

Proposal on a high-seas boarding and inspection scheme

France (OT) Statement

France on behalf of its territories regrets that the measure proposed by the European Union to establish a High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) Scheme for the IOTC could not be adopted at this annual meeting despite the support expressed by a large majority of contracting parties. France (TO) retains from these exchanges the significant willingness of many CPCs to set up an ambitious inspection program which would strengthen the fight against illegal, undeclared and unregulated fishing in the Indian Ocean.

However, I note that constructive remarks have been made by several contracting parties on two aspects, and which highlight the need for more in-depth discussions both on the substance of this proposal and on its implementation:

- on the one hand, there are legal questions, in particular concerning the consistency of this scheme with other legal frameworks, and in particular its articulation with that adopted by the contracting parties of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA);
- on the other hand, concerning the concrete implementation of this proposal, we have been particularly attentive to the requests of certain CPCs relating to the sharing of expertise and the strengthening of capacity building.

For this reason, France, on behalf of its territories, supports the European Union's proposal to continue the discussions intersessionally. In that sense, France is willing to share its experience of conducting inspections on the high seas and cooperation in the Indian Ocean, cooperation in this field is essential to further strengthen the fight against IUU fishing.

France proposes that the Commission considers resuming the work of the working group on a scheme for boarding and inspection on the high seas.

The objective would be to establishing a working group which would be intended to last in time but rather to organize a single meeting of this WG, in the first quarter of 2023. This meeting, for reasons of costs and participation could be held the same week as the Working Group on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures, which traditionally meets in February.

On the substance, as I indicated, this WG could tackle the legal and capacity building issues raised this week. For example, the reflections of the working group could relate to a training reference system for inspectors, the challenges of financing, or even rely on the examples of cooperation that already exist in terms of inspection at sea, particularly in the Indian ocean.

If the Commission supports this proposal, France, on behalf of its territories, is available to ensure an active role and to lead this group. However, I would like to point out that in this case it would be useful, even necessary, for the work to be relevant, for a partnership to be

established with a contracting party familiar with the real needs in terms of sharing expertise and building capacity regarding at-sea inspections.