

RESOLUTION 25/01

ON CLIMATE CHANGE AS IT RELATES TO THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION

Keywords: Climate change, capacity building

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECOGNISING international initiatives to address the impacts of climate change including through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement;

NOTING the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;

MINDFUL of the work of the IOTC Scientific Committee and its Working Parties in assessing the impacts of climate change on tuna stocks and by-catch, and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent or associated with the target stocks in the IOTC area of competence;

CONVINCED of the importance of addressing the potential impacts of climate change and other environmental degradation on target stocks, non-target species, and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent or associated with the target stocks in the IOTC area of competence;

CONSIDERING that the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) held, in its Advisory Opinion on Climate Change and International Law of 21 May 2024, that the obligation to cooperate with respect to highly migratory fish stocks under Article 64(1) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea “requires States, *inter alia*, to consult with one another in good faith with a view to adopting effective measures necessary to coordinate and ensure the conservation and development of shared stocks, taking into account the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification on living marine resources”;

BEARING IN MIND that the Agreement for the implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) was adopted in cognisance of the need to avoid adverse impacts on the marine environment, preserve biodiversity, maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems and minimise the risk of long-term or irreversible effects of fishing operations;

RECALLING that Article 5 of the UNFSA requires States to assess the impacts of fishing, other human activities and environmental factors on target stocks and species belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon the target stocks and to adopt, where necessary, conservation and management measures for species belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon the target stocks, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened;

CONSIDERING that the ITLOS, in its Advisory Opinion on Climate Change and International Law of 21 May 2024, expressed the view that Articles 5 and 7 of the UNFSA “may provide guidance in responding to distributional changes and range shifts of stocks due to climate change and ocean acidification, and inform the relevant provisions of Parts V and VII of [UNCLOS]”;

CONCERNED by the findings of the 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change with high confidence that climate change is causing the redistribution of marine fish stocks, increasing risk of transboundary management conflicts among fisheries users, and negatively affecting equitable distribution of food provisioning services as fish stocks shift from lower to higher latitude regions, thereby increasing the need for climate-informed transboundary management and cooperation;

ACKNOWLEDGING that several regional fisheries management organizations, including the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the International Commission for the

Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) have adopted measures to prepare for and understand the impacts of climate change on the fisheries within their management mandate, and have given tasks with a specific timeline to their respective scientific or decision-making bodies;

RECALLING the concern of the 23rd Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tuna that changes in ocean temperatures could have direct impacts on tuna spatial distributions and stock dynamics;

CONCERNED by the fact that climate change and climate variability are increasingly affecting tuna fisheries in the Indian Ocean, including through their influence on stock distribution, migration patterns, and catch rates, and that key phenomena such as the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) and the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) remain relatively poorly understood;

BEARING IN MIND that positive IOD events have become more frequent over recent decades, a trend projected to intensify with the ongoing warming of the Indian Ocean, and that these events contribute significantly to regional climate variability;

FURTHER RECALLING that the 24th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee emphasized the importance of understanding the impacts of climate change, particularly on tropical tuna, and that the 26th Session of the Scientific Committee recognized the need for capacity building to improve understanding of both climate change and climate variability, including IOD and ENSO, and their implications for the sustainable management of tuna stocks;

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

1. The Commission shall in its deliberations, including in the development of Conservation and management measures, take into account information provided by the IOTC Scientific Committee, the Working Party on Socio-Economics (WPSE), on the potential impacts of climate change on IOTC species, bycatch and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent on or associated with IOTC species.
2. The Commission shall support further research into the relationship between climate change, fisheries for IOTC species (IOTC fisheries), bycatch, and the ecosystems, IOTC species, and associated species, they depend on, including research to inform potential measures to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change impacts.
3. The IOTC Scientific Committee, and WPSE, when requested by the Commission, shall consider and, where possible, advise on the potential impacts of climate change on IOTC species and any related impacts on developing States and Small Island Developing States.
4. The IOTC Scientific Committee, and WPSE, shall consider how climate change and fishing activities may be related and provide advice to the Commission on the potential implications for these relationships for the conservation and management of IOTC species, bycatch, and ecosystems.
5. To support and accelerate consideration of climate change issues in the Commission:
 - a) The Working Party on Socio-Economics (WPSE) shall assess the socio-economic impacts (actual or potential) of climate change on IOTC fisheries. On that basis, the WPSE shall provide information or advice to the Commission.
 - b) All IOTC Working Parties reporting to the IOTC Scientific Committee shall include climate change as a standing agenda item at their regular meetings and provide any relevant information or advice to the IOTC Scientific Committee in line with their current reporting processes.



- c) The IOTC Secretariat shall continue its work to develop and keep up to date, a dedicated IOTC webpage on climate change and its impacts on IOTC fisheries.
6. The IOTC Executive Secretary, under the direction of the Commission,, shall undertake capacity-building programmes, in particular in developing coastal State CPCs, among them the Least Developed States and Small Island Developing States, to improve climate change science and the understanding of climate change impacts on IOTC species, bycatch and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent on or associated with the IOTC species.
7. To support the capacity-building programmes undertaken by the IOTC Secretariat, CPCs are encouraged to share relevant information, approaches and experiences, including on capacity-building, via the relevant IOTC subsidiary bodies.
8. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall seek funding for the implementation of climate change related scientific works and capacity building programmes through various funding mechanisms for the implementation of this Resolution.
9. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall monitor, and as they deemed necessary, propose for endorsement by the Commission, options and alternatives to reduce the environmental impacts of the IOTC activities related to the operation of the headquarters office and meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. In particular, the IOTC Executive Secretary is requested to propose guidelines to reduce the impact of in-person meetings, including a list of meetings to be held virtually.
10. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall:
 - a) At its annual meetings, review and consider any climate change information and advice from its subsidiary bodies, and from any other bodies or sources as relevant;
 - b) On an annual basis, provide advice to the Commission based on its review and consideration of the information and advice in accordance with subparagraph a), and suggest any further steps that may be taken to integrate climate change considerations and analyses into its deliberations and decision-making processes; and
 - c) at its 28th annual meeting in 2025, review and propose amendments to its own Terms of Reference and those of its subsidiary bodies to meet the scientific needs stipulated in this Resolution.
11. At its annual session in 2026, the Commission shall add climate change as a standing agenda item and thereafter, to inform the Commission on the discussions mentioned in the paragraph 5 (a), (b) and (c).
12. Resolution 24/01 *On Climate Change as it Relates to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission* is superseded by this Resolution.