



# 2023 IOTC Position Statement

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GLOBAL TUNA ALLIANCE

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# TOP LEVEL ASKS

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## Yellowfin Rebuilding

IOTC agrees a resolution that specifies how the yellowfin stock could be rebuilt in two generations.

## Bigeye Rebuilding

IOTC agrees a resolution that specifies how the bigeye stock could be rebuilt in two generations.

## Harvest Strategies

- Accelerate development and implementation of comprehensive, precautionary harvest strategies, including precautionary reference points and harvest control rules (HCRs).
- Move from the current system of opaque allocations (where they exist) based on political negotiations to a systematic and transparent system of fair and equitable fishing opportunities for bigeye to all participants according to international law.

## Observer Coverage

- Where lacking, adopt minimum standards for electronic monitoring (EM) data, and a work plan with milestones and deadlines for the implementation of best practice EM and e-reporting, with necessary mechanisms to ensure compliance.
- 100% observer coverage requirement (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024.

## Port State Measures Agreement

IOTC adopts port state measures (PSMs) that are aligned with PSMA requirements.

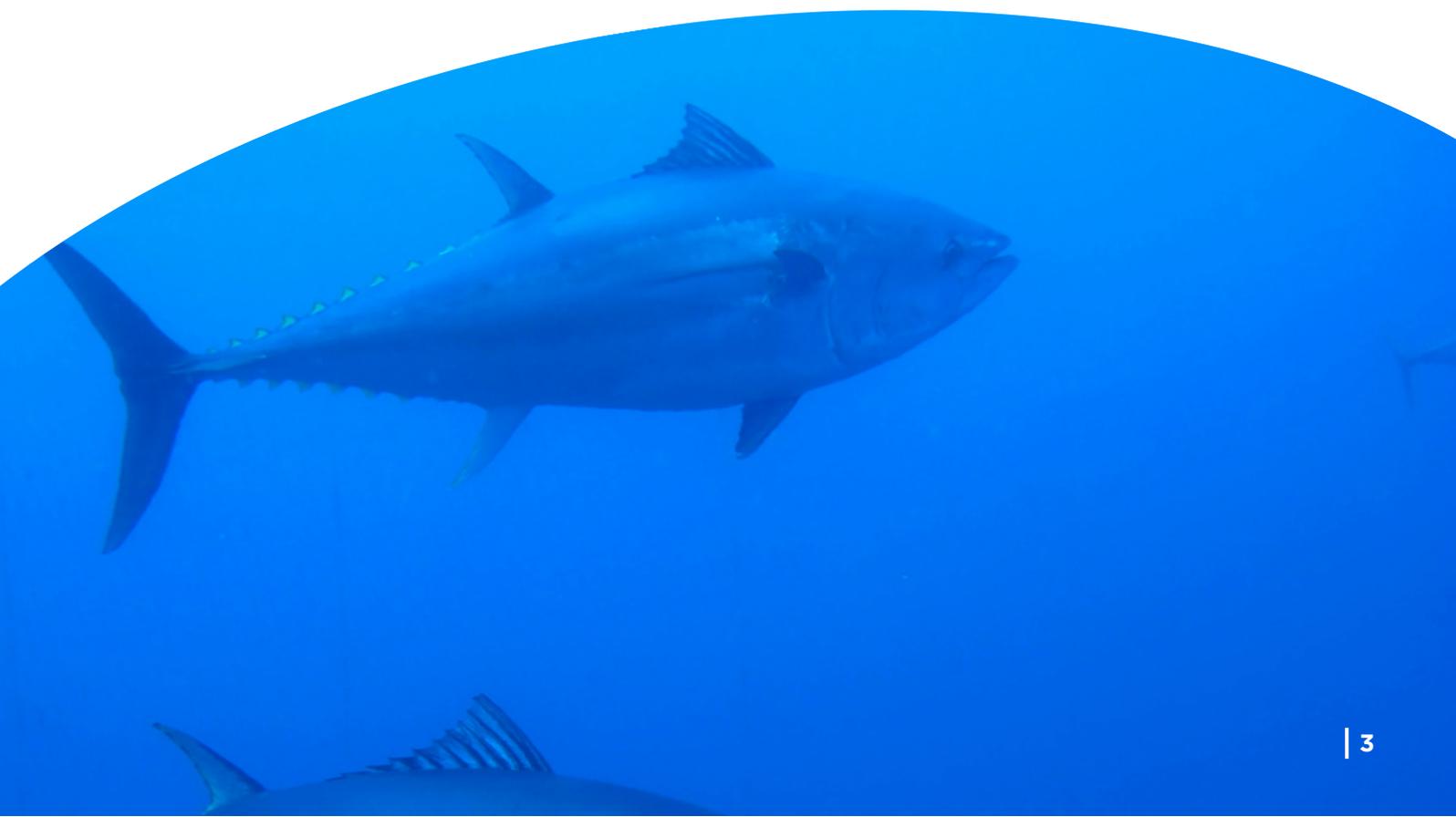
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# YELLOWFIN REBUILDING

