

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

104th MEETING

Lisbon, Portugal

September 2026

PROPOSAL IATTC-104 J-2

SUBMITTED BY ECUADOR

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION C-23-0

RESEARCH FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF MAHI-MAHI

(Coryphaena hippurus)

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), on the occasion of its 104th Meeting:

Recognizing that the fish stocks covered by the Convention are understood to include stocks of tunas and tuna-like species and other species caught by vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species in the Convention Area;

Bearing in mind that Article VII, paragraph 1(f), of the Antigua Convention establishes that the Commission “shall adopt, as necessary, conservation and management measures and recommendations for species belonging to the same ecosystem and that are affected by fishing for, or dependent on or associated with, the fish stocks covered by this Convention, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened”;

Reaffirming the obligations contained in Article VII.1(a) and (i) of the Antigua Convention, under which the Commission shall adopt “standards for the collection, verification and timely exchange and reporting of data concerning the fisheries for fish stocks covered by this Convention”, and shall also establish “a comprehensive program for data collection”;

Recognizing that mahi-mahi (Coryphaena hippurus) is caught as a target species by artisanal and industrial longline fisheries of several CPCs, accounting for 98% of catches in the EPO; is caught incidentally by purse-seine vessels operating in the Convention Area, estimated at 2% of the total catches of this species; and is among the fish stocks of interest to the Commission;

Recalling that collaborative research with the IATTC during 2014–2016 showed that the data available for the southern eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) were sufficient to conduct an exploratory assessment of the core mahi-mahi stock and management strategies, although information for the northern EPO was found to be limited;

Recalling that the IATTC has provided opportunities for collaborative research, including three technical meetings on Coryphaena hippurus between 2014 and 2016; an exploratory stock assessment of C. hippurus in the “core” region; an exploratory management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the southern EPO; and an evaluation of possible reference points and harvest control rules for C. hippurus in the EPO;

Taking into account that, at its 10th meeting, the Scientific Advisory Committee recommended that the IATTC staff continue working with the CPCs on research into the stock status of mahi-mahi (Coryphaena hippurus) in the Convention Area;

Recalling that the IATTC scientific staff, in the document *Staff Activities and Research Plan* IATTC-100-02b, indicated the need for future research to improve the analysis of assessments of *C. hippurus* (mahi-mahi/dolphinfish) stocks in the Convention Area;

Bearing in mind also that, at the 12th meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, the SAC recommended that the Commission encourage Members participating directly or indirectly, as flag States or coastal States, in the mahi-mahi fishery to consider assessing and managing the mahi-mahi stock;

Emphasizing that the objective of the Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fish stocks covered by the Convention in the Convention Area, and that the collaborative studies and exploratory research of the Scientific Advisory Committee demonstrate the need to obtain better data for assessing the *Coryphaena hippurus* stock in the Convention Area and to conduct research that contributes to improving the analysis and assessment of this fish stock;

Taking into account that, through Resolution C-25-05, the Commission established the Working Group on Mahi-Mahi, and that the Fourth Technical Meeting on Mahi-Mahi (DOR-04) was held in 2026, with objectives that included updating the conceptual model for mahi-mahi in the eastern Pacific Ocean, reviewing data availability, and establishing a workplan for the next stock assessment;

Taking into account the recommendations concerning mahi-mahi adopted by the Scientific Advisory Committee at its 17th meeting (La Jolla, California, USA, 8–12 June 2026), and the recommendations of the scientific staff contained in document SAC-17-10, which concur on completing the mahi-mahi stock assessment in 2027 in accordance with the roadmap agreed at DOR-04 and set out in document SAC-17-INF-J;

Recognizing that DOR-04 identified marked regional variability in data quality and monitoring systems, as well as a substantial discrepancy between catch data held by the IATTC and catch estimates derived from alternative sources, making it necessary to review the historical catch series used in the assessment;

Recognizing also that there is an emerging consensus that mahi-mahi in the eastern Pacific Ocean functions as a dynamic metapopulation, strongly influenced by ocean currents, sea-surface temperature, and climatic events such as El Niño and La Niña, and that preliminary genomic studies and tagging work indicate regional differentiation with potential connectivity, such that the assessment requires a model capable of considering both the stock-separation hypothesis and north–south connectivity;

Resolves as follows:

1. Members and Cooperating non-Members (CPCs)

The CPCs shall collect and submit to the IATTC biological, catch, and interaction data on mahi-mahi, as well as fishing-effort data relating to mahi-mahi, for their fleets in which catches of this species constitute more than 5% of their total annual catch. CPCs are encouraged to collect and submit data from other fleets, when available. This information shall be submitted before 30 June (~~beginning in 2024~~) of each year, as part of the annual catch reports, in accordance with Resolution C-03-05. Data from artisanal and recreational fleets ~~Data from fishing and recreational fleets~~ may be reported as total annual catches without fishing-effort data, in accordance with Resolution C-03-05.

2. IATTC scientific staff:

- a) The IATTC scientific staff shall work with the CPCs on mechanisms for the timely submission of their data for reporting in accordance with Resolution C-03-05 and shall present them at the meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee in 2027⁴. This mechanism shall be used by the CPCs for the submission of information both in the future and retroactively.
- b) Based on the data received from the CPCs and taking into account the human and financial resources available, the IATTC scientific staff shall:
 - i. Update, ~~to the extent possible~~, the mahi-mahi stock assessment conducted by the

IATTC staff between 2012 and 2016, and present it to the Scientific Advisory Committee in 2027⁶.

- ii. The scientific staff shall present, for consideration by the Working Group on Mahi-Mahi, the Scientific Advisory Committee, and the Commission in 2027, a workplan to conduct a new mahi-mahi stock assessment, with phases ranging from the development and validation of the conceptual model to the analysis of risks and uncertainties. The plan shall include a clear estimate of the costs and staff required to implement the work schedule. The Commission shall review these estimates, including possible external sources of funding, and consider allocating the necessary resources, as appropriate, taking into account its priorities for stock assessments.
- iii. As appropriate, update the recommendations for the CPCs on harvest control rules for the mahi-mahi longline fishery during the 2027⁶ meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

3. Review

~~That the Working Group on Mahi-Mahi (WGMA), with the support of the IATTC scientific staff, promote implementation of the workplan recommended during its fourth technical workshop~~ That the Working Group on Mahi-Mahi (WGMA), with the support of the IATTC scientific staff, promote implementation of the workplan recommended during its fourth technical workshop (DOR-04), as set out in document SAC-17-INF-J, while seeking to ensure that its implementation does not affect the schedule envisaged for updating the mahi-mahi stock assessment or the presentation of its results and recommendations to the Scientific Advisory Committee and the Commission in 2027.

This Resolution shall be reviewed by the scientific staff and at the 2028 meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, once the results of the mahi-mahi stock assessment have been presented, in order to evaluate the adequacy of its provisions and provide a recommendation to the Commission.

~~In 2024, the SAC should consider and recommend to the Commission, as appropriate, the establishment of a voluntary group to identify the information available on mahi-mahi (*Coryphaena hippurus*) in the various fisheries of interest to the IATTC. It should also identify the information gaps that need to be addressed in order to determine the status of this resource, whether as target catch or incidental catch, and possibly recommend management measures.~~

~~This Resolution shall be reviewed by the scientific staff and at the 2026 meeting of the SAC to evaluate the adequacy of the measures in this Resolution and provide a recommendation to the Commission.~~