC Standard for surface fisheries (incorrect grid codes, no information reported for some gear / species combinations, or less than 1 fish sampled per ton of catch retained), as required by Resolution 15/02.

Maldives implements a size sampling programme at key commercial landing sites that are operated by the major fish processors and exporters in the country. Additionally, a limited number of fishermen samplers, mainly from small vessels that would fall in the coastal fleet category, also report size and catch and effort information. Additionally, scientific observers also contribute data from observer trips and visits to landing sites. Despite these efforts, it is sometimes difficult to achieve the required sampling effort of 1 fish/ton and other data stratification that is required by the resolution. Maldives has taken measures to increase sampling coverage, including requiring exporters and processors to implement a sampling program in accordance with the IOTC

requirements. Further steps are taken to report segregated datasets by fleet and vessels that belong to the coastal fleet category (i.e. <24m and operating within the EEZ).

Sampling effort has also been boosted with the funding made available from the World Bank's Sustainable Fisheries Resources Development Project. Maldives has been gradually increasing the coverage of SF data collection by deploying additional samplers in major fishing islands.

Maldives would like to highlight that the data is reported in accordance with the guidelines (stratified by gear, month, area and fleet size) and any data that does not fall into a given strata are those that does not have the accompanying information required to segregate accordingly. Maldives is also working to improve the sample size (1 fish/ton).

4. Has not reported catch and effort data to the IOTC Standard for coastal fisheries (inter alia, 'Data processing' and 'Target species' metadata missing), as required by Resolution 15/02.

5. Has not reported catch and effort data to the IOTC Standard for surface fisheries (inter alia, data processing' metadata missing), as required by Resolution 15/02.

The issues with catch and effort data from the Maldives was mostly related to the incorrect (old) forms that were used to report the data. This is merely an administrative error and all necessary arrangements have been made to ensure that the correct forms are used in the future.

6. Has not reported the details on transshipments between Maldivian collector vessels and pole and line fishing vessels, as required by Resolution 21/02.

We have made necessary changes to the FIS system to capture this information and we would be able to report this data to IOTC with the annual statistical reports.

7. Has not provided copy of all inspection reports to foreign vessels, as required by Resolution 16/11.

Foreign vessels calling into the ports of the Maldives are carrier vessels that load fish from landing facilities. The operations involving carrier vessels are neither a landing or a transshipment activity in our view. For this reason, Maldives believes this operation of carrier vessels does not fall into requirement of inspecting 5% of landing or transshipment of foreign vessels calling into port of the coastal state. Having said that, more than 95% of the vessels that call into Maldivian ports to load fish are inspected and the reports are uploaded on to the PSM portal.

In spite of this, Maldives had inspected most of the carrier vessels (more than 80%) that called into a port during the year 2021. These reports are uploaded into the e-PSM portal. Yet, we also note that with current internal arrangements we have not been able to upload the final reports into the e-PSM portal within 3 working days.

I also take this opportunity to reaffirm to you and the Secretariat of our commitments to the work of the Commission.

Yours sincerely,



Adam Ziyad
Director General