



LDAC ADVICE ON IOTC 2026

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL MEASURES FOR TROPICAL TUNA, SWORDFISH AND SHARKS STOCKS.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HORIZONTAL TOPICS: OBSERVER COVERAGE, MCS, AND FIGHT AGAINST IUU FISHING, TRANSHIPMENTS, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Date of adoption by Executive Committee: 12 March 2026

Ref. R-14-Ej.19 (2025-2026)/WG1

**30th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
(Male-Maldives, 11-15 May 2026)**

1. Rationale

IOTC is an important RFMO for the EU, including as a coastal CPC, in terms of economic activity for the EU fishing and processing operators. This RFMO is also important as sustainable food systems and supply to the EU market, as the utilization of tuna resources means a significant contribution to regional food security and regional economic activity and creates jobs and income for local communities and EU business.

The EU fleet contributes not only to the economy of its mainland and outermost territories, but also, through licensing agreements, to the economies of several coastal states in the Indian Ocean region, using ports, local services, supplies, facilities, and supplying local plants with raw materials.

The LDAC would like to see the adoption of holistic measures covering all fleets and CPCs to ensure a level playing field for the long-term sustainability of the tropical tuna, tuna-like and shark stocks.

The LDAC reiterate its commitment to promoting a responsible and sustainable fishing activities in compliance with maritime, environmental, social, and sanitary rules, as well as the best standards and science-based decisions.



2. Overarching recommendations

In view of the above, the LDAC wishes that all future IOTC recommendations are based on three prerequisites/elements:

i. Sustainability: The aim must be to ensure the optimum utilisation of tuna resources and the economies that depend on them while minimizing impacts on the ecosystem to ensure the long-term sustainability of both the target stocks and the ecosystem.

ii. Science and Precautionary principle: Decisions adopted must be science-based. In the absence of sufficient data, precautionary principle must be applied.

iii. Level playing field: Compliance and implementation of the IOTC rules by all CPCs and all gear types. To be effective, any stock conservation or management measures shall target all relevant fisheries and not only one part of it.

To meet the prerequisites above mentioned, the LDAC recommends to the EU to:

2.1. Advocate for IOTC to **carry out dedicated socio-economic evaluations and impact assessments of proposals for conservation and management measures for tropical tuna, tuna-like and commercial shark stocks**. Science-industry collaboration in data gathering is essential for improving knowledge of the key commercial stocks.

In its first meeting that took place in Thailand on October 25th of 2024 the IOTC Working Party on socioeconomics agreed on gathering socio-economic data and on developing socio-economic indicators. In its subsequent meeting on April 24-25th, a set of indicators were presented by the consultant and a 2026-2030 workplan was discussed.

The LDAC recommends that the European Commission considers including relevant socio-economic studies in the future to foster discussions, for example the IRD study on “Macroeconomic impact of an international fishery regulation on a small island country”¹ either at the next WP or at the Commission meeting. Further, the LDAC recommends that the indicators and workplan of the WG are presented and endorsed at the 2026 Commission meeting.

¹ Guilloteau and all, 2024:

[Macroeconomic impact of an international fishery regulation on a small island country | npj Ocean Sustainability \(nature.com\)](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41566-024-01000-0)



- 2.2. **Ensure accurate reporting and improve the level of compliance with all requirements among all CPCs.** This could be done by addressing those developing coastal states with problems of capacity, mobilising funding to assist when necessary. When CPCs already benefit from IOTC's development and capacity building initiatives and still record low levels of compliance IOTC should investigate on the reasons why the assistance did not work.
- 2.3. The LDAC also notes that in recent years several IOTC CPCs have not been participating in the Compliance Committee meeting and, as a result, are not available to address questions raised. The LDAC recommends that the EU encourages CPC participation and explores mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of the compliance review process and to address CPCs that repeatedly fail to participate.
- 2.4. Encourage reforms in decision making processes and promote a consensus-based environment to minimize the number of objections and **ensure level playing field in terms of adoption and implementation of decisions made by all CPCs** to achieve a real recovery of IOTC stocks.

