



LDAC ADVICE

Recommendations to invest more resources into cooperation in the Indian Ocean, beginning with IOTC's 27th Commission

Date of Adoption: 17 April 2023

Ref: R-05-23/WG1

Introduction

As part of the FAO, the IOTC must respect the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), which requires cooperation in good faith and with transparency between coastal states and fishing states. Considering the recent agreement of a UN BBNJ Treaty and the recognition of the role of RFMOs in high seas, it is key to ensure IOTC's good governance, starting with the forthcoming 27th session of IOTC that will take place in Mauritius from May 8th to 12th, 2023.

The LDAC believes that the European Union should endeavor to increase its efforts to initiate or consolidate cooperative relationships in the Indian Ocean in order to create a favorable ground for collaboration and understanding. The LDAC would be ready to be a facilitator and to support DG MARE to organise meetings with relevant coastal states and/or SFPA partners in third countries when necessary.

Recommendations from the LDAC:

In order to reduce the gap created last years between fishing nations and coastal states, the LDAC recommends that the European Commission:

- better collaborates with Indian Ocean countries throughout the year for better results within the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), using its own network of external services, offices of representation, embassies and institutes, as well as concerned Member States'.
- uses SFPAs and preferential trade agreements to better analyse and prepare for IOTC's negotiations and works towards proposals informed by science with IOTC countries, notably Seychelles, Mauritius, and Madagascar, including by tabling joint proposals to the IOTC.
- invests more resources in the science not only for strengthening European physical participation to RFMO's scientific meetings and workshops, but also by supporting coastal states' scientists' capacity building by establishing regular exchanges with Indian Ocean's countries scientists, including by organizing events on fisheries and environment resources and by financing projects for sustainable fisheries.



- advocates for and supports comprehensive, effective data reporting and collection systems at IOTC.
- facilitates meetings and discussions between DG TRADE, DG INTPA, DG TAXUD and DG MARE to have a global approach and exchanges with IOTC members.
- facilitate exchanges and meetings between the tuna supply chain's representatives (retail and food services, direct suppliers), relevant civil society organisations, and IOTC's members' representatives so they can better understand EU market's requirements and the need of developing harvest strategies, observer coverage and other measures in order to meet those requirements.

More broadly, the LDAC recommends that in future negotiations for IOTC, the European Commission aims at:

- increasing transparency to ensure good information of local stakeholders. For example, see the 2020 LDAC advice applied to SFPAs¹.
- evolving toward an allocation system that gives priority to those who fish sustainably and contribute most to local economies in the on-going discussions on access allocation, as addressing overcapacity in the Indian Ocean tuna fisheries remains essential.
- improving transparency and compliance including through the adoption of the amendments in appendix V of the IOTC rules of procedure for an improved and transparent compliance mechanism allowing for accountability (currently submitted as IOTC-2023-CoC20-13).
- ensuring human and labour rights as well as security and safety for crew members; and guarantee the safety and security of human observers on tuna vessels; this would also ensure a better level playing field for the European fleet.
- strengthening scientific research on bycatch mitigation and improving the conservation and management of endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species while applying the precautionary approach.
- credibly promoting the EU's standards in the world by ensuring it is irreproachable at home, particularly when it comes to fighting illegal and unreported fishing².

¹ https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC_Advice_on_improving_SFPAs_evaluationsR.13.20.WG4.pdf

² https://ldac.eu/images/EN_LDAC_Advice_LPF_25May2021.pdf (page 5)



**Minority Joint Statement by: International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF), Seas at Risk (SAR),
Tuna Protection Alliance (TUPA) and Global Tuna Alliance (GTA)**

IPNLF, SAR, TUPA and GTA are concerned that the increasing numbers of objections to RFMO measures undermine the fundamental principle, established under the UNFSA, that States should cooperate to ensure conservation and promote the objective of the optimum utilization of fisheries resources both within and beyond exclusive economic zones. The Agreement further sets out principles for the conservation and management of those fish stocks and establishes that such management must be based on the precautionary approach and the best available scientific information.

Recognising this, and while being supportive of the recommendation by LDAC to invest more resources into cooperation in the Indian Ocean, beginning with IOTC's 27th Commission, we are highly concerned by the EU Commission's stated intention to object to resolutions after they have been adopted according to the IOTC's rules of procedure. As a general principle, we would urge the EU to refrain from objecting against resolutions which have been duly adopted and would further urge all IOTC members to cooperate more effectively and to not use objections to undermine the effective management of Indian Ocean tuna and tuna-like resources, and their associated environments.
