

Overarching Statement on Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna by the Worldwide Fund for Nature, the Global Tuna Alliance and the Tuna Protection Alliance.

The above organisations believe that effective management and healthy fish stocks is a **collective responsibility and commitment**, and failure and the consequences that come from it are also collective. We recognise that as far as possible, all IOTC members and fishing gear-types are required to play their part in delivering yellowfin tuna catch reductions going forwards.

At the 25th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) in June 2021, delegates agreed an interim rebuilding plan for overfished yellowfin tuna. The agreed measure, resolution 21/01, set a total catch limit of 401,011mt. However, six countries formally objected, and these objections put the interim rebuilding plan at serious risk of [failure](#).

In December 2021, the IOTC Scientific Committee confirmed that the new stock assessment reveals that Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna continues to be overfished with overfishing occurring, and the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) estimate for the Indian Ocean stock was recalculated as 349,000t – significantly below the catch limit of the interim rebuilding plan (resolution 21/01).

2021's scientific advice also revealed that if the 2020 catch levels are reduced by 30% there is a more than 67% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2030. This equates to a yellowfin catch below 302,837t.

At the 26th Session of the IOTC in May 2022, two alternative approaches for addressing yellowfin overfishing were tabled. Despite scientists, consumers, NGOs and retailers all calling for a catch reduction on yellowfin, a recurring theme was certain member states objecting to proposals without offering alternatives or a rationale. Those who did explain their reasons frequently cited that they were supportive of conservation measures - proving that they understand the importance of reducing catch – though they weren't prepared to cut their own share. Of course, many member states did agree to take considerable cuts, and were frustrated with the lack of compromise from others.

We are concerned that discussions are stymied by polarised views: Distant water fishing nations (DWFN) versus Coastal states and small-island developing states (SIDS), small scale vs large scale, and gear-types against gear-types. This divisive narrative is derailing constructive dialogue and compromise and leading to misuse of objections.

WWF, GTA and TUPA are working in partnership to end the misuse of objections by delegations of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.



TUPA
Tuna Protection Alliance

Meanwhile, consumers choose to source their seafood from sustainable sources, and the market remain looking for progress to be made. With a significant share of the global sales of tuna, our market partners have undeniable purchasing power as well as multiple sourcing options. They are looking for well-managed fisheries as requirements of their own sourcing policies. In the current situation, Indian Ocean yellowfin risks becoming an unattractive proposition for market actors who wish to source tuna responsibly.

Given the consistent overfishing and overfished status of the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock since 2015, the Global Tuna Alliance, the Tuna Protection Alliance and the World Wide Fund for Nature, and their market partners, strongly urge the IOTC to:

- **Agree a 30% cut in catch relative to 2020 levels to stop yellowfin overfishing;**
- **Agree a resolution that specifies how the yellowfin stock could be rebuilt in two generations;**
- **Revise the IOTC Treaty to prevent spurious use of objections.**

The issue of yellowfin tuna needs to be taken seriously. The market can no longer wait patiently for the IOTC to act responsibly; they are now setting deadlines with clear consequences [\[link to sourcing statements webpage\]](#) of inaction and/or irresponsible decision-making.

WWF, GTA and TUPA are working in partnership to end the misuse of objections by delegations of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.



TUPA
Tuna Protection Allianc