

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

101<sup>st</sup> MEETING

Victoria, Canada

7-11 August 2023

PROPOSAL IATTC-101 B-2

SUBMITTED BY JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Projections in the most recent stock assessment conducted by the ISC in 2022 indicate the stock is expected to meet the second rebuilding target established in this Resolution. Additionally, the management strategy evaluation for Pacific bluefin tuna is also underway and expected to inform a long-term harvest strategy for Pacific bluefin tuna. Because the decision rules in this Resolution apply during the period the stock is rebuilding to the second target and a long-term harvest strategy has not yet been developed, it is necessary to have interim decision rules that direct management after the second rebuilding target has been met until the long-term harvest strategy has been developed.

During July 3-5, 2023, the Joint IATTC-WCPFC Northern Committee Working Group on Pacific bluefin tuna met and recommended an interim harvest strategy to the Northern Committee and IATTC. The Northern Committee subsequently adopted these rules during its meeting July 6-7, 2023. This proposal to the IATTC seeks to adopt the recommendation of the Joint Working Group consistent with the text adopted by the Northern Committee.

**AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION C-~~21-01~~~~18-02~~ ON A LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA IN THE EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN**

*The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), gathered on the occasion of its ~~101<sup>st</sup>~~<sup>98<sup>th</sup></sup> Meeting:*

*Taking into account that the stock of Pacific bluefin tuna is caught in both the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) and the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO);*

*Recalling the outcomes of the Joint IATTC-WCPFC Northern Committee (NC) Working Group meetings;*

~~*Recognizing with concern that the latest stock assessments by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) [2020] show that, although the spawning stock biomass (SSB) appears to have grown slightly in the last few years, SSB remains overfished relative to most of the commonly used reference points;*~~

~~*Taking into consideration that IATTC Members, through resolutions and voluntary actions, have since 2012 effected 40% reductions in the catch of Pacific bluefin tuna across the entire range of age classes available in the EPO with the objective of urging comparable conservation actions in the WCPO fishery, but, in the view of IATTC Members, without the actions sought by the IATTC having been taken by the WCPFC;*~~

*Recalling that Article VII, paragraph 1(c) of the Antigua Convention provides that the Commission shall “adopt measures that are based on the best scientific evidence available to ensure the long-term*

*conservation and sustainable use of the fish stocks covered by this Convention and to maintain or restore the populations of harvested species at levels of abundance which can produce the maximum sustainable yield...”;*

*Affirming* that it is necessary to adopt compatible and effective management measures in both Commissions (IATTC and WCPFC), which have the responsibility and competence over this resource in order to reduce fishing mortality throughout the range of the Pacific bluefin tuna resource to contribute to the rebuilding of the stock;

*Putting on record again* that greater than 80% of the proportional fishery impact on the spawning stock biomass of Pacific bluefin tuna results from WCPO fisheries, and urging joint action with the WCPFC to progress toward an equitable distribution of catch between EPO and WCPO fisheries;

*Highlighting concerns* that measures adopted in the EPO alone will not fulfill the objective of this resolution if effective and substantial measures are not taken for all fisheries involved by both Commissions;

*Recognizing* the need for a basin-wide rebuilding plan for Pacific bluefin tuna and a precautionary long-term management framework for the stock and associated fisheries;

*Urging* all IATTC Members and Cooperating Non-Members (CPCs) involved in this fishery to participate in a fair and equitable manner, and without exceptions, in the discussion and adoption of a harvest strategy applicable to the stock throughout its entire range;

*Mindful* that these measures are intended as an interim step towards assuring sustainability of the Pacific bluefin tuna resource, consistent with the precautionary approach, and that future conservation measures should be based not only on these interim measures, but also on the development of future scientific information and advice of the ISC the IATTC scientific staff, and the Scientific Advisory Committee, which may include outcomes of a management strategy evaluation (MSE);

~~*Recalling that the IATTC Scientific Staff in 2014 recommended the adoption of  $B_{MSY}$  and  $F_{MSY}$  as interim target reference points for Pacific bluefin tuna (Document IATTC-87-03d);*~~

