



WWF

POSITION

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Smart Fishing Initiative

18TH SESSION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION (IOTC): WWF POSITION

Colombo, Sri Lanka

1 - 5 June 2014

Advances in fisheries science over many decades have provided scientists and managers with an unprecedented ability to monitor and safeguard fish stocks. Now, in the 21st century, adaptive and progressive fishery managers worldwide are applying proven tools and methods to effectively manage their fisheries and ensure stocks are maintained at levels guaranteeing optimal economic benefits for their respective nations.

The goals of the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) are to ensure the long-term viability of tuna stocks throughout the Indian Ocean region and support and promote the development of sustainable fisheries on these stocks. We believe these goals can be achieved while maintaining a healthy ecosystem and safeguarding the rich biodiversity of the region.

At this time WWF wish to emphasise the following key issues and associated recommendations to the IOTC 18th Session.

Develop Harvest Control Rules Using Appropriate Reference Points

No fishery of any significant scale can claim to be effectively managed in the absence of pre-agreed mandatory actions to be taken in response to changes in indicators of stock status. These changes in stock

status can be measured against defined Reference Points. The actions to be taken by fisheries management bodies in relation to fluctuations by stocks are defined by Harvest Control Rules (HCR) which incorporate the Reference Points as triggers for these actions. HCRs are a fundamental fisheries management tool.

WWF welcomes the adoption, at the 17th Session of the IOTC, of Resolution 13/10 regarding Interim Biological Reference Points and a Decision Framework, and strongly recommend that the IOTC formally evaluate their use and incorporation in Harvest Control Rules.

WWF accords the development of effective Harvest Control Rules for Indian Ocean tuna fisheries the highest priority, and fully supports the IOTC in these efforts, including the facilitation of regional capacity building activities to improve the dialogue among scientists, managers and other stakeholders.

An essential early step is formally identifying management objectives for tuna fisheries which guide scientists in developing appropriate HCRs. WWF fully supports and encourages proposals to further enhance the dialogue between scientists and managers.

Finally, as an increasing number of Indian Ocean states consider certification of their fisheries as sustainable in order to ensure market access or improve profitability, it should be noted by these states that credible third party certification schemes require Harvest Control Rules and appropriate Reference Points to be implemented.

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) procedures and processes form the basis for well-managed fisheries and Indian Ocean coastal states face many challenges in implementing these. Strengthened MCS capability is key to combating illegal fishing, an activity occurring on a large scale in the region which threatens and undermines the social and economic benefits of healthy tuna stocks in Indian Ocean waters. WWF endorse the following actions in support of MCS:

1. Strengthen the reporting and reliability of scientific data

WWF strongly encourages all CPCs to note that effective management of their valuable stocks through stock assessments and production of effective management options by the IOTC Scientific Committee relies primarily on the production and timely reporting of Catch Statistics. Of significant concern, the quality of data collection and levels of reporting with regard to Coastal and/or Artisanal Tuna Fisheries is generally low throughout the region.

WWF encourages all relevant CPCs to commit to full compliance with IOTC resolutions relating to data collection and reporting of catch related information. WWF is pleased to offer support for any Indian Ocean coastal state wishing to improve these aspects of their fisheries and welcome contact from these states to discuss possible options for improvement.

2. Improve the Observers scheme

Levels of observer coverage within the IOTC are currently very low relative to levels achieved in other tuna RFMOs. Appropriate observer coverage is essential in ensuring that IOTC management arrangements in place to safeguard the tuna resources of all CPCs are implemented. WWF strongly recommends development and adoption of plans to increase observer coverage to effective levels.

3. Effective Vessel Registry Scheme

WWF welcomes the amendments to Resolutions 13/02 and 13/07 adopted during the 17th Session of the IOTC recommending that vessels obtain IMO numbers by 1 January 2015.

In order to improve the effectiveness of those Resolutions WWF supports further proposed amendments to make IMO numbers mandatory, with an implementation date no later than 1 January 2016.

