



ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBACORE CAUGHT IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE

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Explanatory Memorandum

Maintaining or increasing effort in the core albacore fishing grounds is likely to result in further declines in albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) biomass, productivity and CPUE. The impacts of piracy in the western Indian Ocean have resulted in the displacement of a substantial portion of longline fishing effort into the traditional albacore fishing areas in the southern and eastern Indian Ocean. It is therefore unlikely that catch and effort on albacore will decline in the near future unless management action is taken.

Furthermore, i) there is substantial uncertainty concerning the current status of the albacore stock ii) the available evidence indicates considerable risk to the stock status at current effort levels, iii) the current catches 38,946 t in 2011 (average 41,609 t over the last five years) exceed between 20% and 30% the MSY level (33,300 t, range: 31,100–35,600 t), iv) maintaining or increasing effort will result in further declines in biomass, productivity and CPUE and v) the Kobe 2 Strategy matrix indicates that a reduction in fishing mortality of 30%, compared to its 2010 level, would be required to ensure that the stock does not move to an overfished state by 2020.

Albacore are currently caught almost exclusively using drifting longlines (98%), South of 10°S, with remaining catches recorded using purse seines and other gears. Catches of albacore were relatively stable until the mid-1980s. However, catches more than doubled over the period from 1993 (less than 20,000 t) to 2001 (44,000 t). Since 2001 catches have been almost exclusively taken by drifting longlines. Record catches of albacore were reported in 2008 at approximately 44,500 tonnes. Catches for 2010 were estimated to be 42,915 t, while catches for 2011 amount to 38,946 tonnes.

Catches of albacore in recent years have come almost exclusively from vessels from Indonesia and Taiwan,China, although the catches of albacore reported for the fresh tuna longline fishery of Indonesia have increased considerably since 2003 to around 17,000 t, which represents approximately 32% of the total catches of albacore in the Indian Ocean.

In this context, Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties shall make any possible effort to reduce at least by 25% catches of albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) in the Southern Indian Ocean compared to the 2010 reported levels. Moreover, the Working Party on Temperate Tunas and the Scientific Committee shall continue to examine albacore stock structure and evaluate management measures, including spatio-temporal closures, in view of ensuring that the fishing mortality in 2020 does not exceed fishing mortality allowing the stock to deliver MSY and that spawning biomass is maintained at MSY level.

RESOLUTION 13/XX**ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBACORE CAUGHT IN IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE****The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),**

CONSIDERING that albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) is one of the most important species regulated by IOTC;

NOTING that the Working Party on Temperate Tunas and the Scientific Committee recognized that the current level of catches is likely to result in further declines in albacore biomass, productivity and CPUE;

FURTHER NOTING that the impacts of the piracy in western Indian Ocean has resulted in the displacement of a substantial portion of longline fishing effort into the traditional albacore fishing grounds in the southern and eastern Indian Ocean and therefore it is unlikely that catch and effort on albacore will decline in the future unless management action is taken;

BEARING IN MIND that the albacore stock in Indian Ocean is currently subject to overfishing (current fishing mortality > fishing mortality allowing the stock to deliver MSY) and that the 2010 fishing mortality rate needs to be reduced by at least 30% to ensure that fishing mortality in 2020 does not exceed fishing mortality allowing the stock to deliver MSY;

CONSIDERING the recommendations of the 15th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee held in Mahé, Seychelles from 13–15 December 2012;

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

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (hereafter referred to as CPCs) shall endeavour to undertake management measures in order to reduce by 25% the 2010 level of albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) catches by long line vessels targeting albacore south of 30° South latitude flying their flag and operating in the IOTC area of competence. CPCs shall communicate to the IOTC Secretariat such management measures before 1st January 2014, to be implemented from that date.
2. The Working Party on Temperate Tunas and the Scientific Committee shall examine in their respective 2013 sessions the state of albacore stocks, by considering even common working sessions with the ICCAT scientific community to improve the knowledge on the interrelation between the Indian Ocean and Atlantic albacore populations, and evaluate the possibility to implement management measures, including spatio-temporal closures, in view of ensuring that the fishing mortality in 2020 does not exceed fishing mortality allowing the stock to deliver MSY and that spawning biomass is maintained at MSY level.