



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/ASB/ARES(2026)

Dear Mr. Rodriguez,

Thank you for the valuable insights provided by the Long Distance Advisory Council in preparation of the 30th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), taking place on 11-15 May 2026. We have carefully reviewed your recommendations and appreciate the substantial effort made.

I concur with your perspective on the necessity for holistic measures that encompass all fleets and Contracting Parties (CPCs). These measures should ensure sustainability, science-based decision-making and a level playing field as the foundation for IOTC decisions. Your emphasis on socio-economic evaluations, accurate reporting and decision-making processes aligned with these principles is well noted.

In preparation of the 30th Session of the IOTC, the EU has taken a proactive stance and put forward an ambitious array of proposals, touching on a diversity of topics. Swordfish will be one of our priorities for this meeting with the aim to implement the TAC from the recently adopted Management Procedure by allocating catch limits. This is a particularly sensitive issue given the importance of this stock for our coastal communities and our surface longline fleet. In that regard, we have tabled a joint proposal with Australia for a fair repartition of catches based on the recent available reference periods, ensuring that the distribution remains in line with the current fishing capacity of the various fleets, including the EU fleet. If adopted, this proposal would ensure both the sustainability and economic viability of this fishery.

Concerning yellowfin tuna, while we recognise the Scientific Committee advice, we are also mindful of the issues linked to Resolution 21/01, in particular objections. Our engagement in discussions on yellowfin tuna will be conditional to the pre-requisite that any new Resolution covers all IOTC fleets and that the efforts done by our fleet to substantially improve the stock status are duly taken into account.

Our position on *elasmobranchs* (sharks and rays) remains consistent with that of previous IOTC meetings, where we supported the full enforcement of the fins naturally attached policy, the conservation of vulnerable species and the sustainable management for commercially targeted species. In this context, one of our proposals concerns the

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conservation of mobulid rays and aims at improving the safe release of bycatch. In that regard, I would like to commend the leadership of your members in sharing good practices that should improve the practices of all Indian Ocean fleets. Beyond the various proposals, sharks will remain one of our focus areas with discussions on a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for blue shark, compliance with existing Resolutions, and potential implementation of the safe release guidelines for sharks as recommended by the Scientific Committee. Similarly to last year, I draw your attention to our proposal for the extension of the ban on the use of driftnets, a highly non-selective gear.

Lastly, on the side of monitoring, control and surveillance, the EU will continue its push to improve the existing framework. Regarding at-sea transshipments, we share your concerns regarding the risks posed by this practice and the need for its strengthened oversight and will be proposing again to limit it to vessels of IOTC CPCs. I can confirm that we also tabled, jointly with France OT, a proposal on a High Seas Boarding and Inspection scheme in the IOTC, reaffirming our commitment to enhance the capacity to control IOTC fisheries. In addition, this year, we will propose to extend the scope of the Record of Authorised Vessels (RAV) with the goal to obtain more information about fleet capacity in the Indian Ocean, as well as to increase the monitoring on those vessels. These measures aim to ensure the sustainable harvesting of our shared resources and promote a level playing field, bringing IOTC standards closer to the ones of the EU.

The potential for reaching an agreement on each of these proposals will, of course, depend on the readiness of other parties to engage in good-faith negotiations. Rest assured, the EU delegation will exert every possible effort, including upstream and my personal engagement, to secure a positive outcome, with the overarching goal of promoting sustainable fisheries in the Indian Ocean.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA