

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries



سُلْطَانَةُ عُومَانِ
وَزَارَةُ الْبَرِّ وَالسَّمَكِ

No. 233113278

الرقم :

Date :

التاريخ :

Date :

الموافق :

Prof Indra Jaya,

Chairman of the Compliance Committee

cc. Mr Zahor El Kharousy

Vice-Chairman of the Compliance Committee

cc. Mr. Chris O'Brien

Executive Secretary

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

Le Chantier Mall, P.O. Box 11

Victoria, Seychelles.

SULTANANTE OF OMAN

Muscat, 2nd May 2023

Prof Indra Jaya, dear Chairman,

Ref. 20 TH SESSION OF THE COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

Point 10 of the Agenda. Review of the implementation of IOTC Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) together with associated reports and identification of challenges encountered in the implementation of IOTC CMMs – Appendix V of the IOTC Rules of Procedure.

During yesterday's session of this 20th Session of the Compliance Committee, the IOTC Secretariat presented its Summary Report on level of Compliance, including the conclusions on Oman 2022 Compliance Report.

The Oman Delegation requested you as Chairman to accept the submission of written comments to this presentation of the 2022 Summary Report in relation to Oman and also in relation to comments raised by some Contracting Parties.

You accepted and we are thankful for it and request that this written statement will be included in the Minutes of the Report of this 20th Session.



First of all, the Sultanate of Oman wishes to express its gratitude to the IOTC Secretariat for this new Summary Report on the level of Compliance.

As a responsible Contracting Party, and as developing coastal State, Oman is committed to address and implement the IOTC Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) the IOTC Resolutions and Conservation Measure to protect the tuna stocks in the Indian Ocean, which are vital to set up a sustainable tuna fishery in the common interest of the livelihood of thousands of fisheries communities and related actors (fishing industries, supply services, ports, etc).

In relation to our 2022 Compliance Report, Oman, as responsible CPC, wants to formally commit to improving its current compliance rate reflected in the Summary Report.

Having said that however, Oman wants to respectfully provide some of the reasons why this score is not as good as any CP wants to expect to avoid alleged repeated and non-repeated lack of compliance requirements:

1. Oman has stated that some IOTC CMMs have not been formally implemented into its national law, however, it has included most of the requirements of those CMMs in the terms and conditions of each and every fishing licence granted to the fishermen and, in particular, to shipowners operating largest fishing vessels, both inside and outside the EEZ of Oman within the IOTC Regulatory Area.
2. Oman has fully implemented CMMs on VMS, the systems operate well and there have not been relevant incidents to report last year. However, Oman has not been able to prepare the annual report to IOTC, simply for lack of some support services in the Minister to handle this task.
3. Missing pages of logbooks. To solve this problem, we have requested shipowners not to take pages out from the logbook and to use the approved format of the logbook.
4. Scientific Report, this year Oman was unable to provide this report because of the person in charge has been moved to other Department within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. Please note that in the past, every year the Scientific Report has been submitted.

For those and other reasons, the Minister of Fisheries has taken this seriously and recently decided the creation of a Task Force to handle all the matters related to IOTC with top officers of the Ministry, duly supported by representatives of the stakeholders (including shipowners of the tuna purse seiners) and external legal & regulatory and technical experts with international background.

This would remove much of the uncertainty in the Sultanate's non-compliance with the requirements of the Commission .As it is no secret to everyone that the lack of human capacity may be a major reason for not sending reports on time ,and this is what many countries suffer .

During the 20th Session that took place yesterday, some Contracting Parties raised some general comments on Oman's compliance that to some extent were absolutely misplaced and, with ue respect, has nothing to do with the level of implementation of CMMs:

- **COMMENT NUMBER 1: Considering that Oman was one of the largest harvester and keeps on increasing their catches (we understand, referred to YF catches), and that has reported catches when there was not increase of exports and no increase of number of fishermen. In other words raising doubts about the solidity of their latest annual catches reports submitted to the IOTC.**

Oman has already tackled this matter of alleged over catch reporting. Based on Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, Oman submitted a Statement and Commitments that were included in the Report of the 26th Session that was duly notified to all Parties concerned.

Oman reiterates that in recent years it has not significantly increased the yellowfin catches.

On the contrary, what has substantially increased in recent years **has been the reporting** of catches. As explained in Oman Statement S26, sharp increases in the yellow fin catch corresponds to improved data collection and increased catches from the artisanal sector.

The Ministry of Fisheries of the Sultanate of Oman has not always had the tools and human resources to report the date. It is not difficult to find relevant disparities in the reporting of catches to the IOTC, both on decreases and increases. For instance, Oman has also had sharp decreases, such as in 2009, (21,045 mt in 2008 and just 7,991 mt in 2009).

Across the years, and for a wide number of reasons, other CPs have also substantially increased or decreased the reporting of catches, for instance Maldives within two-year time, Maldives increased more than 100% its reported catches (2010: 21,068 mt and in 2012 44,261 mt).