4. Implementing a Vessel Tracking System

An important tool to assist in combating IUU fishing, in conjunction with unique vessel identifiers, is a mechanism ensuring adequate coverage of the location and fishing activities of vessels operating in the Indian Ocean region. WWF supports proposals for the implementation of regional VMS systems, and also supports initiatives by coastal states with regards to independent or ancillary costs-effective systems such as Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) for vessels. CPCs wishing to implement any vessel tracking systems are welcome to discuss capacity building support with WWF.

WWF is also willing to assist/facilitate coastal states to look into a cost effective technology for data and information between states by scaling up existing efforts and building on data sharing framework presented by Seychelles.

5. Capacity Building and implementation of International agreements

There is a need to build knowledge and technical capacity within government departments and relevant sectors (including industry) on the impacts of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. It is imperative to address unreported fishing by estimating the extent of unreported catches in the Indian Ocean, increasing engagement with states with low catch reporting and addressing the issue of dual-registry of vessels and flag hopping. It is thus a key concern to promote the ratification of Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) across the Indian Ocean using existing frameworks and assess nations' capacity to implement the agreement.

WWF welcomes any involvement, commitment or action to be taken forward by coastal states on ratification of the PSMA.

Compliance

IOTC members have adopted many highly desirable and necessary Conservation Management Measures. Unfortunately, compliance with a large proportion of these has been low.

WWF encourages all CPCs to recognise the importance of these measures in ensuring the future of their fisheries and the health of the ecosystems, from which they gain tremendous economic wealth, and urge them to work toward strengthening national and regional compliance with the adopted IOTC Conservation and Management Measures.

Allocation

Discussing the issue of catch quotas for member countries has not been an easy task. The IOTC should maintain efforts to determine the appropriate criteria for identifying equitable quotas. WWF urges members to persist with their support for the objectives of the IOTC Technical Committee of Allocation Criteria, to work towards addressing their differences and eventually reach a common stand. Given the characteristics of Indian Ocean tuna fisheries, special attention must be given to the needs of small-scale fisheries and fishing dependent communities. Coastal States will not be able to benefit from the true value of their tuna resources unless an equitable system of allocation is implemented for the Indian Ocean region.

Conservation of Vulnerable Non-Tuna Species

WWF is committed to stronger conservation measures for sharks, rays, sea turtles, seabirds and cetaceans and will support proposals improving the protection for these key ecosystem species. In order to minimise the effect of tuna fishing on vulnerable non-target species, WWF supports all efforts to refine existing live release and safe handling guidelines as well as appropriately researched and designed gear modifications to reduce catch rates of these species.

WWF strongly supports all measures to prohibit the removal of fins from carcasses of retained shark species. In addition, WWF supports the live release, if captured, of the following CITES listed species (based on the revised list that comes into effect in September 2014):

Sharks and Rays (Appendix II):

- All hammerhead species (Family Sphyrnidae)
- Oceanic whitetip (*Carcharhinus longimanus*)
- Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*)
- Basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*)
- Great white (*Carcharodon carcharias*)
- Porbeagle (*Lamna nasus*)
- Manta rays (*Manta spp.*)

And the additional shark species:

- Silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*)
- Shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrichus*)

Sea Turtles (Appendix I):

- Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)
- Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)
- Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*)
- Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)
- Olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

Cetaceans spp. (Appendices I and II).

Establish Effective Management of FADs

The region lacks effective management of FADs in terms of effort and verification. It is critical to agree, at the IOTC level, precautionary limits for the numbers of deployed FADs per vessel. WWF support the use of limited numbers of instrumented FADs by purse seine fleets operating in the Indian Ocean. WWF encourages the Commission to ask the IOTC Scientific Committee to develop advice regarding FAD effort management needs and encourage the CPCs to establish precautionary measures in order to properly manage and monitor FAD fishing activity

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.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

panda.org

For more information

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