



ON A BAN ON DISCARDS OF BIGEYE TUNA, SKIPJACK TUNA, YELLOWFIN TUNA, AND NON-TARGETED SPECIES CAUGHT BY VESSELS IN THE IOTC RECORD OF AUTHORISATION THAT OPERATE IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE

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Explanatory Memorandum

Resolution 19/05 provides for a mandatory reporting of discards for purse seine fleets in the area of competence of the IOTC.

According to the Sixth IOTC CPUE Workshop on Longline fisheries held in San Sebastian from April 28th to May 3rd in 2019, which aim was to validate and improve the methods of developing joint standardized CPUE for tropical tuna species from main distant water longline fisheries operating in the Indian Ocean, these fleets suffer from potential mis-reporting of length samples, as the proportion of smaller fish sampled for length decreased drastically since the 2000s. Discarding and high grading is likely to explain the vanishing of small fish in the length samples, among other factors. The CPUEWG also noted that the discard for yellowfin may have been increased since 2017 following the introduction of the catch quota (Res. 17/01 and 18/01). It also noted the following:

- For the ~~Taiwanese deep~~ longline fleet of Taiwan Province of China, “The overall discard rate was estimated 4.74% for bigeye and 2.32% for the yellowfin. It was estimated that the discard rate for bigeye tuna could be as high as 38% from the fleet that targeted albacore”
- For the Japanese and Korean longline fleets, there is an “overall discard rate 1.8%–2.7% for tropical tuna. However, it was noted that the observer monitoring was poor in tropical areas”.
- “Unaccounted discards can introduce bias to length samples and nominal catches, and undermine the interpretation of CPUE. The CPUEWG suggested that a number of data sources can be used to explore the extent and trend of discards of tropical tuna in the longline fisheries, including (1) commercial logbook reports of discarding (however, the changes in reporting behavior over time need to be accounted for), (2) observer data, (3) weight category data in the ~~Taiwanese~~ commercial logbooks of the longline fleet of Taiwan Province of China (since 2009), e.g. changes in the weight distribution overtime may reveal possible trend in discarding.

2023 reviews of the statistical data available for both Indian Ocean billfish and neritic tuna¹ and seerfish species² show a dramatic lack of data, especially catch and effort as well as size frequency for several fleets, including gillnets, longline and small purse seiners.

~~Bigeye and yellowfin tuna are both overfished, as well as blue marlin, stripped black marlin, longtail tuna and narrow-bared Spanish mackerel. It is then crucial for IOTC to get a complete record of catches and effort to ensure accurate science and control within the RFMO. Unreported and mis-reported discards can bias CPUE, leading to inaccurate stock assessments and ineffective management decisions. This data inaccuracy undermines efforts to sustainably manage fish stocks, potentially jeopardising food security. Bigeye and yellowfin tuna are both overfished, as well as blue marlin, stripped marlin, longtail tuna and narrow-bared Spanish mackerel. Without accurate catch and effort data, these species’ populations could decline further, reducing the availability of these crucial food resources.~~

To address these issues, it is then crucial for IOTC to get a complete record of catches and efforts to ensure accurate science and control within the RFMO.

In the lack of accurate data, the precautionary approach should be applied in the absence of accurate data, extending and the ban on discards of key species such as bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna and non-targeted species shall extend. However, to avoid to imposing too much burden on small-scale artisanal fisheries, this expansion could be limited to vessels in the IOTC record of authorized vessels that operate in the IOTC area of competence.

Effective fisheries management is essential for maintaining food security, particularly in regions dependent on marine resources for nutrition and livelihoods. Accurate reporting and robust management practices can help ensure the sustainability of fish stock, providing a stable food source for future generations. The IOTC's efforts to mandate discard reporting and improving data accuracy are crucial steps towards achieving this goal.

