
IOTC MEETING PARTICIPATION FUND STATUSPREPARED BY: SECRETARIAT

PURPOSE

1. To submit for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Administration and Finance (SCAF), the Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) historical and future expenditure levels in support of the annual budget decision making process. This report is a requirement in accordance with Rule XVI.4: of the IOTC Rules of Procedure.

BACKGROUND

2. The IOTC Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) was set up by the Commission in 2010 through the adoption of Resolution 10/05 for the purpose of supporting scientists and representatives from IOTC Members and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) who are developing States to attend and/or contribute to the work of the Commission, the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties.
3. Since 2014, the IOTC rules of procedure (Appendix VIII) have guided the administration of the MPF. The rules detail a range of eligibility criteria for gaining access to the IOTC MPF. However, the core requirement is that the applicant must be from a developing Contracting Party, which is defined as any Contracting Party (Member) that is under the categories of 'Low' or 'Middle' income, according to the criteria used in the most recent calculation of the annual IOTC budget contributions (see the Annex of the IOTC Financial Regulations).
4. The MPF currently serves nine scientific bodies (seven working parties, the Technical Committee on Management Procedures and the Scientific Committee); and six non-scientific bodies (the Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria, the Technical Committee on Performance Review, the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures, the Standing Committee on Administration & Finance, the Compliance Committee and the Commission).

CURRENT USAGE

5. A total of 122 participants were supported by the MPF in 2018. The 2018 meetings accounted for an expenditure of \$250,903, which is slightly more than the average expenditure calculated for the period 2014 to 2018 (Table 1).
6. The numbers of MPF participants and MPF expenditures are not directly correlated as the cost of travel and allowances is largely dependent on the location of the meetings. In 2018, most meetings were held in Seychelles, which is a relatively expensive location.

CURRENT BUDGETS

7. The Commission approved a budget of US\$200,000 for the 2018 MPF. This was augmented by \$20,000 of extra-budgetary contributions received from China and \$30,842 received from Australia. The total 2018 MPF budget was \$250,842.
8. The Commission approved a budget of US\$200,000 for the 2019 MPF and the same amount is being proposed for 2020 and 2021.

Table 1. Numbers of participants supported by the MPF at IOTC meetings since 2014.

	Meeting Participation Fund				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
WP Neritic Tunas	13	9	10	11	7
WP Temperate Tunas	3	-	4	-	-
WP Billfish	8	9	6	8	5
WP Ecosystems and Bycatch	5	8	10	7	6
WP Methods	6	6	9	5	2
WP Data Collection & Statistics	3	5	6	10	9
WP Tropical Tunas	6	6	12	11	9
TC Management Procedures	-	-	-	13	8
Scientific Committee	12	14	12	14	13
Compliance Committee	12	10	14	13	10
SC Administration & Finance	8	10	14	11	7
Commission	13	10	14	15	10
TC Allocation Criteria	-	-	10	-	13
TC Performance Review					13
WP Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures					10
Total MPF participants	89	87	121	118	122
Expenditure (US\$)	\$242,517	\$207,073	\$285,088	\$202,945	\$250,903

Table 2. Historical expenditures against the IOTC Meeting Participation Fund, including from the initial allocation of 'accumulated funds', regular budget and extra-budgetary sources for the period 2010-18.

Year	Total expenditure (US\$)	Regular budget actual expenditure (US\$)	Extra budgetary actual expenditure (US\$)	Extra budgetary source
2010	57,429	57,429	0	Initial MPF Allocation from 'accumulated funds' (US\$200,000)
2011	157,186	157,186	0	
2012	195,502	108,263+17,747*	69,492	Australia *FAO Project servicing costs 2010-12.
2013	315,952	240,547	75,405	Australia
2014	242,517	118,517	124,000	Australia, BOBLME Project, ABNJ Tuna Project
2015	207,073	118,656	88,417	Australia, China, ABNJ Tuna Project
2016	285,088	211,022	74,066	Australia, China, ABNJ Tuna Project
2017	202,945	182,945	20,000	China
2018	250,903	200,000	50,903	Australia, China
TOTAL	1,914,595	1,412,312	502,283	

DISCUSSION***Almost \$2 million has been spent from the MPF since 2010***

9. The total MPF expenditure from the IOTC regular budget and extra-budgetary sources for the period 2010 to 2018, has been (US dollars) \$1,914,595 (Table 2). Of this, \$1,412,312 was sourced from the IOTC regular budget (including the initial allocation from 'accumulated funds') and \$502,283 was provided through extra-budgetary contributions.

The MPF was included in the FAO Audit of IOTC in 2019.

10. In March 2019 the Office of the Inspector General (FAO) carried out an audit of the IOTC. Overall, the Secretariat was found to be administering the fund in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

Current demand on the MPF is greater than the budgeted amount.

11. Noting that the first two years of the MPF were financed from 'accumulated funds' and that the process had not yet been fully developed, the annual average expenditures for the ensuing eight years (2012-18) could be considered as a better reflection of MPF needs. The total average expenditure for the period 2012-18 was \$242,854.
12. While regular budget contribution remains at \$200,000, extra-budgetary contributions are essential to meet the current MPF demand, and Members and partners should be encouraged to contribute to the MPF.
13. Since 2011, the number of IOTC bodies benefitting from the MPF has increased from 8 to 15, this is due to an increase in the number of non-scientific bodies being convened in recent years. Further meetings of the TCAC and the TCPR and the addition of the WPICMM, not only has the potential to increase demand on the MPF, but also may require the current 25% allocation of the MPF to non-scientific meetings (Rule XVI.5: of the IOTC Rules of Procedure) to be reassessed in the future.

The eligibility of participants to access the MPF with respect to the payment of contributions

14. A core exclusion criterion for the MPF is that any Contracting Party of the Commission that is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Commission is not eligible to benefit from the MPF if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the two preceding calendar years.
15. The issue of arrears and the interpretation of the rule was raised in the TCAC in 2019 and IOTC Circular 2019-15 was sent out to members in response to a request for clarification on the matter [[click here](#)]. The underlying issue is related to which two years are to be considered as the 'preceding years', given that the Call for Funds is sent out in the middle of the year. The Secretariat interprets the rule to be the year in which the CFFs are sent out and the previous year. This approach encourages contributions to be paid on time for the operational year and the Secretariat seeks guidance from the SCAF on the continued use of this interpretation.
16. The SCAF16 has been requested to provide guidance to the Secretariat on this matter under Agenda Item 5.2, Contributions Outstanding (refer to document IOTC-2019-SCAF16-05).

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

That the SCAF:

- a) **NOTE** paper IOTC-2019-SCAF16-06 on the Meeting Participation Fund.
- b) **NOTE** the importance of extra-budgetary contributions in meeting the current MPF demand.