The effectiveness of the decision-making procedure in RFMOs relies on limiting risks of blocking or opting-out behaviours, a transparent objection procedure and a timely dispute resolution process must be considered like in other RFMOs such as SPRFMO and ICCAT to some extent.

3. Specific remarks and recommendations on tropical tuna fisheries

- The LDAC notes with concern that several CPCs have recently submitted to IOTC modification (increase) of their historical catch data sets, in some cases poorly documented.

The LDAC recommends the European Commission to follow these updates and request the Scientific Committee and the Compliance Committee to carefully review the data to ensure the accuracy of the stock assessment and compliance.

- The LDAC notices that Article 44(e) of IOTC Resolution 24/02 relative to drifting FAD management in the IOTC area of competence does not allow to "*register any new or additional supply vessels on the IOTC Record of Authorised Vessels*". As it is written, this disposition makes it impossible to replace a supply vessel, even by another vessel with the same or lesser capacity.



Replacement of supply vessels shall indeed be allowed in case the vessel has a serious incident and even for security reason in case the vessel is too old risking incidents with potentially dramatic consequences for the crew to occur. Supply vessels are also key to the decarbonisation strategy of the European Union as they allow the company to save fuel by using smaller vessels and manage FADs.

To increase crew safety, to improve working conditions and quality of life, to engage the sector in the necessary decarbonation supported by the European Commission.

The LDAC encourages the European Commission to take every opportunity to allow renewal of supply vessels by modifying the text of Article 44(e), of IOTC Resolution 24/02 as soon as possible for above mentioned reasons.

- ***The LDAC recommends extending the obligation to retain all catches of yellowfin, skipjack and bigeye tuna, as set in IOTC Resolution 24/06, to all industrial fisheries, making it also a requirement for fisheries other than purse seine.***

3.1. Yellowfin tuna (YFT)

3.1.1. The LDAC notes that the latest evaluation of the stock being in the green quadrant of Kobe plot has been validated by the SC. The yellowfin tuna stock is determined to be not-overfished and not-subject to overfishing with a high probability.²

3.1.2. The LDAC also notes that the Scientific Committee agreed that the stock assessment for yellowfin tuna would not need to be re-run in 2026, that a full assessment would take place in 2027.³

3.1.3. The LDAC salutes this success, reflecting effective governance and sustained commitment and acknowledges the important sacrifices with which certain CPCs, such as Seychelles, Maldives and, specially, the EU, have contributed.

3.1.4. The LDAC recommends that efforts are focused on the development of a management procedure (MP) with sufficient budget allocated. In parallel, the EU should intensify efforts within IOTC to secure validated catch histories from objecting CPCs and the withdrawal of objections to Resolution 21/01.

² Point 187 of the report of the 28th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee

³ Points 194 and 195 of the report of the 28th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee



The LDAC further recommends that the Commission report back to LDAC on progress on data validation and objection withdrawals at each IOTC cycle and reassess implementation pathways accordingly.

Finally, the LDAC recommends that in a second stage the TAC resulting from the MP should be implemented by all CPCs through catch limits, including a safeguard clause against objections.

3.2. Skipjack tuna (SKJ)

3.2.1. The LDAC notes that the IOTC resolution 25/03 provides for both a TAC of 628,606 tons in 2026 and an allocation scheme for skipjack tuna⁴, requesting progressive application of the decrease in the TAC by 2028. The Scientific Committee noted that there were no exceptional circumstances occurring in 2025, thus confirming the TAC.

3.2.2. The LDAC notes that assessing the performance of the management procedure is planned by 2032,⁵ at the latest. The LDAC further notes that the stock evaluation planned in 2026, especially the analysis of stock recruitment and productivity, might trigger this review of the skipjack MP. If this was the case, the LDAC recommends that the European Commission consider calling for those potential adjustments, as recommended by the scientific committee.

3.2.3. The LDAC also notes that:

- The IOTC secretariat has transmitted to CPCs a circular with their catch limits, applying the full catch limit decrease in 2026 and indicating that the catch limit of the European Union for 2026 would be 125,000 tons⁶.
- Indonesia has required IOTC to adapt its catch limit, so it is effectively progressive⁷.
- The European Union have sent a letter to the IOTC Secretariat⁸ requiring this issue to be discussed at the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM) for homogeneous implementation among CPCs and further recommendation to the Compliance Committee.

