

## Meeting Prospectus

### Consultative meeting for the coastal states on the quota allocation criteria for the Bigeye and Yellowfin Tuna Resources in the IOTC Area of Competence

#### 1.0 An overview of the Tuna Fishery and status of Stocks in the WIO

The world fisheries production in 2005 was close to 142 million MT, comprising a stable supply from the capture fisheries of about 94 million MT and a growing supply from aquaculture, amounting to 48 million MT. Global production of tuna and tuna-like species has steadily increased over the past 50 years, from less than 0.6 million tons in 1950 to over 6 million tons in 2004, worth around US\$5 billion, this catch represented over 7 % of total marine capture fisheries production in 2002. The Western Indian Ocean is important for tuna and supports one of the largest industrial tuna fisheries. About 1.4M tons of tuna valued at about 2 billion Euros are landed annually from the region.

A major consequence of globalization on the Coastal and Island States in the Indian Ocean region is that they allow Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFN) to access their marine fisheries resources without much benefits to their national economies. Developing Coastal and Island States in the region have limited skills, experience and financial resources to develop, use and protect their rich resources. The access arrangements are often skewed in favour of DWFN.

Overcapacity is an increasing issue in the WIO region. Because of the increasing demand of fish, (especially from the EU, the USA, China and Japan whose domestic resources have dwindled), the African EEZs, including the WIO region, are the target fishing grounds by DWFN. It is estimated that there are about 3,000 active tuna fishing vessels in the Indian Ocean (IOTC, 2009). Other issues of great concern among others include IUU, by-catch, weak policy and institutional frameworks, and limited capacities to police the EEZ.

The WIO tuna and tuna-like species catch contributes to about 70% of total tuna harvests from the Indian Ocean. This represented on average around 875,000 tons over the period from 1994 to 2003. The status of stocks in the Indian Ocean remains uncertain although IOTC, through its Scientific Committee, has made some attempts to undertake stock assessments using various models, particularly for yellowfin, bigeye and skipjack tuna..

**Skipjack;** Annual catches of skipjack remained more or less constant between 1994 and 1998, with values around the 340,000 tons. Catches since 1999 exceeded 400,000 tons, was recorded in 2002. This represented a sharp increase from previous years. The sharp increases in the catches of skipjack tunas during 1999 and 2002 came from the exceptional catch rates of industrial purse seiners.

**Albacore;** Stock size and fishing pressure are considered to be within acceptable limits. Catches, mean weight and catch rates of albacore have been stable for over 20 years. Annual catches of

albacore have been around 27, 900 tons annually over the past five years (2004-2008). Historical average annual catches for the past 50 years is estimated at 22, 800 tons. This shows considerable stability over a long period. The status of the stock is not likely to change markedly over the next 1-2 years if the price of albacore remains low compared to other tuna species. The IOTC scientific committee acknowledges that the 2008 was preliminary and more comprehensive assessment was therefore necessary

**Bigeye;** Estimate catches for bigeye tuna have increased steadily since 1950s, but more dramatically with the targeting by purse seiners since the early 1980s (catches reached a peak of 460,000 tons in 2002). The exact stock status is not known since full stock assessments have never been undertaken. Uncertainties are also due to data limitations from member countries. However stock size and fishing pressure are close to the optimal, indicating that the stock is fully exploited. Stock size indicators have gradually declined since 1970s. *In 2009, the 12<sup>th</sup> IOTC Scientific Committee meeting held in Seychelles recommended that catches should not exceed the MSY level (110,000 t).*

**Yellowfin;** Available information for yellowfin tuna indicates a large and steady increase in fishing mortality since the early 1980s and a corresponding substantial decline in biomass since the mid-1980s. The current MSY for yellowfin tuna has been estimated to be 300,000 t. The preliminary estimate of 2008 catches (322,000 t) is above the current estimate of MSY, while annual catches over the period 2003-2006 (averaging 464,000 t) were substantially higher than all estimated values of MSY. Preliminary estimates for 2008 show that this stock is close to or has possibly entered an overfished state recently. Fishing pressure has been too high in recent years, resulting in a decline of the population to levels below the optimal. Currently, the population might not be able to sustain the 1992-2002 level of catches. *In 2009, the 12<sup>th</sup> IOTC Scientific Committee meeting held in Seychelles recommended that catches should not exceed the MSY level (300,000 t).*

