



EUROPECHE TUNA GROUP priorities for the 30th session of the IOTC

(11th – 15th May 2025, Malé, Maldives)

Brussels 20 April 2026

1. Achieving sustainable management of Indian Ocean tuna stocks through operational and equitable management of fleets and gears

- Tropical tuna: maintain yellowfin, skipjack and bigeye healthy

Within the IOTC area, yellowfin tuna and skipjack tuna stocks are healthy and the bigeye tuna stock, is recovering. All three stocks are under allocated TAC or catch limits and there are Management Procedures in place for Skipjack and Bigeye.

Europêche Tuna Group (ETG) applauds this success, acknowledging the important sacrifices from certain CPCs such as Seychelles and, specially, the EU, which have contributed to this achievement.

ETG also calls CPCs to:

1. **Finalize, under the purview of the IOTC Scientific Committee, any pending reviews to time-series of catch-and-effort and eliminate the objections to yellowfin tuna catch limits¹, in order to achieve a sustainable management of yellowfin tuna, towards the adoption of a robust Management Procedure for yellowfin tuna and a management plan to supersede [Resolution 21/01](#), which ensures that future catches of yellowfin tuna can be maintained by the TAC coming from the Management Procedure.**
2. **Remind the Scientific Committee (SC) to revisit and, where required, amend the Skipjack tuna management procedure ([Resolution 24/07](#)), as was already required by [Resolution 25/03](#)² at its last session.**

¹ India, Iran, Madagascar, Oman, and Somalia

² Point 16 of IOTC Resolution 25/03: 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, to ascertain whether it might be overly conservative, and propose, if appropriate the relevant adjustment to the Management Procedure



3. **Eliminate the objections to catch limits for skipjack tuna ([Resolution 25/03](#)) and bigeye tuna ([Resolution 25/04](#)), to ensure their sustainable management**, in particular the objections from Somalia, India and Korea which reported total catches of both stocks at around 65,000 tons in 2024.

- **Ensure fair and sustainable fishing for tropical tuna purse seiners: recovery and supply vessels**

ETG calls CPCs to **allow replacement of existing supply vessels** in order to ensure crew security and improve their working conditions, as well as to work towards fleet decarbonation.

Article 44(e) of IOTC Resolution 24/02 relative to drifting FAD management in the IOTC area of competence does not allow to "*register any new or additional supply vessels on the IOTC Record of Authorised Vessels*". As it is written, this disposition makes impossible to replace a supply vessel, even by another one with same or lesser capacity.

Replacement of supply vessel shall be allowed in cases of force majeure or when vessels become too old, to ensure vessel and crew safety. Replacing supply vessels by newer vessels is also key to the necessary decarbonation strategy supported by the European Union.

- **Bycatch and discards: complete the discards ban**

ETG recommends **extending IOTC Resolution 24/06** on a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, and non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC area of competence, to all industrial vessels and fishing gears targeting tropical tunas.

Failure to report non-retained catch data render the catch database even less complete, which has serious consequences for evaluating the status of the stocks and makes observer data even more crucial. Bycatch and discards data actually reported to IOTC has been extremely poor, and although it is improving in some areas, it remains very limited for bycatch species.



2. Promoting transparency and fighting against IUU

- **Observer coverage**

ETG recommends:

1. As a first step, **raising the observer coverage (human and/or electronic) up to 25%** of the fishing effort for all fishing vessels in the IOTC Record of Authorized Vessels.
2. **Monitoring baits use** in pole and line fisheries, to assess their sustainability.
3. Imposing a **full-observer coverage on at sea-transhipments** for both cargo and fishing vessels, without any derogation.
4. Adopting a binding measure that will ensure the **safety of human observers**, including those on supply and carrier vessels.

Only 5% observer coverage, for offshore fleets, is mandatory in IOTC while science recommends reaching at least 20% observer coverage. During its 23rd session, the Scientific committee expressed concern on the low observer level at 2,15% for the Regional Observer Scheme and on the fact that there is no coverage of the artisanal fleet, which accounts for a large portion of catches taken in the Indian Ocean³. EU purse seine fleets voluntarily implement 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) of their fishing effort.

- **Monitoring, control and surveillance**

ETG recommends:

- Adopting amendments to Resolution 25/02 to **strengthen the IOTC VMS**, including by requiring simultaneous near real-time position reporting and temper-proof systems, and by implementing a **regional tool under IOTC's secretariat control**.
- **Including anchored FADs monitoring into the DFAD register**.
- Setting up schemes to **define, monitor and evaluate catches from subsistence fisheries at the landing place**.
- Tasking the competent working groups to conduct an analysis of IOTC fisheries in order to **define artisanal and subsistence fisheries**.

While the European and associated purse seine fleets are all registered and monitored, IOTC accounts for only a fraction of the activity in its area of competence and provides no indication of the total days of vessels' activity in its official list. Only vessels larger than 24 metres in length

³ Point 143 of the report of the 23rd session of the IOTC Scientific Committee: [IOTC-2020-SC23-RE_Rev1.pdf](#)



overall or in case of vessels less than 24m, those operating in waters outside the economic exclusive zone of the flag State, are declared in the [IOTC Record of Active Vessels](#)⁴.

