



OUTCOMES OF THE 22ND SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, LAST UPDATED: 11TH NOVEMBER 2020

Purpose

To inform participants at the 16th Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS16) of the recommendations arising from the 22nd Session of the Scientific Committee (SC22) held from 2 - 6 December 2019, specifically relating to the work of the WPDCS.

Background

At the 22nd Session of the SC, the SC noted and considered the recommendations made by the WPDCS in 2019 that included modifications to national statistical systems.

Based on the recommendations arising from the WPDCS15, the SC22 adopted a set of recommendations, provided in [Appendix A](#) of this paper.

The recommendations contained in [Appendix A](#) were supposed to be provided to the Commission for consideration at its 24th Session, that was scheduled to be held in June 2020 but ultimately had to be postponed to November 2020 and held as a remote meeting due to the insurgence of the CoViD-19 pandemic. At the time of this writing, the report of the 24th Session of the commission is not yet publicly available, therefore the usual separate paper that addresses the responses and actions of the Commission is not provided for this meeting.

In addition, the SC22 reviewed and endorsed a Program of Work for the WPDCS. A separate paper (IOTC–2020–WPDCS16–09) will outline the review and further development of a *Program of Work* for the WPDCS for the next five years.

Discussion

In addition to the recommendations outlined in [Appendix A](#), the following extracts from the SC22 Report (IOTC–2019–SC22–R) are provided here for the consideration and action of the WPDCS16:

National Reporting to the Scientific Committee: overview

(Para. 20) The SC reminded CPCs that the submission of a National Report is mandatory, irrespective of whether a CPC intends on attending the annual meeting of the SC or not and shall be submitted no later than 15 days prior to the SC meeting. In 2019, of the 23 National Reports submitted, 7 were submitted after the deadline. The National Report does not replace the need for submission of data according to the IOTC Mandatory Data Requirements listed in the relevant IOTC Resolution (currently Resolution 15/02 *On mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)*).

National Reporting to the Scientific Committee: Contracting Parties (Members)

(Para. 27) Noting the 23 National Reports submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2019 by Contracting Parties (Members), the SC expressed concern about the difference between the catches submitted in National Reports and total catches, by fleet, in the IOTC database. The IOTC Secretariat uses the information from the National Report to update estimates of nominal catches, in the case of revisions to the data or when CPCs have not submitted any catch data; however, the time available between submission of the National Reports and the Scientific Committee makes it difficult to update the IOTC nominal database prior to the annual Session. (...)

(Para. 28) The SC noted that scientific and statistical information such as discard levels, observer coverage, fleet statistics etc., which are of particular relevance for several IOTC Resolutions (e.g. 15/02, 16/04, 17/05 etc.), is often only reported by CPCs in their national reports but not made available to the IOTC Secretariat in due time in accordance with the reporting requirements prescribed in the resolutions. For this reason, the SC requested all CPCs to ensure that the information presented in the respective national reports is in agreement with the official submissions available to the IOTC.

Report of the 9th Session of the Working Party on Neritic Tunas (WPNT09)

(Para. 34) The SC noted that there are considerable uncertainties with the IOTC catch estimates of neritic species due to ongoing issues related to data collection and reporting; notwithstanding this, the nominal catches in the IOTC database are considered the best scientific estimates for stock assessment purposes. The SC further noted that compliance with data reporting obligations remains low for neritic tuna species, and requested CPCs do their best to collect data and comply with data reporting requirements adopted by the IOTC.

Report of the 15th Session of the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB15)

(Para. 49) The SC noted that information on bycatch from FAD fisheries is only partially available for the major industrial fleets but that it can be extracted from regular ROS data submissions. (...)

(Para. 52) The SC reiterated the importance of having detailed information on climate indicators disseminated through the IOTC website as publicly available datasets, and acknowledged that the scoping study requested by the SC21 to create the platform for these data could not be conducted due to unforeseeable circumstances. Given this, the SC reiterated its request to the Secretariat that this activity be implemented as soon as possible.

(Para. 55) The SC endorsed the advice of the WPEB regarding the need to improve data collection and reporting for shark species. To this end, the SC recommended that several initiatives be implemented, including: (i) holding regional workshops to improve shark species identification, shark data sampling and collection (fisheries and biological) and IOTC data reporting requirements; (ii) data mining to fill historical data gaps; (iii) developing alternative tools to improve species identification (e.g. genetic analyses, machine learning, and artificial intelligence).

Report of the 21st Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT21)

(Para. 58) The SC noted that the change in the methodology used for the production of catch statistics by EU, Spain has resulted in a large increase in the reported bigeye catches in 2018. This increase was considered implausible by the WPTT. The SC noted that the WPTT adopted revised catch estimates for bigeye and yellowfin tuna in 2018 (based on the purse seine species composition in 2017) for use in the stock assessments for these species. The method for producing the revised catch estimates was fully documented and discussed by the WPDCS15.

(Para. 65) The SC noted that some aspects of the data uncertainty covered in the yellowfin workplan (e.g. historical catch by acritical fleets) can be applied to most IOTC species, while other aspects of uncertainty (e.g. the utility of IO-RTTP tagging data and the longline size frequency data) were mostly relevant to the tropical tuna.

(Para. 72) The SC noted that the IOTC Secretariat has implemented a detailed procedure to assist CPCs to calculate the fraction of the yellowfin catches that are subject to the catch reduction under Resolution 19/01 (documented in the WPDCS report). To this end, the SC requested CPCs to provide the fraction of their fleet catches that are subject to Resolution 19/01 when reporting yellowfin catches to the IOTC Secretariat.

