



Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Vessel Monitoring System Working Group

Held in person and by video-conference, 14 February 2023

DISTRIBUTION:

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

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRY

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Contact details:

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
Abis Center - Blend
Providence Industrial Estate
PO Box 1011
Mahé, Seychelles
Ph: +248 422 5494
Email: IOTC-secretariat@fao.org
Website: <http://www.iotc.org>

HOW TO INTERPRET TERMINOLOGY CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT

This 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 MEETING

1. The meeting was held in person and online, via Zoom, on 14 February 2023.
2. The List of Participants is provided in [Appendix 1](#). A total of 34 participants attended the meeting. The sixth meeting of the Vessel Monitoring System Working Group (VMSWG06) was chaired by Mr Stephen Ndegwa (Kenya).
3. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** the position of Vice-Chair was vacant.

2. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS

4. The Chair of the VMSWG06 **INVITED** participants to introduce themselves.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The VMSWG06 **ADOPTED** the Agenda in [Appendix 2](#).

4. TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SECRETARIATS OF THE GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION ON VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM

6. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2023-VMSWG06-04 Rev1](#) on the technical concept note for potential VMS trials through pilot cooperation between the IOTC and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), and **FURTHER NOTED** the intervention made by the Chairperson of the Compliance Committee of the GFCM.
7. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the project is also in a pilot phase with ICCAT and NEAFC.
8. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the IOTC is discussing inclusion of vessels 12m length overall (LOA) and above, and in the record of authorised vessels (RAV) and **FURTHER NOTED** that GFCM obliges VMS for vessels of 15m LOA and above.
9. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the GFCM does not have difficulties in installing VMS on vessels because the GFCM system is merely connected to the existing national systems, and **FURTHER NOTED** that GFCM is in a pilot phase, so connection between national fisheries monitoring centres and the GFCM is not yet mandatory.
10. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that one of the potential hurdles is obtaining approval from the national authorities, because of confidentiality rules and **FURTHER NOTED** that the GFCM had chosen a hybrid centralised/decentralised system in order to cater for different countries' constraints and ensure compliance.
11. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the GFCM Secretariat had established a system of technical assistance in support of their Members.
12. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that costs depend on the choice between non-satellite and satellite technologies and also the frequency of transmission, and **FURTHER NOTED** that the frequency varied between one and two hours in the GFCM.
13. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that artisanal vessels working close to shore could be using low-cost non-satellite systems, while vessels working far from shore would report through regular VMS satellite-based units.

14. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that countries had a choice of technology that they may adopt for the exchange of information, allowing for a reduction in potential costs.
15. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that suspicious activities are monitored by the fisheries monitoring centres of each country and **FURTHER NOTED** that the GFCM Secretariat is not monitoring VMS at present.
16. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that not all GFCM members have national VMS systems.
17. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that there are several choices for the transmission of data from GFCM Members to the GFCM Secretariat, and **FURTHER NOTED** that there is a need for a data standard format, which led the GFCM to use the North Atlantic Format (NAF), which includes the basic VMS information data fields.
18. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that international standard formats (e.g. NAF, UNFLUX) facilitate data transmission irrespective of the Members' service providers.
19. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that power for VMS transmission is essential, so if a vessel of 12m LOA or above does not have an autonomous power supply, transmitting VMS might be challenging.
20. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that there is a high dependence on the political will of countries to share data with a regional body.
21. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the GFCM's pilot project, ending in October 2023, has a limited life span, and **AGREED** that IOTC's involvement in the pilot project would have the merit to provide the necessary experience and information to inform the Commission on the future form of an IOTC VMS.
22. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the current arrangement between the IOTC and GFCM would not allow for IOTC to joint GFCM's pilot project without a decisions from the Commissions of both organisations.
23. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that a decision would need to be taken by the Commission as to whether the IOTC and a few volunteer CPCs should apply to participate in the GFCM pilot project.

5. UPDATE ON STATUS OF PROGRESS OF THE WORK PLAN

24. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** the presentation from the IOTC Secretariat on the progress of the VMSWG work since its last meeting and **RECALLED** the status of implementation of the VMSWG work plan as extracted from [IOTC-2023-WPICMM06-09](#).
25. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the VMS Working Group had agreed on the objectives of the VMS, on a hybrid centralised/ decentralised option, on VMS for vessels 12m LOA and above, on inclusion of all vessel types and of non-CPC flagged carrier vessels, on a 20nm buffer zone or 24h notice prior to entry to an EEZ.
26. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that work in progress included the development of funding models and options, improvements on Resolution 15/03, rules and procedures for sharing, use and protection of data, technical cooperation between the GFCM and IOTC, and mechanisms for a smooth transition to a new system.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE TO DETERMINE EXTRA COSTS RELATED TO INFRASTRUCTURE, STAFFING, AND DATA SECURITY REQUIRED FOR THE IOTC VMS

27. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2023-VMSWG06-02](#) on the Terms of Reference to determine extra costs related to infrastructure, staffing, and data security required for the IOTC Vessel Monitoring System.
28. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that on recruitment of the consultant the timeline of the key performance indicators would be updated.
29. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the Terms of Reference for the consultancy were drafted before the discussions on a possible cooperation with GFCM's pilot project and **FURTHER NOTED** that it would be beneficial if the consultancy contributed to this process.
30. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that Australia was still in a position to fund the consultancy.
31. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that collaboration with GFCM had been accepted as the way forward, and **FURTHER NOTED** that if serious consideration were given to IOTC participating in a pilot project then it may not be an appropriate time to conduct this particular study.
32. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the decision for the consultancy and its TORs would have to be referred to the Compliance Committee and the Commission.
33. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** comments from participants and amended the Terms of Reference as presented in track changes in [IOTC-2023-VMSWG06-02 Rev1](#).
34. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that since the VMSWG had been meeting for four years, it was time to enter into concrete action.
35. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that IOTC Member States that are not members of the GFCM might have a problem sharing data with GFCM, so from that point of view IOTC's going ahead with its own pilot project might be more appropriate.
36. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that a decision on a pilot project and the form of that pilot project would be necessary to be able to finalise the Terms of Reference for the consultancy and **FURTHER NOTED** that guidance would be needed from the Compliance Committee and the Commission.
37. The VMSWG06 **RECOMMENDED** that the Compliance Committee consider whether the IOTC should enter in an agreement with GFCM to join their pilot project, or whether IOTC should enter into a pilot project on its own, or whether IOTC doesn't need a pilot project.

7. CONSIDER PENDING OR NEW AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 15/03, AND THEIR PRESENTATION OR CO-SPONSORSHIP BEFORE THE COMMISSION BY A CPC OR CPCS

38. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2023-VMSWG06-03](#) on proposed revisions to Resolution 15/03, including relevant edits and comments from the legal scrubbing into the proposed amended Resolution 15/03.
39. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that VMS could contribute to conflict resolution, as well as scientific research and management.
40. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that some IOTC Members had gross tonnage as a condition for VMS in their national legislation, instead of length overall.

41. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that the Resolution may refer only to those vessels on the RAV, exempting those of less than 12m in length and **FURTHER NOTED** that the Resolution referring to the RAV would have to be amended to incorporate those 12m length overall and above as well.
42. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that paragraphs 16 to 27 relate to rules of procedure and confidentiality, and **FURTHER NOTED** that it would be able to revisit these after the planned consultant’s report.
43. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** that some CPCs have data confidentiality laws in force that restrict the sharing of VMS information to third parties.
44. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** changes proposed by members during the meeting relating to:
 - Paragraph 1d: to include “and addressing uncertainties in the geographical position of CPC vessels”;
 - Paragraph 8: to delete transmitting option repeated in paragraph 7 and 8;
 - Paragraph 9: to provide for a transition period for automated reports when antenna is obstructed;
 - Paragraph 10: to include the alternative to the capabilities of VMS transmission and a transition period for remotely prompting position reports;
 - Paragraph 12: to include “The geographic position every XX hours.”;
 - Paragraph 16: to delete “only” of VMS data; and
 - Paragraph 23bis: to include an exchange of information on the grounds to believe that a fishing vessel may have engaged in IUU fishing.
45. The VMSWG06 **AGREED** that the revisions to the draft Resolution as discussed by the VMSWG06 in [IOTC-2023-VMSWG06-03 Rev1](#) (highlighted in yellow in the document) be presented to the Compliance Committee for information pending decision on the form of a pilot project, if any, and the work of the VMS consultant.

8. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT VMS WG MEETING(S)

46. The VMSWG06 **AGREED** that the next ordinary meeting of the VMSWG would take place from 11h00 to 15h00 Seychelles time (UTC+4) on 26 September 2023 and **FURTHER AGREED** that the meeting be held virtually.

9. ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR FOR THE VMS WORKING GROUP

47. The VMSWG06 **ELECTED** Mr. Shoukot Kabir Chowdhury (BGD) as Vice-Chair of the VMS Working Group.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

48. The VMSWG06 **NOTED** there was no other business.

11. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

49. The Report of the meeting was adopted by correspondence on 7 March 2023.

APPENDIX 1 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CHAIR

Mr Stephen NDEGWA
Kenya Fisheries Service
Kenya
ndegwafish@yahoo.com

liliankabira01@gmail.com

Dr Thabiti Soudjay KAMAL
Direction générale des
ressources halieutiques
Comoros
thabitik@yahoo.fr

hiroyuki_morita970@maff.go.jp

Ms Maiko NAKASU
Fisheries Agency
Japan
maiko_nakasu100@maff.go.jp

PARTICIPANTS

Mr Mohamed ABDULLAHI
Ministry of Fisheries and
Marine Resources
Somalia
dg@mfmr.gov.so

