

ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BLUE SHARK CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH IOTC FISHERIES

SUBMITTED BY: EUROPEAN UNION

Explanatory Memorandum

The Indian Ocean Blue Shark represents an important by-catch of several fisheries for highly migratory stocks managed by IOTC in its Convention Area. Several UN Resolutions and the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks calls upon States to take national and collective concerted action to improve the implementation of and compliance with effective conservation and management measures for sharks stocks by also facilitating improved species-specific catch and landings data and monitoring of shark catches and the identification and reporting of species-specific biological data.

The Indian Ocean Blue Shark stocks is considered to be with high probability (72,6%) in the green zone of the Kobe plot. Nonetheless, the scientific advice highlights that the current effort and catches are likely to make the stock overfished and subject to overfishing in the near future. In addition, it should be noted that the average estimated catches are 80% higher than the officially reported catches.

It is therefore highly advisable to start putting in place further management measures in the interest of sustainable fisheries while simultaneously adopting measures to improve data collection, monitoring of catches and research on this species.

RESOLUTION 18/XX**ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BLUE SHARK CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH IOTC FISHERIES**

Keywords: Blue shark, Catch limits, scientific research, reference points, data collection, catch reporting

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING the Resolution 17/05 on the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC aims the sustainability of shark fisheries and the protection of sharks;

RECALLING the Resolution 12/01 on the implementation of the precautionary approach calls on IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) to apply the precautionary approach in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement;

RECALLING the Resolution 15/01 on the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence fixes the IOTC data record system;

RECALLING the Resolution 15/02 on the Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) defines the catch and catch related information to be provided by CPCs to the IOTC secretariat;

RECALLING that United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries, adopted annually by consensus, since 2007 (62/177, 63/112, 64/72, 65/38, 66/68, 67/79, 68/71, 69/109,70/75 and 71/123) calls upon States to take immediate and concerted action to improve the implementation of and compliance with existing regional fisheries management organisation or arrangement measures that regulate shark fisheries and incidental catch of sharks, in particular those measures which prohibit or restrict fisheries conducted solely for the purpose of harvesting shark fins, and, where necessary, to consider taking other measures, as appropriate, such as requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached;

CONSIDERING that pending the results of the new stock assessment, it is advisable to avoid an increase in levels of catches of blue shark while simultaneously adopt measures to improve data collection and monitoring of catches.

CONSIDERING that the average estimated catches of blue shark are much higher than the reported catches

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

To ensure the conservation of the blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) stock in the Indian Ocean, Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (CPCs) whose vessels catch blue shark in the IOTC Convention Area shall ensure that effective management measures are in place to support the sustainable exploitation of this stock in line with IOTC's Convention objective by undertaking the following:

Management measures

1) Each CPC shall ensure to maintain its estimated catch of blue shark at the level of its 2015 estimated catch level.

Recording, Reporting, and Use of the Catch Information

- 2) In order to curb the level of unreported catches, each CPC shall ensure that its vessels catching blue shark in association with IOTC fisheries in the Agreement area record their catch in accordance with the requirements set out in the Resolution 15/01 on the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence or any Resolution superseding it.
- 3) CPCs shall implement data collection programmes that ensure improved reporting of accurate blue shark catch, effort, size and discard data to IOTC in full accordance with the Resolution 15/02 on the Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs), or any Resolution superseding it.
- 4) CPCs shall include in their national Annual Reports to the Scientific Committee information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches and to ensure sustainable exploitation and conservation of blue shark.

Scientific Research

- 5) CPCs are encouraged to undertake scientific research on blue shark that would provide information on key biological/ecological/behavioural characteristics, life-history, migrations, post-release survival and guidelines for safe release and identification of nursery grounds, as well as improving fishing practices. Such information shall be made available to the Scientific Committee through the national Annual Reports.
- 6) In light of the results of the next stock assessment of blue shark in 2021, the Scientific Committee shall provide advice, if possible, on options for candidate limit, threshold and target reference points for the conservation and management of this species in the IOTC Convention area.
- 7) The Scientific Committee shall also provide advice, at the latest by 2021, on potential management options for ensuring long-term sustainability of the stock, such as improving selectivity of fishing gears, spatial/temporal closures or minimum conservation sizes.

Final Provision

- 8) Based on the review and the results of the next stock assessment and taking into account the Scientific Committee's advice, the Commission, at its 2021 meeting, shall review this Resolution and consider the adoption of additional conservation and management measures for blue shark as appropriate.