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IOTC-2021-VMSWG01-R[E]

Report of the First Meeting of the Vessel Monitoring System Working Group

Held by video-conference, 19 May 2021

DISTRIBUTION:

Participants in the Meeting
IOTC CPCs
Chairperson IOTC
Chairperson IOTC Compliance Committee
Chairperson IOTC Scientific Committee

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Contact details:

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
Le Chantier Mall
PO Box 1011
Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles
Ph: +248 422 5494
Email: IOTC-secretariat@fao.org
Website: <http://www.iotc.org>

HOW TO INTERPRET TERMINOLOGY CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT

The VMSWG01 Report has been written using the following terms and associated definitions so as to remove ambiguity surrounding how particular paragraphs should be interpreted.

Level 1: *From a subsidiary body of the Commission to the next level in the structure of the Commission:*

RECOMMENDED, RECOMMENDATION: Any conclusion or request for an action to be undertaken, from a subsidiary body of the Commission (Committee or Working Party), which is to be formally provided to the next level in the structure of the Commission for its consideration/endorsement (e.g. from a Working Party to the Scientific Committee; from a Committee to the Commission). The intention is that the higher body will consider the recommended action for endorsement under its own mandate, if the subsidiary body does not already have the required mandate. Ideally this should be task specific and contain a timeframe for completion.

Level 2: *From a subsidiary body of the Commission to a Contracting Party or Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CPC), the IOTC Secretariat, or other body (not the Commission) to carry out a specified task:*

REQUESTED: This term should only be used by a subsidiary body of the Commission if it does not wish to have the request formally adopted/endorsed by the next level in the structure of the Commission. For example, if a Committee wishes to seek additional input from a CPC on a particular topic, but does not wish to formalize the request beyond the mandate of the Committee, it may request that a set action be undertaken. Ideally this should be task specific and contain a timeframe for the completion.

Level 3: *General terms to be used for consistency:*

AGREED: Any point of discussion from a meeting which the IOTC body considers to be an agreed course of action covered by its mandate, which has not already been dealt with under Level 1 or level 2 above; a general point of agreement among delegations/participants of a meeting which does not need to be considered/adopted by the next level in the Commission's structure.

NOTED/NOTING: Any point of discussion from a meeting which the IOTC body considers to be important enough to record in a meeting report for future reference.

Any other term: Any other term may be used in addition to the Level 3 terms to highlight to the reader of the IOTC report, the importance of the relevant paragraph. However, other terms used are considered for explanatory/informational purposes only and shall have no higher rating within the reporting terminology hierarchy than Level 3, described above (e.g. **CONSIDERED; URGED; ACKNOWLEDGED**).

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Background information

Paper IOTC-2019-WPICMM02-VMS Study provided options to the Sixteenth Compliance Committee Meeting (CoC16) for strengthening the IOTC VMS and further noted paper IOTC-2019-CoC16-05a, which summarised the work of the Steering Group. CoC16 (CoC16.33 Para 109) recommended the establishment of a VMS Working Group, chaired by Mr Stephen Ndegwa (Kenya), to progress the work associated with strengthening the IOTC VMS, as per the ToR in Appendix 8 of [IOTC-2019-CoC16-R](#). This was subsequently endorsed by S23 ([IOTC-2019-S23-RE Rev1 FINAL](#)).

Two attempts were made by the Chair of the VMSWG to hold virtual meetings in 2021. However, both of these were unsuccessful, due to insufficient notification time to the Members of the Working Group. Notification of a third attempt to hold a virtual meeting of the VMSWG on 19 May 2021, was sent to Members of the Working Group on 21 April 2021; four weeks in advance.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING (Chair)

1. The meeting was held online, via Zoom, on 19 May 2021.
2. The List of Participants in [Appendix 1](#). A total of 14 participants (seven Member States and one Observer) attended the meeting. The first meeting of the Vessel Monitoring System Working Group (VMSWG01) was chaired by Mr Stephen Ndegwa (KEN).

2. ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED (Chair)

3. The Chair **RECALLED** that it had been agreed that the meeting discuss the following items:
 - a. Choice of either Option 2 or Option 3 or a derivative of these;
 - b. The scope of the system; and
 - c. Reporting.

3. ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS (Chair)

4. One observer (PEW) was nominated to participate in the VMSWG01; no others requested to participate in this meeting.

4. REVIEW OF OPTIONS (Chair/Members/Secretariat)

5. VMSWG01 **RECALLED** that some countries would find it difficult or impossible to implement a system where the vessel reported directly to a centralised system.
6. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that if the purpose of the system is more limited then Option 1 Cooperative Decentralised may be possible but **RECALLED** that in previous meetings Option 1 had been discarded because of technical difficulties of making arrangements with each one of the numerous coastal and flag States.
7. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that there is no technical barrier to having a hybrid arrangement whereby those flag States that are able to apply Option 3 Partially Centralised and report directly to the IOTC Secretariat do so, and those that cannot, apply Option 2 Shared Decentralised.
8. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that WCPFC had introduced a hybrid Centralised and Partially Centralised system. VMSWG01 was informed by a party that WCPFC has been experiencing technical problem and putting significant effort in to solve them.
9. The VMSWG was also informed by a party that the technical issues on data transmission experienced by members in WCPFC can be avoided in the development of an enhanced VMS system in the IOTC.
10. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that while several parties prefer Option 3 Partially Centralised, some parties have a strong preference for Option 2 Shared Decentralised. A solution would be to allow parties to choose which system to apply, as long as reporting resulted in being near real time and tamper-proof.

