



Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) Annual Meeting, April 13–17, 2025

ISSF underscores the importance of cooperation and consultation among all RFMO members — a tenet that is enshrined in the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and essential to managing highly migratory fish stocks like tunas. We encourage all IOTC Parties to give effect to their duty to cooperate to achieve the objectives of the IOTC Agreement and effective management through the adoption of science-based conservation and management measures that all Parties support and implement fully.

This Position Statement outlines issues that we urge the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) to act on at its upcoming meeting.



COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

2025 Asks

- Fully implement the revised IOTC compliance assessment process adopted in 2023 to ensure robust and transparent assessment of CPC accountability, particularly for CPC non-compliance with the provision of mandatory fishery and FAD data, catch and FAD limits and use of large-scale gillnets.
- Ensure all CPCs provide a detailed plan of action to address non-compliance — when they are assessed as non-compliant category 2 — within the three-month period following the Compliance Committee.

Background

A strong compliance process improves fisheries management by ensuring robust and transparent assessment of RFMO member accountability. IOTC Compliance Committee reports show significant CPC non-compliance with IOTC measures, in particular mandatory fishery and FAD data, catch and FAD limits and use of large-scale gillnets, which reduces their effectiveness. ISSF and Pew Charitable Trusts have recommendations to improve RFMO compliance processes in workshop reports: [2020 report](#), [2021 report](#), [2022 report](#). This includes action plans to address identified non-compliance, developing a scheme of responses to CPC non-compliance, and prioritizing the most serious infractions.

Priorities to Progress

- Further elaborate specific actions to be recommended by the Compliance Committee to the Commission to address serious CPC non-compliance.

[RFMO Compliance Information & Resources](#)

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2025 Asks

- Adopt precautionary, science-based catch limits, in line with the Scientific Committee's advice, for yellowfin tuna to maintain the rebuilding of the stock and task the Scientific Committee with confirming the status of yellowfin as determined by the 2024 assessment.
- Implement effective measures to ensure that skipjack and bigeye tuna catches do not exceed the catch limits established by the Harvest Control Rule for skipjack and the Management Procedure for bigeye.

Background

Since 2018 catches of yellowfin tuna have been generally decreasing, and the recent yellowfin stock assessment shows an encouraging turn-around to not overfished and not subject to overfishing. Nonetheless, in line with the Scientific Committee's advice there remains a need to verify assessment data inputs that changed substantially from the previous assessment. Therefore, precaution is warranted. It is important that the Scientific Committee investigate and resolve the longline CPUE uncertainty in 2025 and provide updated advice to the Commission.

Skipjack catches in 2021-2023 exceeded the catch limit set by the HCR in Res. 16/02 by around 23% in 2021, 31% in 2022, and 34% in 2023, reaching a record-high 688,680 tons in 2023. Moreover, the recent catch levels in 2021-2023 are even higher than the new catch limit established by the HCR in Res. 21/03 (628 606t) for the period 2024-2026. IOTC has not implemented any measures to prevent catches from overshooting this limit.

Bigeye is overfished and subject to overfishing. Res. 22/03 for a bigeye Management Procedure recommended a TAC of 80,583 tons per year for 2024-2025, which requires a 23.5% catch reduction from the 2023 catch level. The bigeye management procedure will be applied again in early 2025, and the IOTC Commission should adopt a new TAC for the period 2026-2028 and update the bigeye catch limit resolution 23/04.

Priorities to Progress

- Consolidate the existing disparate tropical tuna management measures into one, new comprehensive Tropical Tuna Management measure.
- Ensure CPCs comply with prohibition on large-scale driftnets on high seas and accelerate implementation of Res. 17/07.

[Tuna Conservation Information & Resources](#)



FAD MANAGEMENT

2025 Asks

In line with ISSF's established approach to strengthening FAD management:

- Further strengthen FAD management measures and provisions, including by fully implementing Res. 24/02.
- Require vessels to report complete FAD position data and acoustic biomass records from echosounder buoys for scientific use with appropriate time-lags to protect confidentiality.

Background

In 2019-2023, FAD sets accounted for nearly 38% of tropical tuna catches (50% of skipjack, 21% of yellowfin, and 34% of bigeye) in the Indian Ocean. Comprehensive FAD management will help to manage fishing pressure, reduce the catch on the three tropical tuna stocks, and lower other ecosystem impacts. In 2024, IOTC adopted a comprehensive, forward-leaning FAD management resolution. Res. 24/02 sets out a number of progressive changes to IOTC's FAD management, as well as areas for ongoing work (such as the new dFAD Register). The IOTC must ensure that Res. 24/02 is fully implemented within the IOTC and by CPCs.

Priorities to Progress

- Take all necessary steps to operationalize the dFAD Register in accordance with the provisions and timelines in Res. 24/02.

[FAD Management Information & Resources](#)



BYCATCH MITIGATION & SHARK PROTECTIONS

2025 Asks

- Amend Res. 17/05 to require shark fins to be naturally attached for all landings, as well as to consider additional mitigation measures, such as limitations on the use of wire leader and shark lines.
- Adopt best practices for shark, mobulids, and cetaceans safe handling and release, including use of safe release devices, as recommended by the SC and those adopted in WCPFC and IATTC.
- Amend Res. 12/04 to include scientifically proven mitigation measures and safe handling and release devices recommended by the IOTC SC for sea turtles and require identification of sea turtles at species level.