**Swordfish;** The overall stock size and fishing pressure are estimated to be within acceptable limits, although there is a possibility that certain limit reference points have been marginally exceeded. Also, it cannot be discounted that localized declines took place in some areas. The scientific committee recommended precautionary measures, such as capacity control or catch limit, in order to avoid overcapacity and avoid exceeding common biomass limit reference points.

## **2.0 The urgent need for allocating quotas to IOTC member countries**

The management body for tuna resources in the Indian Ocean is the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) was established in 1996 under the FAO framework to manage tuna and tuna like species in the Indian Ocean, as provided for by international instruments including the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982. However, the IOTC and its members are facing many challenges in meeting and fulfilling their mandate as a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO). This is reflected by the poor state of tuna resources in the region

The stock of yellowfin has recently been overexploited and there is an urgent need for adequate management measures to be put in place. The report of the eight session of the IOTC Scientific Committee concluded that the current levels of catches (32,000 t of Sword Fish, 347,000 t of Yellow fin) were unsustainable. The Scientific Committee had already noted with concern the rapid increase of bigeye tuna catches at its meeting in 1999. The Scientific Committee recommended a reduction in catches of bigeye tuna and sword fish from all gears, eventually to the level of MSY as soon as possible and that fishing effort should be reduced or, at least, it should not increase further (resolutions 03/01, 01/04, 06/05).

The most recent available scientific information and advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee have concluded that the yellowfin and bigeye tuna stocks might have been over or fully exploited in recent years. During the 12th IOTC scientific meeting held in Seychelles from 30 November to 04 December 2009, the Scientific Committee recommended that yellowfin and bigeye tuna catches should not exceed the MSY levels, which have been estimated at 300,000 metric tones (MT) for yellowfin and at 110,000 MT for bigeye tuna.

The February meeting of the Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria (TCAC) is the result of IOTC's resolution 10/01 "For the Conservation and Management of Tropical Tunas Stocks in the IOTC Area of Competence" made at the 14<sup>th</sup> session of the IOTC in March 2010 (See appendices). Recognising that yellowfin and bigeye tuna stocks had been over or fully exploited, Resolution 10/01 implemented a fishing ban for yellowfin and bigeye tuna within a specified area of the IOTC jurisdiction from 2011 to 2012 and required further actions from the Scientific Committee, technical committees, contracting members and cooperating non-contracting members (CPCs). Specifically, the resolution requires CPCs to establish an allocation system (quota) for the main targeted species under IOTC area of competence and a technical committee meeting in 2011 to discuss allocation criteria and recommend an allocation quota system for tuna in the Indian Ocean. The resolution also requires an allocation quota system or other "relevant measure" for yellowfin and bigeye tuna to be adopted at the IOTC plenary session 2012. Depending upon the recommendations of the TCAC and the implementation of the yellowfin and bigeye tuna quotas, further species can be expected to be integrated into the system at a later stage.

A quota allocation system would be implemented by the IOTC as a conservation and management measure and would therefore be binding on IOTC members if a two thirds majority of IOTC members present and voting vote in favour of the measure. Under Resolution 10/01, the IOTC is required to adopt an allocation quota system or other "relevant measure" at its plenary session in 2012.

### **3.0 A summary of the proposals:**

**Prepared for WWF by Kwame Mfodwo and Jeremy Noye, (Law School, Monash University – Australia), January 2011.**

#### **3.1 The EU proposal**

The EU proposal is structured as a draft resolution for the creation of a quota allocation system for yellowfin and bigeye tuna stocks in the Indian Ocean. The emphasis of the EU proposal is on

reconciling the interests of developing coastal states and distant water fishing nations that have fished and invested in the region. The defining feature of the EU proposal is a baseline allocation to parties which is fixed to historical catch rates. This makes for a conservative quota allocation system which institutionalises the pattern of fishing activity over the past ten years as the norm from which “corrections” are then made. Amounts “set aside” by corrections are then redistributed to developing coastal states, states implementing fleet development programs, and new entrants.