Mr Moghaddam KHANEH ZAEI
Iran Fisheries Organisation
Iran
kalatkot@gmail.com

Mr Gudarz RASHNO
Iran Fisheries Organisation
Iran
gudarz.rashno@yahoo.com

Mr Roddy ALLISOP
Seychelles Fishing Authority
Seychelles
rallisop@sfa.sc

Mr Benedict KIILU
Assistant Director of Fisheries
Kenya Fisheries Service
Kenya
kiilub@yahoo.com

Mr Marolova Antoine
RASOLOMAMPIONONA
Direction générale de la
pêche et de l'aquaculture
Madagascar
lovstat.mrhp@gmail.com

Mr Arthur Besther SUJANG
Department of Fisheries
Malaysia
arthur@dof.gov.my

Ms Chonticha KUMYOO
Department of Fisheries
Thailand
chonticha.dof@gmail.com

Mr Paul RICKARD
Australian Fisheries
Management Authority
Australia
Paul.RICKARD@afma.gov.au

Mr Shoukot Kabir
CHOWDHURY
Department of Fisheries
Bangladesh
Shoukot1977@yahoo.com

Ms Fanny LOISEL
Direction Générale Des
Affaires Maritimes, De La
Pêche Et De L'Aquaculture
France
fanny.loisel@agriculture.gouv.fr

Ms SARASWATI
Ministry of Marine Affairs and
Fisheries
Indonesia
cacasaras@gmail.com

Ms Riana HANDAYANI
Ministry of Marine Affairs and
Fisheries
Indonesia
Daya139@yahoo.co.id

Ms Laura MAROT
European Commission
DG Maritime Affairs and
Fisheries
European Union
Laura.marot@ec.europa.eu

Ms Soobin SHIM
Ministry of Oceans and
Fisheries
Korea
sbin8shim@korea.kr

Mr Indra JAYA
Head of National Committee
on Fish Stock Assessment
Indonesia
indrajaya123@gmail.com

Mr Ranwel Nelson MBUKWAH
Deep Sea Fisheries Authority
Tanzania
ranwel.mbukwah@dsfa.go.tz

Ms Chutima SITTIWONG
Department of Fisheries
Thailand
chusittiwong@gmail.com

Ms Lilian KABIRA
Kenya Fisheries Service
Kenya

Mr Hiroyuki MORITA
Fisheries Agency
Japan

Ms Marguerite TARZIA
Australian Fisheries
Management Authority
Marguerite.TARZIA@afma.gov.au

Ms Nada VADIATI
Iran Fisheries Organisation
Iran
shirinvad@gmail.com

Mr Nicolas VUILLAUME
Groupe CLS
France
nvuillaume@groupcls.com

OBSERVERS

The PEW Charitable Trusts

Mr Nikolas EVANGELIDES
nevangelides@pewtrusts.org

Sustainable Fisheries & Communities Trust (SFACT)

Ms Beatrice KINYUA
beatrice.kinyua@sfact.org

World Wildlife Fund for Nature

Mr Umair SHAHID
World Wide Fund for Nature
ushahid@wwf.org.pk

INVITED EXPERT

Ms ILU LAI
Fisheries Agency
lu@ms1.fa.gov.tw

Mr Ching-Ying TSENG
cyt0630@ofdc.org.tw

Mr Chia-Chun WU
jiachun@ms1.fa.gov.tw

Mr Ken Chien-Nan LIN
chiennan@ms1.fa.gov.tw

GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

Mr Hamadi MEJRI
Chairperson
GFCM Compliance Committee
Hamadi.mejri1@gmail.com

INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION SECRETARIAT

Mr José Antonio ACUÑA
BARROS
Compliance Officer
Jose.Acuna@fao.org

Mr Florian GIROUX
Compliance Coordinator
Florian.Giroux@fao.org

Mr Gerard DOMINGUE
Compliance Manager
Gerard.Domingue@fao.org

Mr Carlos PALIN
MCS Expert
Compliance.expert@iotc.org

APPENDIX 2
ADOPTED AGENDA

ADOPTED AGENDA FOR THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE VMS WORKING GROUP

Date: 14 February 2023

Location: Safari Park Hotel & Casino, Nairobi, Kenya / Hybrid Zoom

Time: 09:00 – 17:00 Kenya Time

Chair: Mr Stephen Ndegwa, **Vice Chair:** Vacant

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Introduction of members
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Technical cooperation between the Secretariats of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission on Vessel Monitoring System
5. Update on status of progress of the work plan
6. Terms of reference to determine extra costs related to infrastructure, staffing, and data security required for the IOTC VMS
7. Consider pending or new amendments to Resolution 15/03, and their presentation or co-sponsorship before the Commission by a CPC or CPCs
8. Date and place of the next VMS WG meeting(s)
9. Election of a Vice-Chair for the VMS WG
10. Other business