

Progress of work on the IOTC scheme to operationalise the FAO voluntary guidelines on the marking of fishing gear

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PURPOSE

To provide participants at the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM) an update on the progress of the work on the IOTC scheme to operationalise the FAO voluntary guidelines on the marking of fishing gear.

BACKGROUND

On marking of fishing gear and prevention of marine pollution, in 2019 the Commission reached no consensus on a proposal, [IOTC–2019–S23–Propl](#), which sought to introduce a management measure for marking of fishing gears in the IOTC Area. In view of the lack of support for such a measure at the time, the proponent agreed to defer the proposal for further discussion and possible presentation at the next Commission meeting (para 50, [IOTC-2019-S23-RE_Rev1_FINAL](#)), and requested the IOTC Secretariat, through the Commission, to initiate a process to develop draft guidelines on how IOTC might operationalize the FAO voluntary guidelines on the marking of fishing gear. The process should utilize the expertise of IOTC technical bodies and review the guidelines by electronic means, before being made available to the Commission.

Subsequently, the IOTC Secretariat, in conjunction with the Fishing Operations and Technology Branch (NFIFO, previously NIFO) of the FAO, set about to develop an initial draft of the terms of reference for a consultant to develop the scheme to operationalise the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG) and FADs, in the IOTC Area. The terms of reference was endorsed by the Compliance Committee ([CoC17](#)) and subsequently by the Commission ([S24](#)), in 2020.

The consultant, Dr Pingguo He, was contracted as of 01 April 2021 to undertake this work, under the joint supervision of the NFIFO (previously FIAO) and the IOTC Secretariat. The preliminary results of the consultant's work was presented to the fifth meeting of the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM), in the meeting document [IOTC-2022-WPICMM05-13_Add1](#) and has been presented at the nineteen session of the Compliance Committee ([CoC19](#)), in the meeting document [IOTC-2022-CoC19-06_Add1](#).

At its [19th Session](#), the Compliance committee noted the following:

[IOTC-2022-CoC19-R](#) paragraph 174. The CoC19 **NOTED** that CPCs had been asked to provide comments in a month following WPICMM05, this period being a bit short and **FURTHER NOTED** that intersessional work will continue with a view to have the report discussed at the CoC20, for possible adoption at the S27 meeting.

[IOTC-2022-CoC19-R](#) paragraph 175. The CoC19 **NOTED** that there appeared to be no CPC that had fully adopted and implemented the Voluntary Guidelines.

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DISCUSSION

To address the establishment of an IOTC fishing gear marking scheme, the following topics related to the consultant's report were proposed for discussion by the [WPICMM05](#):

- *Major Fishing Gears of Interests to IOTC,*
- *Gear Marking Technologies and Practices,*
- *Risk Assessment for the Marking of Fishing Gear: Categorization of risk, Prioritization and complexity. In particular the consultant would like invite participants at the WPICMM05 to reflect on whether the proposed framework for conducting risk assessment is appropriate for IOTC or if a simpler approach with less steps is preferred.*
- *Economic assessment for implementation of gear marking in the IOTC area: costs to fishers, CPCs and IOTC,*
- *Awareness raising and capacity building for the implementation of gear marking: Awareness raising and communication, Capacity-building measures, requirements of Developing States.*

No comments have been received from CPCs during the 2022/2023 intersessional period.

The report of the consultant, *Operationalisation of FAO voluntary guidelines for the marking of fishing gears in the IOTC area of competence*, is available for comments from CPCs, click [HERE](#).

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WPICMM06:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2023–WPICMM06–12 on the progress of work on the IOTC scheme to operationalise the FAO voluntary guidelines on the marking of fishing gear.
- 2) **NOTE** that no comment was provided by CPCs on the Consultant's report during the intersessional period 2022/2023.
- 3) **RECOMMEND** that CPCs provide their feedback on the report of the consultant, document [IOTC-2022-CoC19–06 Add1](#), during this session of the WPICMM.