Title The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) has agreed to measures that, if appropriately implemented by tuna longline fishing vessels, will result in significant reductions in albatross mortality. It announced that all longline vessels in the Indian Ocean will now be required to use two seabird bycatch mitigation measures from a choice of either bird streamers, also known as tori lines, which scare birds away from the hooks; adding weights to hooks to make them sink more quickly; or setting hooks at night when most birds are less active. Scientists estimate that upwards of 300,000 seabirds are being killed every year by longline fisheries; it?s believed this is the primary reason behind 17 of the world?s 22 species of albatrosses being threatened with extinction. Home to globally important populations of eight albatross species including the Critically Endangered Amsterdam Albatross, the Indian Ocean is popular with fleets of longliners fishing for tuna. Tuna longliners typically deploy several thousand hooks, attached by branchlines to a main line that can be more than 100km long. Seabirds, especially albatrosses, are vulnerable to becoming hooked when they take the bait, and are drowned as the line sinks. Dr Cleo Small, representing the RSPB and BirdLife International, said: ?It may seem like an issue that doesn?t concern us here in the UK, but in fact this move is great news for UK albatross species such as the wandering albatross, which fly over the Indian Ocean in the non-breeding period and often become victims of bycatch from the longliners that fish there. Without such measures, these beautiful birds could be lost forever.? Although an understanding of the scale and nature of this threat has been known for a long time, the development of measures to reduce bycatch has been slow. The RSPB and BirdLife International?s Global Seabird Programme have been particularly active in devising and testing technologies and fishing practices to reduce the problem and be part of the solution; the Albatross Task Force, founded by the organisations, works directly with fishermen and fishery managers in eight bycatch hotspot countries worldwide to reduce the number of seabirds being killed. The news from the IOTC follows the strong set of measures put in place last November when the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) agreed that fishing vessels must use two out of three measures to reduce bycatch when working in areas where albatrosses occur. Dr Small continued: ?The RSPB and BirdLife International have played a key part in getting seabirds measure adopted in the Indian Ocean and in the Atlantic last year, but we?re not going to stop just yet. Next on the list is the Pacific; once this is achieved it will mean all longline vessels worldwide will be required to use two seabird bycatch mitigation measures when fishing in areas overlapping with albatrosses.? The delegation from Japan offered US$20,000 to support training workshops for fishing skippers to help them implement the new requirements. BirdLife International and the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation will work with Japan and other nations to secure additional funding and provide the training. Find out more about BirdLife's Global Seabird Programme **VBN (BirdLife in the Netherlands) is the BirdLife Species Champion for Amsterdam Albatross. Find out more about BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions Programme**