

Forum NGO Letter to IOTC

ATTN: Heads of Delegation to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

### **19 Environmental Organizations Call on the IOTC to Rebuild the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock**

At the 25th Session of the IOTC in June 2021, delegates agreed an interim rebuilding plan for overfished yellowfin tuna. However, six countries formally objected, and these objections put the interim rebuilding plan at serious risk of failure. Further, in December 2021 the IOTC Scientific Committee confirmed that the new stock assessment reveals that Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna continues to be overfished with overfishing occurring.

Given the serious risk of further declines in the status of the yellowfin stock, we urge the Commission to **adopt without delay in 2022 an effective long-term rebuilding plan for yellowfin tuna** that gives full effect to the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee and ensure that all CPCs abide by the Resolution.

Specifically, we call on the Commission to **adopt a 30% reduction of catches relative to 2020 levels** that, based on projections in the Scientific Committee, would be required to provide a reasonable chance of stock recovery by 2030.

In addition to the urgent need to rebuild yellowfin tuna stocks, the Commission must also address several issues that impact the health of all tuna stocks in the Indian Ocean, including:

- **Accelerating the adoption and implementation of comprehensive, precautionary harvest strategies.** Specifically in 2022, agree on permanent limit and target reference points for tropical tuna and temperate tuna, and adopt a bigeye tuna management procedure.
- In 2022, endorsing the terms of reference and work plan developed by the IOTC EMS working group and **accelerate work on EM minimum standards so these are adopted in 2023. Require 100% observer coverage** (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those vessels engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024.
- **Adopting robust FAD management measures in line with the [NGO Tuna Forum's Aligned Guidance on FAD Management](#).** Specifically in 2022, allow use by the Scientific Committee of FAD tracking data submitted for compliance purposes (Res. 19-02), and any other data required to inform sustainable FAD management; develop and implement science-based FAD limits consistent with precautionary management objectives for the tropical tunas; establish a timeline for transitioning to 100% biodegradable FADs; require fully non-entangling FADs with no netting or meshed materials; and by 2023 develop a fully transparent FAD-recovery policy, a FAD marking scheme, clearer rules for FAD ownership and stronger rules for activation and deactivation of FAD buoys.
- Amending Resolution 17/05 on the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC to **require fins naturally attached for ALL (i.e. fresh and frozen) sharks without exceptions**, thereby adopting the globally acknowledged best practice to prevent finning.

We the undersigned agree that these critical issues can and must be addressed before and during the Commission's annual meeting.

As a delegate to the IOTC, we urge you to support efforts to adopt an effective long-term yellowfin rebuilding plan that gives full effect to scientific advice, as well as the important issues noted above.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Kind regards,

