Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation
Ocean Partnership for Sustainable Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation – Models for Innovation and Reform: Bay of Bengal Project (TF 018233)
Regional Dialogue on "Management of Highly Migratory Fish Species in the Bay of Bengal"
23 November 2017; Kochi, India
Status and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Species of Sri Lanka [1]

ABSTRACT

The fisheries industry of Sri Lanka contributes significantly to the nutrition and food security, employment, foreign exchange earnings and government revenue and, therefore, its sustainability has become a primary concern in the economic development of the country. Marine fisheries in Sri Lanka can be categorized into coastal and offshore fisheries. The effective phase of development started in the early 1980s by introducing 8.0 - 9.8 m boats to conduct multi-day fishing operations in offshore waters.

Sri Lanka is one of the older and most important tuna fish producing island nations in the Indian Ocean. Exploitation of the fishery resources in the Indian Ocean has shown that tuna resources around Sri Lanka consist of several major species. The fisheries in the EEZ and high seas, are of yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), big eye tuna (*Thunnus obsesus*), skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), kawakawa (*Enthynnus affinis*), frigate tuna (*Auxis thazard*) and bullet tuna (*Auxis rochei*). The first three species are known to be broadly distributed in other parts of the Indian ocean. Among the tuna species, skipjack is dominant in offshore areas, followed by yellowfin tuna. Five species of billfishes have been identified in commercial landings, which include black marlin (*Makaira indica*), blue marlin (*Makaira nigricans*), striped marlin (*Tetrapturus audax*), sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*) and swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*). Other large pelagic species which associate with the tunas are billfishes, Spanish mackerels and pelagic sharks and rays.

The fish export industry in Sri Lanka, until recent past, had been hugely hindered by the ban imposed by the European Union (EU) in 2015 prohibiting Sri Lankan fish products to be exported to European market in view of non-compliance to rules and regulations of the EU. The ban was eventually revoked by EU on 16.06.2016. In 2016, tuna accounted for 51.5 percent of the total fish and fishery products exports of Sri Lanka. Of the total fish export

[1] **HLNS Herath[1*], HACC Perera[2], KHK Bandaranayake[3] and KBC Pushpalatha[4]**
[1]Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Colombo, Sri Lanka; [2 & 3] National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency, Colombo, Sri Lanka; [4] National Aquaculture Development Authority, Colombo, Sri Lanka;
*Email: hisherath@gmail.com

by Sri Lanka in 2016, 36.6 percent was to the USA, 16.7 percent to Europe, 3.7 percent to Japan, and 43 percent to other states.

Fisheries of Sri Lanka are governed by the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act, No. 2 of 1996 as amended by Acts No. 4 of 2000, 4 of 2004 and 22 of 2006, No. 35 of 2013, No. 2 of 2015, No. 2 of 2016 (considering the length of the vessel and the catch) and No.11 of 2017. These provisions are administered by the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR). Sri Lanka is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, FAO Compliance Agreement and the FAO Port State Measures Agreement. The country is also a member of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Therefore, it is also committed to co-operate with other States both directly and through the IOTC. Sri Lanka has developed a National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (SLNPOA-IUU) in line with the FAO International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing. This contains the measures that are being implemented and those proposed to be adopted for implementation to combat IUU fishing activities conducted by local fishing boats in Sri Lankan waters, waters of national jurisdictions of other coastal States, and high seas.

***