

## OUTCOMES OF THE FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 6 APRIL 2011

### PURPOSE

To inform the Working Party on Billfish (WPB) of the requests made by the Commission at its Fifteenth Session, held from 18–22 March 2011, specifically relating to the work of the WPB.

### BACKGROUND

At the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, a proposal for a new measure *for the conservation and management of swordfish in the IOTC area of competence* was proposed by the European Union (provided at Attachment A). The proposal aimed to establish for all vessels over 24 meters length, and under 24 meters if they fish outside their EEZ, either a closure of a defined area, from 1<sup>st</sup> August to 1<sup>st</sup> September, or a reduction in fishing effort by 30% in relation to active capacity expressed in vessels numbers deployed in 2009 from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30 September each year in the whole of the IOTC area of competence. The proposed closure area was defined by the coordinates: 25° - 35° South and 30° - 55° East. Although the Members of the Commission could not reach consensus to adopt the proposal, the Commission made two requests to CPCs:

- 1) CPCs agreed that greater representation at the Working Party on Billfish, especially by the main fleets targeting swordfish such as the Spanish longline fleet, should attend the next meeting to ensure the most complete data sets are available for analysis.
- 2) The Commission requests that the Scientific Committee provide clear advice outlining alternative management approaches which would provide effective protection of a possible southwest Indian Ocean swordfish stock.

### DISCUSSION

In 2010, the Scientific Committee recommended that the Commission consider appropriate Conservation and Management Measures to control and/or reduce effort on the swordfish stock in the southwest Indian Ocean. Although a proposal was tabled for the Commission's consideration, consensus could not be reached. The primary concerns raised by Members during the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission revolved around the lack of a direct link between the recommendations of the Scientific Committee and the specific components of the proposed measure.

Members queried whether the proposed closure boundaries were relevant to the known stock structure for Indian Ocean swordfish, noting that the closure was not aligned with the preliminary southwest IO stock assessment.

Members also queried whether the alternatives of an effort reduction or the closure would bring about the sustainability objectives of the Commission.

As such, the Commission's request that the Scientific Committee provide clear advice outlining alternative management approaches which would provide effective protection of a possible southwest Indian Ocean swordfish stock, need to be addressed by the Working Party on Billfish.

### RECOMMENDATION

That the Working Party on Billfish **NOTE** the outcomes of the Fifteenth Session of the Commission, and consider how best to provide the Scientific Committee with the information it needs, in order to satisfy the Commission's requests.

### ATTACHMENTS

**Attachment A:** Proposal by the EU *for the conservation and management of swordfish in the IOTC area of competence.*

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**ATTACHMENT A**

**PROPH\_REV1[E]**

**FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SWORDFISH IN THE IOTC AREA OF  
COMPETENCE**

**SUBMITTED BY THE EU**

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**Background**

This resolution is intended as an experimental approach to reduce the pressure on swordfish stocks in the south-west of the Indian Ocean and avert the risk of local depletion.

The MSY-related reference points are probably not being exceeded for the swordfish population as a whole. However, catches still exceed some of the more pessimistic MSY estimates and the potential high level of depletion in the south-west remains a special concern.

In fact, the preliminary assessment for the referred sub-region confirms that the pessimistic indicators are consistent with a sub-population that has experienced overfishing for several recent years and remains currently overfished. Recent declines in catch and effort have probably brought the fishing mortality level down to sustainable levels.

In this context, it is recommended that catches in the south-west should be maintained at levels at or below those observed in 2008 until either *i*) there is clear evidence that substantial rebuilding is occurring (through recruitment or immigration), or *ii*) further analyses indicate that the current assessment is inappropriate.

In order to be coherent with this assessment with the view of decreasing the pressure on the swordfish stocks in the most affected area of the Indian Ocean it is proposed either to close the area defined by the coordinates: 25° - 35° South and 30° - 55° East for the entire month of August or to reduce the fishing effort by 30% compared to the 2009 levels for the entire IOTC area of competence between 1 July and 30 September.

This resolution will apply for a period of two years, 2011 and 2012, and its effects will be assessed by the IOTC Scientific Committee at its 2011 session, also taking into account available additional information on stock structure and other relevant data. On this basis, this resolution will be reviewed by the IOTC Plenary in 2012.

