



# Recommendations to the 93rd Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

24-30 August 2018, San Diego, California, US

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is responsible for the conservation and management of tunas, sharks, and other highly migratory species in the eastern Pacific Ocean. At its annual meeting in August, its members must focus on fulfilling the Commission's mandate and ensuring the sustainability of its valuable fisheries.

To do that, the IATTC needs to take immediate steps to rebuild the region's Pacific bluefin tuna population and end the overfishing of bigeye tuna. Looking to the future, the long-term sustainability of all Pacific species under IATTC management requires additional measures. The Commission also should put procedures in place to better track transshipment at sea; curtail illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; and reduce shark mortality.

The Pew Charitable Trusts calls on members and cooperating non-members at the 93rd Meeting of the IATTC to take the following critical actions:

- **Rebuild the severely depleted Pacific bluefin tuna population**

The most recent Pacific bluefin tuna stock assessment confirms that the population remains severely depleted, at just 3.3 percent of its unfished level. Under the 2010 Antigua Convention, the Commission is required "to maintain or restore the populations of harvested species at levels of abundance which can produce the maximum sustainable yield" (MSY). In 2017, the Joint IATTC/Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission's Northern Committee Working Group agreed on a long-term rebuilding plan for the stock.

The Commission should adopt this plan while continuing current management measures, including catch limits, for at least two more years to allow the population to recover. The Commission also should ensure that any catch limit overages by any IATTC member or cooperating non-member are immediately deducted from future quotas.

- **Increase the transparency of transshipment**

Clear rules for transshipment are essential to ensure a strong, legal, and verifiable seafood supply chain and reduce opportunities for illicit activities. Pew calls for a ban on transshipment at sea in the Convention area until the best practices outlined here are implemented. The IATTC should require that transshipment authorizations and declarations are sent to all relevant authorities in near-real time, that carrier vessels that intend to transship notify the Secretariat when they enter the Convention area, and that all vessels involved in the transfer report their International Maritime Organization (IMO) numbers. All vessels involved in transshipment should be required to carry an observer on board, and all observer reports from at-sea and in-port transshipments should be sent directly to the Secretariat.

The IATTC has a resolution in place—C-12-07—requiring that carrier vessels authorized to transship have an operating vessel monitoring system (VMS),<sup>1</sup> but clarifying language must be added to ensure that this requirement applies to all carrier vessels conducting transshipment—regardless of length. Finally, the Secretariat should ensure that the list of vessels authorized to conduct at-sea transshipment is made public, as required in Resolution C-12-07, and that this list includes the IMO number of each vessel.

- **Require 100 per cent observer coverage on longline vessels**

To ensure that longline catches are verifiable and legal, and to increase the quality and availability of scientific data, the Commission should require 100 per cent observer coverage for all longline operations and commit to building the infrastructure needed to successfully implement electronic reporting and monitoring. All IATTC members also must provide set-by-set data for fishing operations—including species-specific catch, effort, and gear configurations—for their longline fisheries to improve the accuracy of stock assessments.

- **Create a working group to advance the management strategy evaluation process**

The Scientific Advisory Committee has recommended that the Commission create a dedicated working group to facilitate dialogue among fisheries scientists, managers, and other stakeholders to advance the harvest strategy and management strategy evaluation (MSE) process.<sup>2</sup> This working group would help the Commission enhance communication and foster mutual understanding among these key groups and provide input on matters related to harvest strategies and MSE.

- **End overfishing of bigeye tuna**

Based on the latest stock assessment, the fishing mortality for bigeye tuna is well above the sustainable level, with rates driven by recent increases in purse seine capacity, fishing days, and sets.<sup>3</sup> Although there is some uncertainty in the assessment results, it is clear the current level of bigeye mortality needs to be decreased. To end overfishing, the Commission should consider the impact of all gear and reduce fishing mortality—through restrictions either on effort or catch—to below the MSY level. In the purse seine fishery, effort restrictions could include science-based limits on the number of sets on fish aggregating devices (FADs) or total purse seine sets, while catch restrictions could include a juvenile bigeye limit, a reduction of the adult limit allocated to the longline fleets, or a combination of the two.

- **Strengthen port State measures**

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a threat around the globe, including the eastern Pacific. To close loopholes in IATTC policies and prevent illegally caught fish from reaching the market, members should strengthen controls at port. Many regional fisheries management organizations have adopted and strengthened their port State measures in recent years.<sup>4</sup> The IATTC still does not have a port inspection scheme, despite six years of discussions on proposals drafted to adapt to the needs of member States. This represents a serious gap in regional efforts to stop IUU fishing.

The Commission should adopt the current proposal to establish an IATTC scheme that sets minimum standards for inspection in port, ensures that States designate ports for use by foreign fishing vessels, requires prior notification from vessels wishing to land and/or transship in port, and allows for effective port inspections so action can be taken against vessels having engaged in IUU fishing. The Commission also should consider how the Special Sustainable Development Fund established by Resolution C-14-03<sup>5</sup> may be used to help developing member States implement port controls.

- **Ensure that the IUU vessel list is effective and up to date**

The Commission should continue to improve Resolution C-15-01<sup>6</sup> so the IUU vessel list can help deter illegal practices in the Convention area. In 2015, the Commission clarified and strengthened the rules for listing IUU vessels, but it continued to exempt those less than 23 meters in length from the requirements. Vessels of all sizes engage in IUU fishing, and violations of IATTC rules by those less than 23 meters long also undermine efforts to exploit marine living resources sustainably. The Commission should eliminate the exemption for vessels under 23 meters from the rules for listing IUU vessels.