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11. VMSWG01 **CONCLUDED** that this flexibility comprises a hybrid option and **RECOMMENDED** this option be considered by the Compliance Committee.

5. SCOPE AND APPLICATION OF THE SYSTEM (Chair/Members/Secretariat)

12. VMSWG01 **AGREED** to use the scope defined in Paragraph 1 of Resolution 15/03 in the first instance.
13. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that there may be a need to consider amending the scope of Resolution 15/03 to cover other vessels not currently covered (such as carrier and supply vessels).
14. VMSWG01 **CONSIDERED** whether a buffer zone for EEZs should be introduced and what form that might take (position or alert to coastal State).
15. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that Attachment 2 of the consultant's report provides proposed amendments to Resolution 15/03 and **AGREED** that discussion of this be referred to the next VMSWG meeting.
16. VMSWG01 **AGREED** that changes to the Resolution should be decided at the Commission level not at the VMSWG.
17. VMSWG01 **RECOMMENDED** that the Compliance Committee consider whether other vessels should be covered and whether a buffer zone should be applied, and if so in what form.
18. The Chair **REQUESTED** Members to review the report of the consultant and its Attachment ([IOTC-2019-WPICMM02-VMS Study](#)) before the next meeting.

6. REPORTING (Chair/Members/Secretariat)

19. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that there should not be any significant delay in receiving VMS data if reports come directly from the vessels or via the flag State Fisheries Monitoring Centre.
20. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that as long as the architecture and software is well set up then near real-time reporting is ensured.
21. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that it is unlikely that a Party will tamper with VMS data because of its volume.
22. VMSWG01 **REQUESTED** that European Union and Seychelles provide a summary to the next meeting on how the transmission of VMS data works in practice between flag State and coastal State, highlighting any risk of tampering and any mitigation measures that might apply.

7. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR (Chair/Members)

23. VMSWG01 **NOTED** that it would be desirable to have a Vice Chair of the Working Group and **AGREED** the process to elect a Vice Chair take place at the next meeting.

8. CALENDAR OF FUTURE MEETINGS (Chair/Members/Secretariat)

24. VMSWG01 **AGREED** that there be at least two meetings before the next WPICMM meeting, and VMSWG01 **REQUESTED** the IOTC Secretariat to send proposed dates along with the draft Report of the VMSWG01 to Members.

25. VMSWG01 **NOTED** the difficulties with obtaining a quorum for previous meetings and **REQUESTED** the IOTC Secretariat to remind Members to attend.
26. VMSWG01 **NOTED** the value in developing a work plan to complement the terms of reference to help inform members of the issues to be addressed at future meetings.
27. The VMSWG01 also **REQUESTED** the IOTC Secretariat to write to the IOTC Commissioners of the CPCs who have nominated participants to the VMSWG, and whose nominees did not participate in this meeting or respond to previous requests for meetings, to indicate if their nominees are still interested in contributing to the tasks of the Working Group.
28. The VMSWG01 **NOTED** that the absence of some nominees has compromised previous attempts to hold meetings, since the required quorums were not met.

APPENDIX 1 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members

CHAIR

Mr Stephen Ndegwa (Kenya)
ndegwafish@yahoo.com

AUSTRALIA

Mr Neil Hughes
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment
<mailto:neil.hughes@awe.gov.au>

Mr Patrick Sachs
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment
patrick.sachs@awe.gov.au

Mr Paul Rickard
Australian Fisheries
Management Authority
Paul.RICKARD@afma.gov.au

EUROPEAN UNION

Mr Thierry Remy
European Commission
DG Maritime Affairs and
Fisheries
Thierry.Remy@ec.europa.eu

Mr Ekehard Reussner
European Commission
DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Ekehard.REUSSNER@ec.europa.eu

JAPAN

Mr Hiroyuki Morita
Fisheries Agency of Japan
hiroyuki_morita970@maff.go.jp

Mr Hideki Moronuki
Fisheries Agency of Japan
hideki_moronuki600@maff.go.jp

MADAGASCAR

Absent

MALDIVES

Mr Ahmed Shifaz
Ministry of Fisheries Marine
Resources and Agriculture
ahmed.shifaz@fishagri.gov.mv

OMAN

Absent

SEYCHELLES

Mr Freddy Lesperance
Seychelles Fishing Authority
flesperance@sfa.sc

Mr Johnny Louys
Seychelles Fishing Authority
jlouys@sfa.sc

UNITED KINGDOM

Ms Sandie-Gene Muir
Department for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs
[Sandie-
Gene.Muir@defra.gov.uk](mailto:Sandie-Gene.Muir@defra.gov.uk)

Mr John Pearce
MRAG Ltd
j.pearce@mrag.co.uk

YEMEN

Absent

OBSERVER

The PEW Trust

Mr Nikolas Evangelides
nevangelides@pewtrusts.org

INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION SECRETARIAT

Mr Gerard Domingue
Compliance Manager

Gerard.Domingue@fao.org

Ms Mirose Govinden

Bilingual Secretary

mirose.govinden@fao.org

Ms Claudette Matombe

Office Assistant

claudette.matombe@fao.org

Mr Carlos Palin

Technical Assistant – MCS

Expert

SWIOFish2 Project (IOTC

Component)

compliance.expert@iotc.org