*Noting* that the WCPFC has adopted a harvest strategy for Pacific bluefin tuna, including: (1) rebuilding targets as recommended by the Joint IATTC-NC Working Group in 2017; (2) development of reference points through the MSE process, which includes a workplan to develop candidate reference points and harvest control rules; and (3) decision rules at the initial and second rebuilding periods;

*Also noting* that the initial rebuilding target adopted by WCPFC, the historical median of SSB calculated in the ISC’s 2020 stock assessment, is equivalent to a depletion ratio of 6.4%, which is below the interim limit reference point adopted for other tunas in the EPO and below the interim limit reference point for Pacific bluefin tuna recommended by the IATTC scientific staff;

*Further noting* that WCPFC also adopted the second rebuilding target, which is  $20\%SSB_{F=0}$ , to be reached by 2034, or 10 years after reaching the initial rebuilding target, whichever is earlier, with at least 60% probability; and,

*Considering* the recommendations made by the Seventh Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, which recommended strengthening scientific cooperation with the WCPFC and promotion of the adoption of harmonized conservation measures for bluefin and bigeye tunas in both organizations;

*Resolves as follows:*

#### Rebuilding targets

1. The Commission recognizes that the management objective of the IATTC is to maintain or restore fish stocks at levels capable of producing MSY, and shall implement a provisional rebuilding plan in part by adopting: (1) an initial (first) rebuilding target of  $SSB_{med,1952-2014}$  (the median point

estimate for 1952-2014) to be achieved by 2024 with at least 60% probability; and (2) a second rebuilding target of  $20\%SSB_{F=0}$ <sup>1</sup> to be achieved within 10 years of reaching the initial rebuilding target or by 2034, whichever is earlier, with at least 60% probability.<sup>2</sup>

2. The Commission shall do so by adopting catch limits and other necessary management measures that, based on information provided by the IATTC Scientific Staff, the SAC recommendations and the ISC, are expected to achieve the rebuilding target, while also recognizing the need for compatible and comparable measures and goals in both the IATTC and WCPFC.
3. The harvest control rules during the second rebuilding period below will be applied based on the results of stock assessments and SSB projections to be conducted by ISC. If the SSB projection indicates that the probability of achieving the second rebuilding target by 2034 or 10 years after reaching the initial rebuilding target, whichever is earlier, is less than 60%, management measures shall be modified to increase it to at least 60%. For this purpose, the ISC will be requested, if necessary, to provide information on possible management measures to achieve 60% probability. If the SSB projection indicates that the probability of achieving the second rebuilding target by 2034, or 10 years after reaching the initial rebuilding target, whichever is earlier, is at 75% or larger, fishery controls may be changed, including adjustment of catch limits, as long as the probability is maintained at 70% or larger. For this purpose, ISC will be requested, if necessary, to provide relevant information on potential fishery controls.
  - a. Any adjustments to management measures shall be considered in cooperation between the two RFMOs taking into account historical and future projected proportional fishery impacts on SSB between fisheries in the EPO and fisheries in the WCPO. For this purpose, ISC will be requested, if necessary, to provide relevant information, including projected proportional fishery impact of potential management measures changes.
  - b. This harvest control rule will be reviewed and modified, as necessary, if depletion estimates across the time-series have been adjusted due to changes in assumptions and/or settings of the stock assessment model<sup>3</sup>.

4. The following harvest control rules shall be applied based on the results of stock assessments and SSB projections to be conducted by the ISC during the period from the year in which the stock is projected to achieve the second rebuilding target of  $20\%SSB_0$  to the year a long-term harvest strategy based on an MSE process is implemented.

- a. If the SSB projection indicates that SSB will be below  $20\%SSB_0$  with a probability of 60%, management measures shall be modified to increase the SSB to at least  $20\%SSB_0$

<sup>1</sup> 20% of the expected spawning stock biomass under average recruitment conditions without fishing. If  $20\%SSB_{F=0}$  is considered inappropriate as the second rebuilding target, taking into account consideration from WCPFC, scientific advice from ISC, IATTC SAC or WCPFC SC, and the IATTC Scientific Staff, and socioeconomic factors, another objective may be established.