Background

Some shark and sea turtle species are declining in abundance. The requirement of fins naturally attached in Res. 17/05 only applies to vessels landing fresh sharks and there are no additional mitigation measures to limit fishing mortality on sharks. WCPFC has adopted restrictions on the use of wire leaders or shark lines. WCPFC and IATTC have both adopted best

practices for safe handling and release of sharks, including the use of specific procedures and tools. The IOTC should also adopt such measures.

IOTC scientists advise that there is considerable risk to marine turtles in the Indian Ocean. Current IOTC sea turtle conservation resolutions are outdated and do not include best-practice mitigation techniques. Res.12/04 could be modernized to include scientifically proven mitigation measures and devices recommended by the IOTC SC for sea turtles. IOTC should also require identification of sea turtles at species level so that the Scientific Committee can better understand the impacts of fishing on turtles.

Priorities to Progress

- Progress the adoption of measures to limit fishing mortality on sharks, based on IOTC Scientific Committee recommendations.
- Strengthen bycatch mitigation measures for all taxa and for all fishing gears in line with any scientific best practices.

[Bycatch Reduction Information & Resources](#)



ELECTRONIC MONITORING (EM) AND REPORTING & OBSERVER COVERAGE

2025 Asks

- More fully embrace the use of electronic monitoring to increase observer coverage from the minimum 5% level for all gear types.
- Adopt measures to begin increasing observer coverage (human and/or electronic) from the minimum 5% and progress toward 100% coverage in industrial tuna fisheries.

Background

IOTC lags far behind other RFMO observer coverage rates. IOTC only requires 5% observer coverage regardless of gear and/or area of operation. Comprehensive and higher levels of observer coverage are critical to effective fisheries management; compliance monitoring; and independent verification of catch, effort, and non-target species interactions. The adoption of EM standards was a positive step forward. IOTC now has the tools to progressively increase the minimum level of monitoring coverage thereby implementing its Scientific Committee's advice.

Priorities to Progress

- Require 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including supply vessels and all those engaged in at sea transshipment.

[Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Information & Resources](#)



EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES (HARVEST STRATEGIES)

2025 Asks

- Adopt a comprehensive Management Procedure for albacore.
- Accelerate the adoption of robust management procedures for yellowfin tuna.

Background

IOTC adopted a management procedure for bigeye, skipjack, and swordfish, but progress is slow on management procedures for other species, especially yellowfin.

Priorities to Progress

- Develop permanent Limit and Target Reference Points for all tunas.
- Conduct management strategy evaluation (MSE) for yellowfin and blue shark.



VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS & PORT STATE MEASURES

2025 Asks

- Strengthen Res. 16/11 to be consistent with the FAO Port State Measures Agreement, including by adopting provisions for prioritizing vessels for inspection and including ports of CPCs outside the IOTC Agreement Area.
- To improve compliance with tuna conservation measures, adopt amendments to Res. 15/03 to strengthen the IOTC VMS, including by requiring simultaneous near real-time position reporting and ensuring systems are tamper-proof.

Background

IOTC's monitoring, control and surveillance measures are not sufficient to deter IUU fishing. CPC compliance with existing requirements is low. The absence of a high seas boarding and inspection measure, along with decentralized and unevenly implemented VMS, places significant pressure on port States to undertake inspection and enforcement activities. Further, IOTC's Port State measure (Res. 16/11) is not aligned with the FAO Port State Measures Agreement. Improvements to this resolution are needed, including amendments for prioritizing vessels for inspection in port and expanding the scope to include ports of CPCs outside the IOTC Agreement Area. The IOTC VMS needs to be strengthened to meet best practices and improve regional efforts to combat IUU fishing and enhance vessel transparency.

Priorities to Progress

- Accelerating efforts to enhance the IOTC VMS, including through improving CPC participation in the VMS Working Group and implementation of the VMS pilot program.



TRANSSHIPMENT REGULATION

Background

At-sea transshipments in the Indian Ocean have more than doubled since 2015. To combat IUU fishing activities and improve data collection, deficiencies and loopholes must be addressed in IOTC's monitoring and regulation of this activity.

Priorities to Progress

Amend IOTC at-sea transshipment Res. 23/05 to:

- Require authorized carrier vessels to be flagged to IOTC CPCs or cooperating non-contracting parties.
- Require all reporting to be electronic and in near real-time, but no greater than 24 hours after event, and that all transshipment declarations be submitted to flag State and IOTC Secretariat.
- Require all vessels authorized to conduct at-sea transshipment to have IMO number and operational automatic identification systems (AIS), and that VMS position data are provided to IOTC Secretariat in near-real time.

[Transshipment Regulation Information & Resources](#)



LABOR & SOCIAL ISSUES IN TUNA FISHERIES

2025 Asks

- Adopt a binding measure that will ensure the safety of human observers, including those on supply and carrier vessels.

Background

Human observers can be subjected to unsafe or dangerous conditions and treatment on board fishing vessels. WCPFC, ICCAT and IATTC have all adopted observer safety measures. IOTC must now also do so as a matter of priority.



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