**The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),**

RECOGNISING that based on past experience in the fishery, the potential production from the resource can be negatively impacted by excessive fishing effort;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the available scientific information and advice, in particular the IOTC Scientific Committee conclusions whereby the swordfish stock might have been over or fully exploited in recent years in the south-west of the Indian Ocean;

CONSIDERING that swordfish catches in the south-west of the Indian Ocean are evaluated at a level above that which would produce local depletion;

CONSIDERING that during the 13<sup>th</sup> IOTC Scientific Committee meeting held in Seychelles from 6 to 10 December 2010, the Scientific Committee recommended that swordfish catches should be maintained at levels at or below those observed in 2008;

RECOGNISING the importance of applying the precautionary approach for the management of the swordfish stock in the Indian Ocean;

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

1. This resolution is applicable in 2011 and 2012 to all Longliners over 24 meters overall length and over, and under 24 meters if they fish outside their EEZ, fishing within the IOTC area of competence.
2. With the view of decreasing the pressure on the swordfish stocks in the IOTC area of competence for the years 2011 and 2012, the CPCs shall adopt one of the following measures for each vessel flying their flag:

2.1. An implementation of a closure in the high seas within the area defined by the following coordinates in each year from 0000 hours on 1 August to 0000 hours on 1 September (Annex 1):

25 ° - 35° South  
30° - 55° East.

A by catch of 5% of swordfish in weight of total catches will be allowed;  
or

2.2 A reduction of the fishing effort by 30% in relation to active capacity expressed in the number of vessels over 24 meters overall length and over, and under 24 meters if they fish outside their EEZ, actively fishing in 2009 from 1 August to 30 September [31 October] each year in the whole IOTC area of competence.

3. All vessels fishing within the IOTC area of competence in 2011 and 2012, regardless of the flag under which it operates or whether it changes flag during the year, shall observe either the area and period closure or the capacity reduction.
4. The CPCs shall inform the IOTC Secretariat by 1 June of the given year whether the vessels flying their flag will observe the area and period closure or the capacity reduction.
5. In case of adoption of the area and period closure (point 2.1), the CPC flag states shall monitor the compliance of their vessels with this Resolution, notably through VMS, and will provide a summary of VMS records related to their fleet operation in the previous year at the following years' meeting of the Compliance Committee. Each CPCs shall no later than 15 May of the year of the area and period closure:
  - a) take the necessary legal and administrative measures to implement the area and period closure;
  - b) inform all interested parties in its national tuna and tuna-like species industries of the area and period closure;
  - c) inform the IOTC Secretariat that these steps have been taken.
  - d) submit the total catches made by the vessels in the closed area in the previous year, including all the species taken, by weight and number of individuals.
6. In case of adoption of a reduction of fishing effort (point 2.2) the CPC shall provide, no later than 1 June of the given year, to the IOTC Secretariat with the names of vessels which will operate in the period of reference, taking into account the 30% reduction related to the 2009 levels. The CPCs shall also submit a complete report on the vessels' activities by 30 October of the given year.

7. Landings, transshipments and commercial transactions of swordfish, and their products, that have been positively identified as originating from fishing activities that contravene this resolution, are prohibited.
8. The IOTC Scientific Committee will analyse, at its 2011 session, the effect of this resolution on the conservation and recovery of swordfish stocks, also in light of available additional information on stock structure and other relevant data, and will propose, if necessary, appropriate measures to the Commission for its consideration at its 2012 plenary session.
9. The IOTC Scientific Committee will also examine at its 2011 session additional measures for the consideration of the Commission, in particular focusing on:
  - a) an evaluation of the effects of the area closure, specifying in its advice if a modification is necessary, its basic scientific rationale with an assessment on the impact of such a closure on the swordfish stocks;
  - b) an evaluation of the effects of the closure time period, specifying in its advice if a modification is necessary, its basic scientific rationale with an assessment on the impact of such a closure on the swordfish stocks;
  - c) an evaluation of effects of the capacity reduction, specifying in its advice if a modification is necessary, its basic scientific rationale with an assessment on the impact of such a reduction on the swordfish stocks;
  - d) any other advice on possible different management measures that would achieve the intended management target with a certain probability by a certain time.

# Annex 1

