REVISION OF THE WPEB PROGRAM OF WORK (2016–2020)

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PURPOSE

To ensure that participants at the 11th Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB11) revise the Program of Work for the WPEB by taking into consideration the specific requests of the Commission and Scientific Committee.

BACKGROUND

Scientific Committee

At the 17th Session of the SC:

(Para. 175) The SC **NOTED** paper IOTC–2014–SC17–10 which outlined the proposed research priorities for each of the Working Parties, with the aim of developing an IOTC Science Program of Work for 2015 to 2019.

(Para. 176) The SC **REMINDED** the IOTC Secretariat that any projects recommended by the SC in 2013, and which were subsequently endorsed by the Commission and funded for implementation in 2014 and/or 2015 budget, should occur in 2015, if not already completed.

(Para. 177) The SC **NOTED** the proposed Program of Work and priorities for each of the Working Parties and **AGREED** to a consolidated Program of Work as outlined in Appendix XXXVIII. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of each working party shall ensure that the efforts of their working party is focused on the core areas contained within the appendix, taking into account any new research priorities identified by the Commission at its next Session.

(Para. 178) The SC **REQUESTED** that during the 2015 Working Party meetings, each group not only develop a Draft Program of Work for the next five years containing low, medium and high priority projects, but that all High Priority projects are ranked. The intention is that the SC would then be able to review the rankings and develop a consolidated list of the highest priority projects to meet the needs of the Commission. Where possible, budget estimates should be determined, as well as the identification of potential funding sources.

(Para. 179) The SC **AGREED** that identifying research priorities among its Working Parties (Appendix XXXVIII) will assist individual CPCs and the IOTC Secretariat to identify funding sources for the implementation of priority research projects. Accordingly, and in the interest of transparency, the SC **REQUESTED** the IOTC Secretariat to follow the following consultative process involving the SC and Working Party Chairs and Vice-Chairs and the IOTC Secretariat:

- **Step 1:** Working Parties to identify research needs (based on the needs of the Commission), rank them by order of priority, provide cost estimates and list potential funding sources;
- **Step 2:** The SC and Working Party Chair and Vice-Chair, in liason with the IOTC Secretariat should develop a consolidated document taking into account the different Working Party research needs and priorities, with the objective of ranking the research needs among all Working Parties;
- **Step 3:** The Chair of the SC shall present these to the SC, to be discussed and endorsed as the consolidated research priorities for the IOTC Science process;
- **Step 4:** The IOTC Secretariat, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the SC and Chair and Vice-Chair or relevant Working Parties, shall identify funding possibilities to undertake the consolidated research priorities;
- **Step 5:** Once the funding sources have been committed to a particular research priority, the panel mentioned above in Step 2 shall develop terms of reference of the 'Expression of Interest' (including tasks, timelines and deliverables) and the selection procedure/criteria;
- **Step 6:** IOTC Secretariat to advertise a call for 'Expression of Interest' among the IOTC Commissioner's and Science contact lists, and via the IOTC website;
- **Step 7:** The Chair of the SC, Chair(s) and Vice-Chair(s) of the WP(s) concerned, in liaison with the IOTC Secretariat shall determine the most appropriate project proposal, based on the

criteria defined in Step 5 and in line with the financial rules of the Commission and FAO. Potential contracted candidate will be contacted by the IOTC Secretariat to confirm availability.

Commission

At Sessions of the Commission, Conservation and Management Measures adopted contained elements that call on the Scientific Committee, via the WPEB, to undertake specific tasks. These requests will need to be incorporated into a revised Program of Work for the WPEB:

Resolution 12/12 ***To prohibit the use of large-scale driftnets on the high seas in the IOTC area***

(para. 1) The use of large-scale driftnets[1] on the high seas within the IOTC area of competence shall be prohibited.

(para. 6) The IOTC shall periodically assess whether additional measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure that large-scale driftnets are not used on the high seas in the IOTC area of competence. The first such assessment shall take place in 2013.

Resolution 11/04 ***On a regional observer scheme***

(para. 2) In order to improve the collection of scientific data, at least 5 % of the number of operations/sets for each gear type by the fleet of each CPC while fishing in the IOTC area of competence of 24 meters overall length and over, and under 24 meters if they fish outside their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) shall be covered by this observer scheme. For vessels under 24 meters if they fish outside their EEZ, the above mentioned coverage should be achieved progressively by January 2013.

(para. 4) The number of the artisanal fishing vessels landings shall also be monitored at the landing place by field samplers. The indicative level of the coverage of the artisanal fishing vessels should progressively increase towards 5% of the total levels of vessel activity (i.e. total number of vessel trips or total number of vessels active).

(para. 15) The elements of the Observer Scheme, notably those regarding its coverage, are subject to review and revision, as appropriate, for application in 2012 and subsequent years. Basing on the experience of other Tuna RFMOs, the IOTC Scientific Committee will elaborate an observer working manual, a template to be used for reporting (including minimum data fields) and a training program.

