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## PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 25th SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT AND SC CHAIRPERSON, 30 OCTOBER 2023

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### PURPOSE

To provide participants at the 26<sup>th</sup> Scientific Committee (SC) with an update on the progress made in implementing the recommendations from the previous SC meeting, and to provide alternative recommendations for the consideration and potential endorsement by participants as appropriate given any progress.

### BACKGROUND

At the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the SC, participants agreed on a series of actions to be taken by participants, CPCs, and the IOTC Secretariat on a range of issues. The subsequent table developed and agreed to by the SC was endorsed at its December 2022 meeting.

### DISCUSSION

The Rules of Procedure of the Scientific Committee include the following seven core tasks, which are to be supported by the various Working Parties.

- a) recommend policies and procedures for the collection, processing, dissemination and analysis of fishery data;
- b) facilitate the exchange and critical review among scientists of information on research and operation of fisheries of relevance to the Commission;
- c) develop and coordinate cooperative research programmes involving Members of the Commission in support of fisheries management;
- d) assess and report to the Commission on the status of stocks of relevance to the Commission and the likely effects of further fishing and of different fishing patterns and intensities;
- e) formulate and report to the sub-commission, as appropriate, on recommendations concerning conservation, fisheries management and research, including consensus, majority and minority views;
- f) consider any matter referred to by the Commission;
- g) carry out other technical activities of relevance to the Commission.

Recalling that the SC, at its 16<sup>th</sup> Session adopted a set of reporting terminology SC16.07 (para. 23), which was subsequently endorsed by the Commission at its 18<sup>th</sup> Session in 2014 (S18, para 10), to further improve the clarity of information sharing from, and among the science bodies, the following two term levels should be noted when interpreting the Reports and [Appendix I](#) to this paper:

**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 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 formalise 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.

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The Recommendations endorsed by the SC at its 25<sup>th</sup> Session are contained in [Appendix I](#) for the consideration, review of progress, and revision/reiteration as necessary by the SC26. The SC participants are also encouraged to review the Progress on the Recommendations of Working Parties prepared by the Secretariat and presented to each Working Party for their consideration and revision (IOTC-2023-WPNT13-06, IOTC-2023-WPEB19-06, IOTC-2023-WPB21-06, IOTC-2023-WPM14-06, IOTC-2023-WPTT25(DP)-06, IOTC-2023-WPDCS19-06).

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the SC:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2023–SC26–10 which detailed the progress made in implementing the recommendations and the requests of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Scientific Committee (SC25);
- 2) **AGREE** to consider and revise as necessary, the recommendations, and for these to be combined with any new recommendations arising from SC26.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix I:** Progress made on the Recommendations of SC25.

SC25 Report	SC recommendations	Update/Progress
SC25.08 Para. 30	<p><b>National Reports from CPCs</b></p> <p>The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Compliance Committee and Commission note the lack of compliance by 5 Contracting Parties (Members) that did not submit a National Report to the Scientific Committee in 2022, <b>NOTING</b> that the Commission agreed that the submission of the annual reports to the Scientific Committee is mandatory.).</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. (IOTC-2023-S27-R, Para 17) The Commission NOTED that 26 National Reports were submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2022 by CPCs and that this was an increase when compared with the 21 reports provided by CPCs in 2021.</p>
SC25.09 Para.41	<p><b>Report Of The 12th Session of the Working Party On Neritic Tunas (WPNT12)</b></p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> with concern the stock status of Longtail tuna and Narrow-barred Spanish Mackerel. The SC further <b>NOTED</b> that the stock statuses for these species have been in the red for at least the past 5 years with a high probability and are showing no sign of recovery. As such, the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission take measures to reduce the catches (to at least MSY levels) of these species and develop management measures that will facilitate the recovery of these stocks.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. No new management measures have been adopted for neritic tuna species.</p>
<p>SC25.10 Para. 52</p> <p>SC25.11 Para. 53</p> <p>SC25.12 Para. 54</p>	<p><b>Report of the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Working Party on Billfish (WPB20)</b></p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> that reported catches of black marlin and Indo-Pacific sailfish have exceeded the limits set out in Resolution 18/05 for both 2020 and 2021. The SC further noted that catches of both species are predominantly taken by gillnet and as such, <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that any revision of Resolution 18/05 should focus mainly on gillnet fisheries, to be effective.</p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> that striped marlin and blue marlin assessments indicate these species to be overfished and subject to overfishing, with 100% and 72% probability, respectively. The SC advised that projections and associated Kobe 2 Strategy Matrices (K2SM) are available for both species and <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that any revision of Resolution 18/05 catch limits with respect to these species should be based on projections as opposed to MSY estimates, given the need to rebuild these stocks.</p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> that the current minimum size limit in Res 18/05 (60 cm LJFL) is unlikely to be effective for these species, with the possible exception of blue marlin, due to the high at-haul mortality and low post release survival of these species particularly when taken by gillnet. For blue marlin, it is <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that further management options relating to limiting retention, including the option of increasing the current minimum size limit, be considered.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. No Revision to Resolution 18/05 has taken place.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. No Revision to Resolution 18/05 has taken place.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. No new management measures for billfish species have been adopted.</p>

