

OUTCOMES OF THE 27th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 12 OCTOBER 2023

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 25th Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT25) 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 WPTT.

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:

Resolutions

- [Resolution 23/3](#) *On Establishing a Voluntary Fishing Closure in the Indian Ocean for the Conservation of Tropical Tunas* [[Download here](#)]
- [Resolution 23/4](#) *On Establishing Catch Limits for Bigeye Tuna in the Area of IOTC Competence* [[Download here](#)]
- [Resolution 23/5](#) *On Establishing a Programme for Transshipment by Large-scale Fishing Vessels* [[Download here](#)]
- [Resolution 23/6](#) *On the Conservation of Cetaceans* [[Download here](#)]
- [Resolution 23/7](#) *On Reducing the Incidental Bycatch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries* [[Download here](#)]
- [Resolution 23/8](#) *On Electronic Monitoring Standards for IOTC Fisheries* [[Download here](#)]
- [Resolution 23/9](#) *On a Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) Working Group* [[Download here](#)]
- [Resolution 23/10](#) *Terms of Reference for a Working Party on Socio-Economics* [[Download here](#)]

Recommendations

- [Recommendation 23/11](#) *To Enhance Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Decision Making Process* [[Download here](#)]

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–2023–S27–R):

Report of the 25th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC25)

The status of tropical and temperate tunas

(*Para 21*) The Commission **NOTED** that the current status of tropical and temperate tunas are as follows:

Bigeye tuna

In 2022 a new stock assessment was carried out for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence to update the stock assessment undertaken in 2019. On the weight-of-evidence available in 2022, the bigeye tuna stock is determined to be **overfished** and **subject to overfishing**. As IOTC agreed on a bigeye Management Procedure (Res. 22/03) it should be noted that the stock assessment is not used to provide a recommendation on the TAC.

Yellowfin tuna

No new stock assessment was carried out for yellowfin tuna in 2022 and so the advice is based on the 2021 assessment. On the weight-of-evidence available since 2018, the yellowfin tuna stock is determined to remain **overfished** and **subject to overfishing**.

Skipjack tuna

No new stock assessment was conducted in 2022 and so the advice is based on the 2020 assessment 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** ($E_{2019} < E_{40\%SB0}$).

(Para 23) The Commission **ENQUIRED** as to the status of the report from the recently conducted YFT stock assessment external peer review workshop that was held in February 2023. The SC Chair explained that the report was currently being finalised by the expert panel and would be presented to the WPTT in October. Feedback will be provided to the Commission once the SC has been able to review the expert panel's recommendations. The SC Chair further clarified that the expert panel's recommendations would be used to improve future YFT stock assessments as well as guide future planning for YFT work.

(Para 24) The Commission **NOTED** that the SC was currently prioritising single species MSEs as there was a need to provide robust management advice on a species-by-species basis. However, the SC is also looking into the possibility of developing a multi-species MSE for tropical tunas, considering the nature of the tropical tuna fishery. In addition, the feasibility of incorporating environmental factors and climate change into the MSEs is being assessed.

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.

RECOMMENDATION

That the WPTT

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2023–WPTT25–04 which outlined the main outcomes of the 27th 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.