



# MINUTES

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## **36<sup>th</sup> Meeting of LDAC Working Group 1 Highly Migratory (Tuna and Tuna-like) Stocks and their RFMOs**

**Tuesday, 14 October 2025 - 10:00-13:00h**

**Venue: NH Brussels Carrefour de l'Europe, Brussels**

**Chair: Anne-France Mattlet / Vice-Chair: Ignacio Fresco**

### **1. Welcome by the Chair.**

The WG1 Chair, Ms. Mattlet, welcomed the participants to the Working Group 1 meeting and thanked members and registered observers including representatives from the European Commission, Member States and scientific organisations for their participation.

The agenda and the minutes from the previous WG1 meeting were adopted without amendments. The Chair invited members to actively participate in the discussions and emphasised the importance of WG1 in preparing LDAC advice related to tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

### **2. Overview of Stock Status and Catch Trends of Tropical Tuna in RFMOs.**

Dr. Gorka Merino (AZTI) presented an overview of the current status of tropical tuna stocks based on recent scientific assessments from RFMOs as well as ISSF summary reports.

Key points included:

- Most tropical tuna stocks globally remain in good condition and are located in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot (i.e. neither overfished nor subject to overfishing).
- Bigeye tuna (BET) in the Indian Ocean remains the only stock of concern, although it is close to MSY levels.
- Recent years have seen high level of catches across several oceans while abundance indices have not shown significant declines.
- Climate change and ocean warming are being analysed as potential drivers of changes in tuna productivity and distribution.



Dr. Merino also referred to ongoing Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) processes that aim to provide more stable and predictable management systems for tropical tuna stocks.

During the discussion, members raised questions regarding the scope of the MSE framework and the possibility of managing multiple stocks or species simultaneously. Participants also discussed recent increases in catches and how management frameworks should respond to natural fluctuations in stock abundance.

### **3. Consultation Process before RFMO Annual Meetings – example of ICCAT**

Mr. Stijn Billiet (DG MARE Unit B2) explained the European Commission's approach to consultation with stakeholders prior to RFMO annual meetings.

DG MARE B2 unit coordinates EU participation in 17 international regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) and seeks to gather stakeholder input before preparing negotiating mandates with the Council and EP. The Commission highlighted the value of receiving advice from Advisory Councils early in the process so it can be considered for incorporation in their technical arguments before closing their political mandate.

Mr. Billiet explained that DG MARE may organise broader stakeholder meetings than the LDAC open to interested parties in order to ensure transparency and gather additional input.

During the discussion, several members expressed concerns about this approach. Participants stressed that Advisory Councils were created precisely to provide structured stakeholder input and that their role should remain central in the consultation process.

Members highlighted the need to ensure meaningful participation of stakeholders in RFMO decision-making processes and called for strengthened dialogue between DG MARE and Advisory Councils.

A proposal was raised to strengthen coordination between Advisory Councils through the creation of a possible Inter-AC Focus Group to work on horizontal issues and joint advice for RFMOs such as ICCAT.

### **4. IOTC – Outcomes of the 29th Annual Session (Réunion, April 2025).**

The lead negotiator of DG MARE, Mr. Marco Valletta, presented the outcomes of the 29th Annual Meeting of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Mr Valleta was assisted by his colleague Jessica Demblon.

Overall, the meeting was considered one of the most successful in recent years.



Main outcomes from IOTC 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Session included:

- Adoption of 14 resolutions.
- Agreement on catch limits and allocation for skipjack tuna (SKJ) under a management procedure.
- The EU obtained approximately 20% of the TAC allocation for SKJ.
- Renewal of catch limits for bigeye tuna (BET), including a 15% increase in the TAC.
- Adoption of measures on shark conservation including retention bans for mako sharks under certain conditions.
- A new regional framework for transshipment aimed at improving transparency and monitoring.

LDAC WG1 members congratulated the work made by the EU and welcomed the progress made in the IOTC. However, they noted that important challenges still remain regarding compliance and monitoring systems and level playing field between operators from non-EU vessels. Participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that all CPCs comply with existing measures and contribute fairly to conservation efforts.

## **5. Cross-RFMO Work on Conservation and Management of Sharks**

Members discussed ongoing work on the development of a cross-RFMO approach to shark conservation led by Dr. Iris Ziegler (representing Seas at Risk).

The objective of this initiative is to identify shark species most affected by tuna fisheries, improve scientific knowledge on by-catch and mortality rates, and explore horizontal conservation and management measures that could be applied across tuna RFMOs.

Members recognised the value of continuing this work while highlighting the importance of considering operational realities and specificities of fisheries and ensuring adequate scientific data.

The Chair suggested allowing members one month to provide written input and comments before deciding on the next steps for developing this initiative.

## **6. Closure of the Meeting.**

With no further items on the agenda, the Chair thanked participants for their constructive contributions, interpreters for their valuable work and Secretariat for organizing the meeting and preparing all the agendas and working documents. Meeting was closed at 1pm.



## **SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AGREED**

### **1. Inter-AC Coordination on ICCAT**

Beyond the current dialogue between Chairs, Vice Chairs and Secretaries, the WG1 Chair and Vice Chair proposed exploring the creation of a Inter-AC Focus Group with members from 4 interested ACs to coordinate and look together joint advice on horizontal ICCAT issues in 2026. The LDAC Secretariat will work with the co-Chairs of WG1 to develop a proposal in writing that will be shared with 4 ACs Chairs, Vice Chairs and Secretaries to assess feasibility and agree on a common way forward.

### **2. Preparation of RFMO Advice (WCPFC)**

The LDAC Secretariat will circulate the draft advice to members for comments before submitting it to the Executive Committee for approval.

### **3. Cross-RFMO on Conservation and Management of Sharks**

The Secretariat will circulate a call for interest to WG1 and WG2 members including the proposal presented during the meeting. Members will have one month to provide input before determining the next steps.

**END**



## ANNEX I. LIST OF ATTENDEES

### WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

1. Anne-France Mattlet. Europêche Tuna Group
2. Ignacio Fresco. OCEANA
3. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA
4. Julio Morón. OPAGAC
5. Vanya Vulperhorst. OCEANA
6. Julien Daudu. EJF
7. Anertz Muniategui. ANABAC
8. Ángela Cortina. Opnapa / OPP3
9. Francisco Fernández. OPROMAR
10. Rob Banning. PFA
11. Béatrice Gorez. CFFA-CAPE
12. Javier Garat. CEPESCA
13. Xavier Leduc. UAPF
14. Luis Vicente. ADAPI
15. Raúl García. WWF
16. Juan Manuel Trujillo / Andrea Albertazzi. ETF
17. Juana Parada. ORPAGU
18. Emil Remisz. High Seas FPO
19. Edelmiro Ulloa. Acemix / Agarba
20. Sergio López. OPP Burela



21. Juana Parada. ORPAGU
22. Michel Goujon. ORTHONGEL
23. Daniel Voces. EUROPECHE

#### **OBSERVERS**

24. Gorka Merino. AZTI (online)
25. Marco Valletta (DG MARE, IOTC)
26. Jessica Demblon ( DG Mare, IOTC)
26. Stijn BILLIET (DG MARE, HoU B2 - RFMOs)
27. Yago Rosado. OCEANA

#### **LDAC SECRETARIAT**

28. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC
29. Manuela Iglesias. LDAC
30. Marta de Lucas. LDAC (online)