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In recent years, other CPs have sharply increased the reporting of catches too.

The below table is self-explanatory:

YEAR	MALDIVES	OMAN	Seychelles	INDIA	KOREA	SPAIN	FRANCE	JAPAN	PAKISTAN	IRAN	CHINA	INDONESIA
1972	5 128	4 060	120	3 033	10 528			3 208	2 762	705		4 332
1980	5 982	5 035	367	3 393	13 298			3 358	1 275	604		5 358
1981	6 251	4 786	940	3 091	12 427	363	188	4 940	1 958	227		5 203
1982	4 814	3 805	810	4 403	10 633	55	1 001	7 400	2 450	506		7 501
1983	7 581	1 564	157	1 505	10 394		10 400	7 991	827	478		5 535
1984	6 488	4 586	131	2 028	10 287	11 453	39 260	8 145	893	401		5 074
1985	7 138	3 249	177	2 250	12 587	10 420	37 700	9 540	1 487	480		5 838
1986	6 353	2 534	10	3 283	10 900	20 017	40 947	10 064	2 017	643		6 145
1987	7 585	5 874	8	6 004	13 288	26 256	41 012	9 570	2 449	935		6 854
1988	8 218	15 575	3	3 032	14 217	44 958	56 786	9 845	3 894	1 011		9 088
1989	5 776	10 348		4 408	8 076	41 070	33 547	5 475	8 068	880		11 303
1990	5 140	14 456	15	6 097	7 478	42 711	45 361	9 309	3 341	2 290		10 490
1991	7 227	8 170	572	4 308	3 316	44 025	38 135	9 460	6 082	3 238		12 343
1992	8 309	13 085	225	3 090	4 437	37 836	45 282	17 715	23 402	13 861		15 500
1993	9 905	11 855		6 340	4 343	47 802	39 509	30 676	30 857	20 646		20 049
1994	12 821	10 370	8	5 101	3 876	43 149	35 819	15 057	4 004	26 356		24 964
1995	12 091	21 427	5	6 542	2 590	65 143	39 636	12 779	5 540	25 007	208	27 118
1996	11 811	11 706	71	6 778	3 798	69 421	35 677	16 721	3 005	36 294	711	43 758
1997	12 489	8 980	2 882	5 873	3 976	80 046	31 227	18 218	8 414	22 024	976	50 835
1998	13 588	11 415	7 460	7 310	2 554	38 588	23 387	18 793	6 197	21 534	980	46 660
1999	13 281	7 433	9 949	8 978	1 078	61 919	33 799	16 188	11 693	27 085	2 734	53 121
2000	11 825	8 534	11 885	6 772	1 963	48 512	37 694	16 421	9 378	15 743	2 597	40 994
2001	13 858	8 861	13 436	4 290	1 502	47 734	31 252	14 543	11 266	26 163	1 834	38 787
2002	10 410	7 130	17 139	7 208	348	63 532	34 567	14 378	11 021	24 045	1 358	34 638
2003	16 823	10 288	24 723	8 788	2 165	78 060	83 181	17 610	12 219	37 722	2 305	30 878
2004	21 404	25 317	53 843	11 547	4 173	93 820	83 174	16 361	13 541	50 720	3 781	30 387
2005	30 513	22 015	84 851	15 937	3 517	77 546	57 188	22 388	16 237	43 195	4 386	31 495
2006	21 772	18 455	31 036	17 578	3 444	71 076	44 406	22 818	18 307	38 521	3 857	24 707
2007	20 983	19 271	18 362	21 400	3 589	37 849	32 600	19 555	13 702	15 940	2 828	29 835
2008	22 608	21 945	21 348	16 348	1 011	48 181	37 643	11 668	15 961	18 728	898	29 908
2009	19 611	1 981	21 001	15 844	368	33 807	22 192	6 405	13 402	20 707	433	26 735
2010	21 068	3 210	26 002	21 298	702	45 298	22 589	3 820	15 204	30 870	498	29 289
2011	34 941	7 283	26 464	22 343	235	62 380	21 201	4 800	15 646	26 740	181	33 888
2012	44 261	7 600	26 456	32 187	1 777	87 625	23 732	3 562	16 281	34 965	538	31 293
2013	45 898	8 866	27 543	34 818	3 238	89 664	24 571	4 263	15 798	32 483	922	32 807
2014	68 210	7 268	25 079	33 623	10 408	64 239	33 619	4 072	16 441	46 218	1 078	25 276
2015	52 428	15 182	41 488	17 158	8 183	82 885	31 047	3 470	18 817	42 588	1 783	25 945
2016	33 708	20 983	43 261	19 244	11 721	81 660	33 719	3 380	25 590	45 110	1 812	22 839
2017	48 381	10 469	81 086	13 032	8 784	64 588	29 962	4 001	27 784	66 121	2 962	22 162
2018	47 217	26 637	42 181	17 488	5 990	45 269	30 057	3 362	18 394	88 050	4 041	22 035
2019	44 702	37 055	41 487	23 304	10 786	42 218	27 200	2 587	9 358	59 084	3 212	35 907
2020	42 706	88 756	38 250	26 795	5 697	44 260	24 524	2 065	7 919	48 314	3 757	36 517
		71 920										

As reported by Oman, and reflected in the Minutes of the 19th Session of the Compliance Committee (page 54), there have been increase of yellowfin catches from the artesanal fleet and an improvement of data collection which was the replay received from Oman Statistical department which was forwarded to Secretariat earlier that year.

Oman continues strengthening data collection and reporting for IOTC species which have increased in recent years.

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I would like to confirm that Oman Fisheries statistic program has been established since 1984 and developed all the way in cooperation with international well-known institutes, for example not limited to FAO, and this system is nowadays considered a valuable tool system in the region.

In fact, Oman is continuously working to:

a) Improve the understanding of the composition and characteristics of Omani fisheries catching tuna and tuna-like species and ensure these are mapped correctly to the standard fishery classifications.

d) Provide clarification on any outstanding aspects of the IOTC data reporting process and proposing improvements to increase the efficiency of data reporting to IOTC, including the tools and methodologies being used by our Fisheries administration to also produce official catch estimates.

To this respect, please also note that Oman has agreed to hire the services of external consultants to provide support to our Fisheries Department team dealing with IOTC species.

Oman is fully committed on those tasks, propose you an Open Dialogue and, in any event, will continue reporting to the CPC and Secretariat in forthcoming meetings.

- **COMMENT NUMBER 2: Considering that Oman's rejected a mission to investigate the way the data is collected by Oman.**

In relation to this comment, please respectfully note that Oman already answered to the IOTC by letter dated 24 August 2022 under the Ref. IOTC REF: IOTC2022-217 - PROPOSAL FOR AN IOTC DATA SUPPORT MISSION TO OMAN, which again was self-explanatory:

We thank you for your letter dated 22th July 2022 (IOTC2022-217), where you refer to the "recent request by the Commission for the Secretariat to offer to send a data support mission to Oman".

As you state, this offer of mission and its related activities fall in the context of the actions identified by the IOTC working parties and Scientific Committee (2019-2021); and by the Commission at its 26th session (2022).

However, to the best of my knowledge, the 26th Annual Meeting of the Commission did not specifically agree to offer to send a data support mission to

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Oman or to other Contracting Parties. Point 100 of the Minutes only states that *“The Commission REQUESTED that a Heads of Delegations meeting be convened by the second week of July 2022 to agree on a process to convene a series of meetings with the Contracting Parties objecting to Resolution 21/01 on an Interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin stock and other interested Contracting Parties to explore ways to address their concerns”*.

To this respect, Contracting Parties such as Seychelles made a formal statement where it is stated that *“clearly understand the critical importance of effective conservation and management measures to restrict catches of yellowing tuna to sustainable levels, while at the same time recognizing the rights of coastal States and, in particular, developing coastal States and Small Island Developing States, to develop their fisheries”*.

As reported by Oman, and reflected in the Minutes of the 19th Session of the Compliance Committee (page 54), there have been increase of yellowfin catches from the artisanal fleet and an improvement of data collection.

For these reasons, please note that Oman continues strengthening data collection and reporting for IOTC species which have increased in recent years.

Most of the objectives of that mission stated in your letter have already been presented by Oman Delegation in the 26th Meeting of the Commission with clear explanations and justifications.

I would like to confirm that Oman Fisheries statistic program has been established since 1984 and developed all the way in cooperation with international well-known institutes, for example not limited to FAO, and this system is nowadays considered a valuable tool system in the region.

In fact, Oman is continuously working to:

- a) Improve the understanding of the composition and characteristics of Omani fisheries catching tuna and tuna-like species and ensure these are mapped correctly to the standard fishery classifications.
- d) Provide clarification on any outstanding aspects of the IOTC data reporting process and proposing improvements to increase the efficiency of data reporting to IOTC, including the tools and methodologies being used by our Fisheries administration to also produce official catch estimates.

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To this respect, please also note that Oman has agreed to hire the services of external consultants to provide support to our Fisheries Department team dealing with IOTC species.

Oman is fully committed on those tasks, propose you an Open Dialogue and, in any event, will continue reporting to the CPC and Secretariat in forthcoming meetings.

Based on the above mentioned points, Oman thanks again the Secretariat for the proposed offer to carry out a mission on data reporting, but decline the invitation.

Oman request to record and/or to refer to this Written Statement in the Minutes of the 20th Session of the Compliance Committee.

I thank you for your usual co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Abdulaziz Al Marzuqi
Head of Delegation to IOTC
SULTANATE OF OMAN

CC: FAO Representative to Oman (FAO-OM@fao.org)
Alternate Commissioner to IOTC