RESOLUTION 2419/XX05

ON A BAN ON DISCARDS OF BIGEYE TUNA, SKIPJACK TUNA, YELLOWFIN TUNA, AND NON- TARGETED SPECIES CAUGHT BY PURSE SEINE VESSELS IN THE IOTC RECORD OF AUTHORISATION THAT OPERATE IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE

Keywords: Bigeye, yellowfin, skipjack, discards, purse seine

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECOGNISING the need for action to ensure the achievement of IOTC objectives to conserve and manage bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna in the IOTC area of competence;

RECOGNISING that the international community has recognised both ethical concerns and policy regarding discards of species in several international instruments and statements, including United Nations General Assembly resolutions (A/RES/49/118 (1994); A/RES/50/25 (1996); A/RES/51/36 (1996); A/RES/52/29 (1997); A/RES/53/33 (1998); A/RES/55/8 (2000); and A/RES/57/142 (2002)), United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement); The Rome Consensus on World Fisheries adopted by the FAO Ministerial Conference on Fisheries, Rome, 14–15 March 1995; the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the FAO International Plan of Action (IPOA) on sharks; the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);

RECALLING that the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement has underlined the importance of ensuring the conservation and optimum utilisation of highly migratory species through the action of regional fishery bodies such as the IOTC, and provides that “*States should minimize ... discards, ..., catch of non target species, both fish and non-fish species, and impacts on associated or dependent species, in particular endangered species...*”;

RECALLING that The Rome Consensus on World Fisheries adopted by the FAO Ministerial Conference on Fisheries, Rome, 14–15 March 1995, provides that “*States should...reduce bycatches, fish discards...*”;

RECALLING that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides that “*States should take appropriate measures to minimize waste, discards...collect information on discards ...; ... take account of discards (in the precautionary approach) ...; develop technologies that minimize discards ...; use of selective gear to minimize discards*”;

RECALLING that the Commission adopted [Resolution 12/01](#) *On the implementation of the precautionary approach*;

CONCERNED about the morally unacceptable waste and the impact of unsustainable fishing practices upon the oceanic environment, represented by the discarding of tunas and non-target species ~~from high seas in the purse seine in tuna fisheries for tunas in the Indian Ocean~~;

CONSIDERING the important volume of tuna and non-targeted species discarded in the purse seine fishery for tunas in the Indian Ocean;

CONSIDERING the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal Number 2 aims to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”;

~~RECOGNISING the need to ensure the sustainability of fisheries for tunas and tuna-like species for food security, livelihoods, economic development, multispecies interactions and environmental impacts in its decisions~~

ADOPTS, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, that:

RETENTION OF TARGETED TUNA SPECIES

1. ~~Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) shall require all purse seine vessels on the IOTC Record of Authorized vessels targeting species covered by the IOTC Agreement within the IOTC area of competence vessels on the IOTC record of authorized vessels~~ ~~purse seine vessels~~ to retain on board and then land, ~~to the extent practicable~~, all bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, and yellowfin tuna caught, except fish considered unfit for human consumption as defined in paragraph 4 ~~(i) and 4 (ii) b (i)~~.

~~1.bis. CPCs shall encourage their vessels using other gear types not provided for in paragraph 1 of this resolution, on the Record of Authorized vessels which are targeting tuna and tuna like species in the IOTC area of competence should encourage their vessel to retain on board and then land, to the extent practicable, all bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, and yellowfin tuna caught, except fish considered unfit for human consumption as defined in paragraph 4 c (i) and 4 c (ii)~~

RETENTION OF NON-TARGETED SPECIES

2. ~~Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties~~ ~~CPCs~~ shall require all ~~purse seine vessels on the IOTC record of authorized vessels~~ ~~which fall within the scope defined in paragraph 1~~, to retain on board and then land, to the extent practicable, the following non-targeted species or species group:

~~a) Purse seine vessels: other tunas, rainbow runner, dolphinfish, triggerfish, billfish, wahoo, and barracuda, except fish considered unfit for human consumption as defined in paragraph 4 d (i) and 4 d (ii) b (i), and/or species which are prohibited from retention, consumption, or trade through domestic legislations and international obligations;~~

~~b) All Longline and other vessels: other tunas and billfishes, except fish considered unfit for human consumption as defined in paragraph 4 d (i) and 4 d (ii) b (i), and/or species which are prohibited from retention, consumption, or trade through domestic legislations and international obligations.~~

~~1.3. Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties~~ ~~CPCs~~ should encourage vessels ~~using other gear types not provided for in paragraph 1 and 2 of this resolution, which are targeting tuna and tuna like species in the IOTC area of competence and outside of the scope defined in paragraph 1~~ ~~should encourage their vessel~~ to:

- a) take all reasonable steps to ensure the safe release of non-targeted species taken alive, to the extent possible, while taking into consideration the safety of the crew;

- b) retain on board and then land all dead non-targeted species, except those considered unfit for human consumption as defined in paragraph 4d(i) and 4d(ii) and 4e(i) and/or are prohibited from retention through domestic legislations and international obligations.

