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Organization of the  
United Nations



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

IOTC-2023-VMSWG07-R[E]

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## Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Vessel Monitoring System Working Group

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Held by video-conference, 26 September 2023

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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

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 online, via Zoom, on 26 September 2023.
2. The List of Participants is provided in [Appendix 1](#). A total of 26 participants attended the meeting. The seventh meeting of the Vessel Monitoring System Working Group (VMSWG07) was chaired by Mr Stephen Ndegwa (Kenya).

## 2. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS

3. The Chair of the VMSWG07 **INVITED** participants to introduce themselves.

## 3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

4. The VMSWG07 **ADOPTED** the Agenda in [Appendix 2](#).

## 4. UPDATE ON STATUS OF PROGRESS OF THE WORK PLAN

5. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** the progress made on the work of the VMSWG with regards to the Terms of Reference of the IOTC Pilot Project on Vessel Monitoring System, and the collaboration between the Secretariats of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

## 5. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN IOTC PILOT PROJECT ON VMS

6. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2023-VMSWG07-03](#) on the Terms of Reference for an IOTC Pilot Project on Vessel Monitoring System.
7. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** that the Terms of Reference described consist of two different phases, namely the design of the Pilot Project on VMS and the formulation of its implementation plan, and the subsequent implementation of the plan.
8. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** changes to the Terms of Reference ([Appendix 3](#)) proposed by members during the meeting relating to:
  - a. Section B, paragraph 1.(v), to include “for vessels’ masters, the FMC of flag States and the Commission”, and;
  - b. Section B, paragraph 1., to consider the costs associated to CPCs and to vessels not currently equipped with a VMS unit.
9. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** that the Terms of Reference has been designed to be implemented in its entirety, or partially, by either a consultant or a service provider and **FURTHER NOTED** that although a service provider can guarantee a greater level of consistency between the two phases described, the solution proposed by a service provider may be biased to suit their own technologies and may not include the best or most adequate solution.
10. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** that the recruitment of a service provider would be necessary for the implementation of the Pilot Project on VMS and **FURTHER NOTED** that this would need to be done through the FAO procurement procedures.
11. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** that the IOTC budget could only finance a consultant for the first phase of the Pilot Project on VMS.

12. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** that should external funding not be available to fund Phase 2, a request for fund must be raised to the Commission following endorsements by the Compliance Committee and the Standing Committee on Administration and Finance.
13. The VMSWG07 **AGREED** to follow a two-phased approach where, in the initial phase a consultant would recruited to provide: i) a proposal, design and requirements of the IOTC VMS Pilot Project; and ii) an implementation plan for the IOTC VMS Pilot Project (including budget proposal).
14. The VMSWG07 **AGREED** to review the reports from the consultancy at the next meeting of the VMSWG, prior to the 2024 Compliance Committee meeting.
15. The VMSWG07 **AGREED** that the second phase will be the actual implementation of the Pilot Project.
16. The VMSWG07 **AGREED** for the IOTC Secretariat to launch a call for CPCs to volunteer their participation in the implementation of the Pilot Project on VMS.

## 6. UPDATE ON THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SECRETARIATS OF THE GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION ON VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM

17. The VMSWG07 **RECALLED** the main milestones of the on-going collaboration between the GFCM and IOTC Secretariats, initiated in 2022.
18. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** that the GFCM Secretariat will share the experience gathered through their GFCM Pilot Project on VMS after the Annual Session of their Commission, in November 2023.
19. The VMSWG07 **REQUESTED** the IOTC Secretariat to continue collaborating with the GFCM Secretariat in order to learn from the implementation of the GFCM Pilot Project on VMS and the procurement processes undertaken with the FAO.

## 7. CONSIDER PENDING OR NEW AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 15/03

20. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2023-VMSWG07-02](#) on proposed revisions to Resolution 15/03.
21. The VMSWG07 **AGREED** to resume working on new amendments to Resolution 15/03, after the conclusion of the IOTC Pilot Project on VMS.

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

22. The VMSWG07 **AGREED** that the next meeting of the VMSWG would take place in mid-February 2024, back-to-back with the meeting of the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM07).
23. The VMSWG07 **AGREED** that the next VMSWG meeting be held virtually, if no CPC offers to host the WPICMM07.

## 9. OTHER BUSINESS

24. The VMSWG07 **NOTED** the low level of CPCs representation in the Working Group; comprising of only 17 CPCs, and that 13 CPCs have not nominated participants to the Working Group and **FURTHER NOTED** that of the 52 nominees for the Working Group only 23 nominees participated in this meeting.
25. The VMSWG07 **STRESSED** on the importance of wider participation of CPCs and nominees in the Working Group to increase the chances of the end result of the Working Group being accepted by the Commission.
26. The VMSWG07 **RECALLED** that according to the Commission's decision, participants to the VMSWG should be nominated by CPCs and **AGREED** for the IOTC Secretariat to remind all CPCs on the need to nominate participants and contribute to future meetings and the work of the VMSWG.