- **Effectively implement the IMO number requirement to help identify and monitor vessels**

As of 1 January 2016, all vessels weighing at least 100 gross tons and fishing in the eastern Pacific must have IMO numbers.<sup>7</sup> This requirement ensures the effective monitoring and control of fishing vessels at sea and in port. Currently, about 90 percent of the vessels required to have IMO numbers are compliant with Resolution C-14-01. Non-compliant vessels should obtain an IMO number—at no cost—from IHS Maritime & Trade.<sup>8</sup>

In August 2016, the IMO amended its guidance on eligibility criteria for IMO numbers to include vessels over 12 meters in length operating outside of waters of their national jurisdiction. Resolution C-14-01 should be updated to reflect these changes. About 1,900 vessels on the Consolidated List of Authorized Vessels would be eligible. They should obtain IMO numbers and add them to the IATTC database.<sup>9</sup>

- **Adopt conservation and management measures to protect shark species**

At least 63 million and as many as 273 million sharks are killed in commercial fisheries every year.<sup>10</sup> Given the status and vulnerability of many shark populations, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) now protects 20 commonly traded shark and ray species, including a number caught in IATTC fisheries, such as silky, thresher, and hammerhead sharks. With the shark listings in force, the Commission must help member States meet the CITES requirements.

The IATTC must make reducing shark mortality an urgent priority. Until measures are in place to ensure that both targeted and incidental catch of sharks is sustainable, harvesting these species should be avoided. Fishing gears that increase the likelihood of shark catch, such as wire leaders and shark lines, should be prohibited. The Commission also should improve data collection for all shark species. Better data would ensure that stock assessments and other indicators of stock status could be developed and used to better inform management of all sharks caught in IATTC fisheries.

## Endnotes

- 1 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, Resolution C-12-07, Amendment to Resolution C-11-09 on Establishing a Program for Transshipments by Large-Scale Fishing Vessels, 2012, [https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles/Resolutions/IATTC/\\_English/C-12-07-Amendment-C-11-09-Transshipments.pdf](https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles/Resolutions/IATTC/_English/C-12-07-Amendment-C-11-09-Transshipments.pdf).
- 2 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, Document IATTC-93-93, Recommendations of the Ninth Scientific Advisory Committee, 2018, [https://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/IATTC-93/PDFs/Docs/\\_English/IATTC-93-03-EN\\_Recommendations-of-the-9th-meeting-of-the-Scientific-Advisory-Committee.pdf](https://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/IATTC-93/PDFs/Docs/_English/IATTC-93-03-EN_Recommendations-of-the-9th-meeting-of-the-Scientific-Advisory-Committee.pdf).
- 3 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, "Stock Status Indicators for Bigeye Tuna" (2018), [https://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/SAC-09/PDFs/Docs/\\_English/SAC-09-16-EN\\_Stock-Status-Indicators-for-bigeye-tuna.pdf](https://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2018/SAC-09/PDFs/Docs/_English/SAC-09-16-EN_Stock-Status-Indicators-for-bigeye-tuna.pdf).
- 4 Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, "Summary of Port State Measures Adopted by RFMOs" (2016), <https://www.wcpfc.int/node/27801>; South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization, CMM 07-2017, Conservation and Management Measure on Minimum Standards of Inspection in Port, 2017, <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Fisheries/Conservation-and-Management-Measures/CMM-07-2017-Port-Inspection-27Feb17.pdf>; Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, CMM 2017-02, Conservation and Management Measure on Minimum Standards for Port State Measures, 2017, <https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/cmm-2017-02/conservation-and-management-measure-minimum-standards-port-state-measures>.
- 5 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, Resolution C-14-03, Amendment of Resolution C-11-11 on the Creation of the Special Sustainable Development Fund for Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species to Strengthen the Institutional Capacity of Developing Countries and Territories, 2014, [https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles/Resolutions/IATTC/\\_English/C-14-03-Special-fund.pdf](https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles/Resolutions/IATTC/_English/C-14-03-Special-fund.pdf).
- 6 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, Resolution C-15-01, Amendment to Resolution C-05-07 on Establishing a List of Vessels Presumed to Have Carried Out Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Activities in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, 2015, [https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles/Resolutions/IATTC/\\_English/C-15-01-Amendment-C-05-07-IUU.pdf](https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles/Resolutions/IATTC/_English/C-15-01-Amendment-C-05-07-IUU.pdf).
- 7 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, Resolution C-14-01, Resolution (Amended) on a Regional Vessel Register, 2014, [https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles/Resolutions/IATTC/\\_English/C-14-01-Regional-Vessel-Register.pdf](https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles/Resolutions/IATTC/_English/C-14-01-Regional-Vessel-Register.pdf).
- 8 IMO numbers can be obtained free of charge from <http://imonumbers.ihs.com>.
- 9 For the number of fishing vessels weighing 100 gross tons or more with IMO numbers on the Consolidated List of Authorized Vessels see <http://www.tuna-org.org/globaltvr.htm>.
- 10 Boris Worm et al., "Global Catches, Exploitation Rates, and Rebuilding Options for Sharks," *Marine Policy* 40 (2013): 194-204, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X13000055>.

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## For further information, please visit:

[www.pewtrusts.org/tuna](http://www.pewtrusts.org/tuna)

[www.pewtrusts.org/endillegalfishing](http://www.pewtrusts.org/endillegalfishing)

[www.pewtrusts.org/sharks](http://www.pewtrusts.org/sharks)

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**Contact:** Leah Weiser, officer, communications

**Email:** [lweiser@pewtrusts.org](mailto:lweiser@pewtrusts.org)

**Project website:** [pewtrusts.org/tuna](http://pewtrusts.org/tuna)

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