
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 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).
5. 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.

2021 USAGE

6. The Commission approved a budget of US\$25,000 for the 2021 MPF which was transferred into the fund. The lower-than-normal budget was due to there being a positive balance in the fund of \$269,486, from previous years. This was augmented by \$18,000 of extra-budgetary contributions received from China. The total amount available in the 2021 MPF budget was therefore \$312,486.
7. The travel restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in all in-person meetings being held by videoconference in 2021, and as a consequence, the MPF was not used.
8. According to the FAO Financial System, the balance of funds in the MPF as of 31 December 2021 was \$312,981 (this includes a small additional amount due to interest). The balance 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 | 2021 |
| WP Neritic Tunas | 13 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| WP Temperate Tunas | 3 | - | 4 | - | - | 1 Prep + 4 main | 0 | 0 |
| WP Billfish | 8 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| WP Ecosystems and Bycatch | 5 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| WP Methods | 6 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| WP Data Collection & Statistics | 3 | 5 | 6 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| WP Tropical Tunas | 6 | 6 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| TC Management Procedures | - | - | - | 13 | 8 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Scientific Committee | 12 | 14 | 12 | 14 | 13 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| Compliance Committee | 12 | 10 | 14 | 13 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| SC Administration & Finance | 8 | 10 | 14 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Commission | 13 | 10 | 14 | 15 | 10 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| TC Allocation Criteria | - | - | 10 | - | 13 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| TC Performance Review | | | | | 13 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| WP Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures | | | | | 10 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Total MPF participants | 89 | 87 | 121 | 118 | 122 | 117 | 7 | 0 |
| Expenditure (US\$) | \$242,517 | \$207,073 | \$285,088 | \$202,945 | \$250,903 | \$246,546 | \$21,324 | 0 |

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 2010-21.

| 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 | 7,814 | 250,000 | 31,414 | 1,582 | 21,324 | 0 | 21,324 | 269,486 | Australia (US\$ 13,414), China (US\$ 18,000) |
| 2021* | 269,486 | 25,000 | 18,000 | 495 | - | 0 | 0 | 312,981 | China (US\$ 18,000) |
| TOTAL | | | | | 2,182,466 | 1,612,312 | 569,949 | | |

*US\$ 25,000 was transferred to the MPF and an additional US\$ 25,000 will be transferred in 2022

DISCUSSION***Almost \$2.2 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 2021, was \$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.
10. 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 and 2021 were extraordinary years due to COVID-19 restrictions so should not be considered. The total average annual expenditure for the period 2012-2019 was \$240,104.
11. 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).
12. 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 2022 and proposed 2023 budgets are reduced

13. COVID-19 travel restrictions in 2020 and 2021 resulted in all meetings after February 2020 shifting to virtual platforms.
14. The balance of the MPF at the end of 2021 was \$312,981. This balance, is unlikely to be fully spent in 2022 due to the ongoing pandemic; therefore. the proposed budget allocation in 2023 was set at zero.
15. It is proposed to allow the Secretariat the possibility to use Working Capital Funds up to a maximum of \$250,000 should the MPF require additional funds in 2023.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

That the SCAF:

- a) **NOTE** paper IOTC-2022-SCAF19-06 on the Meeting Participation Fund.
- b) **AUTHORIZE** the use of Working Capital Funds up to a maximum of \$250,000 should the MPF require additional funds in 2023.
- c) **NOTE** the extra-budgetary contributions made to the MPF.