

E-training tool descriptor

Supra-category: IOTC ROS Observer Co-ordinator Training (IOTC ROS OLC)

Category: Mandate for Observer Deployment (IOTC ROS OLC TR1)

Course: IOTC ROS Standards and Guidelines (IOTC ROS OLC TR1.04)

Course Description

Regional Observer Schemes (ROS) have increasingly been adopted by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) as an ‘independent’ source of detailed information on the fisheries being managed. The ROS provides information that can be used to verify the gear types used in the convention area, as well as catch and effort data independent from that reported in vessel logbooks. In addition, observer data can provide information on the effectiveness of mitigation measures and an indication of vessels adherence to management measures adopted by RFMOs.

Recognising that observer programs could successfully be used for the purposes of collecting scientific information at both the national and RFMO level, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) adopted Resolution 09/04 on a Regional Observer Scheme (ROS) in 2009 at its 13th Session, superseded in 2010 by Resolution 10/04, and again in 2011 by the current Resolution 11/04.

In adopting the ROS, the Commission acknowledged the United Nations General Assembly “Sustainable Fisheries” Resolution 63/112, which encourages the development of observer programs by RFMOs and arrangements to improve data collection in their area of jurisdiction.

The Commission also emphasised that in terms of Articles IX and XI of the IOTC Agreement, Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) have the obligation to fully comply with the IOTC Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) and are required to submit, on the request of the Commission, any available statistical, biological and other scientific information needed for the purposes of the Agreement in maintaining the resources of tuna and tuna-like species of the Indian Ocean.

The IOTC Resolution 11/04; Paragraph 2, requires specifically “that each CPC is to implement a national observer program in order to improve the collection of scientific data, on at least 5% of the number of operations/sets for each gear type by their fleet while fishing in the IOTC area of competence, on vessels of 24 meters overall length and over (within both the their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and on the high seas), and for vessels under 24 meters if they fish outside their EEZ.”

The IOTC, as an RFMO, therefore places the responsibility on each of its CPCs to establish a legal mandate for their flagged vessels to accommodate observers. Essential to the requirement for observer coverage is the associated need for the CPC to develop and coordinate its national observer program.

In 2010, the IOTC Scientific Committee endorsed an Observer Manual, including, inter alia, a set of guidelines and standards for observer training. However, at this stage few guidelines were forthcoming on the development and management of national observer programs, and numerous issues were encountered in the observer data and CPCs reporting back to the IOTC.

In June 2019, the IOTC Commission endorsed “IOTC ROS Standards and Guidelines” which includes a clear set of standards for the development and management of observer programs.

The objective of this course is to familiarize participants at the Observer Coordinator Workshops (OCW) with IOTC ROS Standards and Guidelines, ENDORSED by the IOTC Commission at its 23rd session, so they can revert to these for guidance in the development/management of their National Observer Program.

Participants are to autonomously complete the e-training module on IOTC ROS Standards and Guidelines within the 5-days interactive practical workshop on Observer Program Development & Logistic Coordination, so they can take these into consideration when drafting *CPCs’ Observer program development & observer logistical co-ordination guide*.