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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 five non-scientific bodies (the Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria, the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures, the Standing Committee on Administration & Finance, the Compliance Committee and the Commission).

**2020 USAGE**

5. The Commission approved a budget of \$250,000 for the 2020 MPF. This was augmented by \$18,000 of extra-budgetary contributions received from China and \$13,414 received from Australia. The total 2020 MPF budget was \$281,414.
6. A total of 7 participants were supported by the MPF in 2020. The 2020 meetings accounted for an expenditure of US\$21,324 which was significantly lower than expected and was due to the travel restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in all meetings after February 2020 being held by videoconference. The only meetings to be held with MPF participation were the WPICMM03 and the VMS and CDS Working Group meetings in Nairobi, Kenya in February. There were some expenditures related to agents' fees and cancellation costs associated with the TCAC06 meeting which was cancelled a few weeks before it was due to take place.
7. According to the FAO Financial System, the balance of funds in the MPF as of 31 December 2020 was \$269,486. This included the unused allocated funds plus unspent extra budgetary funds.

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

	Meeting Participation Fund						
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
WP Neritic Tunas	13	9	10	11	7	6	0
WP Temperate Tunas	3	-	4	-	-	1 Prep + 4 main	0
WP Billfish	8	9	6	8	5	8	0
WP Ecosystems and Bycatch	5	8	10	7	6	9	0
WP Methods	6	6	9	5	2	7	0
WP Data Collection & Statistics	3	5	6	10	9	8	0
WP Tropical Tunas	6	6	12	11	9	12	0
TC Management Procedures	-	-	-	13	8	6	0
Scientific Committee	12	14	12	14	13	11	0
Compliance Committee	12	10	14	13	10	10	0
SC Administration & Finance	8	10	14	11	7	10	0
Commission	13	10	14	15	10	11	0
TC Allocation Criteria	-	-	10	-	13	7	0
TC Performance Review					13	7	0
WP Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures					10	0	7
<b>Total MPF participants</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>7</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>	<b>\$21,324</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 2010-20.

Year	Start of year balance	Additional Regular Funds	Additional Extra Budgetary Funds	Extras (interest/FAO payments)	Total expenditure (US\$)	Regular budget expenditure (US\$)	Extra budgetary expenditure (US\$)	End of Year Balance	Extra budgetary source
2010	200,000				57,429	57,429	0	142,571	Initial MPF Allocation from 'accumulated funds' (US\$200,000)
2011	142,571	14,615			157,186	157,186	0	0	
2012	0	126,010	69,492		195,502	126,010	69,492	0	Australia
2013	0	240,547	75,405		315,952	240,547	75,405	0	Australia
2014	0	118,519	124,000	(2)	242,517	118,517	124,000	0	Australia, BOBLME, ABNJ Tuna Project
2015	0	118,387	88,417	(1,497)	207,073	118,656	88,417	(1,766)	Australia, China, ABNJ Tuna Project
2016	(1,766)	200,000	77,604	(3,461)	285,088	211,022	74,066	(12,711)	Australia, China, ABNJ Tuna Project
2017	(12,711)	200,000	20,000	1,150	202,945	182,945	20,000	5,494	China
2018	5,494	200,000	49,439	3,784	250,903	200,000	50,903	7,814	Australia, China
2019	7,814	200,000	46,337	1,683	246,546	200,000	46,342	9,288	Australia, China
2020*	9,288	250,000	31,414	108	21,324	0	21,324	269,486	Australia (US\$ 13,414), China (US\$ 18,000)
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>2,182,466</b>	<b>1,612,312</b>	<b>569,949</b>		

\*Note that \$250,000 was transferred to the MPF from the regular budget to roll-over to the 2021 MPF.

**DISCUSSION*****Almost \$2.2 million has been spent from the MPF since 2010***

8. The total MPF expenditure from the IOTC regular budget and extra-budgetary sources for the period 2010 to 2020, was (US dollars) \$2,182,466 (Table 2). Of this, \$1,612,312 has been sourced from the IOTC regular budget (including the initial allocation from 'accumulated funds') and \$569,949 was provided through extra-budgetary contributions.
9. 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. 2020 was an extraordinary year due to COVID-19 restrictions so should not be considered. The total average annual expenditure for the period 2012-19 was \$240,104.
10. The regular budget contribution was set at a higher level of \$250,000 for 2020, considering that some extra-budgetary contributions would be received to meet the MPF demand and taking into account that additional meetings were added to the IOTC schedule (e.g. TCAC & WPICMM).
11. Between 2011 and 2019, 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 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.

***Demand on the MPF was much lower than expected due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and therefore the 2021 and proposed 2022 budgets are reduced***

12. COVID-19 travel restrictions in 2020 resulted in all meetings after February shifting to virtual platforms.
13. The balance of the MPF at the end of 2020 was \$269,486. This balance, plus the \$25,000 allocated for 2021 is unlikely to be spent in 2021 due to the ongoing pandemic; therefore. the proposed budget allocation in 2022 was again set at \$25,000.

***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. 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 2021.

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

That the SCAF:

- a) **NOTE** paper IOTC-2021-SCAF18-06 on the Meeting Participation Fund.
- b) **NOTE** the extra-budgetary contributions made to the MPF.