

RESOLUTION 25/04

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

(Objection received from India and Somalia: does not apply to India and Somalia.

Resolution 23/04 remains binding on India and Somalia.)

Keywords: bigeye tuna, catch limits, management procedure

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING the responsibility of IOTC for the conservation and optimum utilization of tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC area of competence;

RECOGNIZING the need for action to ensure the achievement of IOTC objectives to conserve and manage tuna resources in the IOTC area of competence;

MINDFUL of Article XVI of the IOTC Agreement regarding the rights of coastal States and of Articles 87 and 116 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regarding the right of all States to fish on the high seas subject to their treaty obligations, the rights and duties as well as the interests of coastal States provided for, *inter alia*, in Article 64 UNCLOS and the provisions of Section 2 of Part VII of UNCLOS;

RECOGNIZING the special requirements of developing States, particularly Small Island Developing States, in Article 24 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);

RECOGNIZING *Resolution 22/03 On a management procedure for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence*, which introduced a Management Procedure (MP) for bigeye tuna for the first time in the IOTC;

RECOGNIZING that the 1st Special Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee (SSC01) recommended a total allowable catch (TAC) of 92,670 t of bigeye tuna per year for 2026, 2027 and 2028, which is a 15% increase from the current TAC, in accordance with the MP adopted by Resolution 22/03;

CONCERNED by the latest stock assessment on bigeye tuna conducted in 2022 which determined that the stock is overfished and subject to overfishing with a probability of 79%;

NOTING that *Resolution 22/03* stipulates that “the Commission shall adopt the TAC based on the outcome of the MP, unless the Scientific Committee identifies exceptional circumstances that require consideration of alternate management actions to be taken by the Commission”;

RECOGNIZING that the excess fishing capacity is likely to lead an over-catch against the respective catch limit and is not favorable;

NOTING that *Resolution 24/03 On Establishing Catch Limits for Bigeye Tuna in The IOTC Area of Competence* obliges CPCs to limit their catches to their ‘recent’ levels;

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

TAC and Catch Limits

1. The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for bigeye tuna shall be 92,670 t in 2026, 2027 and 2028 in accordance with the Management Procedure (MP) established by Resolution 22/03 *On a management procedure for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence*.

2. The annual catch limits as shown in the table below shall be applied in 2026, 2027 and 2028.

	Catch Limit (t)
Indonesia	21,396
Seychelles	13,664
EU	19,562
Sri Lanka	5,488
Japan	4,237
China	4,353
Iran	2,421
Mauritius ¹	2,482

3. The Commission shall request Taiwan, Province of China to limit their annual bigeye tuna catch in the IOTC area of competence to 13,211 t in 2026, 2027 and 2028. Any overage or underage of their bigeye tuna catch shall be subjected to paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.
4. Any CPCs with a catch limit below 5% of the TAC may implement a three-year management of their catch limits. Such CPC shall notify the IOTC Secretariat by 31 January 2026. The CPC shall not transfer its catch limit or receive transfer from other CPCs as per paragraph 9. If, at the end of the three-year management period, the CPC has exceeded its catch limit, 110% of the overage of the catch limit shall be deducted during the next management cycle. The IOTC Secretariat shall circulate the information and reflect this information in the communication of catch limits, as per paragraph 10.
5. If any Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) specifically referred to in the table in paragraph 2 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.
6. If any CPC exceeds its catch limit for two consecutive years, the respective CPC's catch limit during or before the corresponding adjustment year shall be reduced by 125% of the overage, and the Commission may recommend additional measures, as appropriate.

<u>Catch year</u>	<u>Adjustment year</u>
2026	2028
2027	2029
2028	2030
2029	2031
...	...

