

Intervention by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

United Nations Oceans Conference

3-minute statement

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

On behalf of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, an Article XIV body under the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this vital dialogue on safeguarding our oceanic future. As a regional fisheries management organization, the IOTC stands firmly committed to the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water, and we strongly support the principles enshrined in the High Seas Treaty — the BBNJ Agreement, demonstrated through the adoption of a specific Recommendation related to collaboration with the BBNJ process at our recent 29th session of the IOTC Commission.

The Indian Ocean sustains over one-third of the world's tuna production, serving as a lifeline for coastal communities, food security, and economies across the region. But this resource cannot be taken for granted. Climate change, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and other factors continue to threaten both biodiversity and the sustainability of our shared marine resources.

The IOTC has taken concrete steps to address these challenges in alignment with SDG14 targets, particularly:

- 14.4, by adopting science-based conservation and management measures for tuna and tuna-like species;
- 14.6, by encouraging transparency in reporting;
- and 14.7, through capacity building and equitable participation for developing coastal States, especially Small Island Developing States.

In line with the BBNJ Agreement, the IOTC welcomes the prospect of greater cooperation in the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. We recognize that science, equity, and international collaboration must form the backbone of governance on the high seas. The IOTC is committed to:

- Sharing data and research to inform ecosystem-based management;
- Enhancing transparency in access and benefit-sharing from marine resources;
- And discussing the potential of area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, where appropriate.

We reaffirm our readiness to collaborate with States Parties, RFMOs, and global institutions to ensure that the BBNJ Agreement complements and strengthens existing RFMO mandates. Only through coherence, not duplication, can we achieve truly effective ocean governance.

Excellencies, the IOTC believes that safeguarding tuna stocks is not just about managing a fishery — it is about securing a future. A future where coastal nations thrive, biodiversity endures, food security is ensured and our ocean remains a source of life and hope for generations to come.

We are proud to be part of this global effort. Thank you.