⁴ Point 197 of the report of the 28th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee

⁵ Resolution 24/07, point 14: "A review of performance of the MP by the Commission and its subcommittees is to occur before 2032. The aim of the review is to ensure the MP is performing as expected and whether there are any conditions that warrant reconditioning the operating models, retuning the existing MP, or consideration of alternate candidate MPs and a new full management strategy evaluation"

⁶ IOTC Circular 2025-44

⁷ IOTC Circular 2026-01

⁸ IOTC Circular 2026-04



3.2.4. To respect the level playing field between fleets, strictly implement resolution 25-03 and help mitigating socio-economic consequences of the TAC decrease, ***the LDAC recommends that the European Union asks for a progressive implementation of the skipjack catch limit for the European fleet, as provided for by Resolution 25-03⁹.***

3.3. Albacore tuna

3.3.1. The LDAC express its disappointment over the delay of the albacore management procedure (MP).

3.3.2. The LDAC recommends that the EU ensures that the MP for albacore tuna is finalised as soon as possible and adopted this year.

3.4. Billfish and neritic tuna species

3.4.1. The LDAC notes that blue marlin, striped marlin, longtail tuna and narrow-barred tuna, mainly fished with gillnets, longlines and handlines, are overfished and subject to overfishing; Kawakawa is overfished. Black marlin, bullet tuna and frigate tuna's stock status are unknown.

3.4.2. The LDAC therefore calls the European Commission to urgently address the lack of sustainable fishing of billfish and neritic tuna species through:

- ***A total discard ban for all industrial fisheries.***
- ***Providing mechanisms to ensure the maximum annual catches, where any, are respected.***
- ***Prioritise stock assessment for those stocks with unknown status.***

3.5. Live baits on tropical tuna pole and line fisheries

3.5.1. The LDAC reminds that integrating data on live baits used in tropical tuna pole and line fisheries is essential from an ecosystem-based management perspective, as discussed at the 27th meeting of the IOTC.

3.5.2. The LDAC recommends including reporting requirements for live baits in IOTC pole and line fisheries and Res. 15/01 being updated for such purpose.

⁹ CPCs shall progressively reduce their current catches to the limits specified in paragraph 5 by 2028, with a reduction of one-third (1/3) of the total required reduction in the first year, two-thirds (2/3) in the second year, and the full reduction achieved in the third year.



4. Swordfish

- 4.1. ***The LDAC acknowledges that Swordfish allocation is critical for the successful implementation of the MP which has been adopted but its implementation is already behind schedule. The LDAC therefore recommends that an implementation measure is agreed and adopted this year.***
- 4.2. The LDAC notes that the average swordfish catch for the period 2015-2024 was of 30,713 tonnes, a figure that is closely aligned with the TAC recommended by the Scientific Committee for the coming years. ***The LDAC requests the EU to ask IOTC for inclusion of the most recent available data (including 2025 if possible) when the EU negotiates its allocation for this stock during the annual meeting in 2026.***
- 4.3. With regard to the allocation of swordfish, the LDAC believes that the allocation should be based on historical catches in recent years. However, in order to safeguard the interests of the EU longline fleet, we consider it essential that the reference period excludes the years 2020 and 2021, corresponding to the COVID pandemic.
- During that period, health restrictions, combined with the remoteness of the Indian Ocean, created significant logistical difficulties and crew changes, preventing the EU longline fleet from operating normally. This situation was clearly reflected in a significant reduction in the catches and, consequently, in the EU's percentage of the total for those years.
- 4.4. The negotiations on quota allocation must take into account that the European fleet is already limited in capacity, both in terms of the number of vessels and gross tonnage. ***In this context, this measure should be maintained and no additional concessions in terms of capacity reduction for the EU longline fleet should be considered.***
- 4.5. In relation to the use of traplines in the surface longline fleet, ***the LDAC supports the Scientific Committee's recommendation to conduct trials with this device in the Indian Ocean.*** In 2025, a recommendation was already approved by ICCAT (REC 25-09) for such trials in the Atlantic Ocean; ***the LDAC considers that a proposal on the same terms should be presented by the European Union at the IOTC meeting this year.***



5. Specific recommendations on sharks:

In 2025, the IOTC adopted Resolution 25/08 and Resolution 25/09, establishing management procedures for commercially targeted sharks and conservation measures for sharks considered ETP species or incidental bycatch in IOTC tuna and tuna-like fisheries. In particular, Resolution 25/08 included several tasks for the WPEB and SC to complete in 2025, with the aim of proposing updates to management and conservation measures for consideration by the Commission in 2026.