DISCUSSION

Participants at the WPEB11 are requested to consider the priorities set by the Commission via its Conservation and Management Measures, and the Scientific Committee, and revise its Program of Work (previously outlined in paper IOTC–2015–WPEB11–03) to match those priorities.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WPEB:

1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2015–WPEB11–10, which encouraged the WPEB to further develop and refine its Program of Work for 2016–2020 to align with the requests and directives from the Commission and Scientific Committee.
2) **RECOMMEND** a revised Program of Work for 2016–2020 to the Scientific Committee for its consideration and potential endorsement.

[1] "Large-scale driftnets" are defined as gillnets or other nets or a combination of nets that are more than 2.5 kilometres in length whose purpose is to enmesh, entrap, or entangle fish by drifting on the surface of, or in, the water column.

DRAFT: WORKING PARTY ON ECOSYSTEMS AND BYCATCH PROGRAM OF WORK (2016–2020)

The Program of Work consists of the following, noting that a timeline for implementation would be developed by the SC once it has agreed to the priority projects across all of its Working Parties:

- **Table 1**: Priority topics for obtaining the information necessary to develop stock status indicators for bycatch in the Indian Ocean; and
- **Table 2**: Stock assessment schedule.

Table 1. Priority topics for obtaining the information necessary to develop stock status indicators for bycatch species in the Indian Ocean

Topic	Sub-topic and project	Priority ranking	Est. budget and/or potential source	Timing				
				2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	SHARKS							
1. Stock structure (connectivity and diversity)	1.1 Genetic research to determine the connectivity of select shark species throughout their distribution (including in adjacent Pacific and Atlantic waters as appropriate) and the effective population size. 1.1.1 Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) to determine the degree of shared stocks for select shark species (highest priority species: blue shark, scalloped hammerhead shark, oceanic whitetip shark and shortfin mako shark) in the Indian Ocean with the southern Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean, as appropriate. Population genetic analyses to decipher inter- and intraspecific evolutionary relationships, levels of gene flow (genetic exchange rate), genetic divergence, and effective population sizes. 1.1.2 Nuclear markers (i.e. microsatellite) to determine the degree of shared stocks for select shark species (highest priority species: blue shark, scalloped hammerhead shark and oceanic whitetip shark) in the Indian Ocean with the southern Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean, as appropriate.	High	1.3 m Euro: European Union					

		1.2 Connectivity, movements and habitat use	High	US$??				
		1.2.1 Connectivity, movements, and habitat use, including identification of hotspots and investigate associated environmental conditions affecting the sharks distribution, making use of conventional and electronic tagging (P-SAT).		TBD	BSH SMA	BSH SMA OCS	SMA OCS	
2.	Fisheries data collection	2.1 Historical data mining for the key species and IOTC fleets (e.g. as artisanal gillnet and longline coastal fisheries) and implementation of Regional Observer Schemes, including:		US$??				
		2.1.1 Capacity building of fisheries observers (including the provision of ID guides, training, etc.)						
		2.1.2 Define observer scheme (including minimum requirements) for fleets which are believed to have large catches on pelagic sharks (i.e. various longline and gillnet coastal fisheries) and where those statistics are mostly absent						
		2.1.3 Historical data mining for the key species, including the collection of information about catch, effort and spatial distribution of those species and fleets catching them						
		2.1.4 Integration of data mining with observer programs to reconstruct species composition and catches of sharks						
3.	Biological and ecological information (incl. parameters for stock assessment)	3.1 Age and growth research (Priority species: blue shark (BSH), shortfin mako shark (SMA) and oceanic whitetip shark (OCS))		US$??				
		3.1.1 CPCs to provide further research reports on shark biology, namely age and growth studies including through the use of vertebrae or other means, either from data collected through observer programs or other research programs.		CPCs directly	BSH SMA OCS	SMA OCS	OCS	
		3.2 Post-release mortality		US$??				
		3.2.1 Post-release mortality (electronic tagging), to assess the efficiency of management resolutions on no retention species (i.e. oceanic whitetip shark (OCS) and thresher sharks), shortfin mako shark SMA) ranked as the most vulnerable species to longline fisheries		US$??	SMA THR	OCS		

4.	Shark bycatch mitigation measures	4.1 Develop studies on shark mitigation measures (operational, technological aspects and best practices)	
		4.1.1 Longline selectivity, to assess the effects of hooks styles, bait types and trace materials on shark catch rates, hooking-mortality, bite-offs and fishing yield (socio-economics)	
		4.1.2 Gillnet selectivity, to assess the effect of mesh size, hanging ratio and net twine on sharks catches composition (i.e. species and size), and fishing yield (socio-economics)	
		4.1.3 Post-release mortality of whale sharks in purse-seine fisheries, to assess the efficiency of the best practice currently set in place	
		4.1.4 Develop guidelines and protocols for safe handling and release of sharks caught on longlines and gillnets fisheries	
5.	CPUE standardisation / Stock Assessment / Other indicators	5.1 Develop standardised CPUE series for each key shark species and fishery in the Indian Ocean	US$??
		5.1.1 Blue shark: Priority fleets: TWN-CHN LL, EU,Spain LL, Japan LL; Indonesia LL	CPCs directly
		5.1.2 Shortfin mako shark: Priority fleets: TBD	CPCs directly
		5.1.3 Oceanic whitetip shark: Priority fleets: TBD	CPCs directly
		5.1.4 Silky shark: Priority fleets: TBD	CPCs directly
		5.2 Stock assessment and other indicators	
		5.2.1 Develop and compare multiple assessment approaches to determining stock status for key shark specie	See Table 2.
		MARINE TURTLES	
6.	Marine turtle bycatch mitigation measures	6.1 Review of bycatch mitigation measures	