(Para. 75) The SC noted that a primary concern for the IOTC is the definitions and terminology related to FAD fishing activities, and to work with other tRFMOs on a similar terminology for reporting purposes and to allow inter-ocean comparative analyses. The SC therefore recalled the recommendation made by the WPTT21 that the

IOTC FAD Working Group, which to date has met only once, be reactivated with a clear mandate to discuss these and other IOTC FAD issues.

WPTT priorities and Program of Work

(Para. 78) Acknowledging that holding data preparatory meetings prior to stock assessments is generally considered to be best practice and in view of the success of the albacore tuna data preparatory meeting in 2019, the SC agreed to explore the possibility of holding data preparatory meetings in addition to stock assessment meetings for the major IOTC species in 2020.

Report of the 15th Session of the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS15)

(Para. 98) The SC noted that the WPDCS endorsed the methodologies used by Pakistan to revise their historical gillnet catch series for tuna and tuna-like species, and that the results presented are currently the best scientific estimates available for this fishery. Therefore, the SC requested that these reconstructed catches be incorporated in the IOTC nominal catch database.

(Para. 99) The SC requested the WPDCS to further support studies aimed at evaluating possible combinations of alternative data collection systems and protocols as a replacement for scientific data collected by onboard observers (whenever the deployment of the latter is considered unfeasible).

(Para. 100) Noting that the quality of data available for artisanal fisheries in the Indian Ocean still needs to be greatly improved, the SC requested the WPDCS to continue assisting CPCs in improving the implementation of data collection and sampling activities for artisanal, coastal and small-scale fisheries

Implementation of the Regional Observer Scheme

(Para. 126) The SC encouraged CPCs to validate the information provided in appendices A, B and C of paper IOTC-2019-SC22-07, and confirm that it correctly reflects the status of implementation of the ROS at the national level, and to liaise with the IOTC Secretariat should any discrepancy be identified.

(Para. 128) The SC supported the utilization of the ROS electronic tools for data collection and reporting, noting the effort made by the Secretariat in support of their adoption also by countries not directly participating to the implementation of the ROS training programme.

(Para. 129) The SC noted that the ROS pilot project is planned to be initiated in six member countries, but that only four members had confirmed their participation prior to the SC22. The SC welcomed the confirmation by Mozambique and the offer by Maldives and Pakistan to join the project.

Recommendation

That the WPDCS:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2020–WPDCS16–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 22nd Session of the Scientific Committee, specifically related to the work of the WPDCS.
- 2) **CONSIDER** how best to progress these issues at the present meeting.

Appendices

[Appendix A:](#) Consolidated set of recommendations of the 22nd Session of the Scientific Committee (2 - 6 December 2019) to the Commission, relevant to the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics.

Appendix A

Consolidated set of recommendations of the 22nd session of the Scientific Committee (2 – 6 December 2019) to the Commission and relevant to the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics

*Extract of the Report of the 22nd Session of the Scientific Committee
(IOTC-2019-SC22-R; Appendix 38, Pages 200-204)*

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE 15TH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON DATA COLLECTION AND STATISTICS (WPDCS15)

SC22.17 (para. 97) **NOTING** that the WPDCS highlighted several issues still affecting the quality of the information available for stock assessment purposes of tropical tunas, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that a data preparatory meeting be held prior to the Working Party on Tropical Tunas.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF MATTERS COMMON TO WORKING PARTIES (CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES – STOCK ASSESSMENT COURSE; CONNECTING SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT, ETC.)

Invited Expert(s) at the WP meetings

SC22.18 (para. 104) Given the importance of external independent review for working party meetings, the SC **RECOMMENDED** the Commission continues to allocate sufficient budget for invited scientific experts to be regularly invited to scientific working party meetings.

Meeting participation fund

SC22.19 (para. 105) The SC reiterated its **RECOMMENDATION** that the IOTC Rules of Procedure (2014), for the administration of the Meeting Participation Fund be modified so that applications are due not later than 60 days, and that the full Draft paper be submitted no later than 45 days before the start of the relevant meeting. The aim is to allow the Selection Panel to review the full paper rather than just the abstract, and provide guidance on areas for improvement, as well as the suitability of the application to receive funding using the IOTC MPF. The earlier submission dates would also assist with visa application procedures for candidates.

IOTC species identification guides: Tuna and tuna-like species

SC22.20 (para. 106) The SC reiterated its **RECOMMENDATION** that the Commission allocates budget towards continuing the translation and printing of the IOTC species ID guides so that hard copies of the identification cards can continue to be printed as many CPCs scientific observers, both on board and port, still do not have smart phone technology/hardware access and need to have hard copies on board.

Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the SC and its subsidiary bodies

SC22.21 (para. 107) The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission note and endorse the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons for the SC and its subsidiary bodies for the coming years, as provided in Appendix 7.

Implementation Of The Regional Observer Scheme

SC22.22 (para. 127) The SC **ACKNOWLEDGED** that estimation of ROS coverage for the purse seine fleets is adversely impacted by the lack of uniformity in reporting effort data to the IOTC Secretariat, and **AGREED** that this information, which is particularly useful to assess the performance of Resolution 11/04, should be further standardized. As such, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that all purse seine fleets reporting effort as fishing hours or fishing days begin to submit this information as 'number of sets' instead, in particular when fulfilling the reporting requirements of Resolution 15/02.

PROGRAM OF WORK AND SCHEDULE OF WORKING PARTY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Consultants

SC22.24 (para. 150) Noting the highly beneficial and relevant work done by IOTC stock assessment consultants in previous years, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the engagement of consultants be continued for each coming year based on the Program of Work. Consultants will be hired to supplement the skill set available within the IOTC Secretariat and CPCs.