The LDAC recommends that the EU insist on including the recommendations made by the SC and support updating Resolution 25/08 accordingly.

5.1. Fins naturally attached (FNA) policy for sharks

5.1.1 ***The LDAC continues to support the FNA policy without exceptions.*** The LDAC doubts the effectiveness of the allowed alternatives under Resolution 25/08 in preventing finning, due to the low observer coverage and the absence of a High Seas Boarding and Inspection scheme and Port Inspection Schemes in the IOTC area of competence, which make enforcement difficult or even impossible.

5.1.2 ***The LDAC recommends that the EU closely monitors reporting compliance of IOTC countries with the provisions made in Resolution 25/08.***

All CPCs using an alternative to FNA should provide annual data in their compliance questionnaire (on enforcement difficulties, the number of vessels applying the alternative measures, how compliance is enforced, etc.). In case of non-compliance with the reporting requirements, Resolution 25/08 directs that the CPC will no longer be eligible to use the alternative measures. ***The LDAC recommends that the EU insist on strict enforcement without waivers or exemptions for any CPC.***

5.2. Improving compliance with shark related reporting requirements

5.2.1 The LDAC notes that reporting requirements laid out in Resolutions 15/01 and 15/02 are poorly complied with, with many sharks still not reported at species level and reporting of discards often missing. This misreporting hinders producing best scientific catch estimates for these species and leads to data poor stock assessments.

5.2.2 ***The LDAC recommends the EU insists that discard reporting in the national reports is complied with by all CPCs and for all gear types***



5.2.3. The LDAC notes that Resolution 25/08 requested the SC to review the list of sharks and gears for which reporting at species level is mandatory. LDAC recommends that the EU support updating Resolution 15/01 to include the additional species per gear as recommended by the SC.¹⁰

5.2.4 *In the meantime, the LDAC recommends that existing observer data can be used to aggregate all information from all CPCs together to produce combined fleet-level estimates and reduce uncertainty, similarly than already practiced at ICCAT.*

5.3 Sustainable management of commercially targeted shark stocks

5.3.1 *The LDAC supports a long-term sustainable management for commercially targeted shark stocks as agreed by the IOTC.* Within the IOTC convention area, EU longline fleets target only blue sharks and shortfin mako for commercial purposes, as the other shark species are prohibited. The LDAC notes that other CPCs do not apply this prohibition and intentionally catch and retain other shark species in addition to blue sharks and shortfin mako, in both their industrial and small-scale fisheries.

5.3.2 The LDAC encourages improved communication between IOTC and CITES to provide a scientific basis for CPCs to issue viable Non-Detrimental Findings (NDF) certificates in line with CITES requirements.

5.3.3 *The LDAC supports that commercially targeted shark stocks should be subject to management procedures, including HCRs and clearly defined target, limit and threshold reference points, with trade-offs considered to ensure sustainable exploitation without compromising the viability of fisheries.*

¹⁰ 2025 SC report IOTC-2025-SC28-R SC28.14 (para. 118)/ page 266.

- Silky sharks to be added also for gillnets fisheries.
- Hammerhead sharks to be reported at species level at least for scalloped, smooth and great hammerhead sharks for all gear types (explicitly including purse seine fisheries).
- Mantas and devil rays to be reported at species level differentiating at least between manta rays (giant manta and reef manta) and other devil rays adding them for mandatory reporting at least for purse seine fisheries and for gillnet fisheries instead of optional.
- Great white sharks as mandatory for all gear types.
- Oceanic whitetip sharks as mandatory for all gear types.



