

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

95TH MEETING

(By videoconference)

30 November-4 December 2020

PROPOSAL IATTC-95 A-4

SUBMITTED BY ECUADOR

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION ON CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR
TROPICAL TUNAS IN THE EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN DURING 2021**

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Decision-making processes aimed at managing tropical tunas in the EPO have historically been based on the results of assessment models (IATTC-94-04). Although Stock Status Indicators (SSIs) have been an important complement to the description and visualization of the fishery and biological components of the stocks (Maunder and Deriso, 2007), they have not been definitive in the adoption and implementation of management measures.

The IATTC scientific staff, as well as the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), has invested significant effort in the identification and development of the elements of a management procedure (MP) aimed at standardizing and reaching a preliminary agreement on a decision-making process that avoids ambiguities in the implementation of harvest strategies (C-16-02, C-17-02). The recent development of improved models for yellowfin and bigeye tuna was an important step toward strengthening the elements of the MP (SAC-11-06, SAC-11-07), making it possible to specify the levels of the stock (*i.e.*, spawning biomass) and the fishing mortalities that the stock has experienced with respect to reference points (RP).

Aware that pre-agreements are an efficient mechanism for the regulation of fisheries in the EPO, Ecuador considers that the arbitrary use of SSIs either to modify regulatory and management measures (*e.g.*, number of days of closure) or to complement measures (*e.g.*, set limits) undermines the objective of a MP, risking the impartiality of its implementation because of two reasons:

First, the MSY-based reference framework (C-16-02) is categorical about the actions to be implemented when fishing mortality exceeds the RPs and puts the stock at risk. The use of SSIs as an argument to interpret fishing mortality (its levels and trends) allows for second definitions of management measures, leading to errors in the implementation of management measures based on the results of assessment models. In fact, when complementary management measures are adopted, such as limits on the number of sets, their impact on the mitigation of fishing mortality cannot be measured until they have been implemented. This is contradictory to the objective of a MP, which seeks to direct measures based on a reference framework such as that provided by the new reference models.

The new assessment models were developed by the scientific staff in order to improve stock estimates, thus reducing uncertainty in the decision-making process on management measures. Therefore, the question arises as to why use SSIs as a substitute for fishing mortalities, when the reference models themselves were designed to provide these quantities and apply them through the management procedure.

Second, the management measures implemented by the IATTC have been based on valid or proven tools regarding their use in decision-making processes (*e.g.*, the new improved assessment models and their performance validated by expert reviews and recommendations for improvement). However, the framework for the use of SSIs, as proposed by the IATTC staff (SAC-11-15), is temporary in nature as it lacks a validation scheme. The IATTC staff recognizes that prior to selecting

SSIs for some management measures, it should be taken into account how these indicators will be used to provide advice (SAC-05-11c), noting that these indicators should be considered as complementary information to the decision-making process (SAC-11-05).

Maunder, M. N., & Deriso, R. (2007). Using indicators of stock status when traditional reference points are not available: evaluation and application to skipjack tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean." Inter-Amer. Trop. Tuna Comm., Stock Assessment Report 8: 229-248.

CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR TROPICAL TUNAS IN THE EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN DURING 2021

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), gathered virtually on its 95th Meeting:

Taking into account the best scientific information available on the status of the bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack stocks;

Committed to the long-term conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO);

Recognizing that the new reference models for yellowfin and bigeye tuna do not provide evidence of overexploitation and/or overfishing in the EPO, and their results are considered reliable for management advice;

Supporting the SAC-11 recommendation that the provisions in Resolution C-17-02 in force until 2020 be maintained for 2021;

Considering that the COVID-19 health emergency has prevented a presential discussion on the possibility of potential management measures to complement C-17-02;

Taking into account that a three-year conservation measure requires an adoption process that is difficult to carry out virtually;

Considering that it is necessary to have a better understanding of how Stock Status Indicators (SSIs) will be used to provide scientific advice, and

Noting that the IATTC scientific staff will implement a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) as a mechanism to evaluate the performance of potential conservation measures;

Reviews and adopts the following conservation measure for tropical tunas:

To apply in the Convention Area the conservation and management measures for tropical tuna established below, and to request that the staff of the IATTC monitor the fishing activities of the respective CPC's flag vessels relative to this commitment, and also report on such activities at each annual meeting of the Commission;

MEASURES FOR PURSE-SEINE FLEETS

1. Maintain in full the management measures contained in Resolution C-17-02 for them to be applied during 2021.
2. Validate the Stock Status Indicators (SSIs) to integrate them into the harvest control rules (RCC, C-16-02) for the management of tropical tunas.
3. Review Resolution C-16-02 in order to specify the management actions associated with the Reference Points (RP) derived from the new assessment models.