
INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION (IOTC) CODE OF CONDUCT

PREPARED BY: COMMISSION CHAIRS AND SECRETARIAT

PURPOSE

To ensure that the Commission functions in a way in which everyone can participate in an inclusive, respectful and safe environment and that the Commission is guided by the highest ethical and professional standards.

BACKGROUND

After the 2023 Commission meeting, the Chair and Vice-chairs identified the need to have Code of Conduct document to guide the functioning of the Commission.

IOTC CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct (“Policy”) is intended to set clear expectations of professional behaviour of individuals (“Participants”) participating in Indian Ocean Tuna Commission meetings, including meetings of subsidiary bodies, Working Parties, Working Groups and Technical Committees, workshops and any other fora and their related activities organized, hosted or sponsored in whole or part by the IOTC whether virtual or in person, to ensure ethical, professional, and inclusive conduct that provides a safe and welcoming environment for discussions. This Policy applies to all Participants including representatives of Member countries, Observers, Secretariat staff, outside contractors, and service providers.

IOTC welcomes all Participants to its working party and working group meetings, as well as duly authorised Participants to its Technical Committees and Commission meetings and celebrates the diversity of Participants in all its forms. The IOTC is dedicated to providing an inclusive environment that is collaborative, supportive, and engaging for everyone involved, and that is free of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

1. Expectations of Participants

As outlined in the [Code of Conduct – To prevent Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment at UN System Events](#), discrimination, harassment, and bullying by and between Participants will not be tolerated. Participants asked to stop such behavior(s) by anyone are expected to comply immediately, regardless of their intent.

Discrimination is the treatment of an individual or group based on gender, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, age, marital status, pregnancy or parental status, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability status, physical appearance, socioeconomic level, or other protected statuses that results in unfair, unequal, or differential professional opportunities or benefits.

Harassment is any form of discrimination that is unwelcome or unwanted, or persistent offensive, denigrating, or hostile behaviour that is directed toward a person or group based on gender, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, age, marital status, pregnancy or parental status, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability status, physical appearance, socioeconomic level, or other protected statuses. Harassment can be manifested by, but not limited to, verbal or written abuse such as slurs, epithets, denigrating jokes, abusive direct messaging online, or negative stereotyping; and by non-verbal behaviour such as obscene gestures or the display of denigrating or insulting written or graphic materials.

Sexual harassment is a particular type of harassment that includes unwelcome conduct such as sexual advances, requests for sexual favours or dates, remarks about an individual’s appearance, discussions, remarks or jokes of a sexual nature, and/or other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can also include non-verbal behaviour such as unwanted physical contact or violations of personal space that are of a sexual nature.

Behaviour involving “quid pro quo” offers of professional opportunities or the creation of a hostile professional environment are clear examples of sexual harassment.

Bullying is unwelcome or unreasonable verbal or non-verbal behaviour by an individual or group that demeans, intimidates, humiliates, abuses, or sabotages the work of people and causes physical or emotional harm in a professional environment. Bullying behaviour is most often aggressive, persistent, and part of a pattern, but it can also occur as a single egregious incident. Bullying often involves abuse of professional or supervisory authority or position. Exercising appropriate authority, directing the work of others pursuant to their job responsibilities, an honest error, and respectful scientific debate over differences of opinion are not considered bullying behaviour.

In the context of communications that take place during an Event presentation and the discussions among and between Participants that follow, communications should be focused on the Event topic at hand and all Participants must be able and welcome to equitably and effectively participate. Participants may courteously and respectfully express an opinion, raise research or describe an experience (“articulation”) that is at odds with the opinions of others. Such an articulation must be part of an on-point discussion of the topic at hand and offered in a manner that does not interfere with others’ reasonable ability to participate fully. In the pursuit of science, individuals have the freedom to disagree with or dispute wider community-held positions.

2. Social Media

By attending an IOTC Event, Participants agree to allow the use of their photo or a video of them in any official IOTC publication, promotion, on the website or social media pages. IOTC virtual events will be recorded by the IOTC Secretariat. Only the Secretariat or parties requesting and granted official permission from the IOTC Executive Secretary may (a) take/make or distribute (in any medium) audio- or visual-recordings of the Event or Participants or (b) distribute them (via social media or other means). Other recording of IOTC Events is strictly prohibited. This includes recording events, in whole or in part, via videos and/or making audio recordings. Participants wishing to share information from the Event and/or post screen shots of presented or distributed material not already available via the IOTC website, via social media, whether of their own material or that of others, must not result in any form of invasion of privacy.

The discussions that take place during a meeting are considered preliminary and as such viewpoints and positions may change as the event progresses. The reporting of discussions that take place during the sessions of an event are therefore not to be shared on social media in any way as they may prejudice the ongoing deliberations taking place. In particular, quoting specific participants or delegations without the express consent of the participant/delegation is prohibited. Even with consent, such quotations must not be shared before the event has closed.

Participants are expected to respect fellow participants privacy. No photos or video recordings may be taken of another participants personal/work device screen (including computers, phones or tablets), without the express consent of the owner of the device.

3. Accountability

CPCs, and observer organizations are responsible for the conduct of their representatives, contractors and other support staff. Any behaviour not consistent with this Code of Conduct may have an impact on the participation or contract of the concerned individual(s) and/or the relevant Party or observer organization at current or future IOTC events.

Depending on the severity of an incident, the Chairperson will either issue a warning to the individual/s responsible, or in the event that obvious harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination, or violence in any form takes place during a session, the Chairperson will eject the individual responsible from the Session..

The Executive Secretary in Consultation with the IOTC Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons may take the following actions

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- undertaking a fact-finding exercise;
 - request the concerned individual(s) to immediately stop the offending behavior;
 - for member participants, request the suspension or termination of the concerned individuals(s) access to the IOTC event; in consultation with their Head of Delegation (if applicable);
 - for observer participants, request the suspension or termination of the concerned individuals(s) access to the IOTC event; in consultation with their Head of Delegation (if applicable) and potential review of admission status of the observer organization;
 - conveying the complaint to any investigative or disciplinary authority with jurisdiction over the concerned individual(s);
 - conveying a report to the employer or entity with jurisdiction over the concerned individual(s) for appropriate follow-up action.

In addition, IOTC Secretariat staff shall be subject to any applicable regulations, rules and procedures. The IOTC secretariat will take appropriate action in accordance with its applicable regulations, rules and policies.

4. Complaint process

Any participant who feels that they have been harassed at an IOTC event may report the matter. Any participant who witnesses such harassment should report it immediately. Reports can be made to the IOTC Executive Secretary (IOTC-Secretariat@fao.org). The complainant will be informed as regards the status of the report. The victim of alleged harassment may also seek help from other relevant authorities, such as the local police, bearing in mind the applicable legal framework. A participant should never knowingly make a false or misleading claim about prohibited conduct.

5. Prohibition of retaliation

Threats, intimidation or any other form of retaliation against a participant who has made a complaint or provided information in support of a complaint are prohibited

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Commission:

1. **NOTE** paper IOTC-2024-S28-06 regarding a proposed IOTC Code of Conduct and provide comments and revisions to improve the document with the intention of providing it to the FAO Legal department for comment and possible endorsement.