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**OUTCOMES OF THE 25<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION**PREPARED BY IOTC SECRETARIAT, AUGUST 2021

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**PURPOSE**

To inform participants at the 17<sup>th</sup> Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch Assessment meeting (WPEB17(AS)) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 25<sup>th</sup> Session, held from 7-11 June 2021, specifically relating to the work of the WPEB.

**BACKGROUND**

At the 25<sup>th</sup> Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 3 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 7 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations), as detailed below. The Commission did not **ADOPT** any new proposals for Conservation and Management Measures specifically relevant to the WPEB.

**Resolutions**

- Resolution 21/01 *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC area of competence.*
- Resolution 21/02 *On establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels.*
- Resolution 21/03 *On harvest control rules for skipjack tuna in the IOTC area of competence.*

These Conservation and Management Measures shall become binding 120 days after their distribution to all CPCs. The final versions of the newly agreed CMMs will be made available here in due course: <http://iotc.org/cmms>.

**DISCUSSION**

The Commission made a number of general comments on the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee in 2020, which have relevance for the WPEB. The text from the Commission report is preliminary as at this stage the report has not been finalised.

**Status of sharks**

The Commission **NOTED** the current status of the following sharks:

**Blue shark**

No new stock assessment for blue sharks was carried out in 2020, thus, the stock status is determined on the basis of the 2017 assessment. On the weight-of-evidence available in 2017, the stock status is determined to be not overfished and not subject to overfishing.

**Oceanic whitetip shark**

There is no quantitative stock assessment and limited basic fishery indicators currently available for oceanic whitetip sharks in the Indian Ocean therefore the stock status is unknown.

**Scientific Committee Recommendations**

The Commission **NOTED** the stock status summaries for species of tuna and tuna-like species under the IOTC mandate, as well as other species impacted by IOTC fisheries ([Appendix 5](#)) and considered the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee to the Commission. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2020 list of recommendations as its own.

The Commission **ENDORSED** the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons elected by the Scientific Committee and its subsidiary (scientific) bodies for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2020 Scientific Committee Report.

The Commission **NOTED** that although all scientific meetings had been successfully held virtually in 2020, they were shortened to facilitate the virtual platform. The virtual platforms, however, did result in increased participation to the meetings which the Commission **AGREED** was beneficial. The Commission further **NOTED** that the SC proposed that in the future virtual meetings may still be conducted for certain meetings (such as

data preparatory meetings) in order to reduce the expenses travel imposes on CPCs as well as the IOTC Meeting Participation fund (MPF), but for those meetings requiring closer, in-person, collaborations, physical meetings will be continued as required. The Commission **NOTED** that the MPF was not used for science-related meetings in 2020 because they were all convened by videoconference.

**Consideration of management measures related to ecosystems, bycatch and sharks WPEB**

The Commission **NOTED** a proposal for an amendment to Resolution 13/04 *On the conservation of cetaceans* (document IOTC-2021-S25-PropB). Due to time constraints, the proponents agreed to defer this proposal and continue to work and collaborate on a revised proposal intersessionally, with a view to submitting it at the next Commission meeting. The Commission **NOTED** that the proposal was not based on advice provided by the Scientific Committee. As such, it was suggested that available information on cetaceans should be reviewed by the Scientific Committee so that the future iteration of this proposal can be based on the best available science for the species concerned.

The complete report of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission will be available for download from the IOTC website in the near future.

**RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the WPEB:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2021–WPEB17(DP)–03 which outlined the outcomes of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, specifically related to the work of the WPEB 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 WPEB meeting.