



11 May 2023

Position Statement / Policy Recommendation of FPAOI to the INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION SESSION 27. MAURITIUS 08TH TO 12TH MAY 2023

Who is FPAOI?

The Federation of Artisanal Fishers of the Indian Ocean (FPAOI) was created in 2015, with the aim of representing and defending the interests of artisanal fishers in the countries of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The FPAOI currently groups together 36 professional organisations and associations representing OVER 120000 artisanal fishers in the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, La Réunion (France) and the Seychelles. Through the FPAOI, artisanal fishers in the Indian Ocean work for the recognition of their rights, the importance of their sector in the economies of the region, their contribution to food security and their role in the management of the resources on which they depend.

The FPAOI was established on the basis that artisanal fishers are currently unable to participate fully in decisions made relating to the management and exploitation of the common resources on which they depend, in particular tuna. To remedy this situation, the FPAOI wishes to promote participation of its members in decision-making processes at the national and regional levels. To better attain this objective, the FPAOI has joined a network of fisher's organizations led by SWIOTUNA forum.

Who is SWIOTUNA?

South West Indian Ocean Tuna Forum (SWIOTUNA) is an international Non-Governmental Organization registered in Kenya. SWIOTUNA is governed by a board and its secretariate is based in Mombasa, Kenya. SWIOTUNA has a regional network with membership drawn from civil society organizations, community-based organization such as fisher associations and non-state actors from Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Mauritius, Reunion, Somali, and Kenya.

SWIOTUNA mission is to promote transparent and accountable marine fisheries sector and responsible ocean governance with active participation of empowered non-state actors and coastal communities contributing to increased, impactful and sustainable economic, social and

environmental benefits in the SWIO region and its people. This is achievable by empowering non-state actors and coastal communities by improving their access to credible information and knowledge, integrating science, society and policy, enhancing civic participation, engagement and collective action in processes which shape and influence policy and practice to promote transparency and accountability in the governance of fisheries and equitable benefit sharing of sustainable marine resources in the SWIO region.

Sustainable fisheries need transparency

Marine fisheries are a critical resource fulfilling the economic, food security, and nutrition needs of millions of people around the world, including in the Western Indian Ocean. However, our fisheries are falling short of their potential contributions to socio-economic development. Among other issues, unequal access to fisheries prevents coastal communities from fully harnessing the benefits of fish in neighbouring waters, while overfishing, ecosystem damage, and climate change make the future of this precious resource even more uncertain and vulnerable. Those responsible for managing fisheries may also face increased social and political pressures from coastal communities if they lose access to the benefits of their natural resources.

While there are many aspects to achieve sustainable fisheries, the public availability of credible information is critical. But it has not been a priority. Many governments are not disclosing even basic information on their fisheries sector, such as laws, permits, fish agreements, stock assessments, financial contributions, catch data, and subsidies. Also, not all companies are reliably reporting on catches, fishing practices, etc. Furthermore, the data that is already publicly available is too often incomplete, outdated, unverified, or not readily accessible, affecting the capacity of governments to manage their marine fisheries efficiently and sustainably, as well as the ability for effective oversight, accountability and public dialogue.

Furthermore, incomplete or inaccurate data can lead to the marginalisation or undervaluation of certain groups or fisheries sub-sectors (in particular small-scale fishers and the role of women in fisheries supply chains), which can consequently limit the visibility of the entire sector in national debates.

The FPAOI and SWIOTUNA strongly believe that making fisheries more transparent and inclusive, fishing nations can also demonstrate to commercial partners their capacity for sustainable fisheries management, as well as give investors, suppliers and international donors greater confidence in their seafood sourcing, trade and investment decisions.

Additionally, providing accessible, credible and comprehensible information avoids the spread of rumours, misinformation and mistrust. This is particularly relevant for our current times, in which struggling economies and clear warning signs of diminishing fish stocks may trigger fears among fishers regarding their livelihoods and futures.

And finally, coastal and small island states understand that challenges and opportunities in the fisheries sector must also be seen through a regional and international dimension. High quality

and timely information shared among states supports good governance and sustainable fisheries management, in particular of migratory fish stocks. Transparency in fisheries management is therefore an important tool to build trust among stakeholders and stimulate regional and international cooperation.

Yet transparency is too often interpreted incorrectly – as something which is voluntary. Instead, transparency must be approached as a legal obligation for governments and a right of citizens, especially of those whose lives depend on fishing. This is outlined, inter alia, in the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015)¹ and in the *Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa* (African Union, 2014)².

FPAOI and SWIOTUNA strongly believe that the time has come for members of the IOTC to recognise that the stocks of tunas in the Indian Ocean has been severely depleted and shall continue depleting and is not in a status of recovering due to the lack of commitment from CPCs to apply corrective CMMs.

The stock of tunas in the IOTC area of competence has suffered not only due to excessive fishing pressure but also because of destructive fishing techniques by major operators.

Unless we review and stop the catching juveniles resulting in cutting the reproduction chain of the tunas, all the other Conservation Management Measures would have been in vain, for the tuna needs to reproduce in order to rebuild the stocks.

FPAOI and SWIOTUNA calls on all CPCs, especially the coastal states and the scientific community to seriously consider tackling this major contributing factor that is causing the imbalance and threatening the survival of coastal communities throughout the region.

FPAOI and SWIOTUNA would like to remind all members and observers the primary objective of the IOTC is to promote cooperation among its members with a view to ensuring, through appropriate management, conservation and optimal utilization of tuna stocks and encouraging sustainable development of fisheries based on such stock.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/resources/detail/en/c/1195488/>

² [Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa | African Union](#)

CONTACTS:



FÉDÉRATION DES PÊCHEURS ARTISANS DE L'OcéAN INDIEN (FPAOI)

C/O CRPMEM DE LA REUNION

47, RUE EVARISTE DE PARNY

BP 295 – 97 827 LE PORT CEDEX

Contact Person: Patrick Fortuno

Email: patrickfortuno@yahoo.com

Phone: +23057125290

Phone: 0262 42 23 75

Email: fpaoi2015@gmail.com /

Facebook: Fpaoi Pêcheurs Artisans



SOUTH WEST INDIAN OCEAN TUNA FORUM

Email: info@swiotuuna.org / swiotuna@gmail.com

Website: www.swiotuuna.org

Social Media Pages

Twitter: [@swiotuna](https://twitter.com/swiotuna)

Facebook: South West Indian Ocean Tuna Forum