

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

In response to the critical nature of yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean, the IOTC adopted Res. 21/01 to address the urgent need to rebuild yellowfin tuna stocks. However, this resolution does not meet the IOTC Scientific Committee's own guidance on what is required to rebuild yellowfin tuna stocks and therefore has little chance of rebuilding the stock. Further, the impact of several countries objecting to Res. 21/01 makes the resolution even less effective. Meanwhile, Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna continues to be overfished with overfishing occurring.

Given the serious risk of further decline in the status of the yellowfin stock and Commission inaction in 2022, **adopt without delay revisions to Res. 21/01 to give full effect to the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee.**

Specifically, we call on the Commission in 2023 to **adopt a minimum 30% reduction of overall yellowfin catches relative to 2020 levels and ensure these reductions are achieved.**

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 in 2023, including:

- **Adopt robust FAD management measures** in line with the [NGO Tuna Forum's Aligned Guidance on FAD Management](#) and implement Resolution 23/02 as adopted.
- **Adopt electronic monitoring terms and definitions (EM), EM Program Standards and EM Data Standards** as recommended by the Scientific Committee.

In addition to these priorities, we encourage all tuna RFMOs to make substantive progress on the following important issues:

- **Accelerate work on, and the adoption and implementation of, robust tuna management procedures.**
- **Require 100% observer coverage** (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those vessels engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024.
- **Adopt and/or strengthen at-sea transshipment measures** in line with best practices, such as those recommended in the [NGO Tuna Forum's Aligned Guidance on At-Sea Transshipment](#).
- **Strengthen compliance mechanisms to ensure processes are transparent and robust so that members are held accountable** for the implementation of all conservation management measures and data reporting requirements and there are clear consequences for non-compliance.

- **Implement precautionary, science-based regulations, best practices and guidelines for avoidance, handling, release and, where appropriate, science-based catch or retention limits,** for all tuna fishing fleets in line with [NGO Tuna Forum's aligned Expectations for Bycatch Mitigation](#) to proactively minimize their impacts upon all non-target and non-retained bycatch species.
- **Require fins naturally attached for ALL (i.e., fresh and frozen) sharks without exceptions,** adopting the globally acknowledged best practice to prevent finning.
- **Establish recommendations for labor and safety standards for crew and observers** on fishing vessels based on relevant international labor conventions.

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,

