
ON ESTABLISHING CATCH LIMITS FOR SKIPJACK TUNA IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE

SUBMITTED BY: SOUTH AFRICA, INDONESIA, MALDIVES, PAKISTAN

Explanatory Memorandum

1. Background

In accordance with the Resolution 24/07 *On the Management Procedure of Skipjack Tuna in the IOTC Area of Competence*, the Scientific Committee at its 26th Session in 2023 (SC26) recommended a total allowable catch (TAC) for skipjack tuna for the period 2024 – 2026 of 628,606 t. SC26 also noted that the environmental conditions are predicted to enter a less favorable period, and it is therefore important that the Commission ensures that catches of skipjack tuna during this period do not exceed the agreed limit, as occurred in recent years.

Basic Concepts

This proposal applies for 2026 and the second management period, as an interim measure, until the allocation criteria being discussed by the Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria (TCAC) are finalised and adopted. Nothing in this Resolution shall prejudice the outcomes of the TCAC. This proposal is not a permanent mechanism for the allocation of rights to fish but establishes a mechanism to constrain the catches until an allocation scheme is implemented.

CPCs are categorised into two categories based on catch levels, where Category A includes CPCs whose average catch levels of the years 2021 to 2023 are above 10,000 t, and the rest being in Category B.

Catch limits are established for CPCs in Category A, whose average catch levels of the years 2021 to 2023 exceed 10,000 t and are therefore subject to catch reductions under this Resolution. In a case where a Category B CPC's catch exceeds 10,000 t in two consecutive years, that CPC shall receive a catch limit equal to the Category A CPC with the lowest catch limit.

2. Factors to be considered in catch reduction

The following factors are considered in establishing catch limits for CPCs in Category A:

- a) CPCs that contribute standardised CPUE indices regularly for skipjack stock assessment and implementation of the Management Procedures.
- b) If a CPC has an average catch above 10,000 t but falls below 10,000 t when reductions are applied, the CPC shall have a catch limit of 10,000 t.

- c) CPCs shall reduce their catch within 3 years to the agreed catch reductions.

RESOLUTION 25/XX
ON ESTABLISHING CATCH LIMITS FOR SKIPJACK TUNA IN THE IOTC AREA OF
COMPETENCE

Keywords: skipjack tuna, catch limits, total allowable catch, management procedure

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING the responsibility of IOTC for the conservation and optimum utilisation of the species listed in Annex B of the IOTC Agreement, including skipjack tuna, in the IOTC area of competence;

MINDFUL of Article XVI of the IOTC Agreement and Article 56 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regarding the sovereign rights of coastal States in their Exclusive Economic Zones;

MINDFUL of Articles 87 and 116 to 119 of UNCLOS regarding the right to fish on the high seas;

COGNISANT of Article 64 of UNCLOS and the provisions of the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) concerning the obligation to cooperate in the conservation and management of highly migratory fish stocks, such as tuna;

RECOGNISING the special requirements of developing States, particularly Small Island Developing States, recognised in Article 24 of the UNFSA;

RECALLING Resolution 24/07 *on a management procedure for skipjack in the IOTC area of competence*, which introduced a Management Procedure for skipjack tuna for the first time in the IOTC;

NOTING that Resolution 24/07 mandates the Commission to adopt a total allowable catch (TAC) for the period 2024 – 2026 as recommended by the IOTC Scientific Committee and thereafter based on the outcome of the Management Procedure, unless the IOTC Scientific Committee identifies exceptional circumstances that require consideration of alternate management actions to be taken by the Commission;

RECOGNISING that the IOTC Scientific Committee, at its annual Session in 2023, recommended an annual TAC of 628,606 t of skipjack tuna for the period 2024-2026;

CONCERNED that the current catch levels exceed the TAC recommended by the IOTC Scientific Committee in 2023 and that there is an urgent need to constrain catch levels below the recommended TAC;

MINDFUL that the IOTC Scientific Committee noted in 2024 that climate model predictions suggest that the positive productivity phase will end by the start of 2024 resulting in a period of lower productivity;

RECALLING the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee in 2024 that as “the environmental conditions are predicted to enter a less favourable period, it is important that the Commission ensures that catches of skipjack tuna during this period do not exceed the agreed limit, as occurred in recent years”;

RECOGNISING the recommendation by the IOTC Scientific Committee in 2023 that the Commission ensure effective implementation of the TAC for skipjack tuna;

RECALLING that Resolution 24/07 stipulates that the Commission will develop a mechanism to constrain catch to the Management Procedure derived TAC for skipjack tuna no later than 2026;

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

Application

1. This Resolution shall apply to all CPCs within the IOTC area of competence.

Total Allowable Catch

2. The total allowable catch (TAC) shall be ~~628,606 t~~ for the first management period in 2025 and 2026.
3. The TAC for the following management periods will be adopted by the Commission in accordance with the Management Procedure in Resolution ~~24/07~~ *On a management procedure for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence*.

Catch Limits for Skipjack Tuna

4. CPCs are categorised into two categories based on their average catch levels of the years 2021 to 2023. Category A includes those CPCs listed in the table in paragraph 5 and Category B includes those CPCs not listed in the table.
5. Category A CPCs shall apply the following catch limits:

CPC	Annual Catch Limit
Indonesia	138,000 140,000 t
Seychelles	76,725 t
Maldives	121, 638-000 t
EU	125,000 126,594 t
Sri Lanka	3638,000 t
Iran	68, 741-000 t
India	25, 669-000 t
Mauritius ¹	13,908 t

¹ Mauritius ~~and Korea~~ shall apply the catch limit under this Resolution as of 1 January 2028 unless they inform the Commission, by 1 January 2026, of their intent to apply paragraph 6 of this Resolution.

