

IPNLF POSITION STATEMENT

30th IOTC Commission Meeting

11-15 May 2026, Malé, Maldives

The International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF) is an international NGO, working to develop and demonstrate the value of one-by-one tuna fisheries to thriving coastal communities and ocean ecosystems. Working across science, policy, and the seafood supply chain, our principal aim is to improve the wellbeing of coastal fisheries, and the people and seas connected with them through environmentally and socially responsible one-by-one fishing methods, such as pole-and-line, troll, and handline.

IPNLF urges the Commission to take the following steps at its annual meeting in 2026:

SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT OF YELLOWFIN TUNA

- Adopt a yellowfin tuna **TAC in line with scientific advice**, not exceeding the median MSY estimate of 421,000 tonnes.
- **Equitably distribute quotas**, upholding the rights of coastal fleets and small-scale fisheries to access and benefit from tuna stocks in their waters, and prioritising fleets using low-impact fishing methods, as per Art. 6.6 of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- **Prevent objections from undermining catch limits** by engaging across the board and seeking cooperative solutions.
- Increase momentum for adoption of a **management procedure in 2027**.

IMPROVE MONITORING, CONTROL, AND SURVEILLANCE

- Strengthen the IOTC measure on **transshipment** in line with FAO guidelines and adopt a measure on **high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI)**.
- Support efforts to ensure that vessels over 24m maintain **Automatic Identification Systems (AIS)** switched on and operational in accordance with international and national laws.
- Adopt **requirements to report** whether catches are taken in the high seas or waters under national jurisdiction.
- If modifications to the IOTC Record of Authorised Vessels (RAV) are implemented, ensure a just and graduated transition, taking into account the **special requirements of developing States** and ensuring there is **no disproportionate burden** placed on them.

CONSERVE SHARKS AND MOBULID RAYS

- **Prevent watering-down** of the resolution on sharks adopted last year (Res. 25/08) by maintaining the retention ban on whale sharks and criteria for experimental trials on wire leaders.
- **Improve data collection** requirements to build a better understanding of interactions between mobulid rays and fisheries, and **adopt the updated Minimum Standards for Safe Handling and Live Release Procedures.**

IPNLF highlights the need for continued work on the following topics, and urges IOTC members to:

STRENGTHEN MANAGEMENT OF DRIFTING FADS

- Continue to press for adoption of a **precautionary annual closure for drifting FADs** (DFADs) to mitigate impacts on juvenile yellowfin and bigeye tunas as well as silky sharks, bringing IOTC in line with practice at other RFMOs.
- Prioritise full implementation of the **DFAD Register**.
- Require fleets using DFADs to take **full responsibility for DFADs** entering coastal State waters and Marine Protected Areas, considering the implementation of a **Polluter Pays** Principle where DFADs place a burden on the environment of coastal States.
- Prioritise efforts to develop rules of procedure for a **real-time DFAD Monitoring System**, as per paragraph 24 of Res. 24/02. Noting that meetings of the VMSWG have been postponed, the Commission must **identify an alternative forum** for advancing the DFAD Monitoring System.

PRIORITISE LOW-IMPACT FISHERIES

- Provide support for **collaborative and just conversions** from high to low-impact fishing gears, so as to minimise bycatch, pollution, and ghost fishing while safeguarding coastal communities.

MAINTAIN MOMENTUM ON CREW LABOUR STANDARDS

- Prioritise the Secretariat's **study of labour standards** applicable in the IOTC area of competence to continue efforts to adopt a measure which takes into account the special requirements of developing States and the practical circumstances of artisanal fisheries.