

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

104th MEETING

Lisbon, Portugal

31 August–4 September 2026

PROPOSAL IATTC B-1

SUBMITTED BY ECUADOR

RESOLUTION C-26-XX

INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PROVISIONAL REFERENCE POINTS FOR SWORDFISH IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC WITHIN THE IATTC AREA

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION NEEDS

- Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) is a highly migratory species of economic, social, and ecological importance. Its management in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) continues to be constrained by uneven data availability, insufficient regional information exchange, and the absence of formally adopted reference points.
- The IATTC Strategic Science Plan for 2026–2030 includes swordfish under the “Sustainable fisheries” theme and provides for a benchmark stock assessment in 2028 (IATTC-103-03a).
- The information required includes, among other elements, catch and effort, fleet characteristics, observation and monitoring, bycatch and protected species, biological sampling, transshipments, data quality, and compliance.
- The coverage and level of detail of these data vary among Members and Cooperating non-Members (CPCs); therefore, collaboration mechanisms need to be harmonized and a regional information base for stock assessments needs to be strengthened.

PROVISIONAL REFERENCE POINTS

- Considering the stock assessment scheduled for 2028 and the potential uncertainty involved in estimating biological reference points based on maximum sustainable yield (MSY) with sufficient robustness, it is proposed that provisional biomass-based reference points be adopted on a precautionary and interim basis to guide management decisions until more robust scientific information becomes available.
- As initial precautionary thresholds, it is proposed that a target reference point (TRP) equivalent to 35% of unfished spawning-stock biomass (SSB_0) and a limit reference point (LRP) equivalent to 20% of unfished spawning-stock biomass be established.
- These reference points shall be provisional and interim and shall be reviewed once the results of the stock assessment scheduled for 2028 become available, taking into account the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and improvements in the quality and coverage of regional scientific and fisheries information.

PROPOSAL C-XX-XX

INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND PROVISIONAL REFERENCE POINTS FOR SWORDFISH IN THE IATTC AREA

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), meeting in Lisbon, Portugal, on the occasion of its 104th meeting:

Taking into account that the objective of the Antigua Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO);

Recalling Article VII of the Antigua Convention, which entrusts the Commission with adopting conservation and management measures based on the best scientific evidence available;

Mindful of its responsibility to make recommendations to its Members and Cooperating non-Members (CPCs) for the long-term sustainable use of stocks of tunas and tuna-like species;

Recognizing that swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) is a highly migratory species and a management priority for the Commission, and that the quality, coverage, and availability of fisheries information vary among CPCs;

Noting that Resolution C-19-08 establishes provisions on scientific observers for longline vessels and that the Strategic Science Plan 2026–2030 identifies data collection, sustainable fisheries, knowledge transfer, and capacity building among its core themes;

Noting that the Strategic Science Plan provides for a benchmark stock assessment of swordfish in 2028, the quality of which will depend on harmonized catch, effort, biological, observer, and bycatch data;

Recognizing also that the observer programs of the Government of Ecuador, including private fishery improvement project initiatives such as SWORDFISH.EC, have strengthened information on catch, effort, CPUE, biological sampling, and bycatch since 2022 and can contribute to regional assessment processes;

Considering that the absence of reference points limits the ability to determine stock status, adopt timely measures, and develop harvest control rules;

Convinced that strengthening data exchange and adopting precautionary provisional reference points are complementary measures for improving the assessment and management of swordfish in the EPO;

Agrees:

INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND HARMONIZATION

1. Implement a second regional technical workshop no later than the first quarter of 2027 for the timely and secure exchange of scientific and fisheries information on South Pacific swordfish within the IATTC Area among CPCs, with the support of the IATTC scientific staff, in accordance with the applicable rules on data confidentiality and use.
2. Request that CPCs strengthen and, where possible, harmonize the collection and submission of: (a) catch and effort data; (b) vessel and gear characteristics; (c) onboard observer and landing-monitoring data; (d) bycatch and discards; (e) biological measurements; and (f) transshipments.
3. Instruct the IATTC scientific staff, in consultation with the Scientific Advisory Committee and the CPCs, to identify information gaps, propose minimum standards and validation mechanisms, and present progress prior to the benchmark stock assessment scheduled for 2028.
4. Establish a Working Group on the Swordfish Longline Fishery, with the objective of strengthening technical cooperation, capacity building, and the exchange of information and experience among national programs, fishery improvement projects, and other relevant initiatives; promoting the harmonization and improvement of onboard and landing data-collection systems; and generating more complete and standardized scientific information to contribute to the assessment and management work conducted by the IATTC scientific staff.

PROVISIONAL REFERENCE POINTS

5. Adopt provisionally, for the swordfish stock in the IATTC Area, the following proxy reference points based on spawning-stock biomass:
 - a) Target Reference Point: 35% of the spawning-stock biomass that would exist in the absence of fishing activity (0.35 SSB_0).
 - b) Limit Reference Point: 20% of the spawning-stock biomass that would exist in the absence of fishing activity (0.20 SSB_0).
6. Recognize that these reference points are interim precautionary measures and do not prejudge the selection of definitive or optimal reference points.
7. Use the provisional reference points to support interpretation of stock status and the future development of management options and harvest control rules, taking scientific uncertainty into account.
8. Review these reference points following the benchmark stock assessment scheduled for 2028, or earlier if substantial new scientific information so warrants, taking into account the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee and the IATTC scientific staff.
9. Seek to ensure that subsequent assessments are conducted at appropriate intervals, preferably every three to five years, subject to available resources and the priorities of the Strategic Science Plan.