Korea ¹	<u>10,000</u> 9,895 t
Total	615,865 633 t

6. Category A CPCs shall progressively reduce their current catches to the limits specified in paragraph 5 by 2028, with a reduction of one-third (1/3) of the total required reduction in the first year, two-thirds (2/3) in the second year, and the full reduction achieved in the third year.

~~7. A reserve pool of 25,000 t shall be set aside for Category B CPCs.~~

~~7. If the Management Procedure results in a reduction or an increase of the TAC, adjustments shall be applied to the catch limits of Category A CPCs in the table in paragraph 5, after deducting the reserve pool under paragraph 7 in proportion to the change in TAC. catch limits under paragraph 5. The Executive Secretary shall submit information on the recent catches of Category B CPCs for consideration by the Commission of possible follow-up measures.~~

~~8.~~

~~9. Category B CPCs are encouraged to maintain their catches of skipjack tuna at the average level of catch of the years 2021 to 2023.~~

~~10.8. If the catch of a Category B CPC exceeds 109,000 t in two consecutive years, that CPC shall be listed as a Category A CPC in the table in paragraph 5 and receive a catch limit equal to the Category A CPC with the lowest catch limit, unless otherwise decided by the Commission at the end of each management period. This adjustment shall be derived from the total catch limits of Category A CPCs and the reserve pool under paragraph 7 for Category B CPCs.~~

~~11. If the annual combined catches of all Category B CPCs exceed the reserve pool under paragraph 7 in two consecutive years, the Commission shall reconsider the approach to the catch limits of Category B CPCs, including the possibility to assign catch limits to individual Category B CPCs.~~

~~12.9. This Resolution shall not prejudice the rights and obligations under international law of those developing coastal CPCs in the IOTC area of competence whose current fishing activity relating to skipjack tuna is limited or non-existent, but that have a real interest in fishing for this species, and that may wish to develop their own fisheries targeting skipjack tuna in the future. CPCs shall implement robust monitoring, control and surveillance measures, as applicable, in relation to their capacity and resources.~~

Transfer of Catch

~~13. By 31 December each year, any Category A CPC may temporarily transfer to another Category A CPC all or part of its allocated annual catch limit. This transfer of catch shall become effective once the transferring CPC has~~

~~notified the IOTC Executive Secretary of the receiving CPC and the quantities transferred, and the receiving CPC has notified the IOTC Executive Secretary of its approval. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall circulate both notifications as well as the adjusted annual catch limits of the two CPCs within seven (7) days of receipt of the notifications.~~

Overage of Catch

~~14.10.~~ If any Category A CPC exceeds its catch limit, 100% of the overage of the catch limit shall be deducted from the respective CPC's catch limit during or before the adjustment year as indicated in the following table:

Catch year	Adjustment year
2026	2028
2027	2029
2028	2030
2029	2031
...	...

~~15.11.~~ Notwithstanding paragraph ~~14.10~~, if any Category A CPC exceeds its catch limit for two consecutive years, this CPC's catch limit for the corresponding adjustment year shall be reduced by 125% of the excess catch, and the Commission may recommend additional measures, as appropriate.

Underage of Catch

~~16.12.~~ Up to 10% of an underage of a CPC's catch limit under may be carried over to the corresponding adjustment year determined in accordance with the table in paragraph ~~14.10~~.

Administration of Catch Limits by the IOTC Secretariat

~~17.13.~~ The IOTC Secretariat shall annually prepare and circulate, by 31 December, a table of allocated catch limits disaggregated in accordance with the requirements set out in paragraphs 5 to ~~16.12~~ (including catch limits, adjustments, transfers, overage and underage of catch) for the following year.

Chartering Agreements and Export of Fishing Vessels

~~18.14.~~ **Category A** CPCs shall not conclude, extend or renew chartering agreements, be it as chartering or flag CPCs, with Contracting Parties that object to this Resolution ~~in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 5 of the IOTC Agreement.~~

~~19.15.~~ To the extent possible, CPCs should prevent their flag fishing vessels from being re-flagged to Contracting Parties that object to this Resolution in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 5 of the IOTC Agreement.

Scientific Work

~~20. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall evaluate the implementation of the Management Procedure at the end of the second management period.~~

~~24.16.~~ Taking into account the healthy status of the skipjack tuna stock, the Scientific Committee should at its 28th Session reassess the management procedure selected for the purpose of defining a TAC for skipjack tuna, ~~especially the condition underlying the recruitment of skipjack tuna,~~ to ascertain whether it might be overly conservative, and propose, if appropriate the relevant adjustment to the Management Procedure.

~~22.17.~~ The IOTC Scientific Committee shall provide advice to the Commission on the potential impacts of carrying forward the underage of catch limits under paragraph ~~16.10~~ on the effectiveness of the Management Procedure.

Final Provisions

~~23.18.~~ Nothing in this Resolution shall pre-empt or prejudice the future allocation of fishing opportunities.

~~24.19.~~ In case one or more Contracting Parties object to this Resolution pursuant to Article IX, paragraph ~~5~~ of the IOTC Agreement, and if the sum of catches of the objecting Contracting Parties is equal to or above 10% of the TAC, this Resolution shall be applicable only in 2026, and the Commission shall review this Resolution at its annual Session in 2026.

~~20.~~ The Commission shall review the performance of this Resolution and, if required, shall consider revising it prior to the second management period in 2029.

~~25.21.~~ The Commission shall review this Resolution at its annual Session in 2029 if the Commission has not established an allocation regime by that time, and, as necessary, shall take into consideration the Management Procedure established by Resolution 24/07 On a management procedure for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence.