

Urgent call for unified actions amongst the South-West Indian Ocean Countries ahead of upcoming IOTC session

Several high-level government officials of the fisheries sector from the South-West Indian Ocean Countries, namely, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius (online representation), Oman, Seychelles, Tanzania and Zanzibar met on Friday 19th April 2024 at L'Escale Hotel, in Seychelles, to discuss a common strategy regarding the conservation and management of the yellowfin tuna stock in the region. The one-day meeting was organized by the Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue Economy, through the Department of Fisheries and the industry partners, in preparation for the upcoming Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) session that will take place from the 13th to 17th May 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The Senior Officials meeting focussed on the need for cooperation and collaboration within the IOTC and on proposed Conservation and Management Measures (CMM's) that the South-West Indian Ocean Countries can collectively defend in the interest of fisheries in the region. The officials discussed ways to promote the sustainable management and conservation of tuna resources in the Indian Ocean with the end goal of protecting the resources and ecosystems as well as the livelihoods and food security of people who rely on these resources.

There are altogether 24 proposals for resolutions that have been tabled for the IOTC meeting, of which Seychelles have submitted three. This included proposed amendments on two existing resolutions with the main objective for improving data collection and reporting to the IOTC secretariat, in order to enhance current reporting on catch and effort data to the IOTC Secretariat on that may directly or indirectly be impacted by tuna fisheries to some extent. The other proposal is to expand the existing resolution on a ban on discards, which currently applies only for tuna purse seiners to include other fishing vessels that are on the IOTC Record of Authorized vessels and operating in the IOTC area of competence. The main objectives of the amendments are to bring fairness and minimize the wastage of fish which are important protein sources.

In line with the main objective of the meeting, Seychelles and Comores also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize the relationship between the two countries.

When being interviewed by the press the Minister for Fisheries and the Blue Economy, Minister Jean-Francois Ferrari emphasized the importance of strengthening the relation between the two countries

“We have had difficulties with Comores in the past in regard to illegal fishing, where fishing vessels from Comores was caught fishing illegally in the Aldabra lagoon. We need to establish a framework to have better cooperation to stop that from happening”.

Aside from the meeting, during their stay in the country, the senior officials also got the chance to visit some fisheries related facilities. They visited the Cascade fish market, a European Union funded project that opened in October 2022 and the Common Central Cold Storage at Ile du Port.

The delegation was also briefed on biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (BIOFADs), an initiative being undertaken by the PEVASA Group. They were shown the FAD materials used by the PEVASA Group vessels which are fully biodegradable and non-entangling. They also visited a fishing net recycling business that cuts, washes and compresses fishing nets for export, which can later be used to make eco-friendly clothing.

The business is also venturing into the recycling of FAD buoys. Country representatives agreed to continue the discussion in the margin of the 28 sessions of the IOTC Commission meeting in Bangkok, to evaluate the progress of the negotiations and agree on common positions to defend.



Formalizing relations between Seychelles and Comores



Getting briefed about bioFAD from local representative of the PEVASA Group



Recycled fishing net to make clothing



Seeing Cascade fishing community at work