



Note Number: **OTD/006/2022**

The Overseas Territories Directorate of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and Chair of the IOTC Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria (TCAC) from 20 to 23 June 2022. In response to statements submitted by the Republic of Mauritius and for the benefit of the delegates, the United Kingdom wishes to restate its position on the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and membership of the IOTC.

The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over BIOT which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the Archipelago and we do not recognise its claim. However, we have a long-standing commitment, first made in 1965, to cede sovereignty of the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer required for defence purposes. We stand by that commitment.

The United Kingdom is a full member of the IOTC. The United Kingdom deposited instruments of acceptance to the IOTC Agreement on 31st March 1995 and 22nd December 2020 and has been a party to the Agreement since it entered into force. The Agreement for the Establishment of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission provides that IOTC membership shall be open, inter alia, to FAO members that are situated wholly or partly within the IOTC's Area of Competence. As BIOT is situated wholly within the IOTC's Area of Competence, there can therefore be no doubt that the United Kingdom, as the State with sovereignty over BIOT as aforementioned, is entitled to be a member of IOTC.

At the IOTC Annual Session last month the Commission noted the advice of the Legal Counsel of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations from 6 May 2022 and the United Kingdom's objection to this. The Commission also noted that a period of consultation with the United Kingdom had now started and that the IOTC would return to this matter at next year's Annual Session.

The United Kingdom requests that this statement be annexed to the report of the Technical Committee and posted on the IOTC's website.

The Overseas Territories Directorate of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission the assurances of its highest consideration.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE  
LONDON

**21 June 2022**