5.3.4 Blue sharks (BSH)

5.3.4.1 The LDAC welcomes that the Commission has tasked the SC and the Working Party on Methods to start the development of MSE tested Management Procedures for blue sharks in 2025. Initial results suggest that both TAC and length-based Management Procedures should be tested.¹¹ The LDAC also welcomes that the SC agreed that “*the BSH fishery is a target fishery, and that the MSE and resulting MP should be built on this*”¹²

5.3.4.2 **The LDAC suggests that the EU proposes a timeline for the completion of MSE-tested MPs and Management Objectives to guide their development.** Such Management Objectives should build on recently adopted objectives for other species and the recently proposed¹³ (not yet adopted) objectives for blue shark at ICCAT, with a view to achieving the long-term sustainable management of the stock. ***As such, the LDAC recommends for the EU to ensure sufficient budget is in place in the IOTC to carry out the MP process.***

5.3.4.3 The 2025 stock assessment indicated that the stock is not overfished nor subject to overfishing, and that current catches are close to the estimated MSY. The assessment also noted that “*significant increases could result in decreasing biomass and the stock becoming subject to overfishing in the future*”.¹⁴

The assessment identifies key uncertainties linked to incomplete species-level reporting and other model inputs.¹⁵ The SC therefore recommends that “*catch for blue shark should remain close to current catches, and below the estimated MSY.*”¹⁶

5.3.4.4 In line with Resolution 25/08, the LDAC recalls that management decisions should be “*based on the review and the results of the stock assessment to be conducted in 2025, updated reported catch information by each CPC and taking into account the IOTC Scientific Committee’s advice*”.¹⁷

5.3.4.5. ***The LDAC considers that management measures should be aligned with the Scientific Committee’s advice, to prevent future overfishing and ensure long-term sustainability of the stock.***

¹¹ 2025 SC report IOTC-2025-SC28-R para 208. Page 56 of 269

¹² 2025 SC report IOTC-2025-SC28-R para 209. Page 56 of 269

¹³ ICCAT Proposal PA4-813/2025 ‘On operational management objectives for Atlantic blue shark’

¹⁴ SC Report IOTC-2025-SC28-R APPENDIX 23 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: BLUE SHARK (2025); Page 178 of 269

¹⁵ SC Report IOTC-2025-SC28-R APPENDIX 23 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: BLUE SHARK (2025); Page 178 of 269

¹⁶ SC Report IOTC-2025-SC28-R APPENDIX 23 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: BLUE SHARK (2025); Page 178 of 269
The current MSY catch estimates from the assessment model are based on nominal reported catch (which are currently under revision and likely under-reported based on sharks not reported to species) and secondly, key uncertainties in other model inputs and parameters, it is recommended that there is no increase in fishing pressure until such uncertainties are resolved

¹⁷ IOTC Resolution 25/08



5.3.4.6. *In relation to blue shark priorities for IOTC 2026:*

- ***The LDAC fishing sector notes, while acknowledging the provisions in IOTC Resolution 25-08, that “the Commission shall consider at its 2026 Session specific conservation and management measures for blue sharks”, that such Resolution has been objected by India and Somalia, expressing concern that India is among the most important fishing nations for sharks in the world. For this reason, the fishing sector considers that the Commission should only contemplate the adoption of measures if they are likely to be effective, for which they should be fully inclusive, with all CPC committed to its implementation. In addition, the LDAC fishing sector believes that, in the interim, priority should be given to improving data quality and strengthening the scientific process, including through enhanced reporting by all CPCs and the ongoing MSE work.***
- ***The NGO group of the LDAC recommends complying with the requests of Resolution 25/08 and that the EU should therefore propose a preliminary Total Mortality Limit (TAC) as a preliminary measure until MSE has been completed and a MP adopted. The TAC should be set at the lower end of the 95% confidence interval of the MSY (21,790 - 39,840 t), taking a precautionary approach. To improve a level playing field and to incentivise reporting of blue shark catches by other CPCs, quotas for blue shark should be allocated to CPCs based on average reported catches between 2020 and 2024 and adding CPCs to the allocation table once they report catches of more than 500 t.***

5.3.5. Shortfin Mako sharks (SMA, LMA, MAK)

5.3.5.1 The LDAC recalls that the 2024 SC assessment concluded that shortfin mako are overfished and experiencing overfishing and recommended that future catches should not exceed 40% of current levels to allow the stock to recover with at least 50% probability within 10 years.¹⁸

5.3.5.2 The LDAC notes that [Resolution 25/09](#) has neither adopted a total mortality limit nor has it allocated quotas between CPCs to ensure that the overfished stock can be rebuilt within the next 10 years with a high probability.¹⁹

5.3.5.3. The LDAC emphasizes that EU fleets already comply with Resolution 25/09 by releasing live shortfin mako sharks at the side of the vessel and retaining dead individuals only when a human observer or functioning EMS is on board.