Artisanal and industrial fleets less than 24 metres operating exclusively in EEZs, including purse seiners and longliners, are not even subject to a number of vessels' declaration. Considering that for example in the case of yellowfin tuna, artisanal fisheries alone are responsible for around 60% of the catches, this undermines the quality of catches declarations, including level of active fishing capacity, as well as by-catch estimations, stock assessments and fleets monitoring. To this date, there is no clear definition of artisanal and subsistence fisheries.

Only a regional VMS tool would allow to verify vessels' activity and their correct registration in the IOTC record, in order to ensure applicability and monitoring of tuna conservation measures, such as seasonal closures for all gear types or FAD register.

More generally, high sea inspections are also required to ensure that vessels comply with IOTC rules, as required by the [United Nations Agreement relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks](#)⁵.

- **Revised compliance assessment process**

ETG recommends that the Compliance Committee:

1. Must **address CPC non-compliance with catch limits and with the use of driftnets.**
2. Shall **require CPCs to submit action plans that address identified non-compliance.**

ETG recommends that **CPCs effectively ban driftnets** and refrain from promoting measures that involve modifying gear while still allowing nets exceeding 2.5 km in length. Lowering driftnets to operate 2 meters below the surface does not constitute an adequate solution.

The revised compliance assessment process shall urgently address large-scale driftnets non-compliances. [Resolution 17/07 On the Prohibition to Use Large-Scale Driftnets in the IOTC Area](#) prohibits the use of large-scale driftnets (exceeding 2.5 kilometres in size), in accordance with the driftnet ban adopted by the United Nations in 1992. However, driftnets' use is still overspread in the Indian Ocean. The IOTC has consistently ignored non-compliance, which relates mainly to activities of vessels from Iran, Pakistan (objector to the measure while having an important driftnet fishery), Sri Lanka, and India. All those countries have objected other IOTC measures. In recent years, gillnets have been responsible for around 15% (60,000 tons) of the catches of yellowfin tuna, many of which are believed to have been harvested using driftnets.

⁴ Obligation under [Resolution 19/04 Concerning the establishment of an IOTC record of vessels authorized to operate in the IOTC area](#)

⁵ In force as from 11 December 2001; Article 21 on Subregional and regional cooperation in enforcement provides that "1. In any high seas area covered by a subregional or regional fisheries management organization or arrangement, a State Party which is a member of such organization or a participant in such arrangement may, through its duly authorized inspectors, board and inspect [...] fishing vessels flying the flag of another State Party to this Agreement" and that "2. States shall establish, through subregional or regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements, procedures for boarding and inspection [...]".



3. Coordinating with BBNJ

The United Nation's agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction entered into force on 17 January 2026⁶. The FAO's publication '*Fisheries and the BBNJ Agreement – A Guide*⁷' underlines that although the BBNJ Agreement cannot create fisheries management measures and shall not undermine existing mandates, it will inevitably intersect with fisheries governance and will require structured, informed and sustained engagement from fisheries bodies. This evolving interface should promote coherence, avoid duplication, and recognise fisheries institutions' long-standing expertise.

ETG calls CPCs to modify Resolution 2025-13 on promoting the objectives of IOTC through cooperation with the BBNJ agreement in order to ensure that:

- **Priority should be given to encouraging the establishment or extension of regional or subregional fisheries management arrangements⁸**, rather than allowing the BBNJ process to assume de facto fisheries management functions.
- Any biodiversity-related measures adopted under BBNJ that may affect fishing activities should explicitly **recognise that the adoption, modification or enforcement of fisheries management measures remains within the competence of the relevant fisheries authorities** or, where appropriate, newly established regional arrangements.
- **IOTC as an RFMO is properly consulted at all stages of the BBNJ process** as well as, where appropriate, **at the proposal development stage**, not merely at the point of adoption, subject to realistic timelines and duly funded consultations obligations.
- **IOTC's scientific advice, stock distribution data, and spatial management experience are systematically integrated into ABMT design.**
- **Existing spatial tools**, including management measures in the IOTC area of competence, **are valid contributions to biodiversity objectives under BBNJ.**
- **The BBNJ Scientific and Technical Body will reflect multidisciplinary expertise, including fisheries scientists and technical experts at monitoring and control from RFMOs.** It shall also build and incorporate the vast knowledge accumulated in the IOTC SC, also providing budgets to make it possible.
- **The Clearing House Mechanism safeguard fisheries' data confidentiality** according to the IOTC and other RFMO's rules.

⁶ The Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the BBNJ Agreement has taken place in New York from 23 March to 2 April 2026. Agenda includes '*Arrangements to enhance cooperation with relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies: Draft decision of the Conference of the Parties prepared by the Co-Chairs (A/AC.296/2026/4)*'

⁷ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd6494en>

⁸ in accordance with Articles 63 and 64 of UNCLOS and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement

