

OUTCOMES OF THE 22nd SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 8TH AUGUST 2018

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 16th Working Party on Billfish (WPB16) of the decision and requests made by the Commission at its 22nd Session, held from 21 – 25 May 2018, specifically relating to the work of the WPB.

BACKGROUND

At the 22st Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 10 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 8 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), as detailed below:

Resolutions

- Resolution 18/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC Area of Competence*
- Resolution 18/02 *On management measures for the conservation of blue shark caught in association with IOTC fisheries*
- Resolution 18/03 *On establishing a list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the IOTC Area of Competence*
- Resolution 18/04 *On bioFAD experimental project*
- Resolution 18/05 *On management measures for the conservation for the conservation of billfish, striped marlin, black marlin, blue marlin and Indo-Pacific sailfish*
- Resolution 18/06 *On establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels*
- Resolution 18/07 *On measures applicable in case of non-fulfilment of reporting obligations in the IOTC*
- Resolution 18/08 *Procedures on a fish aggregating devices (FADs) management plan, including a limitation on the number of FADs, more detailed specifications of catch reporting from FAD sets, and the development of improved fad design to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species*
- Resolution 18/09 *On a scoping study of socio-economic indicators of IOTC fisheries*
- Resolution 18/10 *On vessel chartering in the IOTC Area of Competence.*

Pursuant to Article IX.4 of the IOTC Agreement, the above-mentioned Conservation and Management Measures shall become binding on Members, 120 days from the date of the notification communicated by the Secretariat.

DISCUSSION

The Commission also made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2017, which have relevance for the WPB (IOTC-2018-S22-R):

Status of billfish

Swordfish

A swordfish assessment was carried out in 2017. The stock is not overfished and not subject to overfishing. The most recent catches (31,407 t in 2015) are at the MSY level (31,590 t). However, given the uncertainty of most recent catches from Indonesian fresh tuna longline fisheries there is a possibility that total catches could already be 39,777 t. The catches should not be increased beyond the MSY level.

Striped Marlin

A new stock assessment for striped marlin was carried out in 2017, based on four different models. Only 40% of the CPCs are reporting data. All models were consistent in indicating that the stock has been subject to overfishing, and that the stock biomass is well below the B_{MSY} level. This stock is overfished and subject to overfishing. Current or increasing catches have a very high risk of further decline in stock status. In order to enable the stock to start rebuilding, the Commission should consider a substantial reduction of catches.

Blue Marlin

A blue marlin assessment was carried out in 2016. The stock is not overfished but subject to overfishing; catch since 2012 has been above MSY. In order to achieve the Commission objectives, catches would have to be reduced by 24% compared to the average catch of 2013-2015, to a maximum value of 11,704 t.

Black Marlin

A black marlin assessment was carried out in 2016. The stock is overfished and subject to overfishing. The maximum catch limit should be lower than 40% of current catches.

Indo-Pacific sailfish

57% of data is estimated by the IOTC Secretariat; no countries are submitting data on this stock. An Indo-Pacific sailfish assessment was carried out in 2015. The stock is not overfished but subject to overfishing. The same management advice for 2017 (catches below a MSY of 25,000 t) is kept for 2018

The Commission noted that, in accordance with the MSE work program endorsed at the 21st Session of the Commission, the swordfish MSE was initiated in 2017.

Consideration of management measures related to Billfish

The Commission **adopted** IOTC Resolution 18/05 *On management measures for the conservation of billfish, stripped marlin, black marlin, blue marlin and Indo-Pacific sailfish.*

The complete report of the 22nd Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available for download from the IOTC website: <http://www.iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2018/06/IOTC-2018-S22-RE.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the WPB

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2018–WPB16–04 which outlined the outcomes of the 22nd Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPB and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the SC with the information it needs, in order to satisfy the Commission’s requests, throughout the course of the current WPB meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** the 10 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) adopted at the 22nd Session of the Commission (consisting of 10 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations).