
Summary of the 3rd Session of the IOTC Ad-hoc Working Group on the Development of Electronic Monitoring Programme Standards (WGEMS)

By: Dr. Hilario Murua, IOTC WGEMS Chair,
22 NOVEMBER 2023

PURPOSE

To ensure that participants at the 19th Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics to review the main discussions of the 3rd Session of the IOTC Ad-hoc Working Group on the Development of Electronic Monitoring Programme Standards (WGEMS) and agree on possible actions and work that the WPDCS could do intersessionally in contribution to the discussions of the 4th Session of the WGEMS scheduled for June 2024.

BACKGROUND

Electronic Monitoring Systems is a proven technology to collect fishery information, including when external circumstances prevent human observers from being deployed onboard, and complement human observers to address the data requirements under IOTC Resolution 22/04 On a Regional Observer Scheme. The IOTC Scientific Committee in 2020 (SC23) noted that EMS is a very promising tool for enhancing observer coverage and complementing data collected by onboard observers.

The Commission at its 27th meeting (May 2022) adopted Resolution 22/04 On a Regional Observer Scheme and requests “the IOTC Scientific Committee, in collaboration with the Compliance Committee, to develop and agree on minimum standards for the use of EMS for purse seine, longline, bait boat (pole and line), handline, and gillnet fleets by 2023 at the latest, including on modalities of the substitution of the human observer coverage by an EMS, taking into account factors such as, the principles and regulations regarding minimum safe manning requirements. The Commission may consider and adopt these standards by 2024 in a separate Resolution.”

This Resolution 22/04 also allows to use EM to achieve the minimum human observer coverage requirement of the resolution provided that the EMS standards are adopted by the Commission and CPCs meet the minimum mandatory ROS data reporting standards. The resolution also stated that to meet the minimum mandatory ROS data reporting standards, the EMS may be complemented by port sampling and/or other Commission approved data collection methods.

The SC in 2023 (para 148 of its report) reviewed and **ENDORSED** 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 **RECOMMENDED** their adoption by the Commission.

Moreover, (para 149) the **SC NOTED** that Annex 1 and 2 of the EM Data Standards (Appendix 6C) are general guides that should be tailored to each fishery and could vary from fleet to fleet, those annexes (VMS and EM capabilities to collect ROS minimum requirements) will be finalised during next IOTC WGEMS (15-16 March, 2023) before IOTC Commission Consideration.

The 3rd WGEMS **RECOMMENDED** the adoption of Annex 1- Vessel Monitoring Plan as part of the EM System and Data Standards adopted by the Scientific Committee (Appendix 6c of the IOTC-2022-SC25-R) as a general guide and examples of existing EMS installations.

Subsequently, to ensure that ROS minimum mandatory data requirements are met by CPCs implementing EM, as required by Res 22/04, the **WGEMS RECOMMENDED** that those CPCs include a table, alongside the VMPs submission, that details which minimum required data fields (listed in Annex 2 of Appendix IV of this

report) are to be collected by EM and which are to be collected by other approved methods (including specifying those methods for each field).

However, NOTING the difficulty to collect by EMS alone some of the data minimum requirements of the ROS, the WGEMS in 2023 **AGREED** to review the data that cannot be collected by EMS (and/or human observers) and their utilisation for scientific and management purposes. And the WGEMS also **NOTED** that the revision of the ROS minimum standards is beyond the scope of the WGEMS terms of reference and **SUGGESTED** the issue to be brought to the attention of the WPDCS and Scientific Committee.

Following the recommendations from WGEMS and SC, the Commission at its 28th meeting (May 2023) adopted Resolution 23/08 On Electronic Monitoring Standards for IOTC Fisheries, including (i) the terms and definitions of EMS, (ii) EM Program Standards, and (iii) EM System and Data Standards as per IOTC SC recommendation, that allows CPCs to meet the minimum ROS data requirements under Resolution 22/04 using EMS. Resolution 22/04 also requests CPCs implementing EMS programs to submit to the IOTC Secretariat by 1 July each year, a fleet level ROS data collection table, clearly specifying for each ROS minimum required data field as specified: (i) the data field name and description, (ii) the data field reporting requirement level (i.e. mandatory collection and reporting, mandatory reporting if collected, not mandatory etc), (iii) the data collection method used to collect data for that field, and (iv) a brief description of the data collection method.

Resolution 23/08 also **requests the Scientific Committee** to review, no later than 2024, the ROS minimum required data fields to:

- identify any fields that are logistically difficult for EM and/or human observers to collect, respectively; and
- provide advice and recommendations to the Commission on the need and use of those identified fields for scientific purposes, and their collection and reporting status (i.e. mandatory, non-mandatory etc.), and
- Discuss and provide advice to the Commission on the potential need to develop a separate EM ROS minimum data fields list

DISCUSSION

Participants at the WPDCS19 are requested to consider the report, as well as recommendations and workplan, of the 3rd Session of the WGEMS and the priorities set by the Commission, via Resolution 23/08, and review and agree on a revised WGEMS Program of Work and actions to match those priorities and new deadlines.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WGEMS:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2023–WPDCS19–XX, which encouraged the WPDCS to further discuss and review the WGEMS Program of Work for 2024 to align with the requests and directives from the Scientific Committee and Commission.
- 2) **ENDORSE** a revised WGEMS Program of Work for 2024 for WPDCS and Scientific Committee.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: IOTC–WGEMS03 2023. Report of the 3rd Session of the IOTC Ad-hoc Working Group on the Development of Electronic Monitoring Programme Standards.