
OUTCOMES OF THE 27TH SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY IOTC SECRETARIAT, AUGUST 2023

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 19th Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch Assessment meeting (WPEB19) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 27th Session, held from 8-12 May 2023, specifically relating to the work of the WPEB.

BACKGROUND

At the 27th Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 9 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 8 Resolutions and 1 Recommendations), as detailed below. The Commission **ADOPTED** three new proposals for Conservation and Management Measures relevant to the WPEB.

Resolutions

- Resolution 23/06 *On the conservation of cetaceans;*
- Resolution 23/07 *On reducing the incidental bycatch of seabirds in longline fisheries;*
- Resolution 23/08 *On Electronic Monitoring Standards for IOTC fisheries*

These Conservation and Management Measures shall become binding 120 days after their distribution to all CPCs. The final versions of the newly agreed CMMs will be made available here in due course: <http://iotc.org/cmms>.

One further proposal relevant to the WPEB was considered but not adopted: *On the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC.*

DISCUSSION

The Commission made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2022, which have relevance for the WPEB.

Status of sharks

(para. 29)The Commission **NOTED** the current status of the following sharks:

Blue shark No new stock assessment was carried out for blue sharks in 2022 and so the results are based on the assessment carried out in 2021 using an integrated age-structured model (SS3) (using data up to 2019). On the weight-of-evidence available in 2021, the stock status is determined to be not overfished and not subject to overfishing .
Oceanic whitetip shark There is no quantitative stock assessment and limited basic fishery indicators currently available for oceanic whitetip sharks in the Indian Ocean therefore the stock status is unknown .
Shortfin mako shark An assessment of shortfin mako sharks in 2020 was inconclusive. There is no quantitative stock assessment currently available for shortfin mako sharks in the Indian Ocean therefore the stock status is unknown .

Scientific Committee Recommendations

(para. 31) 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 2022 list of recommendations as its own.

(para. 32) The Commission **NOTED** in particular, SC Recommendation 15 that Resolution 16/07 *On the use of artificial lights to attract fish* (which prohibits using artificial lights for the purpose of aggregating tuna and tuna-like species) does not apply to scientific studies.

(para. 33) The Commission **ENDORSED** those officials elected for the SC and its subsidiary (scientific) bodies for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2022 Scientific Committee Report.

(para. 34) On behalf of the Commission, the Chairperson thanked the outgoing Scientific Committee Chair, Professor Toshihide Kitakado (Japan) for his service to the Commission.

The complete report of the 27th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website.

Proposals considered by the Commission

On the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC

(para. 68) The proposal sought to combine several existing resolutions (18/02, 17/05, 13/06, 12/09 and 13/05) to cover all sharks species under a single management measure.

(para. 69) Despite revisions made, the proponents deferred the proposal.

(para. 70) The Commission **NOTED** the discussions on the issues of shark lines, wire leaders and fins naturally attached to reduce the impacts of IOTC fisheries on elasmobranchs, especially vulnerable species. The Commission also **NOTED** there is no clear advice from the IOTC Scientific Committee regarding the conservation and management of these elasmobranch populations in the IOTC area of competence.

(para. 71) The Commission **REQUESTED** the relevant Working Parties and IOTC Scientific Committee, at its 26th session, to review the latest science and best practices in other oceans and, in collaboration with the Compliance Committee as appropriate, provide advice to the Commission at S28 on technical and mitigation measures to strengthen the conservation of sharks. In particular advice on vulnerable species such as oceanic whitetip sharks, whale sharks and thresher sharks, and how to reduce the impact of tuna fisheries, including the following:

- the use of wire trace as branch lines or leaders and the use of branch lines running directly off the longline floats or drop lines, known as shark lines; and
- the application of fins naturally attached requirements to improve monitoring of elasmobranchs, prevention of the practice of shark finning, full utilization of caught sharks and effective monitoring of compliance with existing conservation and management measures.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WPEB:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC-2023-WPEB19-03 which outlined the outcomes of the 27th Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPEB 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 WPEB meeting.