<b>Report of the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB18)</b>		
SC25.13 Para. 62	The SC <b>NOTED</b> the evidence indicating the increased operation of squid fisheries in the high seas of the Indian Ocean, and particularly in fishing grounds which overlap with areas where tuna purse seine fleets operate, <b>NOTING</b> that this overlap results in bycatch of tuna and tuna-like species in the squid fishery. However, as these fisheries are not managed by IOTC, data on these catches of tuna and tuna-like species are not provided to the IOTC. Therefore, the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission request that the CPCs report all catches of tuna to the IOTC regardless of the target species of the fishery. The SC further <b>REQUESTED</b> that the Commission seek more information on this fishery from the CPCs.	<b>Update:</b> Ongoing. The issue was not raised at the latest Commission meeting. Data submitted to the Compliance department at the Secretariat indicated that in most cases, only small pelagics and other non-IOTC species were being encountered by these vessels.
SC25.14 Para. 63	The SC <b>NOTED</b> the evidence provided to the WPEB on the effectiveness of hook-shielding devices in reducing seabird bycatch mortality in pelagic longlines and further <b>NOTED</b> that the WCPFC included the hook-shielding devices in 2018 as an option to mitigate longline seabird bycatch. The SC <b>ACKNOWLEDGED</b> the potential operational difficulties and costs of utilising these devices as well as the potential limited number of manufacturers. However, based on the scientific evidence (supported by the ACAP guidelines) the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission consider including hook-shielding devices as an additional option for seabird bycatch mitigation measures in Resolution 12/06. The SC <b>NOTED</b> that this had previously been recommended as a stand-alone measure in 2016 for the proposed revision of 12/06 (IOTC-2016-SC19-R para. 69).	<b>Update:</b> Completed. The Commission adopted Resolution 23/07 <i>On Reducing the Incidental Bycatch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries</i> which allows for the use of hook-shielding devices as a mitigation measure.
SC25.15 Para. 64	The SC <b>NOTED</b> the potential for using artificial lights (a visual deterrent) in gillnet fisheries as a potential bycatch mitigation device and the need to test this further via LED trials, which could also determine if such lights might attract unwanted bycatch. However, the SC <b>NOTED</b> that Resolution 16/07 prohibits Fishing vessels and other vessels including support, supply and auxiliary vessels to use, install or operate surface or submerged artificial lights for the purpose of aggregating tuna and tuna-like species. However, the SC <b>NOTED</b> that it is not clear if this also applies to gillnets. Therefore, the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission provide clarification on whether Resolution 16/07 also applies to gillnet fisheries and/or to scientific studies as the current wording is somewhat ambiguous.	<b>Update:</b> Completed. (IOTC-2023-S27-R, para 32) The Commission <b>NOTED</b> in particular, SC Recommendation 15 that Resolution 16/07 On the use of artificial lights to attract fish (which prohibits using artificial lights for the purpose of aggregating tuna and tuna-like species) does not apply to scientific studies. NOTE: The Commission did not address the issue with regards to gillnet fisheries.
SC25.16 Para. 68	<b>Status of development and implementation of national plans of action for seabirds and sharks, and implementation of the FAO guidelines to reduce marine turtle mortality in fishing operations</b>  The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission note the current status of development and implementation of National Plans of Action (NPOAs) for sharks and seabirds, and the implementation of the FAO guidelines to reduce marine turtle mortality in fishing operations, by each CPC as provided in Appendix 5, recalling that the IPOA-Seabirds and IPOA-Sharks were adopted by the FAO in 1999 and 2000, respectively, and recommended the development of NPOAs.	<b>Update:</b> Ongoing. The SC chair presented the current status of development and implementation of National Plans of Action (NPOAs) for sharks and seabirds, and the implementation of the FAO guidelines to reduce marine turtle mortality in fishing operations to the Commission in 2023.
SC25.17 Para. 73	<b>Other matters</b>  The SC <b>ACKNOWLEDGED</b> the proposed Cooperation Agreement between the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU and IOTC and <b>NOTED</b> that this Agreement is based on the language used in the Agreement between IOTC and ACAP which has been accepted by the Commission. The SC <b>NOTED</b> this will facilitate better exchange of scientific information and data on sea turtles and their fishery interactions relevant to future commission discussions and decisions on	<b>Update:</b> Completed. The Commission approved the signature of a Collaboration Agreement with the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU.

