

## Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

The Agreement for the Establishment of the IOTC was approved at the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Conference and adopted by the Council at its 105<sup>th</sup> Session in November 1993. The Agreement entered into force with receipt of the 10<sup>th</sup> instrument of acceptance on March 27, 1996. The aim of the IOTC is to promote cooperation among its members with a view to ensuring, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilization of fish stocks covered by the Agreement and to encourage sustainable development of fisheries based on such stocks. The IOTC has authority over tuna and tuna-like species, with a main focus on albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tunas.

The members are Australia, Belize, China, Comoros, Eritrea, European Community, France, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sultanate of Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, and Yemen. Senegal and South Africa are cooperating non-contracting Parties.

The main functions of the IOTC are, among other things: (a) to review the conditions and trends of the stocks and to gather, analyze, and disseminate scientific information, catch and effort statistics, and other relevant data; (b) to encourage, recommend, and coordinate research and development activities in respect of the stocks and fisheries covered by the Agreement; and (c) to keep under review the economic and social aspects of the fisheries based on the stocks covered by the Agreement. In order to achieve these ends, the Commission may, by a two-thirds majority, adopt, on the basis of scientific evidence, conservation and management measures to ensure the conservation and optimum utilization of the stocks covered by the Agreement. IOTC has passed measures that are comparable to the other tuna RFMOs including: positive and negative vessel lists, VMS, trade restrictive measures, statistical document requirements for bigeye tuna, a shark finning ban, port state measures, a ban on discards in the purse-seine fishery, and measures regarding sea turtles and sea birds. In March of 2011, with input from the United States, IOTC adopted a binding measure prohibiting vessels from intentionally fishing in association with data buoys. The current IOTC conservation and management measure for tropical tunas was adopted in April 2012 and is applicable through the end of 2014.

The Commission is the main decision-making body and is composed of all Members. There is also a Scientific Committee which advises the Commission (and any sub-commissions which may be established) on research and data collection, status of stocks, and management issues. Seven Working Parties-- Tropical Tunas, Neritic Tunas, Billfishes, Temperate Tunas, Tagging, Methods and Bycatch-- report to the Scientific Committee. The Data Collection and Statistics Working Party was transformed into a sub-Committee of the Scientific Committee in 2004.

The United States has attended the annual meetings of IOTC as an observer since 2007.

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