¹⁸ SC Report IOTC-2025-SC28-R APPENDIX 26 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: SHORTFIN MAKO SHARK (2025) Page 190 of 269

¹⁹ IOTC Resolution 25/09



The EU should continue to implement this retention ban provisions strictly, while acknowledging that this alone will not be sufficient to reduce total mako shark mortality for reasons of lack of compliance/level playing field by non-EU fleets.

5.3.5.4 The LDAC is concerned that most non-EU fleets responsible for the majority of shortfin mako catches currently lack sufficient monitoring and surveillance. ***The LDAC therefore requests the EU to insist on the mandatory discard reporting of mako sharks by all (i.e. both EU and non-EU) fleets in line with Resolution 25/09.***

5.4. Incidental catches and interactions with endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species

The LDAC recalls that IOTC fisheries interact with several ETP species due to overlapping habitats. **The LDAC emphasizes that species- and gear-specific mitigation measures are necessary to reduce mortality.**

5.4.1 Vulnerable Shark Species

5.4.1.1 The LDAC notes that shark mortality in IOTC fisheries remains high.

5.4.1.2 ***The LDAC requests that existing bycatch avoidance and mitigation measures are consistently enforced by all fleets, and that the Commission considers initiating additional research to minimize, and where possible eliminate, incidental captures and to increase the post-capture survival of incidentally caught species, with a priority on endangered and critically endangered sharks and including all gear types.***

5.4.1.3 Following Resolution 25/08, the SC reviewed the Minimum Standards for Best Handling and Release Practices.²⁰ ***The LDAC supports the adoption of these updated handling guidelines through a revision of Annex III of Resolution 25/08. In addition, the LDAC endorses the recommendation by the SC to adopt the revised handling guidelines for mobulids as defined by the WPEB in Appendix XVI.***²¹

5.4.1.4 ***The LDAC recommends that the European Commission requests the addition of whale sharks to the list of shark species in Resolution 25/08 for which retention is prohibited, as already provisionally foreseen, but requiring formal confirmation at this year's Commission Meeting.***²²

²⁰ SC Report IOTC-2025-SC28-R para 120; Page 47 of 269; IOTC-2025-WPEB21(AS)-R[E] APPENDIX XXVII SUGGESTED REVISION TO ANNEX III OF RESOLUTION 25/08 (THE LIVE RELEASE HANDLING PROCEDURES FOR SHARKS)

²¹ SC Report IOTC-2025-SC28-R para 121; Page 47 of 269; IOTC-2025-WPEB21(AS)-R[E] APPENDIX XVI SUGGESTED REVISION TO THE LIVE RELEASE HANDLING PROCEDURES FOR MOBULIDS

²² SC Report IOTC-2025-SC28-R para 123; Page 47 of 269



5.4.1.5 Hammerhead sharks are among the most vulnerable shark species.²³ Retention is already prohibited in the EU and at ICCAT. ***The LDAC requests that the EU proposes adding all Sphyrnidae species to Resolution 25/08's list of sharks for which retention is prohibited.***

5.4.2 Cetaceans

5.4.2.1 In line with IOTC Resolution 23/06 on the conservation of cetaceans, the LDAC recommends reviewing all available information on the status of cetaceans in the IOTC area of competence and adopting and enforcing measures that effectively protect them from negative impacts of IOTC fisheries.

5.4.2.2 The LDAC recommends that the Scientific Committee specifically considers interactions between cetaceans and gillnetters and recommends measures to the Commission. This gear is one of the main contributors of such interactions, and one of the least documented²⁴.