	<p>this issue. The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the proposed Agreement is presented at the Commission for further consideration.</p>	
<p>SC25.18 Para. 98</p> <p>SC25.19 Para. 99</p>	<p><b>Report of the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT24)</b> <b>Bigeye tuna MP</b></p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> that the application of the bigeye management procedure resulted in a recommended TAC of 80,583 t per year for 2024 and 2025, which requires a 15% catch reduction from the 2021 catch level. The SC <b>RECOMMEND</b> that the Commission endorse the calculated TAC for 2024 and 2025.</p> <p>Given average catch of BET in the past 5 years being above the calculated TAC for 2024 and 2025 and the lack of effective implementation of catch limits for other stocks in the IOTC, the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission ensure effective implementation of the bigeye management procedure recommended TAC, especially taking into consideration the current overfished and subject to overfishing status of the stock. The SC <b>NOTED</b> that respecting the BET TAC is especially important when taking into consideration the multi-species nature of the Tropical tuna fisheries and especially taking into account the existing catch limit for YFT and TAC for SKJ.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Completed. The Commission adopted <b>Resolution 23/04 On Establishing Catch Limits for Bigeye Tuna in the IOTC Area of Competence</b>. This Resolution contains the endorsed TAC for bigeye, which is unchanged from the SC advice.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. The implementation of the BET TAC is included in Res 23/04.</p>
<p>SC25.20 Para. 118</p> <p>SC25.21 Para. 122</p> <p>SC25.22 Para. 123</p>	<p><b>Report of the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Working Party on Methods (WPM13)</b></p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> that the 1-year time gap between the running of an MP by the SC and its actual implementation is less than ideal. The SC <b>NOTED</b>, however, that such a delay in the implementation has been MSE tested for the adopted BET MP and thus its effect on the performances has been already taken into account. The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission identify and adopt a decision-making process to shorten the delay in the implementation of the MP output.</p> <p><b>Update on TCMPO5</b></p> <p>The SC <b>QUERIED</b> whether it would be necessary to hold a virtual TCMPO meeting early in the year if no MPs are considered ready for presentation to the TCMPO that particular year. The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that there is no need to organize a virtual TCMPO as no candidate MPs will be ready for consideration for adoption in 2023.</p> <p>The SC however <b>CONSIDERED</b> that it is advisable to have focused dialogue with managers on those MSE which are more advanced such as that for SKJ. The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that a virtual TCMPO is tentatively convened early in 2024 with a special focus on MSE for SKJ.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. The Commission has not yet found a solution to the delay issue.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Completed. The Commission agreed to defer the February 2023 TCMPO meeting until 2024.</p>