7. Up to 20% of an underage of a CPC referred to in the table in paragraph 2 in a given year may be carried over to the corresponding adjustment year in the table in paragraph 6.
8. Any overages from the 2024-2025 management period shall be deducted from the 2027 catch limit.
9. The CPCs specifically referred to in the table in paragraph 2, may transfer a portion of their initial catch limits to other CPCs, up to 20% of the initial catch limit in total. Both CPCs shall provide information to the IOTC Secretariat in terms of the quantity to be transferred. The IOTC Secretariat shall disseminate this information to all CPCs without delay.
10. 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 2 to 9, including catch

¹ Mauritius, as a SIDS, shall apply the catch limit under paragraph 2 as of 1 January 2028.

limits, adjustments of overage and underage, and transfers, for the following year. When the catch data is revised retrospectively, the changes shall be reflected in the calculation.

11. CPCs that are not specifically referred to in the table of paragraph 2 are encouraged to maintain catch and effort at their recent 5-years average levels (2019-2023), without prejudice to the development aspirations of those CPCs, in particular developing coastal CPCs.
12. If a CPC subject to paragraph 11 catches more than 2,300 t in any two consecutive years from 2024 and thereafter, the Commission shall consider establishing a binding catch limit applicable to that CPC at the first session of the Commission after such catch data has been delivered, if an allocation scheme has not yet been agreed and implemented by the Commission.
13. This Resolution shall not prejudice the rights and obligations under international law of coastal states, in particular those developing coastal CPCs in the IOTC area of competence whose current fishing activity relating to bigeye tuna is limited, but that have a real interest in fishing for this species, and that may wish to develop their own fisheries targeting bigeye tuna. Those developing coastal CPCs shall implement robust monitoring, control and surveillance measures, as applicable, in relation to their capacity and resources. The provisions in paragraph 11 shall not be applicable to such coastal developing, least developed, and SIDS CPCs.
14. Nothing in this Resolution shall pre-empt or prejudice the future allocation of fishing opportunities.

Management of Fishing Capacity

15. Without undermining the development aspirations and sovereign rights of coastal CPCs and small island developing states, in particular developing coastal CPCs, the CPCs subject to Paragraph 2 are recommended to control, as necessary, their active fishing capacity/effort targeting bigeye tuna in the IOTC Area of Competence to be commensurate with their respective catch limit.

Chartering Agreements and Export of Fishing Vessels

16. CPCs shall not grant their consent as a flag CPC to a chartering agreement with CPCs that object to this Resolution in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 5 of the IOTC Agreement.
17. CPCs shall not grant their consent as a chartering CPC to a chartering agreement with flag CPCs that object to this Resolution in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 5 of the IOTC Agreement.
18. CPCs shall not export their flagged authorized fishing vessels to CPCs that object to this Resolution in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 5 of the IOTC Agreement.

Scientific Work

19. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall conduct a comparative analysis of the contribution of all fishing gears to the mortality of bigeye tuna, which shall include both absolute and relative contributions to mortality and stock depletion.
20. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall develop a table as shown in the Annex that quantifies the expected impact on maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and SSB_{msy} for bigeye tuna resulting from replacing fishing mortality/catches of any major fishing gear/fishery (e.g., Longline, DFAD fisheries, AFAD fisheries, Purse seine on free school, other fisheries) for consideration by the Commission at its 2026 Session. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall also provide advice on FAD management options, including on, limits on FADs sets, that may be necessary to achieve a replacement of fishing mortality of FAD fisheries with free school fisheries. This analysis shall be conducted for DFADs and AFADs fleets separately.
21. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall provide advice to the Commission on the potential impacts of carrying forward the underage of catch limits under paragraph 7 on the effectiveness of the Management Procedure.

Final Provisions

22. This Resolution supersedes Resolution 23/04 *On establishing catch limits for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence*.



Annex

Indicative output table for the impact analysis on MSY and SSBmsy for bigeye tuna resulting from replacing fishing mortality of FAD fisheries with free school fishery.

Treatment	Percent change in MSY	Percent change in SSBmsy	Necessary FADs control measure(s)
10% replacement	<i>XX%</i>	<i>YY%</i>	<i>ZZ%</i> reduction of FADs set Limit on FADs set: <i>AA sets</i>
20% replacement			
50% replacement			
100% replacement			