## *What is the issue?*

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- Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna has been overfished since 2015.
- From 2016-2020 average catches of yellowfin tuna (434,383 tonnes) were determined to be above the estimated maximum sustainable yield (MSY) level of 403,000 tonnes.
- In June 2021, IOTC delegates agreed on an interim rebuilding plan for overfished yellowfin tuna. The measure, resolution 21/01, provided a robust framework on catch reductions and proposed an overall total allowable catch (TAC) of 401,011 tonnes.
- However as of January 2022, this measure was weakened with formal objections submitted by six countries, putting the interim rebuilding plan at serious risk of failure.
- In December 2021, the new stock assessment presented in the IOTC Scientific Committee revealed that Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna continues to be overfished, and the MSY estimate for the Indian Ocean stock was recalculated at 349,000 tonnes. This is significantly below the catch limit of the interim rebuilding plan (resolution 21/01).
- Furthermore, the scientific advice in 2021 showed that if 2020 catch levels were reduced by 30%, there is a more than 67% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2030. This equates to a yellowfin catch at 302,837 tonnes.
- At the 26th Session of the IOTC in May 2022, two approaches for addressing yellowfin overfishing were tabled, but some countries objected to both without offering alternatives or a rationale.
- Many countries did agree to take considerable cuts, but were frustrated with the lack of compromise from others.



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## *What are we calling for?*

- We request the IOTC secretariat schedules adequate time to discuss yellowfin rebuilding proposals.
- CPCs should agree a resolution that specifies how the yellowfin stock could be rebuilt in two generations.
- The resolution should apply to all fishing vessels targeting tuna and tuna like species in the Indian Ocean, regardless of the length of the vessel and area of operation.
- We encourage CPCs to discuss proposals in advance of the meeting.
- If catches are reduced to <70% of 2020 levels there is a >67% probability of being above BMSY in 2030.
- If catches are reduced to <70% of 2020 levels there would be a >67% probability of ending overfishing ( $F < F_{msy}$ ) by 2023 and also by 2030.
- Accordingly, reduce yellowfin catches to below 302,837t.
- In addition to the reduction in catch as set out above, the IOTC must ensure that all CPCs must comply with the resolution.
- GTA recognises that as far as possible, all CPCs and gear types are now required to play their part in delivering catch reductions going forwards.
- Amend IOTC Agreement to remove ability of CPCs to make spurious objections.



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# BIGEYE REBUILDING

## *What is the issue?*

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- The IOTC adopted a management procedure (MP) for bigeye tuna in 2022.
- The MP-based catch limit is scheduled to be implemented for the first time next year.
- Because bigeye is both overfished and experiencing continued overfishing, the first-ever catch limit for the stock will require a reduction in catch from recent averages of around 90,000t annually to the MP-derived annual limit of 80,583t for 2024 and 2025.
- This will be the first ever catch limit for the stock, despite it being identified as subject to overfishing – and potentially overfished – several years ago in 2019.

## *What are we calling for?*

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- CPCs should agree a resolution that specifies how the bigeye stock could be rebuilt in two generations.
- At a minimum, ensure that bigeye catches do not exceed the limit set by the adopted Management Procedure in Res. 22/03



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# HARVEST STRATEGIES

## *What is the issue?*

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- Harvest strategies (or management procedures) provide a pre-agreed framework to facilitate efficient, science-based decision-making to achieve a long-term vision for the stock and fishery.
- Although the IOTC has been progressing the development of management procedures, it has not yet agreed on a complete management procedure for any of the key IOTC species.
- While IOTC has successfully established the catch limit (or 'size of the catch pie') through harvest strategy adoption, the sharing of the slices of the pie has proven incredibly challenging.
- IOTC has been negotiating allocation arrangements among members since 2011.
- In addition, the skipjack catch limit based on the harvest control rule (HCR) has been exceeded in every year since its adoption.

## *What are we calling for?*

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- Adoption of additional measures to prevent continued exceedance of the HCR-derived TAC for skipjack tuna.
- Allocation is a critical component of fisheries management. While RFMOs have defined priorities and values, they have not systematized their application to resource allocation. As such, the actual allocation of tuna resources is shaped more by politics, rather than principles. We call on the IOTC to move from the current system of opaque allocations (where they exist) based on political negotiations to a systematic and transparent system of fair and equitable fishing opportunities for all participants according to international law.



