

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

RESOLUTION ON BIGEYE TUNA

JUNE 1998

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), having responsibility for the scientific study of tunas and tuna-like fishes of the eastern Pacific Ocean (which for the purposes of this Resolution is the area bounded by the coastline of the Americas, the 40°N parallel, the 150°W meridian, and the 40°S parallel), and having maintained since 1950 a continuing scientific program directed toward the study of these resources,

1. *Recognizes* that the bigeye tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean may be part of a larger Pacific-wide stock, but are treated as a separate stock for the purposes of management,
2. *Notes* that the annual catches of bigeye tuna taken in the purse-seine fishery of the eastern Pacific Ocean have increased during the past few years from less than 5,000 metric tons to more than 50,000 metric tons, and that most of the increase is made up of small and medium-sized fish;
3. *Recognizes* that catches of small fish of that magnitude are likely to cause a reduction in the overall catches of bigeye tuna from the eastern Pacific Ocean;
4. *Expresses concern* that the fishery for bigeye associated with floating objects results in elevated catches of unmarketable bigeye and other tunas, and also many other associated species which are discarded to the sea dead;
5. *Noting* that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries calls on states, international organizations, and all those involved in fisheries to collaborate in fulfilling the objectives and principles of the Code, which include taking measures to prevent or eliminate excess fishing capacity and ensuring that levels of fishing effort are commensurate with the sustainable use of fishery resources; in the case of new or exploratory fisheries, adoption as soon as possible of cautious conservation and management measures, including, *inter alia*, catch limits and effort limits, which should remain in force until there are sufficient data available to allow assessment of the impact of the fisheries on the long-term sustainability of the stocks; and take appropriate measures to minimize waste, discards, and catch of non-target species, both fish and non-fish species;
6. *Recalling* that Article 5 of the United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks requires coastal states and fishing states to, *inter alia*, (1) adopt measures to ensure long-term sustainability of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks and promote the objective of their optimum utilization, (2) ensure that such measures are based on the best scientific evidence available and are designed to maintain or restore stocks at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, (3) apply the precautionary approach in accordance with Article 6 of the Agreement, (4) minimize pollution, waste, discards, catch by lost or abandoned gear, catch of non-target species of both fish and non-fish species, (5) protect biodiversity in the marine environment, and (6) take measures to prevent or eliminate overfishing and excess fishing capacity;

7. *Recalling further* that the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program includes, *inter alia*, an obligation to take measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of tuna stocks and other stocks of living marine resources associated with the tuna purse-seine fishery in the Agreement Area, based on the best scientific evidence available, and apply the precautionary approach, consistent with the relevant provisions of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the United Nations Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and that such measures shall be designed to maintain or restore the biomass of harvested stocks at or above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield;

8. *Noting* the recommendations of the Working Group of experts convened pursuant to the resolution adopted by the IATTC at its 58th Meeting;

9. *Concludes* that action should be taken to reduce the catch of small bigeye tuna taken in the eastern Pacific Ocean to 45,000 metric tons in 1998, this limit is to be implemented by prohibiting sets on all types of floating objects at such time as the above limit is reached;

10. *Further concludes* that the status of the bigeye stock should be reviewed at the time of the 1999 Annual Meeting of the IATTC, and consideration should be given to further reductions of the catches of small bigeye tuna commensurate with the scientific advice of the IATTC;

11. *Recommends* that the High Contracting Parties implement the limit in paragraph 9;

12. *Recommends* that the High Contracting Parties prohibit the use of tender vessels which are not capable of purse seining and whose role is to place or service fish-aggregating devices at sea;

13. *Recommends* that the High Contracting Parties conducting purse-seine operations in the eastern Pacific Ocean prohibit the transshipment of tuna at sea;

14. *Directs* the IATTC staff to undertake research on other measures which might be beneficial in reducing catches of juvenile bigeye tuna in purse-seine fishing, including, *inter alia*, a requirement that all small tuna caught in the purse-seine fishery be landed, progressive reduction of discards of small bigeye tuna, net modifications, such as removing strips from the nets during the peak season, and the investigation of the feasibility of national and individual-vessel catch quotas; and

15. *Finally recommends* that all member states and other interested parties, including regional economic integration organizations, work diligently to implement such a bigeye tuna conservation program for 1998.