

RESOLUTION 99/01

ON THE MANAGEMENT OF FISHING CAPACITY AND ON THE REDUCTION OF THE CATCH OF JUVENILE BIGEYE TUNA BY VESSELS, INCLUDING FLAG OF CONVENIENCE VESSELS, FISHING FOR TROPICAL TUNAS IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

NOTING that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing provides that States should take measures to prevent or eliminate excessive fishing capacity;

CONCERNED that the fleets fishing for tropical tunas in the IOTC area of competence continue to increase rapidly, and that current capacity may exceed the level of fishing effort appropriate for sustainable use of the high value tuna resources of the Indian Ocean;

FURTHER CONCERNED that, for example, the biomass of adult bigeye tuna in the Indian Ocean has shown a continual and severe decrease, as reported by the IOTC Scientific Committee, as a result of increasing catches by both longliners and purse seiners;

FURTHER CONCERNED that currently about 70% by number of the total bigeye tuna catch is taken by the purse-seine fleet, and consists mainly of juvenile fish, and that 80% of the catch in weight is taken by the longline fleet, and consists mainly of adult fish;

RECALLING that in February 1999 the FAO Committee on Fisheries adopted the International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity (in application of the Code of Conduct), calling for immediate action to reduce fishing capacity in major international fisheries;

FURTHER RECALLING that the Rome Declaration on the Implementation of the Code, adopted by the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries in March 1999, underlines the important role of regional fishery management organisations in respect of the implementation of the Code of Conduct;

NOTING that the IOTC Scientific Committee has considered that, on the basis of certain indicators, if the catches continue at high levels, the stock of bigeye tuna is likely to become overexploited and, taking account of the precautionary approach, there is a need for immediate management action;

FURTHER NOTING that the IOTC Scientific Committee has recommended that the increase in catches of the stock of bigeye tuna by all gears should be halted immediately, and that the increase in catches of small bigeye tuna associated with floating objects should also be halted;

RECOGNISING Japan's initiative to implement the FAO Plan of Action by a reduction in the number of long-distance longline vessels by 20% (132 vessels), and the need for possible, concerted and appropriate actions by other States or fishing entities;

CONSIDERING that the IOTC Scientific Committee concluded that establishing area and seasonal closures of fishing grounds to fishing on floating objects would appear to be the best option to reduce the catches of juvenile bigeye tuna by purse seiners;

RECALLING the Resolution of the Third Session of IOTC concerning registration and exchange of information on vessels, including flag of convenience vessels, fishing for tropical tunas in the IOTC area of competence;

VERY CONCERNED that illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing activities by large-scale tuna vessels in the IOTC area of competence have continued to increase, severely diminishing the potential effectiveness of conservation and management measures adopted by IOTC and impeding adequate stock assessment by the IOTC Scientific Committee:

1. UNDERTAKES TO ADOPT concerted actions to limit the fishing capacity of the fleet of large-scale vessels fishing for tropical tunas in the IOTC area of competence, to ensure the long-term sustainable exploitation of



tuna stocks. As a first step, at its Session in 2000 IOTC will consider, on the basis of the scientific advice referred to in paragraph 3 below, the limitation of the capacity of the fleet of large-scale tuna vessels to the appropriate level.

2. ENGAGES TO ADOPT, at its Session in 2000, a season and area closure of the use of floating objects in the IOTC area of competence, on the basis of the scientific advice referred to in paragraph 3 below.
3. ASKS the IOTC Scientific Committee to present, at the Session of IOTC in 2000, recommendations on:
 - The best estimate, on the basis of existing data and analyses, of the optimum fishing capacity of the fishing fleet which will permit the sustainable exploitation of tropical tunas.
 - Precise areas, periods and conditions for a moratorium on the use of floating objects that would bring about a reduction of the fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye tuna. The IOTC Scientific Committee should present various options, with estimates of their likely effects on the catch rates of the three species of tropical tunas.
4. URGES Contracting Parties and Non-Contracting Parties cooperating with IOTC to fulfil their obligations concerning the transmission of the list of vessels fishing for tropical tunas according to the Resolution of the Third Session.
5. REGARDLESS of the full application of this Resolution, Contracting Parties will have due regard to the interests of all countries concerned, in conformity with the rights and obligations of those countries under international law and, in particular, to the rights and obligations of developing countries of the Indian Ocean rim with respect to their entry into the high seas fisheries in the IOTC area of competence.