



REPORT ON COMPLIANCE WITH BIGEYE TUNA CATCH LIMITS

Prepared by: IOTC Secretariat, 7 April 2026

PURPOSE

This document provides information on the level of compliance with Resolution 25/04 *On Establishing Catch Limits for Bigeye Tuna in the IOTC Area Of Competence*. Resolution 25/04 supersedes Resolution 23/04, which was adopted in 2023 which introduced catch limits for the main fleets targeting bigeye tuna for the period 2024 - 2025. The current Resolution establishes catch limits over the period 2026 – 2028.

BACKGROUND

The 25th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee (SC25), which took place in 2022, recommended the calculated total allowable catch (TAC) of bigeye tuna during 2024 and 2025 at 80,583 t per year; a 15% catch reduction from the 2021 catch level.

The first management cycle of the measure, which was governed through Resolution 23/04, was for the years 2024 and 2025. The second management cycle, which is governed through Resolution 25/04, is for the years 2026-2028. The measure recognises two groups of bigeye tuna harvesters; major harvesters, with an annual catch over 2,000 t per year and small harvesters with an annual catch below 2,000 t per year. Major harvesters are subject to a specific limit, which represent a reduction of their average catch over the 2017 – 2021 period for the first management cycle. The major harvesters of bigeye tuna in the first management cycle are listed in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Resolution 23/04. Small harvesters are encouraged to keep their catches at recent levels. However, should their catch surpass the 2,000 t threshold during any of the years in the management cycle, they would subsequently be classed as a major harvester and become subject to a specified catch limit in the next management cycle.

Under the first management cycle, major harvesters had the added possibilities applying their annual catch limit over a two-year management period, thus allowing for corrective actions to be taken in the remaining year of the management cycle, or receiving transfer of up to 20% of another major harvester's initial catch limit, which would help to mitigate over catch.

DISCUSSIONS

Resolution 23/04

Catch Limits

Due to the lag in the submission of data, this document can only consider assessing if the major harvesters have respected their catch limits for 2024.

Of the eight major harvesters, all but two have remained below their specified catch limits for the year 2024. China exceeded its catch limit of 3,785 t by 510 t and Sri Lanka exceeded its catch limit of 4,772 t by 576 t. However, without the 2025 catch figures, it would be premature to conclude that China and Sri Lanka are non-compliant with respect to their specified catch limits over the management cycle of 2024 – 2025. It should be noted that the major harvesters are not required to inform on if they are applying a two-year management period to manage their catch limits for 2024 and 2025, in totality.

Three CPCs (Oman, Somalia and Tanzania) which were considered as small harvesters, by virtue of not being listed in the table in paragraph 2 of this Resolution, have made catches in excess of 2,000 t, in 2024. It is to be recalled that any small harvester which catches more than 2,000 t, either in 2024 or 2025, the Commission shall consider establishing a binding catch limit applicable to that CPC for the management period commencing in 2026.

Transfer of catch limits

None of the major harvesters have informed the IOTC Secretariat of the transfer of any part of their initial catch limits to another major harvester, as permitted under paragraph 6 of Resolution 23/04.

Chartering agreements and reflagging of vessels

No CPCs had objected to Resolution 23/04, therefore, the circumstances where a flag CPC or a chartering CPC shall not grant their consent to a chartering agreement with objecting flag CPC or chartering CPC did not arise during the 2024 – 2025 management cycle. The same applies for the reflagging of vessels.

Resolution 25/04

Two CPCs (India and Somalia) have objected to Resolution 25/03; they remain bound by Resolution 23/04.

Catch Limits

As indicated in the previous section there is a time lag in the requirement to submit mandatory statistics, and this creates a temporary information vacuum between management cycles. 2025 catch data will only become available in June 2026, and that for the longline fishery will only be confirmed at the end of December 2026. Therefore, any adjustments resulting from the management cycle of 2024 – 2025, cannot be until the first year of the management cycle 2026 – 2028 is well underway. This is recognised by the Resolution which states in paragraph 8. “Any overages from the 2024-2025 management period shall be deducted from the 2027 catch limit.”

Implement of a three-year management of catch limits

CPCs who wanted to manage their catch limits over the whole management cycle of three years had until the 31 January 2026 to inform the IOTC Secretariat. Since the 21 October 2025, when Resolution 25/04 came into force, until 31 January 2026 no CPC has informed the IOTC Secretariat that they will manage their catch limit over the three year cycle. Therefore, it can be concluded that during the 2026 – 2028 management cycle for bigeye catch limits, all CPCs subject to catch limits will be assessed for compliance to the catch limits on individual year basis, except for Mauritius, which shall apply its catch limit as of 1 January 2028.

Transfer of catch limits

So far in the current management cycle, none of the major harvesters have informed the IOTC Secretariat of the transfer of any part of their initial catch limit to another major harvester, as permitted under paragraph 9 of Resolution 25/04.

Chartering agreements and reflagging of vessels

As indicated earlier, India and Somalia have submitted their objections to Resolution 25/04. Neither India nor Somalia have submitted information related to chartering agreement, therefore, the circumstances where CPCs shall not grant their consent to a chartering agreement with India or Somalia has not arise so far in the current management cycle. There are also no indication vessels being reflagged to India or Somalia.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the CoC23:

- **NOTE** document IOTC-2026-CoC23-07 *Report on compliance with bigeye tuna catch limits*.
- **RECOMMEND** the Commission to consider establishing binding catch limits for Oman, Somalia and Tanzania.

- **RECOMMEND** the Commission task the Scientific Committee to identify any major harvesters that have made catches over their catch limits for the 2024-2025 management period and quantities to be deducted from their 2027 catch limits, at its Twenty-ninth Session.
- **RECOMMEND** the Commission task the Scientific Committee to identify any small harvesters that have made catches over the 2,000 t threshold in 2025, at its Twenty-ninth Session.