
OUTCOMES OF THE 26th SESSION AND 6th SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 17 MAY 2023

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 25th Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT25) Data Preparatory Meeting of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 26th session, held from 16-20 May 2022, and its 6th Special Session held from the 3 – 5 February 2023 specifically relating to the work of the WPTT.

BACKGROUND

At the 26th Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 4 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 4 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), while at its 6th Special Session it adopted 2 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 2 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), as detailed below:

Resolutions

S26

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

SS6

- Resolution 23/01 *On management of Anchored Fish Aggregating Devices (AFADs)*
- Resolution 23/02 *On Management of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs) in the IOTC area of competence*

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.

DISCUSSION

The Commission made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2022, which have relevance for the WPTT (IOTC–2022–S26–R):

Report of the 24th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC24)

The status of tropical and temperate tunas

(Para 29) The Commission **NOTED** that the current status of tropical and temperate tunas are as follows:

Bigeye tuna
In 2019 a new stock assessment was carried out for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence to update the stock status undertaken in 2016. On the weight-of-evidence available in 2019, the bigeye tuna stock is determined to be not overfished but subject to overfishing.
Yellowfin tuna
A new stock assessment was carried out for yellowfin tuna in 2021. The model used in 2021 is based on the model developed in 2018 with a series of revisions that were noted during the WPTT in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

On the weight-of-evidence available since 2018, the yellowfin tuna stock is determined to remain overfished and subject to overfishing

Skipjack tuna

A new stock assessment was carried out for skipjack tuna in 2020 using Stock Synthesis with data up to 2019. On the weight-of-evidence available in 2020, the skipjack tuna stock is determined to be: (i) above the adopted biomass target reference point; (ii) not overfished ($SB_{2019} > SB_{40\%SB0}$); (iii) with fishing mortality below the adopted target fishing mortality, and; (iv) not subject to overfishing ($E_{2019} < E_{40\%SB0}$)

Albacore tuna

A new stock assessment was carried out for albacore in 2019 to update the assessment undertaken in 2016. The stock status in relation to the Commission's BMSY and FMSY target reference points indicates that the stock is not overfished but is subject to overfishing.

(Para 31) 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 32) 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 33) 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.

Scientific Committee Recommendations

(Para. 41) 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. 42) The Commission **ENDORSED** the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons elected by the Scientific Committee and its subsidiary (scientific) bodies for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2021 Scientific Committee Report.

RECOMMENDATION

That the WPTT

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2023–WPTT25(DP)–04 which outlined the main outcomes of the 26th Session and 6th Special Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPTT and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the SC with the information it needs, in order to satisfy the Commission's requests, throughout the course of the current WPTT meeting.