

IPNLF POSITION STATEMENT

23rd Annual Session of the
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
Hyderabad, India 17-21 June 2019

The International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF) is an international NGO, working to develop and demonstrate the value of one-by-one tuna fisheries to thriving coastal communities. IPNLF's principal aim is to improve the wellbeing of coastal fisheries, and the people and seas connected with them through environmentally and socially responsible one-by-one fishing methods, such as pole-and-line, troll, and handline. We work across science, policy and the seafood supply chain to achieve this.

At this year's Annual Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (S23), IPNLF urges Members to take meaningful action to address key challenges facing the Commission. Specifically, we encourage progress in the following areas:

- Progress the allocation process in such a way that recognises the legitimate rights of the developing coastal states
- Adopt a rebuilding plan for yellowfin tuna to recover the stock by 2024
- Improve management of drifting fish aggregating devices (dFADs)
- Accelerate development of harvest strategies
- Improve monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) and data collection



Pole-and-line fishers, Maldives © IPNLF

Progressing the Allocation Process:

Throughout the Indian Ocean, tuna catches are critical to local food security and livelihoods in coastal communities. In the Maldives, for instance, the average consumption of tuna is over 150kg per person per year, while the fishery supports over 20% of the domestic workforce. It should also be recognised that Article V of the IOTC Agreement, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, points to the need to evaluate the economic and social aspects of these fisheries in developing coastal states. In this regard, **allocation principles that account for the rights and aspirations of coastal developing states should be adopted** as a matter of priority. Such allocation principles and criteria need to be further informed by a scoping study on socio-economic indicators, and data which will be presented to delegates at S23.

Rebuilding Plan for Yellowfin Tuna:

Since the adoption of the IOTC yellowfin rebuilding plan in 2016 (2016-01), the Scientific Committee has reported an increase in catch from some members thereby negating the reductions made by others. Overall, the rebuilding plan has been ineffective, and the fishery remains overfished and subject to overfishing. We call on the IOTC to adopt an effective and equitable rebuilding plan for yellowfin tuna at the Commission meeting in June 2019 that meets the IOTC's own scientific advice and international best practice and which will rebuild the yellowfin tuna stock by 2024.

Strengthen dFAD management:

The excessive use of drifting fish aggregating devices (dFADs) continues to drive high catches of juvenile yellowfin and bigeye tuna, and threatens endangered, threatened, and protected species (ETP), as well as the broader marine environment in the form of marine litter and abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). IOTC should **strengthen measures on drifting FADs**, through the adoption of robust dFAD management procedures aimed at reducing the amount of dFAD fishing, banning supply and support vessels, reducing overall dFAD numbers, limiting dFAD effort creep via construction standards, implementing full transparency in dFAD movements through real-time tracking, and requiring operators to retrieve all dFADs deployed to minimise marine litter, ghost fishing, and damage to marine and coastal habitats.

Continue Progress on Harvest Strategies:

Significant progress was achieved with the adoption of the skipjack harvest control rule in 2016 (Resolution 16/02) and IPNLF encourages CPCs to further refine these precautionary management principles across the range of species under IOTC, in line with the harvest strategies workplan agreed upon in 2017. Specifically, the Commission should continue to **progress management strategy evaluation work on yellowfin, bigeye, and albacore to inform the development of future proposals for adoption**. Additionally, the skipjack harvest control rule should be reviewed, in line with the agreed timeline in CMM 16/02.

Taking these steps on harvest strategies will safeguard these vitally important fisheries by implementing pre-defined management actions to maintain the stock at, or above, established target levels.

Improving MCS and Data Collection:

Improvements in monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) are necessary throughout the IOTC Convention Area. While progress is being made via the IOTC Compliance Missions, further strengthening of measures will allow Members to better monitor fishing activities so that management actions can be evaluated and enforced. One measure that would improve both the data and the MCS of the fishery would be **the requirement for 100% observer coverage on large purse seine vessels and large-scale longline vessels** (human or electronic), as part of a Regional Observer Scheme. Elsewhere, this is a widely accepted practice amongst purse seine tuna fisheries, and the largest purse seiners operating in the IOTC already carry observers. Observer coverage on longliners should also be addressed as catches from these vessels are difficult to verify as are the impacts on endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species.

IPNLF also recognises the challenges unique to Indian Ocean tuna fisheries – chiefly that a large proportion of the Indian Ocean catch is taken by artisanal fisheries in developing coastal states. IPNLF calls on CPCs that currently do not meet the IOTC data requirements to **address data gaps as a matter of urgency**. Improved data will strengthen stock assessments and development of conservation and management measures as well as the overall management of the shared tuna resources throughout the region. All feasible and practical efforts should be made to further incentivise compliance and to build necessary fisheries management capacity in developing coastal states. Additionally, **transparency on the location, numbers, and fate of dFADs** will allow the IOTC to better monitor compliance of industrial purse seine vessels with management measures.

Collaboration and coordination is needed for IOTC to live up to its commitment to responsibly manage the shared tuna resources in the Indian Ocean. While recent progress has been achieved, there is more to be done. A number of practical improvements have been identified and can be agreed upon at the 23rd Annual Session of the IOTC to ensure the long-lasting vitality of the fisheries and the communities that depend on them. IPNLF and its Member network wishes all CPCs a successful meeting and look forward to working with all to further strengthen the management of IOTC fisheries.



Handline caught yellowfin tuna, Indonesia, 2018 © IPNLF, Green Renaissance, Warren Smart

ABOUT IPNLF

The International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF) works to develop, support and promote socially and environmentally responsible pole-and-line and handline tuna fisheries around the world. IPNLF's ambition is to contribute to thriving coastal fisheries, including the people, communities, businesses and seas connected with them. As a hub for sustainably-minded organisations, we use the influence of the market to forge change through practical fishery projects and stakeholder cooperation. IPNLF membership is open to organisations involved in the one-by-one tuna supply chain. Allied with [our Members](#), IPNLF demonstrates the value of one-by-one caught tuna to consumers, policymakers and throughout the supply chain. We work across science, policy and the seafood sector, using an evidence-based, solutions-focused approach with guidance from our Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees.

IPNLF was officially registered in the United Kingdom in 2012 (Charity 1145586), with branch offices in the United Kingdom, the Maldives, Indonesia and South Africa.

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Keep informed about the latest developments in one-by-one tuna fisheries through our website and by connecting with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



Flying the IPNLF Flag, Maldives, 2016 © IPNLF