6.1.1 Res. 12/04 (para. 11) Part I. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall request the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch to:

a) Develop recommendations on appropriate mitigation measures for gillnet, longline and purse seine fisheries in the IOTC area;

b) Develop regional standards covering data collection, data exchange and training;

c) Develop improved FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of marine turtles, including the use of biodegradable materials.

6.1.2 Res. 12/04 (para. 11) Part II. The recommendations of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch shall be provided to the IOTC Scientific Committee for consideration at its annual session in 2012. In developing its recommendations, the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch shall examine and take into account the information provided by CPCs in accordance with paragraph 10 of this measure, other research available on the effectiveness of various mitigation methods in the IOTC area, mitigation measures and guidelines adopted by other relevant organizations and, in particular, those of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. The IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch will specifically consider the effects of circle hooks on target species catch rates, marine turtle mortalities and other bycatch species.

6.1.2 Res. 12/04 (para. 17) The IOTC Scientific Committee shall annually review the information reported by CPCs pursuant to this measure and, as necessary, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen efforts to reduce marine turtle interactions with IOTC fisheries.

SEABIRDS

7. Seabird bycatch mitigation measures

7.1 Review of bycatch mitigation measures

7.1.1 Res. 12/06 (para. 8) The IOTC Scientific Committee, based notably on the work of the WPEB and information from CPCs, will analyse the impact of this Resolution on seabird bycatch no later than for the 2016 meeting of the Commission. It shall advise the Commission on any modifications that are required, based on experience to date of the operation of the Resolution and/or

further international studies, research or advice on best practice on the issue, in order to make the Resolution more effective.

DISCARDS

8. Bycatch mitigation measures

8.1 Review proposal on retention of non-targeted species:

8.1.1 The Commission requested that the Scientific Committee review proposal IOTC–2014– S18–PropL Rev_1, and to make recommendations on the benefits of retaining non-targeted species catches, other than those prohibited via IOTC Resolutions, for consideration at the 19th Session of the Commission. (S18 Report, para. 143).

8.1.2 Noting the lack of expertise and resources at the WPEB and the short timeframe to fulfill this task, the SC RECOMMENDED that a consultant be hired to conduct this work and present the results at the next WPEB meeting. The following tasks, necessary to address this issue, should be considered for the terms of reference, taking into account all species that are usually discarded on all major gears (i.e., purse-seines, longlines and gillnets), and fisheries that take place on the high seas and in coastal countries EEZs:

i) Estimate species-specific quantities of discards to assess the importance and potential of this new product supply, integrating data available at the Secretariat from the regional observer programs;

ii) Assess the species-specific percentage of discards that is captured dead versus alive, as well as the post-release mortality of species that are discarded alive, in order to estimate what will be the added fishing mortality to the populations, based on the best current information;

iii) Assess the feasibility of full retention, taking into account the specificities of the fleets that operate with different gears and their fishing practices (e.g., transhipment, onboard storage capacity).

iv) Assess the capacity of the landing port facilities to handle and process this catch.

v) Assess the socio-economic impacts of retaining non-target species, including the feasibility to market those species that are usually not retained by those gears;

vi) Assess the benefits in terms of improving the catch statistics through port-sampling programmes;

vii) Evaluate the impacts of full retention on the conditions of work and data quality collected by onboard scientific observers, making sure that there is a strict distinction between scientific observer tasks and compliance issues.

Table 2. Draft: Assessment schedule for the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch 2016–2020 (adapted from IOTC–2014–SC17–R).

	Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch				
Species	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Blue shark	Indicators	**Full assessment***	Indicators; Revisit ERA	**Full assessment***	Indicators
Oceanic whitetip shark	Indicators; Review of mitigation measures in Res. 13/06	**Full assessment***	Revisit ERA	Indicators	**Full assessment***
Scalloped hammerhead shark	Indicators	–	Revisit ERA	Indicators	–
Shortfin mako shark	Indicators	–	Revisit ERA	–	–
Silky shark	Indicators	–	Indicators; Revisit ERA	**Full assessment***	–
Bigeye thresher shark	–	Indicators	Revisit ERA	–	–
Pelagic thresher shark	Indicators	–	Revisit ERA	–	–
Marine turtles	–	Review of mitigation measures in Res. 12/04	Revisit ERA	–	Review of mitigation measures in Res. 12/04
Seabirds	–	Review of mitigation measures in Res. 12/06	–	Review of mitigation measures in Res. 12/06	–
Marine Mammals	–	–	–	–	–

*Including data poor stock assessment methods; Note: the assessment schedule may be changed dependant on the annual review of fishery indicators, or SC and Commission requests.