

RESOLUTION 23/04
ON ESTABLISHING CATCH LIMITS FOR BIGEYE TUNA IN THE IOTC AREA OF
COMPETENCE

Keywords: bigeye tuna, catch limits, management procedure

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING the responsibility of IOTC for the conservation and optimum utilization of tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC area of competence;

RECOGNIZING the need for action to ensure the achievement of IOTC objectives to conserve and manage tuna resources in the IOTC area of competence;

MINDFUL of Article XVI of the IOTC Agreement regarding the rights of coastal States and of Articles 87 and 116 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regarding the right of all States to fish on the high seas subject to their treaty obligations, the rights and duties as well as the interests of coastal States provided for, *inter alia*, in Article 64 UNCLOS and the provisions of Section 2 of Part VII of UNCLOS;

RECOGNIZING the special requirements of developing States, particularly Small Island Developing States, in Article 24 of the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA);

RECOGNIZING *Resolution 22/03 On a management procedure for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence*, which introduced a Management Procedure (MP) for bigeye tuna for the first time in the IOTC;

RECOGNIZING that the 25th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee (SC25) recommended a total allowable catch (TAC) of 80,583 t of bigeye tuna per year for 2024 and 2025, which requires a 15% catch reduction from the 2021 catch level, in accordance with the MP adopted by Resolution 22/03;

CONCERNED by the latest stock assessment on bigeye tuna conducted in 2022 which determined that the stock is overfished and subject to overfishing with a probability of 79%;

RECOGNIZING that the recommended TAC of 80,583 t, which is 15% below the 2021 catch, is the pre-set maximum decrease under the MP, and that the stock status is more pessimistic than implied by that 15% decrease of TAC;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the recommendation by SC25 that the Commission ensure effective implementation of the bigeye tuna TAC, especially taking into consideration the current status of the stock as overfished and subject to overfishing;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that SC25 noted that respecting the bigeye tuna TAC is especially important when taking into consideration the multi-species nature of tropical tuna fisheries and the existing catch limit for yellowfin tuna and the TAC for skipjack tuna;

NOTING that *Resolution 22/03* stipulates that “the Commission shall adopt the TAC based on the outcome of the MP, unless the Scientific Committee identifies exceptional circumstances that require consideration of alternate management actions to be taken by the Commission”;

NOTING that *Resolution 05/01 On conservation and management measures for bigeye tuna* obliges CPCs to limit their catches to their ‘recent’ levels;

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

TAC and Catch Limits

1. The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for bigeye tuna shall be 80,583 t in 2024 and 2025 in accordance with the Management Procedure (MP) established by *Resolution 22/03 On a management procedure for bigeye tuna in the IOTC area of competence*.

2. The annual catch limits as shown in the table below shall be applied in 2024 and 2025.

	Catch Limit (t)
Indonesia	18,605
Seychelles	11,882
EU	17,010
Sri Lanka	4,772
Japan	3,684
China	3,785
Iran	2,105

3. The Commission shall request Taiwan, Province of China to limit their annual bigeye tuna catch in the IOTC area of competence to 11,488 t in 2024 and 2025.

4. Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) specifically referred to in the table in paragraph 2 may apply a two-year management period to manage their catch limits for 2024 and 2025 in totality. Any underage of the 2024 catch limit may be added to the catch limit in 2025. Any overage of the 2024 catch limit shall be deducted from the catch limit in 2025. However, these CPCs are encouraged to keep their catch in 2024 below the annual catch limits. These CPCs shall submit a compliance table using the template in Annex 1 which includes current catches, balance, and adjusted catch limit to the IOTC Compliance Committee, which shall review the compliance tables.

5. Any overages from the 2024-2025 management period shall be deducted from the catch limit for the management period commencing from 2026. Any underage from the 2024-2025 management period shall not be added to the catch limit for the management period commencing in 2026.

6. The CPCs specifically referred to in the table in paragraph 2, may transfer up to a maximum of 20% of their initial catch limits to another CPC subject to prior authorization by the Commission. Both CPCs shall provide information to the IOTC Secretariat in terms of the quantity to be transferred. The IOTC Secretariat shall disseminate this information to all CPCs without delay. The absence of explicit objection to such transfer within 2 weeks from the dissemination by the IOTC Secretariat shall be considered as an authorization by the Commission.

7. CPCs that are not specifically referred to in the table of paragraph 2 are encouraged to maintain catch and effort at their recent 5-years average levels (2017-2021), without prejudice to the development aspirations of those CPCs.

8. If a CPC subject to paragraph 7 catches more than 2,000 t, either in 2024 or 2025, the Commission shall consider establishing a binding catch limit applicable to that CPC from the management period commencing in 2026, if an allocation scheme has not yet been agreed and implemented by the Commission.

9. Nothing in this Resolution shall pre-empt or prejudice the future allocation of fishing opportunities.

Chartering Agreements and Export of Fishing Vessels

10. CPCs shall not grant their consent as a flag CPC to a chartering agreement with CPCs that object to this Resolution in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 5 of the IOTC Agreement.
11. CPCs shall not grant their consent as a chartering CPC to a chartering agreement with flag CPCs that object to this Resolution in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 5 of the IOTC Agreement.
12. CPCs shall not export their flagged authorized fishing vessels to CPCs that object to this Resolution in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 5 of the IOTC Agreement.

Scientific Work

13. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall conduct a comparative analysis of the contribution of all fishing gears to the mortality of bigeye tuna, which shall include both absolute and relative contributions to mortality and stock depletion.
14. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall develop a table as shown in Annex 2 that quantifies the expected impact on maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and SSB_{msy} for bigeye tuna resulting from replacing fishing mortality/catches of any major fishing gear/fishery (e.g., Longline, DFAD fisheries, AFAD fisheries, Purse seine on free school, other fisheries) for consideration by the Commission at its 2025 Session. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall also provide advice on FAD management options, including on, limits on FADs sets, that may be necessary to achieve a replacement of fishing mortality of FAD fisheries with free school fisheries. This analysis shall be conducted for DFADs and AFADs fleets separately.

Final Provisions

15. This Resolution supersedes Resolution 05/01 *On conservation and management measures for bigeye tuna*.

Annex 1

Template of Compliance Table

Year	Initial catch limit		Current catches		Balance		Adjusted catch limit	
	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025

Example of Compliance Table

Year	Initial catch limit (t)		Current catches (t)		Balance (t)		Adjusted catch limit (t)	
	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025
	3,000	3,000	3,100	3,500	400	-100	3,500	3,400

CPC with a catch limit of 3,000 t for 2024 and 2025.

The CPC received a transfer of 500 t from another CPC in 2024. Thus, its adjusted catch limit for 2024 is 3,500 t.

The CPC caught 3,100 t in 2024. Thus, the balance for 2024 is 400, and the balance in 2024 is carried over to/ paid back from the catch limit in 2025. Accordingly, the adjusted catch limit for 2025 is 3,400 t (3,000 + 400).

The CPC caught 3,500 t in 2025. Thus, the balance for 2025 is -100, and this over harvest shall be paid back in the 2nd management cycle commencing in 2026.

Annex 2

Indicative output table for the impact analysis on MSY and SSBmsy for bigeye tuna resulting from replacing fishing mortality of FAD fisheries with free school fishery.

Treatment	Percent change in MSY	Percent change in SSBmsy	Necessary FADs control measure(s)
10% replacement	<i>XX%</i>	<i>YY%</i>	<i>ZZ%</i> reduction of FADs set Limit on FADs set: <i>AA sets</i>
20% replacement			
50% replacement			
100% replacement			