

RESOLUTION 22/01
ON CLIMATE CHANGE AS IT RELATES TO THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION

Keywords: Climate Change, Precautionary Approach

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

RECOGNISING international initiatives to address the impacts of climate change including through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement;

NOTING the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;

MINDFUL of the work of the Scientific Committee and the Working Parties in assessing the impacts of climate change on tuna stocks and by-catch, and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent or associated with the target stocks in the Convention Area;

CONVINCED of the importance of addressing the potential impacts of climate change and other environmental degradation on target stocks, non-target species, and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent or associated with the target stocks in the IOTC Area of Competence;

BEARING IN MIND that the Agreement for the implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) was adopted in cognisance of the need to avoid adverse impacts on the marine environment, preserve biodiversity, maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems and minimise the risk of long-term or irreversible effects of fishing operations;

RECALLING that Article 5 of the UNFSA requires States to assess the impacts of fishing, other human activities and environmental factors on target stocks and species belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon the target stocks and to adopt, where necessary, conservation and management measures for species belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon the target stocks, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened;

CONCERNED by the findings of the 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change with high confidence that climate change is causing the redistribution of marine fish stocks, increasing risk of transboundary management conflicts among fisheries users, and negatively affecting equitable distribution of food provisioning services as fish stocks shift from lower to higher latitude regions, thereby increasing the need for climate-informed transboundary management and cooperation

RECALLING the concern of the 23rd Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tuna that changes in ocean temperatures could have direct impacts on tuna spatial distributions and stock dynamics.

FURTHER RECALLING that the 24th Session of the Scientific Committee noted the importance of understanding the impact of climate change in particular on tropical tuna;

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

1. The Commission shall in its deliberations, to the extent possible, including in the development of conservation and management measures, take into account scientific information available from the Scientific Committee and other relevant international processes on the potential impacts of climate change on tuna stocks, bycatch and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent on or associated with tuna stocks.

2. The Commission shall support further scientific research into the relationship between climate change, tuna fisheries and tuna stocks, bycatch, and ecosystem or dependent on or associated with the tuna stocks, including research to inform potential measures to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change impacts.
3. The IOTC Scientific Committee, when requested by the Commission, shall consider and where possible, advise on the potential impacts of climate change on highly migratory fish stocks and any related impacts on the economies, food security and livelihood of CPCs in particular developing States among them Least Developing States and Small Island Developing States.
4. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall consider how climate change and fishing activities may be related and provide advice to the Commission on the potential implications for these relationships for the conservation and management of tuna and associated stocks.
5. The IOTC Executive Secretary, with the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee, upon the availability of supplementary funds, shall undertake capacity-building programs in particular in the developing coastal States among them the Least Developed States and Small Island Developing States, to improve climate change science and the understanding of climate change impacts on tuna stocks, bycatch and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent on or associated with the tuna stocks.
6. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall seek funding for the implementation of climate change related scientific works and capacity building programs through various funding mechanisms such as the Global Environmental Facility, World Bank and others for the implementation of this resolution.
7. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall propose for endorsement by the Commission, for its 2023 session, options and alternatives to reduce the environmental impacts of the IOTC activities related to headquarters' operation and meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. In particular, the Secretariat is requested to propose guidelines to reduce the impact of in person meetings, including a list of meetings to be held virtually.