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**RESOLUTION 18/05**  
**ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE**  
**BILLFISHES: STRIPED MARLIN, BLACK MARLIN, BLUE MARLIN AND INDO-**  
**PACIFIC SAILFISH**

**Keywords:** Striped marlin, black marlin, blue marlin, Indo-Pacific sailfish, catch limits, scientific research, reference points, data collection, catch reporting

**The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),**

RECALLING Resolution 15/05 [superseded by Resolution 18/05] on conservation measures for striped marlin, black marlin and blue marlin aiming to reduce the fishing pressure on the marlin species;

RECALLING the available scientific information and advice, in particular the IOTC Scientific Committee conclusions, according to which Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and/or Indo-pacific Sailfish are subject to overfishing and, in some cases, overfished with catches in recent years exceeding by far the average catches of the baseline period 2009/2014;

RECALLING Resolution 12/01 on the implementation of the precautionary approach that calls on IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) to apply the precautionary approach in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and further recalling that Article 6.2 therein stipulates that the absence of adequate scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures;

RECALLING that Resolution 15/01 on the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence fixes the IOTC data record system;

RECALLING Resolution 15/02 on the Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) that defines the catch and catch related information to be provided by CPCs to the IOTC secretariat;

CONSIDERING that the SC noted that, catches have increased in 2015 and in 2016 from the average level of 2009-2014 and that the SC therefore recommended that substantial reduction of current catches should be agreed to end overfishing and, whenever possible, to enable the stocks to rebuild ;

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

1. To ensure the conservation of the striped marlin (*Tetrapturus audax*), black marlin (*Makaira indica*), blue marlin (*Makaira nigricans*) and Indo-Pacific sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*) stocks in the Indian Ocean, Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, (CPCs) whose vessels catch those species in the IOTC Area of Competence undertake at least the following national management measures as described below are in place to support the sustainable exploitation of these stocks in line with the IOTC Agreement objectives of ensuring the conservation and optimum utilization of stocks by undertaking the following:

***Management Measures: Catch limits***

2. CPCs shall endeavour to ensure that the overall catches, of the Indian Ocean Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo Pacific Sailfish in any given year do not exceed either the MSY level or, in its absence, the lower limit of the MSY range of central values as estimated by the Scientific Committee.

3. The limits referred to in paragraph 2 correspond to the following:

- a. Striped Marlin: 3,260 t
- b. Black Marlin: 9,932 t
- c. Blue Marlin: 11,930 t
- d. Indo Pacific Sailfish: 25,000 t

4. If the average annual total catch of any of the species referred to in paragraph 2 in any two consecutive years period from 2020 onward exceeds the limits referred to in paragraph 3, the Commission shall review the implementation and effectiveness of the measures contained in this Resolution and consider the adoption of additional conservation and management measures, as appropriate, by also taking into account the advice of the Scientific Committee referred to in paragraph 14.

#### ***Other Management Measures***

5. Pending advice from the Scientific Committee on a joint and/or a species specific minimum conservation size, notwithstanding Resolution 17/04, CPCs shall not retain on board, trans-ship, land, any specimen smaller than 60 cm Lower Jaw Fork Length (LJFL) of any of the species referred to in paragraph 2, but shall return them immediately to the sea in a manner that maximizes post-release survival potential without compromising the safety of crew<sup>1</sup>.

6. In addition, CPCs may consider the adoption of additional fisheries management measures to limit fishing mortality such as: releasing any specimen brought alive on-board or alongside for taking on board the vessel; modify fishing practices and/or fishing gears to reduce juveniles catches; adopting spatial/temporal management measures to reduce fishing in nursery grounds; limiting days at sea and/or fishing vessels exploiting billfishes.

#### ***Recording, Reporting, and Use of the Catch Information***

7. CPCs shall ensure that their vessels catching Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish in the IOTC Area of Competence record their catch in accordance with the requirements set out in Resolution 15/01 on the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence or any Resolution superseding it.

8. CPCs shall implement data collection programmes to ensure accurate reporting of Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish catches, released alive and/or discarded, together with effort, size and discard data to IOTC in full accordance with the Resolution 15/02 on the Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs), or any Resolution superseding it.

9. CPCs shall include in their Annual Reports to the Scientific Committee information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches and to manage fisheries for sustainable exploitation and conservation of Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish.

10. The Commission, shall consider appropriate assistance to developing CPCs for the collection of data on the above-mentioned species.

#### ***Scientific Research and Scientific Committee***

11. CPCs are encouraged to undertake scientific research on key biological/ecological/behavioural characteristics, life-history, migrations, post-release survival and guidelines for safe release, identification of nursery grounds, improving selectivity of fishing practices and fishing gears, for Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin

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<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding paragraph 5, in the case of billfish, when purse seiners unintentionally catch such small fish and freeze them as a part of a purse seine fishing operation, this does not constitute non-compliance as long as such fish are not sold.

and Indo-pacific Sailfish. The results of such researches shall be made available to the Working Party on Billfishes and the Scientific Committee through working documents and their national Annual Reports.

12. The IOTC Working Party on Billfish and the Scientific Committee shall continue their work on assessing and monitoring the status of Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish and provide advice to the Commission.

13. The Scientific Committee and the Compliance Committee shall annually review the information provided and assess the effectiveness of the fisheries management measures reported by CPCs on striped marlin, black marlin, blue marlin and Indo-Pacific sailfish and, as appropriate, provide advice to the Commission.

14. For each of the four species covered by this Resolution, the Scientific Committee shall provide advice:

a. Options to reduce fishing mortality with a view to recover and/or maintain the stocks in the Green zone of the Kobe Plot with levels of probability ranging from 60 to 90% by 2026 at latest. The advice shall be provided on the basis of the current exploitation pattern as well as of its likely change to take into account the advice under point c. below;

b. Options for candidate reference points for their conservation and management in the IOTC Area of Competence;

c. Species specific minimum conservation sizes by taking into account the size at maturity and the recruitment size to the fishery by gear as well as its practicability. Where adequate, due to considerations on technical interaction of fisheries, advice shall provide also a minimum conservation size common to the four species.

#### ***Final Provision***

15. This Resolution supersedes the Resolution 15/05 *On conservation measures for striped marlin, black marlin and blue marlin*.