5.4.2.3 The LDAC reiterates its request for the EU to ask the IOTC Commission to fully enforce the ban on the use of driftnets. The LDAC also encourages further studies to evaluate methods intended to reduce shark bycatch on longline and gillnet fisheries.

6. Observer coverage, Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS), and fight against illegal fishing and associated abuses:

6.1. Observer Coverage

6.1.1. The LDAC reminds that the adoption of Resolution 24/04, and subsequently of Resolution 25/06, on a regional observer did not change the required level of implementation of 5%, which is the lowest in all RFMOs.

6.1.2. The LDAC recommends a gradual increase on the observer coverage from the existing 5% up to 20% for all gears operated in IOTC (incl. longliners, gillnetters and purse seiners alike), with electronic observer/EMS as a complementary tool to physical observers' coverage noting that the presence of human observers is still very important and should not be replaced²⁵. Combined human and EMS coverage should be increased to at least 10% by 2027 and to 20% by 2029 for all industrial and semi-industrial fleets.

²³ Rigby, C.L., et al. 2019. Sphyrna lewini. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2019: e.T39385A2918526. Accessed on 01 February 2026.

²⁴ [\(PDF\) Cetacean bycatch in Indian Ocean tuna gillnet fisheries](#)

²⁵ IOTC Resolution 23/08 defines the EMS standards in which the requirements to meet partially or fully the minimum ROS are detailed.



6.1.3. The LDAC reminds that the EU purse seine fisheries voluntarily apply 100% observer coverage.

6.1.4. The LDAC reminds that longliners and gillnetters have to deal with technical and operational issues related to their limited space. The LDAC notes that Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) might be particularly useful for longline vessels, given their average size (24 m. LOA) and limited space so they can be more efficient in terms of crews.

6.1.5. The LDAC reminds that even though EM standards were agreed 2 years ago, most CPCs do not submit data from their EM programmes. The LDAC notes that the use of EM effectively removes the logistical constraints of increasing observer coverage and as such they should be used more widely to help achieve observer coverage targets.

6.1.6. The LDAC aspiration is to move progressively increasing observer coverage also for longliners through human, electronic systems, or a combination of both, in compliance with the adopted IOTC standard for EMS.

6.2. Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) and the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

6.2.1. *The LDAC recommends striving for the introduction and mandatory use of a regional VMS applied to all fleets operating in the area to strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance of tuna and tuna-like fisheries of the Indian Ocean. Similarly, the LDAC fully supports the introduction of an electronic and fishery-based catch documentation scheme (CDS) in a phased approach starting first with the three tropical species (bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin tunas) and swordfish and for the IOTC CDS to eventually apply to all IOTC-managed species.*

6.2.2. The LDAC regrets the decision in 2025 to defer discussions on the development of these two critical tools. The LDAC recommends that the EU strives for the VMS and CDS preparatory work to resume and for draft resolutions to be agreed at working group level, so they are ready for adoption in the near future.

6.2.3. The LDAC supports the EU in updating its proposal on high seas boarding and inspection scheme as last year, being aware of the potential blocking from China. It is essential to defend the principle that this scheme falls within the scope of IOTC agreement/convention.



6.2.4. The LDAC supports a constructive multilateral approach for achieving consensus on a High Seas and Boarding and Inspection system for the IOTC that takes into account the regional and individual characteristics, and the socio-economic realities for stakeholders participating in such systems.

6.2.5. The LDAC acknowledges that those systems must be conscious of the needs of Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties. To address this, the LDAC recommends exploring the option of voluntary measures that come attached with concrete conditions to strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance in the Agreement Area, these conditions should include, or may be limited, to the following:

- a) detailed reporting of all vessels refusing inspections which should include an explanation for the refusal and an immediate notification to the authorities of the fishing vessel, as well as the IOTC.
- b) the measure(s) are reviewed on a multiannual basis, with mandatory measure(s) phased in at an agreed timeframe following a transitional period. The LDAC also recommends the publication on IOTC's website of summary statistics and information on the implementation of the measure(s).

In this regard, the LDAC takes note of the discussion on the application of the UN Fish Stock Agreement provisions on high seas boarding and inspection during the 29th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. The LDAC recommends that the EU pursues the operationalisation of these provisions as part of an interim approach until IOTC adopts a high seas boarding and inspection scheme.