<sup>2</sup> However, if: (1) the SSB reaches the initial rebuilding target earlier than 2024; (2) ISC recommends a recruitment scenario lower than the average recruitment scenario; and (3) the SSB projections indicate that the second rebuilding target will not be achieved on this schedule, the deadline for rebuilding may be extended to 2034 at the latest.

<sup>3</sup> Recruitment scenario used in Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) projection: (i) The low recruitment scenario (resampling from the relatively low recruitment period (1980-1989)) or the recent recruitment scenario (resampling from the last 10 years), whichever is lower, should be used for the ISC's SSB projections until 2024 or the SSB reaches the historical median (the median point estimate for 1952-2014 as specified by ISC), whichever is earlier. (ii) The recruitment scenario to be used for the SSB projections after 2024 or the SSB has reached the historical median should be tentatively the average recruitment scenario (resampling from the entire recruitment period). (iii) ISC will be requested to periodically evaluate whether the scenarios in paragraphs (i) and (ii) are reasonable given current conditions and make recommendation on whether a different scenario should be used. If ISC recommends a different scenario, this should be considered.

with 60% probability. For this purpose, the IATTC scientific staff is requested to collaborate with the ISC to provide information on possible management measures to achieve 60% that the stock is above 20%SSB0 after 10 years of the latest stock assessment.

b. If the SSB projection indicates that SSB will be greater than 20%SSB0 with a probability of 60%, management measures should be adjusted so long as any changes maintain SSB greater than 20%SSB0 with a probability of 60%. For this purpose, the IATTC scientific staff is requested to collaborate with the ISC to provide information on possible management under which the stock is maintained above 20%SSB0 with a probability of 60%.

c. Any adjustments to management measures shall be considered in cooperation between the IATTC and WCPFC taking into account historical and future projected proportional fishery impacts on SSB between fisheries in the EPO and fisheries in the WCPO. For this purpose, the IATTC scientific staff is requested to collaborate with the ISC to provide relevant information, including projected proportional fishery impact of potential management measures changes.

d. This harvest control rule will be reviewed and modified, as necessary, if depletion estimates across the time-series have been adjusted due to changes in assumptions and/or settings of the stock assessment model.

~~4~~5. Over-harvest of catch limits established in Resolutions on conservation and management of Pacific bluefin tuna shall be deducted from the applicable catch limits for the following management period [or biennium]. In years when a resolution establishing catch limits expires, the over-harvest shall be deducted from catch limits established in the next resolution.

~~5~~6. An under-harvest of catch limits established in Resolutions on conservation and management of Pacific Bluefin tuna may be added to the applicable catch limit in the following management period [or biennium] and shall not exceed 5% of the initial catch limit.

~~6~~7. Implementation and progress of this plan shall be reviewed based, in part, on updates of stock assessments and SSB projections to be conducted by ISC and IATTC Scientific Staff advice; management measures shall be modified, if necessary, based on the review.

~~7~~8. The Commission should collaborate with the WCPFC NC through the Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group to develop candidate reference points and harvest control rules for Pacific bluefin tuna conservation and management.

~~8~~9. The decisions made in respect to Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 shall be designed so as to conserve and recover the Pacific bluefin tuna stock and be comparable or preferably the same to those made by the WCPFC. This cooperative process should be informed by the Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group. Additionally, the effectiveness of the decisions made with respect to Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 shall be evaluated by the ISC, IATTC Scientific Staff, and SAC when new stock assessment or management strategy evaluation results become available.

~~9~~10. To enhance the effectiveness of this resolution and Pacific-wide progress towards rebuilding the Pacific bluefin tuna stock, CPCs are encouraged to communicate with and, if appropriate, work with the concerned WCPFC members bilaterally, including through the Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group.

~~10~~11. CPCs shall, wherever possible and to the extent practicable, work bilaterally and/or multilaterally towards ensuring the objectives and timelines in this resolution are successfully achieved.

~~11~~12. CPCs shall continue to cooperate to develop a catch documentation scheme (CDS) for Pacific bluefin tuna that is, if possible, electronic. The decisions related to a CDS for Pacific bluefin tuna, specifically, should be informed, in part, by the Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group.