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Indian Ocean Tuna Commission  
Commission des Thons de l'Océan Indien

IOTC-2022-VMSWGSS01-R[E]

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# Report of the First Special Session of the Vessel Monitoring System Working Group

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Held by video-conference, 16 November 2022

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**DISTRIBUTION:**

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

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## HOW TO INTERPRET TERMINOLOGY CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT

The VMSWGSS01 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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## 1. Opening of the Special Session

1. The meeting was held online, via Zoom, on 16 November 2022.
2. The List of Participants is provided in [Appendix 1](#). A total of 25 participants (nine Member States, one RFMO, two Observers and four Invited Experts) attended the meeting. The First Special Session of the Vessel Monitoring System Working Group (VMSWGSS01) was chaired initially by the IOTC Secretariat, in the absence of both the Chair and the Vice-Chair. The meeting was informed that the Chair was unable to attend due to unforeseen family matters, and that the Vice Chair had indicated that he would join the meeting late due to other work-related commitments. In the course of the meeting, the chair was handed over to the Vice Chair, Mr Johnny Louys (SYC).

## 2. Introduction of members

3. The Chair of the VMSWGSS01 **INVITED** participants from the Secretariat of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) to introduce themselves.

## 3. Adoption of the Agenda

4. The VMSWGSS01 **ADOPTED** the Agenda in [Appendix 2](#) without amendment.

## 4. Objective of the Special Session

5. The VMSWGSS01 **RECALLED** that the IOTC is an Article XIV body of the FAO, and is therefore, subjected to the same rules and procedures as the GFCM to develop a regional VMS.
6. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** the objective of the Special Session, being consideration of the presentation by the GFCM on the progress the GFCM has made with the adoption of a pilot VMS and the administrative, financial and technical hurdles that they have faced to date, with a view to deciding whether to cooperate through a joint GFCM/IOTC pilot project.

## 5. Presentation of GFCM's VMS Pilot Project and Questions and Answers

7. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** the pre-recorded presentation by GFCM.
8. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** the presentation covered the following fields:
  - Introduction (GFCM VMS and related control system);
  - GFCM system highlights (VMS data domains and standards, decentralised VMS, centralised VMS, electronic logbook, winch sensor systems, real time AIS data, monitoring of GFCM fishing restricted areas, features leveraging PSM data, small-scale fisheries monitoring solutions);
  - information technology security and confidentiality provisions (cloud computing security risks and interoperability assessment, information technology security provisions); and
  - a proposal for a joint VMS GFCM/IOTC pilot project: tentative roadmap (lessons learnt by the GFCM system of relevance to IOTC, tentative roadmap).

### GFCM System highlights

9. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that setting up a system such as the GFCM's pilot VMS, including pooled tools, such as electronic recording systems, port State measures and sensors, would not be too complicated, and **FURTHER NOTED** that the time required for setting up different tools was approximately one week.

10. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that the costs of introducing new tools were not necessarily excessive since core information and data structures are practically the same, but there may be more follow up required downstream.
11. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that if a hybrid system were introduced, it could cater for those CPCs with a fisheries monitoring centre and for those without.
12. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that where a fisheries monitoring centre is in place inclusion of MCS tools can provide benefits with very few additional costs.
13. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that where a fisheries monitoring centre is not in place, a hybrid system can provide surrogate fisheries monitoring centre services.
14. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that in the first instance VMS could be introduced in accordance with existing resolutions and **FURTHER NOTED** that other resolutions including other requirements, such as the use of gear sensors, could be added later.
15. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that GFCM pilot scenarios included vessels down to a size limit of 10 m length overall and **FURTHER NOTED** the benefits of new technological advances on operating costs, transponders and satellite connectivity.
16. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that technology is being developed to allow transmission using solar energy when a vessel does not have a power generator onboard.

