

OUTCOMES OF THE 28TH SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY IOTC SECRETARIAT, AUGUST 2024

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 20th Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch Assessment meeting (WPEB20(AS)) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 28th Session, held from 13-17 May 2024, specifically relating to the work of the WPEB.

BACKGROUND

At the 28th Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 11 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 10 Resolutions and 1 Recommendations). The Commission **ADOPTED** two new proposals for Conservation and Management Measures relevant to the WPEB.

Resolutions

- Resolution 24/01: *On climate change as it relates to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission*
- Resolution 24/04: *On a regional observer scheme.*

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* along with two proposals relating to the recording and reporting of data.

DISCUSSION

The Commission made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2023, which have relevance for the WPEB.

Status of sharks

(para. 26) The Commission **NOTED** that the current status of sharks are as follows:

Blue shark No new stock assessment was carried out for blue sharks in 2023 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 No new stock assessment was carried out for blue sharks in 2023. 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. 28) 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 2023 list of recommendations as its own.

(para. 29) 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 2023 Scientific Committee Report.

(para. 30) The Commission **NOTED** that at SC26, no nominations were received for the new Scientific Committee chair, and Dr. Kitakado continued as chair for another term as an interim measure. The Commission **NOTED** that some CPCs expressed a preference for an SC chair from a developing coastal nation. However, the Commission **AGREED** that the selection of the Scientific Committee chair should remain the decision of the SC itself. The Commission also **AGREED** that an election for the SC chair should take place at the next session of the SC in 2024.

(para. 31) The Commission **NOTED** 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) requires further clarifications as to which fishery/gear this measure should apply. The Commission **REQUESTED** the CPCs to provide proposals to revise the Resolution next year.

(para. 32) The Commission **NOTED** that some of, the IOTC CMMs apply to vessels targeting tuna and tuna like species that exceed 24 meters in length or operate outside the EEZ when shorter than 24 meters. The Commission further **NOTED** that nominal catch data submitted to the IOTC Secretariat are provided without distinction by vessel class or size; consequently, it is not possible, for example, to estimate accurately catches specifically by vessels less than 12 meters.

(para. 33) The Commission **NOTED** that in 2023, the SC endorsed new data reporting forms to enhance clarity and to facilitate the reporting of mandatory fishery statistics as per Resolutions 15/01 and 15/02. The Commission **NOTED** two regional workshops have been organized in 2024 to train CPCs in using the new forms. The Commission **NOTED** that adaptation to the new reporting forms may require time and **AGREED** that implementation should start in 2025.

(para. 34) The Commission **NOTED** that the SC suggested a consultancy to evaluate the feasibility of developing gillnet CPUE across the Indian Ocean. The Commission **NOTED** that the gillnet fishery accounted for a significant proportion of catches for key IOTC species, but they lack geo-referenced catch effort data. The Commission tasked the SC with drafting a plan to engage a consultant to develop indices from the gillnet fishery.

(para. 35) The Commission **NOTED** that WWF has pledged funds to participate and assist in the proposed yellowfin CKMR project. The Commission **THANKED** WWF for its support.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WPEB:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2024–WPEB20(AS)–03 which outlined the outcomes of the 28th 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.