### **3.2 The Seychelles proposal**

Like the EU, the Seychelles proposal attempts to reconcile the interests of coastal states with those of distant water fishing states that have historical and investment links to the area. The defining feature of the Seychelles proposal is the use of historical catch rates together with catch per area in the EEZs and fishing zones of coastal states in determining a baseline allocation for eligible parties. This baseline is then adjusted depending on membership and compliance status with the IOTC and set-asides redistributed to new entrants and fully compliant eligible parties. The Seychelles proposal also extends the quota allocation system to apply to swordfish stock as well as yellowfin and bigeye tuna.

### **3.3 The Indonesian proposal**

Indonesia proposes six principles it believes criteria of quota allocation should take into account. These include: geographic zone, historical tuna fisheries, historical nominal catch data, fishing fleets and gear, socio-economic context, and environmental concerns. The proposal is not structured as a draft resolution and does not describe a quota allocation system; it is an individual submission of Indonesian’s views and arguments. The Indonesian proposal puts the sustainable use of tuna for people centre-stage, emphasizing food safety and quality of life, rather than reconciliation of state interests. The proposal is sometimes ambiguous as to the role the principles are to play in the criteria for quota allocation.

### **4.0 The potential benefits for applying the TAC**

An adequate quota management system would ensure rational and sustainable exploitation of fish stocks through conservation and management policies designed to protect resources and reflect the needs of the fishing industry. It should ensure that quotas are fairly shared amongst the IOTC Member States and such that these quotas are not exceeded. Operationalization of fleet development and management plans will contribute to improving the balance between catching capacity and available resources by addressing fishing effort. The TAC as one of the approaches to conservation of tuna stocks is aimed at regulating the quantities of fish caught based on scientific advice as envisaged in IOTC resolution 10/01.

The challenge to WIO States is therefore to take advantage of this opportunity in the context of the globalized world fisheries and trade in order to:

- bring about significant flow of benefits to their national economies

- improve the living standards of the local communities who depend on the coastal and marine fisheries resources for their livelihood.

It is envisaged that the application of the TAC in a more effective manner will be one of the key policy reforms in the Indian Ocean tuna fisheries. An adequate management of the resource would reap maximum benefits for the IOTC member states at biological, ecological and socio-economical sustainable levels.

## **5.0 The pre-meeting**

WWF has organized this pre-meeting to help Coastal States to have a full understanding of the quota allocation issues. This will ensure they actively participate to the IOTC meetings to discuss about how a quota based management system for the bigeye and yellowfin tuna stocks will be developed. Further, this forum will provide an opportunity for coastal states to evaluate the various proposals and build a common position in the view of the IOTC Technical Committee. A common position that would better suit their interest with regards to deriving more benefits from the tuna stocks in their respective EEZ, while ensuring tuna fisheries sustainability.

### **Objectives of the Meeting**

The Specific Objectives of this pre-meeting are the following:

- i. Bring the Coastal States to a common understanding of the issues surrounding IOTC Tuna allocation measures (such as the process itself and the allocation criteria).
- ii. Evaluate the merits and de-merits of various proposals.
- iii. Identify and improve any proposal that seems to address most of the concerns of the coastal states.
- iv. Develop common positions and rally for adoption.

## **6.0 Participating countries**

The participating countries will be those in the Coastal and Island States in the Indian Ocean region, including Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Maldives, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and Reunion. It is also opened to other coastal states in the region that may wish to participate. Other relevant government agencies, regional and international organizations (namely AU, WWF, FAO), Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (namely IOTC, SWIOFC), and individual experts will also attend. It is expected that a total of about 20 - 30 participants will attend the meeting.

## **7.0 Official Language**

The official language of the workshop will be in English.

### **Further Information:**

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