<p><b>Report of the 18th Session of the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS18)</b></p> <p><b>Updates to the workflow for the management and submission of statistical data to the IOTC</b></p> <p>SC25.23 (para. 130) The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission <b>ENDORSE</b> the proposed improvements in the data submission process of fisheries statistics, including a) the new approach for the classification of IOTC fisheries, and b) the adoption of the new data submission forms.</p> <p>SC25.24 (para. 131) The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission <b>ENDORSE</b> the mandatory reporting of fishing craft statistics and that this change is included in the next revision of Res. 15/02.</p> <p>SC25.25 (para. 132) The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that, once the Commission adopts data requirements for IOTC fisheries, the Commission <b>DELEGATES</b> the adoption of data standards and submission forms to the SC to facilitate reporting by the CPCs.</p> <p>SC25.26 (para. 133) The SC <b>NOTED</b> that some of the paragraphs in some of the Resolutions are either unclear or inconsistent and therefore the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> the Commission to <b>ENDORSE</b> the following changes for inclusion in the next revision of the relevant IOTC Resolutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. that silky shark (<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>) be included in the list of “other” species appearing in the gillnet table in Section 2.3 of Annex II of Res. 15/01;</li> <li>b. that the terms “shall be submitted frequently” appearing in para. 4.c of Res. 15/02 be further clarified and complemented by a clearer indication of the spatial-temporal stratification of the dataset concerned;</li> <li>c. that para. 4.c of Res. 15/02 be amended with the inclusion of the request that “Documents describing the extrapolation procedures (including raising factors corresponding to the logbook coverage) shall also be submitted routinely” that already appears in both para. 4.a and 4.b of Res. 15/02;</li> <li>d. that para. 5 of Res. 15/02 be amended with the inclusion of “and all other relevant gears” in addition to purse seiners already mentioned in this paragraph;</li> <li>e. that para. 26 of Res. 19/02 be amended to also allow the use of buoy position data for scientific purposes, and to further clarify how to protect business confidentiality aspects as per para. 24 of Res. 19/02.</li> </ul> <p>SC25.27 (para. 134) The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> the Commission to <b>STRENGTHEN</b> the requirements for the monitoring of artisanal and semi-industrial fisheries to improve the collection, reporting and the quality of Neritic tunas and Billfish fisheries statistics.</p> <p><b>Update on WGEMS02</b></p> <p>SC25.28 (para. 148) The SC reviewed and <b>ENDORSED</b> a) the EM terms and definitions b) the EM Program standards, and c) the EM Data standards described in Appendices 6A, 6B and 6C (except Annex 1 and 2 to be adopted in March 15-16), respectively, and <b>RECOMMENDED</b> their adoption by the Commission.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Completed. The Commission endorsed the SC recommendations as its own.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. Although a proposal was presented to the Commission to revise Res. 15/02, it was ultimately not adopted.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Completed. The Commission endorsed the SC recommendations as its own.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. Although two proposals were presented to the Commission to revise Resolutions 15/01 and 15/02, they were ultimately not adopted. No change was made to Res. 19/02.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. No new Resolutions were adopted regarding data collection or reporting.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Completed. The Commission adopted <b>Resolution 23/08 On Electronic Monitoring Standards for IOTC Fisheries</b>. This Resolution takes into account the recommendations from the SC.</p>
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SC25.29 Para. 151	<b>Invited Expert(s) at the WP meetings</b> Given the importance of external independent review for working party meetings, the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> the Commission continues to allocate sufficient budget for invited scientific experts to be regularly invited to scientific working party meetings.	<b>Update:</b> Ongoing. The Commission has provided budget for invited experts for 2024.
SC25.30 Para. 153	<b>Meeting participation fund</b> The SC reiterated its <b>RECOMMENDATION</b> that the IOTC Rules of Procedure (2014), for the administration of the Meeting Participation Fund be modified so that applications are due not later than 60 days, and that the full Draft paper be submitted no later than 45 days before the start of the relevant meeting. The aim is to allow the Selection Panel to review the full paper rather than just the abstract, and provide guidance on areas for improvement, as well as the suitability of the application to receive funding using the IOTC MPF. The earlier submission dates would also assist with visa application procedures for candidates.	<b>Update:</b> No progress. The Rules of Procedure have not been modified to reflect this requested change.
SC25.31 Para. 154	<b>IOTC species identification guides: Tuna and tuna-like species</b> The SC reiterated its <b>RECOMMENDATION</b> that the Commission allocates budget towards continuing the translation and printing of the IOTC species ID guides so that hard copies of the identification cards can continue to be printed as many CPC scientific observers, both on board and at port, need to have hard copies.	<b>Update:</b> Ongoing. Budget has been made available through the IOTC main budget and the OFCF project to continue the printing of ID cards and this has continued in 2023 and will do again in 2024.
SC25.32 Para. 156	<b>General - Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the SC and its subsidiary bodies</b> <b>ACKNOWLEDGING</b> the need to have officers with sufficient experience and capability to serve as Chairs and Vice-chairs of the SC Working Parties and Working Groups, the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission revise the current Rules of Procedure (if necessary) to allow Chairs to serve an additional year or years beyond two terms if no suitable candidates are available to replace them once their terms are completed.	<b>Update:</b> Completed. The Commission endorsed the SCs Recommendations as their own. No change to the Rules of Procedure were made, but there was no disagreement with the recommendation to allow chairs to extend their terms if necessary to ensure sufficient capacity.
SC25.33 Para. 157	The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission note and endorse the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons for the SC and its subsidiary bodies for the coming years, as provided in Appendix 7.	<b>Update:</b> Completed.
SC25.34 Para. 172	<b>Implementation of the Regional Observer Scheme</b> The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission <b>ENDORSE</b> the mandatory reporting of geo-referenced effort data as number of sets/operations for longline and surface fisheries (according to the definitions in Res 15/02) to complement the current requirements of Res. 15/02, in order for the Secretariat to accurately and independently calculate the ROS coverage in agreement with the provisions of Res. 22/04.	<b>Update:</b> Ongoing. No new Resolutions were adopted regarding data collection or reporting.
SC25.35 Para. 186	<b>General - Consultants</b> Noting the highly beneficial and relevant work done by IOTC stock assessment consultants in previous years, the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the engagement of consultants be continued	<b>Update:</b> Ongoing. Several consultants were contracted in 2023.

	for each coming year based on the Program of Work. Consultants will be hired to supplement the skill set available within the IOTC Secretariat and CPCs.	
SC25.36 Para. 188	<p><b>Data preparatory meetings and Hybrid meetings</b></p> <p><b>ACKNOWLEDGING</b> that holding data preparatory meetings prior to stock assessments is considered to be best practice and noting that since 2019 data preparatory meetings were successfully held for the WPTmT, WPTT and WPEB, the SC <b>AGREED</b> to continue the practice of having data preparatory meetings prior to stock assessment meetings for the major IOTC species. The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that data preparatory meetings continue to be held virtually so as not to increase the travel and costs required for the already full IOTC timetable of meetings.</p>	<b>Update:</b> Completed. All data preparatory meetings as well as working group meetings were held virtually in 2023.
SC25.37 Para. 189	The SC <b>NOTED</b> the utility of facilitating both in-person and virtual participation at future meetings to ensure increased participation and reduce the logistical costs for many CPCs. As such, the SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that future working party and Scientific Committee meetings are held in a hybrid format.	<b>Update:</b> Completed. All working party meetings as well as the Scientific Committee meeting were held in a hybrid format in 2023.