

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

89TH MEETING

Guayaquil (Ecuador)

29 June-3 July 2015

PROPOSAL IATTC-89 D-1

SUBMITTED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

**RESOLUTION C-15-XX ON THE CONSERVATION OF MOBULID RAYS
CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES IN THE IATTC
CONVENTION AREA**

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

The Antigua Convention requires IATTC to adopt conservation measures for species associated with the main targeted stocks.

At the 87th Annual meeting of the IATTC, the Commission decided to adopt, on the basis of recommendations by the Scientific staff, voluntary measures for the handling of Mobulid rays, including prohibiting gaffing rays, lifting rays by the gill slits or spiracles, punching holes through the bodies of rays, and retaining rays caught incidentally during fishing operations, and requiring that large rays landed on deck be returned to the water as soon as possible.

The Commission also considered that a proposal in this respect should be approved at the 2015 Annual Meeting.

At its 2015 meeting, the SAC and IATTC staff reiterated the recommendations made in 2014.

The Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC),

Recognizing that fish stocks covered by the IATTC include other species of fish taken by vessels fishing for tunas;

Recalling 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 the Convention, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened;

Considering that Mobulid rays, the family Mobulidae which includes manta rays and mobula rays, are extremely vulnerable to overfishing as they take a long time to reach sexual maturity, have long gestation periods, and often give birth to only a few pups;

Recognizing that Manta rays (*Manta alfredi* and *Manta birostris*) and giant devil rays (*Mobula mobular*) are considered threatened by the IUCN and noting that it is difficult to distinguish some the other species of devil rays from the giant devil ray and;

Noting that Mobulid rays are caught as bycatch when fishing for tuna in IATTC fisheries, as presented at the IATTC Scientific Committee meeting in April 2013, and release methods for these animals do exist;

Further Noting the advice of the 2014 and 2015 Scientific Advisory Committee and the fact that in 2014

the Commission adopted recommendations on the handling of Mobulid rays on a voluntary basis;

Agrees that:

1. Members and Cooperating non-Members (CPCs) shall prohibit retaining onboard, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of Manta or Mobulid rays caught in the IATTC Convention area.
2. CPCs shall require vessels flying their flag to promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, Manta and Mobulid rays as soon as they are seen in the net, on the hook, or on the deck, and do it in a manner that will result in the least possible harm to the individuals captured, following the guidance in the 2014 Scientific Advisory Committee recommendations at all times, as detailed in Annex 1 to this Resolution.
3. CPCs shall record *inter alia*, through the observer programs, the number of discards and releases of Manta and Mobulid rays with indication of status (dead or alive) and report it to IATTC.
4. This Resolution shall enter into force on 1st January 2016.

Annex 1 – Live release guidance

Members and cooperating non-Members (CPCs) shall, wherever possible look to ensure the live release of all manta and mobulid rays caught by:

1. Prohibit the gaffing of rays.
2. Prohibit lifting rays by the gill slits or spiracles.
3. Prohibit the punching of holes through the bodies of rays (*e.g.* to pass a cable through for lifting the ray).
4. Require that, to the extent possible, rays too large to be lifted safely by hand be brailed out of the net using methods such as those recommended in document WCPFC-SC8-2012/ EB-IP-12 (Poison *et al.* 2012, Good practices to reduce the mortality of sharks and rays caught incidentally by the tropical tuna purse seiners).
5. Require that large rays that cannot be released safely before being landed on deck, be returned to the water as soon as possible, preferably utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the boat, or if no such ramp is available, lowered with a sling or net.