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## OUTCOMES OF 28th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 25 OCTOBER 2024

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### PURPOSE

To inform the Scientific Committee (SC) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 28<sup>th</sup> Session, held in May 2024, specifically relating to the IOTC science process.

### BACKGROUND

At the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, 11 Conservation and Management Measures were adopted (consisting of 10 Resolutions and 1 Recommendations), as detailed below

#### Resolutions

- [Resolution 24/01](#) *On Climate Change as It Relates to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission*
- [Resolution 24/02](#) *On Management of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) in the IOTC Area of Competence*
- [Resolution 24/03](#) *On Establishment a List of Vessels Presumed to Have Carried Out Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in the IOTC Area of COMPETENCE*
- [Resolution 24/04](#) *On a Regional Observer Scheme*
- [Resolution 24/05](#) *On Establishing a Programme for Transshipment by Large-Scale Fishing Vessels*
- [Resolution 24/06](#) *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*
- [Resolution 24/07](#) *On a Management Procedure for Skipjack in the IOTC Area Of Competence*
- [Resolution 24/08](#) *On a Management Procedure for Swordfish in the IOTC Area of Competence*
- [Resolution 24/09](#) *To promote compliance by nationals of Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties with IOTC Conservation and Management Measures*
- [Resolution 24/10](#) *On the Promotion of the Implementation of IOTC Conservation and Management Measures*

#### Recommendations

- [Recommendation 24/11](#) *On Marine Pollution*

The updated *Compendium of Active Conservation and Management Measures for the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission* may be downloaded from the IOTC website at the following links:

English: <http://iotc.org/cmms>

French: <http://iotc.org/fr/mcgs>

Below is a summary of the scientific requirements stipulated in the CMMs adopted at the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission:

**Resolution 24/01:** *On climate change as it relates to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.* This Resolution supersedes Resolution 22/01. This Resolution requires that the Commission shall take into account scientific information available from the Scientific Committee and other relevant international processes on the relationship between climate change, tuna fisheries and tuna stocks, bycatch and ecosystems. The SC will consider and where possible, advise on the potential impacts of climate change on highly migratory fish stocks and any related impacts on developing states and small island developing states. Capacity building programs in developing coastal states are also to be supported by the Commission and SC. The SC shall review and consider any climate change information and advice from its working parties and provide advice to the Commission and suggest further steps that may be taken to integrate climate change considerations into its decision-making processes.

**Resolution 24/02** *On Management of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs) in the IOTC Area of Competence.* This Resolution provides criteria for the management of Drifting FADs in the Indian Ocean. It specifies the requirement for a DFAD register (what data should be collected and included) and tasked the IOTC Secretariat to develop and maintain such a register. Specific regulations for DFAD management (such as limits on numbers, deployments, activations etc) are provided as well as the requirement for the submission of DFAD management plans. This Resolution requires that the SC shall analyse further information, when available, and provide scientific advice on existing, additional or alternative DFAD management options. More specifically, the SC shall provide scientific advice by assessing the impact that fishing gears or fishing using DFADs have on juvenile mortality, and provide an analysis of the efficiency of current active buoy limits and examining the potential efficiency of alternative/complementary options to limit the number of DFADs at sea.

**Resolution 24/06** *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.* This Resolution requires all 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. It encourages vessels using other gears to implement the same retention measures to the extent practicable. The Resolution also tasks the SC via relevant working parties to 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 Session of the Commission.

**Resolution 24/04** *On a Regional Observer Scheme.* This Resolution supersedes Resolution 22/04. This Resolution supersedes and is based on Resolution 11/04. This resolution puts in place a programme comprising national observer schemes to collect verified catch data and other scientific data related to the fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC area. CPCs are required to cover a minimum of 5% of their operations/sets per year on vessels over 24m in length or vessels of all lengths operating outside of their EEZ. The Resolution provides provisions for the use of Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) to complement or substitute for human onboard observers once the EMS standards have been adopted. This revision includes a note saying that CPCs may present a list of implementation plans for alternate data collection to the SC which if endorsed by the SC, may be used to record and report mandatory ROS data requirements for by vessels less than 24m in length fishing exclusively in the CPC's EEZ. The Resolution also includes a requirement for the SC to update the ROS observer manual and observer reporting forms including the minimum data fields and provide advice on a training program.

**Resolution 24/07** *On a Management Procedure for Skipjack in the IOTC Area Of Competence.* This Resolution provides a management procedure for the skipjack stock managed by the IOTC with a view of maintaining the stock above the biomass target (BTARG = 0.4B0) while maximizing the average catch from the fishery and reducing the variation in the total allowable catch (TAC) between management periods. This resolution supersedes Resolution 21/03 On harvest control rules for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence.

**Resolution 24/08** *On a Management Procedure for Swordfish in the IOTC Area Of Competence.* This Resolution provides a management procedure for the swordfish stock managed by the IOTC with a view of maintaining the stock above the biomass target (BTARG = BMSY) while maximizing the average catch from the fishery and reducing the variation in the total allowable catch (TAC) between management periods.

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**DISCUSSION**
**Requests from the Commission**

At the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, Members made several comments regarding the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee, which participants are asked to **NOTE** (extracts from IOTC–2024–S28-R):

17. The Commission **NOTED** that all scientific working group and working party meetings taking place in 2023 had been successfully held, utilizing a hybrid format. The Commission also **NOTED** that the Scientific Committee meeting had been held in India and that the MPF was used to support the attendance of participants to that meeting.
18. The Commission **NOTED** that 25 National Reports were submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2023 by CPCs and that this was a slight decrease when compared with the 26 reports provided by CPCs in 2022

***The status of tropical and temperate tunas***

19. The Commission **NOTED** a question regarding the necessity of a catch limit for SKJ, given that the species has been assessed as neither overfished nor subject to overfishing and that the stock is very productive. The Commission **NOTED** that the current productivity might result from favorable environmental conditions, which may not persist. The catch limit was set by the HCR specified in Resolution 21/03, which simulations have shown to perform effectively over a longer term, on average, under a range of uncertainty.
20. The Commission **NOTED** the YFT stock assessment external peer review workshop was held in February 2023. The report of that workshop was presented to the WPTT in October 2023 including the recommendations from the expert panel. The SC Chair further clarified that some of the expert panel’s recommendations would be explored and addressed in the 2024 YFT stock assessment as well as to guide future research planning for YFT work.

***The status of neritic tunas***

21. The Commission **NOTED** that the quality of the catch and associated data for neritic species remain poor and highly uncertain, which hampers the effective assessment and management of these species. The Commission **NOTED** that extensive discussion of data-related issues took place at the WPNT, WPDCS, and SC, and several coastal countries have been identified as priorities for data support missions to enhance the reporting of catch statistics.
22. The Commission further **NOTED** that last year, a training workshop on CPUE standardization was conducted during the WPNT to improve the capacity of scientists from CPCs to develop abundance indices for these species. The Commission **ENCOURAGED** the continuation of such capacity-building workshops in the future.
23. The Commission **NOTED** that, in some coastal fisheries, several neritic tuna species are captured together, therefore a multi-species approach would be more appropriate for effective management. The Commission **SUGGESTED** that the Scientific Committee should consider such an approach for the neritic tunas.

***Scientific Committee Recommendations***

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.
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.
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.

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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

### ***Report of the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the IOTC***

The report of 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission are available on the IOTC website.

<http://www.iotc.org/>

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Scientific Committee:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2024–SC27–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, specifically related to the IOTC science process and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the Commission with the information it has requested, throughout the course of the current SC meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** that 11 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) were adopted at this Session of the Commission.