



POSITION

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Smart Fishing Initiative

16TH SESSION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION (IOTC): WWF POSITION

Fremantle, Australia 22 – 26 April 2012

The Indian Ocean's tuna resources are fished by 100s of thousands of fishers, worth in excess of US\$2 billion and if managed in a sustainable manner the value of these fisheries can be continued and potentially increased¹. However without adequate management by the IOTC, these vital natural resources and the livelihoods that depend on them are at risk.

Now is the time for the member states of the IOTC to embrace sustainable management and reward their fisheries with the benefits it offers. The key barriers, issues to resolve and WWF recommendations to the IOTC 16th Session are:

Adopt the precautionary approach

The precautionary approach to fisheries management has been considered a basic element of sustainability since its introduction in the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement. It has been widely adopted in domestic and international law as an underpinning requirement for good management and included in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. It also appears prominently in the FAO Guidelines for Eco-labelling, and is a critical element for consideration in eco-labelling certification schemes such as the Marine Stewardship Council.

¹ Towards global sustainable fisheries the opportunity for transition, Prince's Charities' International Sustainability Unit (2002)

A key tool to implement the precautionary approach to fisheries management is the use of harvest control rules to govern the levels of catch of the target species. WWF call on the IOTC to adopt harvest control rules that are well-defined, pre-agreed and contain mandatory actions in response to changes in indicators of stock status with respect to reference points.

WWF urges the IOTC to adopt the proposed precautionary approach and give priority to efforts leading to sustainable fisheries management for specific stocks.

Quota Allocation System

In order to support a precautionary approach it is vital that the IOTC and its members are working towards controlling capacity and realizing maximum economic benefits by reaching agreement on a comprehensive rights-based management (RBM) system for IOTC tuna fisheries.

RBM systems are a means to create rights -and associated responsibilities- to benefit from the use of a key public good: marine fisheries. WWF recommends that RBM programs include fair and equitable allocation of fishing rights, conservation targets, transparency, monitoring, control, surveillance, and compliance and enforcements arrangements. Given the characteristics of Indian Ocean tuna fisheries, special attention must be given to the needs of small-scale fisheries and fishing dependent communities.

WWF encourages the IOTC to pursue efforts to establish a quota allocation system for tuna and tuna-like species.

Catch Limits

Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack Tuna

WWF urges the Commission to constrain catches within the IOTC Scientific Committees (SC) recommended MSY levels. This means not exceeding 102,900 tonnes for bigeye, 300,000 tonnes for yellowfin and 512,000 tonnes for skipjack

Albacore

WWF is greatly concerned about the potential state of the Albacore stock which is overfished and overfishing is occurring. The IOTC SC clearly highlighted the considerable risk to the stock status at current effort levels.

WWF strongly urges the adoption of conservation and management measures to ensure fishing effort is reduced and the Albacore stock can recover to a sustainable level.

Renew and strengthen expiring Conservation and Management Measures

Several Conservation and Management measures require action by the Commission

WWF calls on IOTC members to renew or strengthen the relevant CMMs to:

- **Implement a limitation of fishing capacity of contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties; and**
- **Prohibit the use of large-scale driftnets on the high seas in the IOTC Area**

Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS)

WWF notes the following from examining past CDS experience, such as with Bluefin tuna that: Significant improvements in estimates of fishing mortality can only be achieved through the use of monitoring schemes that are applied at the point of harvest such as CDS.

Meaningful estimates of total fishing mortality require the introduction of measures to supplement a CDS. This will provide a reliable and timely record of catches, discards and other incidental mortality from commercial operations and, where relevant, also record mortality from recreational fishing.

WWF strongly supports the application of adequate CDS for the IOTC as a priority,

Mitigation of Bycatch Impacts

WWF welcomes recent IOTC moves to prohibit the take of Thresher sharks. WWF reminds IOTC members, participating territories and cooperating non-members of their responsibility to address the bycatch of species and take immediate and appropriate action. A number of environmental NGOs (including WWF and TRAFFIC) have developed a Compendium (2011)² of best practice Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) to address the bycatch of four taxonomic groups.

WWF also urges that IOTC implement the recommendations of the joint technical bycatch working group from Kobe III (the joint tuna RFMO process).

WWF is concerned about the potential impact of purse seine fishing on populations of cetaceans and supports measures to reduce this impact.

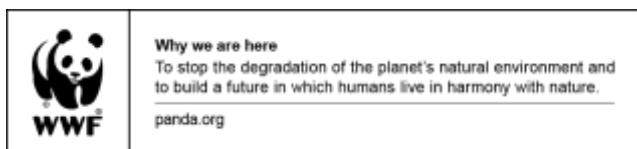
WWF also notes with concern the extremely, limited data on sharks in the Indian Ocean and urges the adoption of improved reporting and conservation measures, including the prohibition on purse seine setting around whale sharks and action to require hammerhead, oceanic whitetip and silky sharks to be release unharmed, to the extent practicable.

² A Compendium of Conservation and Management Measures to address the impacts of species bycatch in tuna RFMOs (2011)
http://www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/joint_fisheries_bycatch_2011.pdf

Our Smart Fishing Vision and Goals:

Vision: The world's oceans are healthy, well-managed and full of life, providing valuable resources for the welfare of humanity.

2020 Goals: The responsible management and trade of four key fishery populations results in recovering and resilient marine eco-systems, improved livelihoods for coastal communities and strengthened food security for the Planet.



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