

Position Statement of the Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fishing to the 98th meeting of the IATTC

1. The Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fishing (OPRT) is an international NGO, whose members are involved in production, distribution and consumption of sashimi tuna in the world. We are submitting our position paper to the 98th meeting of the IATTC.

2. Bigeye tuna is an important species as sashimi tuna and its sustainable use is of vital importance to OPRT members. In this regard, we would like to draw your attention that the OPRT adopted at its General meeting last June “Resolution to urge to recover Bigeye tuna stocks” and sent it to tuna-RFMOs including the IATTC (see attached).

3. According to Document IATTC-97-02, for bigeye there is a 50% probability that F_{msy} has been exceeded and a 53% probability that the current spawning stock biomass is below S_{msy} . It also states that the probabilities that the F and S limit reference points have been exceeded are not negligible. The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) recommends that from 2022-2024 the Commission consider additional measures for FAD management, in particular, an extended temporal closure and individual-vessel daily active FAD limits to prevent further increase in fishing mortality of tropical tunas including bigeye.

4. We strongly urge the IATTC to adopt such measures for better management of FADs fishing operations at the 98th meeting of the IATTC.

OPRT Resolution to urge to recover Bigeye tuna stocks

1. Recognizing that bigeye tuna is one of the major tuna resources in the world, and has not only high commercial values from socio-economic perspectives and is dispensable stuff for food culture in many countries/areas.
2. Being concerned that bigeye stocks show a tendency to have been deteriorating over a couple of years although 4 tuna-related Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) are responsible for conservation and management of tuna stocks including bigeye stocks.
3. Being further concerned that Scientific Committee of an RFMO has introduced “new method of aging and growth” and other factors in stock assessment for bigeye distributed in area of its competence since 2017, this change has made the results of assessment much more optimistic, and subsequently relaxed conservation and management measures have been adopted and implemented without considering precautional approach although no confirmation has been made yet that the new one is appropriate compared with old one,
4. Recognizing that globally while catches of bigeye by longline fishery that target adult fish have considerably decreased, catches by purse seine operations associated with floating objects including Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) have been increasing and have surpassed the level of catch by longline fishery and most of such purse seine catch is composed with juvenile bigeye.
5. Confirming that Scientific bodies of RFMOs have made a series of recommendations that effective measures to restrict (reduce) levels of bigeye catch by purse seine fishery because levels of juvenile bigeye mortality by purse seine fishery that are already high and show further increase will cause further deterioration of bigeye (and yellowfin) stocks.”
6. Recalling that Scientific bodies of RFMOs have warned for years their Commissions **that they should be aware that increased harvests on small(juvenile) fishes could have had negative consequences for the productivity of bigeye tuna fisheries (e.g. reduced yield at MSY and**

increased SSB required to produce MSY) and, therefore, should the Commission wish to increase long-term sustainable yield, the Committee continues to recommend that effective measures be found to reduce fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye tunas.

7. being deeply concerned that, notwithstanding OPRT adopted three resolutions and sent them to RFMOs and others with the objective of urging mainly to restrict fishing capacity of purse seine fishery including number of large-scale purse seine vessels, regulate purse seine operation associated with FADs to realize the recovery of bigeye stocks, fishing capacity of purse seine fishery remains at high levels and status of bigeye stocks is not in good shape.
8. Recalling that UN SDG Target 14.4 stipulates that “**By 2020**, effectively regulate harvesting and **end** overfishing, **illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing** and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics”, and recalling further with disappointment that in its SOFIA 2020 FAO admitted “the situation as at 2017 indicates that it is unlikely that SDG Target 14.4 (to end overfishing of marine fisheries by 2020) will be achieved” and emphasized “Achieving the target will require time and: □ stronger political will, especially at the national level;·····controlling of fishing capacity and intensity at levels that do not impair resource productivity;”
9. Expecting that the provision included in UN SDG Target 14.4 will duly apply to bigeye stocks in the outcomes of work to develop Management Strategy Evaluation that is going on all RFMOs, which establishes a pre-fixed rule and is considered to provide more effective management of fish stocks.
10. **Confirming** that while regarding major tuna longline fishery targeting bigeye its total number of vessels engaging in the fishery and/or catch levels have been restricted through utmost efforts by relevant flag states and OPRT, for purse seiners’ operation associated with FADs and scientific Bodies of RFMOs has requested further restrictive measures be developed and introduced in order to offset the ongoing increase in fishing efficiency.

Have resolve as follows at the Ordinary General Meeting held on June 22,

2021

1. Urge tuna related RFMOs i) to continue endeavor to improve stock assessment for bigeye stocks, in particular, in an expeditious manner for RFMO that has unresolved issues, ii) to adopt and effectively implement conservation and management measures to realize recovery of bigeye stocks in the shortest time feasible to the level that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics including effective restriction rule for catch of juvenile bigeye by purse seine fishery, and iii) to duly reflect the contribution made by tuna longline fishery sector and its importance from socio-economic perspectives in respective outcomes of MSE work.
2. Request FAO to monitor the progress of work at each of relevant RFMOs to realize goals mentioned in the previous paragraph and advise them as necessary to expedite the work in an appropriate direction.
3. Urge competent authorities of relevant countries/areas and related scientists, in particular, those of countries/areas where OPRT member associations are located, to participate in an active manner in the meetings and work of relevant RFMOs and FAO, as appropriate, to help them accomplish the tasks described in paragraphs 1 and 2 mentioned above