6.2.6. The LDAC emphasises the importance of accurate and reliable vessel data, including information on ultimate beneficial ownership to combat IUU fishing within the IOTC Convention Area.

Despite the requirements of Resolution 19/04, compliance remains inconsistent, with many CPCs submitting incomplete, inaccurate or no data at all. To address this, the LDAC recommends strengthening oversight through the Compliance Committee and WPICMM, seeking explanations from non-compliant CPCs and agreeing on a regional definition of beneficial ownership aligned with international standards. Additionally, capacity-building initiatives should be prioritized to improve data collection and reporting processes.



7. Transshipments

- 7.1. **The LDAC recommends that the EU supports the total elimination of transshipments at sea** and welcomes all proposals that will go along this line including any proposal that improves transshipment oversight, in the interim.
- 7.2. The LDAC regrets that Resolution 24/05 on establishing a programme for transshipment by large-scale fishing vessels has increased the number of vessels benefiting from derogations to the obligation to monitor transshipments at sea via the regional observer program, instead of better regulating it.
- 7.3. The LDAC is concerned about this growing number of carrier vessels operating under a derogatory regime for at-sea transshipments. **Therefore, the LDAC recommends that the EU opposes any efforts to further expand this number and instead advocates for ending the currently existing derogatory regime for transshipments at sea.**

8. Scientific research:

- 8.1. The LDAC notes that the WPEB suggested that studies are carried out to validate the findings of studies (Senko et al., 2022; Allman et al., 2020 and many others) that suggest that there are benefits to installing green LED lights on gillnets to mitigate bycatch in these fisheries in the IOTC and that this activity was added to the Program of Work for WPEB. **The LDAC recommends that the EU supports the validation of this program of Work, including a timeline for its conduct, data availability and the evaluation of the study results.**
- 8.2. The NGOs supports the SC agreement on the scientific criteria for conducting the Resolution 25/08 trial assessing wire traces versus nylon leaders. The SC agreed that trials should employ a paired comparison approach, by alternating the control (nylon monofilament) and experimental (wire) leaders and that this is a basic requirement for ensuring a fishing trial to obtain results trustworthy for scientific analyses. **The LDAC recommends that the EU commits to conducting a study in 2026 in line with all the criteria agreed by the SC in Para 151-153 (SC report p. 50) and to present the study outcomes to the WPEB and SC in 2027 for evaluation.**
- 8.3. The LDAC also welcomes the advice of the SC to the Commission to encourage CPCs to continue research on leader materials in use and its impacts on shark bycatch and mortality, as well as alternative gear configurations (for example loop gear) and mitigation measures to reduce shark bycatch mortality in Indian Ocean tuna fisheries.



- 8.4. **The LDAC encourages the EU to provide adequate and sufficient funding to sponsor scientific work; and to dedicate the necessary human resources for EU scientists to participate in all IOTC relevant subsidiary bodies.**
- 8.5. This work is particularly important in ensuring presence of scientific advisors under the EU delegation and present at the Scientific Committee and relevant subsidiary bodies and Working Groups.
- 8.6. **The LDAC encourages IOTC to develop a quality control process of the data, programs and measures used by the Scientific Committee, to ensure that no unchecked unverified data is submitted.**

9. Labour standards

- 9.1. The LDAC remains concerned with the persistence of labour abuses on some non-EU fleets listed on the IOTC record of active vessels. Years on years, indication of labour abuses ranging from excessive working hours and document retention to physical abuse is gathered.^{26,27}
- 9.2. The LDAC urges the European Commission to promote a robust and binding conservation and manage measure, aligned with ILO C188 and other existing relevant standards to ensure decent living and working conditions on board all IOTC authorised fleets.

-END-

²⁶ <https://ejfoundation.org/reports/tide-of-injustice-exploitation-and-illegal-fishing-on-chinese-vessels-in-the-southwest-indian-ocean>

²⁷ <https://ejfoundation.org/reports/trapped-at-sea-exposing-north-korean-forced-labour-on-chinas-indian-ocean-tuna-fleet>