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**IOTC MEETING PARTICIPATION FUND STATUS**PREPARED BY: SECRETARIAT

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**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 117 participants were supported by the MPF in 2019. The 2019 meetings accounted for an expenditure of US\$246,546, which is slightly more than the average expenditure calculated for the period 2014 to 2018 but similar to the budgeted amount for the year, taking into account the additional funds received from Australia and China (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 2019, most of the meetings were held outside of Seychelles, which resulted in some savings compared to hosting the meetings in Seychelles.

**CURRENT BUDGETS**

7. The Commission approved a budget of \$200,000 for the 2019 MPF. This was augmented by \$20,000 of extra-budgetary contributions received from China and \$26,342 received from Australia. The total 2019 MPF budget was \$246,342.
8. The balance of funds in the MPF as of 31 December 2019 was \$6,937.
9. The Commission approved a budget of \$250,000 for the 2020 MPF and the same amount is being proposed for 2021 and 2022.

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

	Meeting Participation Fund					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
WP Neritic Tunas	13	9	10	11	7	6
WP Temperate Tunas	3	-	4	-	-	1 Prep + 4 main
WP Billfish	8	9	6	8	5	8
WP Ecosystems and Bycatch	5	8	10	7	6	9
WP Methods	6	6	9	5	2	7
WP Data Collection & Statistics	3	5	6	10	9	8
WP Tropical Tunas	6	6	12	11	9	12
TC Management Procedures	-	-	-	13	8	6
Scientific Committee	12	14	12	14	13	11
Compliance Committee	12	10	14	13	10	10
SC Administration & Finance	8	10	14	11	7	10
Commission	13	10	14	15	10	11
TC Allocation Criteria	-	-	10	-	13	7
TC Performance Review					13	7
WP Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures					10	0
<b>Total MPF participants</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Expenditure (US\$)</b>	<b>\$242,517</b>	<b>\$207,073</b>	<b>\$285,088</b>	<b>\$202,945</b>	<b>\$250,903</b>	<b>\$246,546</b>

**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 2010-19.

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
2019	246,342	200,000	46,342	Australia, China
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,160,937</b>	<b>1,612,312</b>	<b>548,625</b>	

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

10. The total MPF expenditure from the IOTC regular budget and extra-budgetary sources for the period 2010 to 2019, has been (US dollars) \$2,160,937 (Table 2). Of this, \$1,612,312 was sourced from the IOTC regular budget (including the initial allocation from 'accumulated funds') and \$548,625 was provided through extra-budgetary contributions.

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

11. 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.***

12. 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 nine years (2012-19) could be considered as a better reflection of MPF needs. The total average annual expenditure for the period 2012-19 was \$240,104.

13. The regular budget contribution has been set at a higher level of \$250,000 for 2020, however extra-budgetary contributions are essential to meet the current MPF demand given that additional meetings have been added to the IOTC schedule (e.g. TCAC & WPICMM). Members and partners should be encouraged to contribute to the MPF which in turn will stimulate increased participation in IOTC meetings.

14. 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***

15. 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. A revision to the definition of Arrears is pending in the (newly revised) IOTC Financial Regulations (2019) — a decision on the dates in Annex, Reg. 5 is expected to be made by the Commission in 2020.

**SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE**

That the SCAF:

- a) **NOTE** paper IOTC-2020-SCAF17-06 on the Meeting Participation Fund.
- b) **NOTE** the importance of extra-budgetary contributions in meeting the current MPF demand.
- c) **NOTE** the definition of 'arrears' will henceforth pertain to that described in the IOTC Financial Regulations (2019) and the dates specified by the Commission.
- d) **RECOMMEND** that the current allocation of MPF funding to scientific (75%) and non-scientific (25%) as per the IOTC rules of Procedure XVI.5 be reassessed.