

**WCC-2020-Res-132-EN**

**Controlling and monitoring trade in croaker swim bladders to protect target croakers and reduce incidental catches of threatened marine megafauna**

AWARE that the increasing demand for swim bladders (or maws) of the Vulnerable totoaba croaker (*Totoaba macdonaldi*) is the primary factor driving a gillnet fishery in the upper Gulf of California that threatens not only the totoaba but has also resulted in the imminent extinction of the vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*) due to incidental catch, and that similar demand for the maws from other large croaker species may threaten target species and exacerbate the risk of incidental catches of many other globally threatened marine megafauna including small cetaceans, sharks, rays, and marine turtles;

RECALLING that Resolution 6.017 *Actions to avert the extinction of the vaquita porpoise* (*Phocoena sinus*) (Hawai'i, 2016) expressed concern that the demand for and illegal trade in totoaba swim bladders drive fisheries that kill vaquitas, yet these fisheries continue unabated and the vaquita population has declined from about 60 individuals in 2016, when Resolution 6.017 was adopted, to only about 10 individuals in 2021;

RECALLING Resolution 19.61 *By-Catch of Non-Target Species* (Buenos Aires, 1994) which expressed concern that bycatch threatens the vaquita's survival, Resolution 7.023 *Reducing impacts of incidental capture on threatened marine species* (Marseille, 2020) which expressed concern that that even small-scale fisheries are cumulatively adding substantial pressure to marine species, and Resolution 6.021 that called for *Monitoring and management of unselective, unsustainable and unmonitored (UUU) fisheries* (Hawai'i, 2016);

NOTING recent news from Bangladesh, India, Papua New Guinea and French Guiana (France) indicating that very high prices are being paid for croaker (family Sciaenidae) maws for export, leading to concerns about impacts on the target croaker populations as well as on Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered marine megafauna bycaught incidentally in the gillnet fisheries for croakers; and

CONCERNED that the demand for croakers may also be increasing in other areas of the world resulting in intensifying small-scale fisheries, particularly gillnets, that threaten vulnerable croakers and many globally threatened marine megafauna, including small cetaceans, sharks, rays and marine turtles, already facing a high risk of extinction from incidental capture and other factors such as pollution and climate change, as well as contributing to the overexploitation of coastal fisheries vital to local livelihoods, food security and national economies;

**The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:**

1. REQUESTS the Director General and the Species Survival Commission (SSC) to:
  - a. by 2023 produce an analysis on the impacts of the demand for and trade in fish maws on croaker species and threatened marine megafauna and evaluate the effectiveness of listing croakers in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); and
  - b. promote the consideration of incidental catches of marine megafauna in developing effective policies that specifically address this problem as a targeted subset of Resolution 7.027 that urges all IUCN Members to act to reduce the pressure on threatened species from non-selective fishing gears and methods;
2. CALLS ON Members to support the establishment of trade regulations on fish maws through national laws and regulations, and taking account as appropriate of the analysis referred to in paragraph 1.a., to support a potential proposal to list further croaker species highly valued for their maws in CITES Appendix I or II, depending on their conservation status and where the criteria according to CITES Resolution 9.24 (Rev. COP17) are met;

3. URGES Members to document catches of croakers and exports of fish maws from major source countries by volume, species and value as well as incidental catches;
4. REQUESTS the World Customs Organization (WCO) to mandate that harmonised codes be used for fish maw exports and imports at least at the family level; and
5. ENCOURAGES states that support one or more Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable populations or species of marine megafauna known to be caught in fisheries that catch croakers highly valued for their maws, and that are not included in a conservation action or recovery plan which incorporates specific provisions regulating these fisheries, to ban fish maw exports until such conservation action or recovery plans are developed and implemented.