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# OBSERVER COVERAGE

## *What is the issue?*

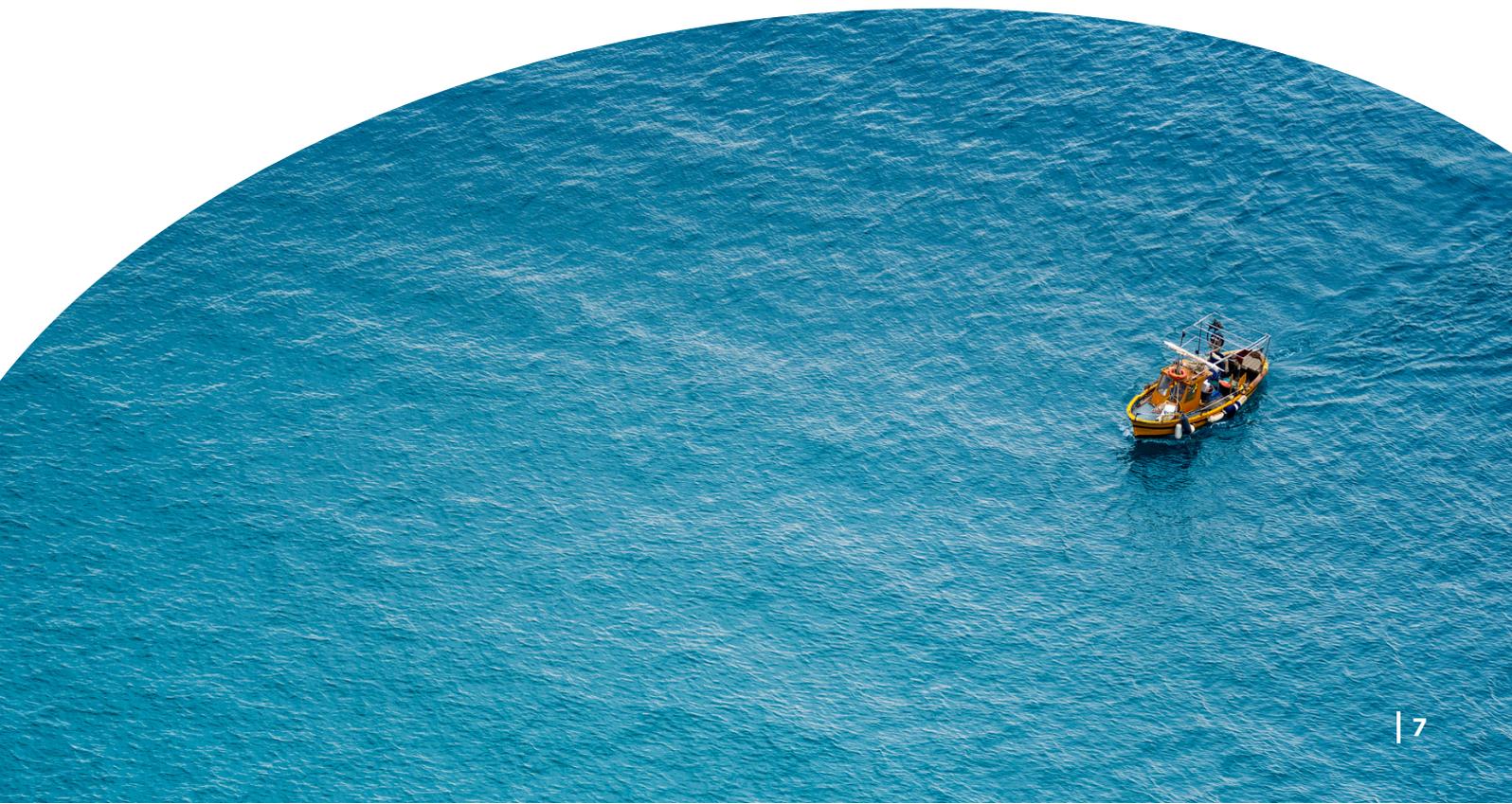
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- Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort and species interactions.
- Low levels of observer coverage limit the availability of independent catch and operational data, reducing the accuracy of stock assessments and effectiveness of conservation management measures.
- The IOTC currently requires only 5% observer coverage for longline vessels larger than 24 meters operating within the Convention Area.
- While the IOTC has endorsed minimum electronic monitoring (EM) standards for purse seine vessels, it has not yet adopted them for all gear types or carrier vessels.
- At-sea transshipment continues to rise in the IOTC area and has been linked to IUU fishing activities and labour abuses when monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures are insufficient.

## *What are we calling for?*

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- Adopt in 2023 the EM terms and definitions, EM Program Standards and EM Data Standards as recommended by the Scientific Committee
- Require 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024.



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# PORT STATE MEASURES AGREEMENT

## *What is the issue?*

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- The PSMA, adopted in 2009 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), requires parties to place tighter controls on foreign-flagged vessels seeking to enter and use their ports to land or transship fish.
- Tuna RFMOs also regulate member nations' port State controls as part of their management measures. This ensures that these governments have minimum standards in place, regardless of whether they are a party to the PSMA.
- The IOTC adopted a Resolution on Port State Measures in 2010, which was amended in 2016.
- However, the exclusion of ports by CPCs that are outside of the IOTC Convention Area undermine the global reach of Port State measures and provide potential safe havens for IUU vessels, operators and vessels that support IUU fishing activities.

## *What are we calling for?*

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- Amend Res. 16/11 to prioritize vessels for inspection in port and expand the measure to include ports of CPCs that are outside of the IOTC Convention Area.





## CONTACT

Albert Arias Arthur  
Director of Outreach and Engagement  
[albert@globaltunaalliance.com](mailto:albert@globaltunaalliance.com)

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