



## **Fifth Meeting of the Commission of the South Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement**

**Cape Panwa Hotel, Phuket, Thailand**

**25-29 June 2018**

### **Deep Sea Conservation Coalition Opening Statement**

Thank you Mr Chair. I will be brief. I am Duncan Currie and I represent the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, which is a coalition of over 80 non-governmental organizations concerned with conservation of the deep sea.

We join the other observers in thanking the government of Thailand for its hospitality and excellent arrangements.

In noting the report of the Scientific Committee we just wish to make a 4 brief observations as we move forward:

Firstly, we are heartened by the progress towards protecting benthic protected areas in a rigorous and scientific manner. We stress the importance of conservation objectives, management plans and good science, together with the precautionary approach, in establishing the MPAs.

Secondly, cumulative impacts of fisheries are important, and we are concerned that the SC reported that it was not possible to provide an assessment of the cumulative impact of all SIOFA fisheries at this time from vessels in accordance with CMM 2017/01 due to the differences in data and approaches in the BFAs provided.

Thirdly, we are concerned at the proposed 20% limit reference point and wish to emphasise the importance of precautionary reference points. There are many uncertainties relating to insufficient data. In the meantime, the outputs should be regarded as little better than guesstimates.

Fourthly, we are concerned at the note that the information on stock structure for deepwater species (chondrichthyans) is lacking and is a key uncertainty.

Mr Chair, what is common to these observations is the lack of data. Article 4(c) of the SIOFA Agreements requires that the precautionary approach be applied in this case.

This is consistent with UNGA resolutions starting with 61/105 (2006), calling on States and RFOs to apply the precautionary approach and ecosystem approach, sustainably manage fish stocks and protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, recognizing the immense importance and value of deep sea ecosystems and the biodiversity they contain. Mr Chair, this is not a numbers game. Instead, the UNGA resolutions stress avoiding significant adverse impacts on VMEs.

In conclusion, we look forward to a productive and cautious meeting.

Thank you Mr Chair