2.4. Procedures for the implementation of full retention requirements include:

a) Purse seine: No bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna and non-targeted species referred to in paragraph 2 caught by purse seine vessels may be discarded after the point in the fishing operation set when the net is fully pursed and more than one half of the net has been retrieved. If equipment malfunctions affect the process of pursing and retrieving the net in such a way that this rule cannot be complied with, the crew must make efforts to release the tunas and the non-targeted species as soon as possible.

~~b) CPCs should encourage their flagged vessels outside of the scope defined in paragraph 1 all other their Longline, pole and line, handline, and trolling and gillnets fishing vessels not to discard. No bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, other tunas and billfishes and non-targeted species referred to in paragraph 2 caught may be discarded after the point in which the fish is brought on deck. If equipment malfunctions affect retrieving the line in such a way that this rule cannot be complied with, the crew must make efforts to release the tunas and the non-targeted species as soon as possible.~~

~~a) Gillnets: No bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, other tunas and billfishes and non-targeted species referred to in paragraph 2 caught may be discarded after the point in which the fish is brought on deck. If equipment malfunctions affect retrieving the net in such a way that this rule cannot be complied with, the event should be reported in the vessel logbook.~~

b)c) The following two exceptions to the above rule shall apply:

(i) Where it is determined by the captain of the vessel that tuna (bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna or yellowfin tuna) and the non-targeted species as listed in pParagraph 2 caught are unfit for human consumption, the following definitions shall be applied:

- "unfit for human consumption" are fish that:
 - is meshed or crushed in the purse seine; or
 - is damaged due to depredation; or
 - has died and spoiled in the fishing gear net where a gear failure has prevented both the normal retrieval of the fishing gear net and catch, and efforts to release the fish alive;
 - has spoiled before landing due to reasons beyond the control of the master or captain and crew of the vessel.
- "unfit for human consumption" does not include fish that:
 - is considered undesirable in terms of size, marketability, or species composition; or
 - is spoiled or contaminated as the result of an act or omission of the crew of the fishing vessel.

(ii) Where the captain of a vessel determines that tuna (bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna or yellowfin tuna) and the non-targeted species as listed in pParagraph 2 were caught during the final fishing operation set of a trip and there is insufficient storage capacity to accommodate all tuna (bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna or yellowfin tuna) and the non-targeted species caught in that fishing operation, provided that set. This fish may only be discarded if:

- the captain and crew attempt to release the tuna (bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna or yellowfin tuna) and the non-targeted species alive as soon as possible; and
- no further fishing is undertaken after the discard until the tuna (bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, and/or yellowfin tuna) and the non-targeted species on board the vessel has been landed or transhipped.

NON-RETENTION

3.5. Where the captain of the vessel determines that fish should not be retained on board in accordance with Clause 4. ~~b~~(i) and 4 ~~d~~(ii), the captain shall record the event in the relevant logbook including estimated tonnage and species composition of discarded fish; and estimated tonnage and species composition of retained fish from that

setfishing operation.

REVIEW

4. The IOTC Scientific Committee, the IOTC Working Party on Tropical Tunas, and the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch shall as a matter of priority
- 5.6 act on its recommendation in the Report of the 18th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee and undertake work to examine the benefits of retaining non-targeted species catches, other than those prohibited via IOTC Resolution, and present its recommendations to the 29th Annual Session of the Commission. The work should take into account all species that are usually discarded on all major gears (*i.e.*, purse seines, longlines and gillnets), and should look at fisheries that take place both on the high seas and in coastal countries and the feasibility of both retraining on-board and processing of the associated landings.

IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.7 This Resolution will be revised, according to the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee resulting from the review of the IOTC Working Party on Tropical Tunas (for bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna) and of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (for non-target species).
- 7.8 This Resolution supersedes Resolution 197/054 *On a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna and a recommendation for non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC area of competence.*