#### **Information technology security and confidentiality provisions**

17. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** the candidate VMS solution would have to be assessed by relevant FAO divisions based on among others, FAO Admin Circular No. 2013/23 setting out the Organization's Policy on Confidentiality, a set of criteria designed to assess the risk of adopting cloud services, the Cloud Standards Customer Council Guide, procurement rules, and subsequent evaluation procedures and award of contract.
18. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** information technology security provisions that include infrastructure protection, logical security, network protection, compliance commitments and security incident management procedures.

#### **Joint VMS GFCM/IOTC pilot project**

19. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that flexibility is key: new tracking tools must be accommodated on the VMS platform; integration with non-MCS systems is crucial for the sake of turning MCS data into actionable knowledge for fisheries management and scientific purposes and for buy-in of the VMS; and interoperability with data providers must allow for ancillary monitoring and control data other than VMS (AIS, satellite imagery).
20. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** service provider-hosted or cloud-based solutions are ideal for ensuring scalability, avoiding excessive monetary commitment and preventing significant burdens on the Secretariat.
21. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** information technology security standards and data access and confidentiality policies can be subject to significant changes requested by CPCs before and after the rollout of a VMS platform.
22. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** since more information domains are included in MCS datasets, efforts must be made on a regular basis to ensure that VMS is able to accommodate different data exchange formats (hybrid scenario).
23. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** the tentative roadmap, including:

- possible joint trials free of charge (sharing the GFCM system with IOTC on a trial basis, exchange of expertise and provision of technical support by GFCM Secretariat to IOTC Secretariat, MCS tests in select countries);
  - assessing results;
  - presenting outcomes to respective VMSWGs; and
  - technical coordination between the two Secretariats.
24. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** the usefulness of GFCM having passed through the different FAO requirements regarding cloud computing security, technical specifications, confidentiality and procurement.
25. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that privacy policies would be dependent on the different technologies.
26. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that GFCM already had joint trials with ICCAT and NEAFC.
27. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that the GFCM would draft a concept note on the nature of the potential joint trials between GFCM and IOTC and send this to the IOTC Secretariat at least 30 days in advance of the next ordinary meeting of the VMS Working Group.
28. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that some IOTC CPCs are still determining which VMS system might be appropriate for them nationally and **WELCOMED** further information on the new technologies presented and their costs to establish their utility against IUU fishing.
29. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that GFCM is still conducting its pilot project, so the real costs have yet to be determined and **FURTHER NOTED** that this would depend on the scale.
30. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that due to FAO’s policy on double financing, where both systems overlap technically the IOTC might not have to incur the costs that GFCM will have already incurred, and **FURTHER NOTED** potential economies of scale.
31. The VMSWGSS01 **NOTED** that deliberations on the technical provisions and the roadmap would be made during the next ordinary meeting of the VMSWG.

## 6. Date and place of the next VMS WG meeting

32. The VMSWGSS01 **AGREED** that the next ordinary meeting of the VMSWG would be held on 14 February 2023.

## 7. Other business

33. There was no other business.

## 8. Adoption of the report

34. The Report of the meeting was adopted by correspondence on 29 November 2022.

## APPENDIX 1 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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**APPENDIX 2**  
**ADOPTED AGENDA**

**AGENDA FOR THE FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE VMS WORKING GROUP**

**Date:** 16 November 2022

**Location:** Virtual

**Time:** 11:00 – 15:00 Seychelles Time

**Chair:** Mr Stephen Ndegwa, **Vice Chair:** Mr Johnny Louys

1. Opening of the Special Session (Chair).
2. Introduction of members (Chair/Members).
3. Adoption of the Agenda (Chair/Members).
4. Objective of the Special Session (Chair/Secretariat)
5. Presentation of GFCM's VMS Pilot Project (GFCM Secretariat)
  - 5.1 Questions and Answers Session (Chair/Members)
6. Date and place of the next VMS WG meeting (Chair/Members).
7. Other business (Chair/Members).