## 10. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

27. The Report of the meeting was adopted by correspondence on 23 October 2023.

## APPENDIX 1

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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

**ADOPTED AGENDA FOR THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE VMS WORKING GROUP**

**Date:** 26 September 2023

**Location:** Online

**Platform:** Zoom

**Time:** 1100–1500 hrs Seychelles time

**Chair:** Mr Stephen Ndegwa, **Vice Chair:** Mr. Shoukot Chowdhury

1. **OPENING OF THE MEETING** (Chair).
2. **INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS** (Chair/Plenary).
3. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA** (Chair/Plenary).
4. **UPDATE ON STATUS OF PROGRESS OF THE WORK PLAN** (Chair/Secretariat).
5. **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN IOTC PILOT PROJECT ON VMS** (Secretariat/Plenary).
6. **UPDATE ON THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SECRETARIATS OF THE GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION ON VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM** (Secretariat).
7. **CONSIDER PENDING OR NEW AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 15/03** (Plenary).
8. **DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT VMS WG MEETING** (Plenary).
9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** (Plenary).

### APPENDIX 3

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN IOTC PILOT PROJECT ON VMS (REVISED VERSION)

The document has been produced in response to the recommendation of the CoC20, which was endorsed by the Commission (S27):

Para 42: The CoC20 **NOTED** the progress of the VMS Working Group and **CONSIDERED** Pilot Project options and the next steps regarding a draft Resolution and the recruitment of a VMS Consultant.

Para 45: The CoC20 **NOTED** support for the Pilot Project for CPCs, in order to appreciate the implications of such a system.

Para 49: The CoC20 **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission (S27) endorse the CoC20 proposal that the IOTC Secretariat prepare a Terms of Reference for an IOTC Pilot Project on VMS, taking into consideration the experience of GFCM to date.

Source: *IOTC-2023-CoC20-R*

Para 83: The Commission **ENDORSED** the recommendations arising from the Report of the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Compliance Committee as its own.

Source: *IOTC-2023-S27-R*

<b>Assignment title</b>	PROPOSE, DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN IOTC VMS PILOT PROJECT
<b>Contract duration</b>	Maximum 230 working days over 2023/2025 @ 1,000 Euros / day
<b>Assignment location</b>	Home/Office/Secretariat based
<b>Financed by</b>	[TBD]

September 2023

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF TASKS AND OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED

### Background and Rationale

A consultant was recruited to provide guidance to the Commission on VMS, [Options Paper for Strengthening the IOTC Vessel Monitoring System \(Options Paper\)](#). The VMS Working Group has since convened six times as detailed in the Reports of its [Meetings](#) and as summarised in [IOTC-2023-COC20-12 Progress reports of the VMSWG](#).

The Twenty-seventh Session of the Commission tasked the IOTC Secretariat to prepare the Terms of Reference for an IOTC Pilot Project on VMS.

### Objective

To provide the Commission with a proposal for the design and plan for the implementation of an IOTC Pilot Project on VMS, outlining the requirements and associated costs that will be incurred. The VMS Pilot Project shall provide an effective platform to test the feasibility, assess any potential risks and identify the costs of a regional IOTC VMS,

### Reports guidelines

The consultant(s)/VMS provider shall produce reports on his/her proposal, design and implementation plan of the IOTC VMS Pilot project. In doing so, the consultant(s)/VMS provider shall take into account reports and other materials already available to the IOTC, which makes specific reference to the elements agreed by the VMS Working Group in its various meetings, including and not limited to the agreed objectives, the scope and application of VMS, the two agreed methods of reporting (Partially Centralised and Shared Decentralised) and the VMS requirements described.

The reports shall comprise the following:

### 1<sup>st</sup> PHASE

#### **A. Proposal, design and requirements of the IOTC VMS Pilot project:**

1. Introduction and objectives of the IOTC Pilot Project on VMS.
2. Background – baseline, options, scope and application and methods already agreed by the VMS Working Group (and the proposed changes to Resolution 15/03), the Compliance Committee and the Commission.
3. VMS overview of volunteer CPCs.

*NOTE: CPCs to volunteer for the IOTC VMS Pilot project for the two types of reporting methods.*

4. Design of the IOTC Pilot Project on VMS - Formulate and design a technical proposal for an IOTC Pilot Project on VMS, including technical requirements, operating procedures, data collection, data policy, data security and confidentiality requirements, including legal, physical and procedural safeguards. Additionally, an information sharing agreement describing the protocols for sharing VMS data with the IOTC Secretariat and among CPCs, if applicable and required (flag State, port State, market State and coastal State).

*NOTE: The Proposal for the IOTC VMS Pilot Project will be reviewed and validated by the VMS Working group, which will be the basis for the consultant/VMS provider to draft the IOTC VMS Pilot Project implementation plan.*

#### **B. Implementation plan of the IOTC VMS Pilot Project (including budget proposal):**

1. Formulate a detailed plan for the implementation of the Pilot Project on VMS, including:
  - i. Operation, maintenance and support requirements,
  - ii. Specifications of the functionalities for the IOTC VMS Pilot Project,

- iii. VMS data, vessel VMS device (MTU) and communication (VMS provider/CPCs), technical specifications/requirements for implementation of the IOTC VMS Pilot project,
- iv. Timeframe for implementation (estimation 2 years).
- v. Associated costs for vessels' masters, the FMC of flag States and the Commission, for implementation in term of infrastructure (secure office and hardware), VMS software, staffing requirement and training of the IOTC Secretariat during the Pilot Project, communication costs, any other extra costs and data security elements.

Cost consideration should be conducted based on the VMS options (Partially Centralised and Shared Decentralised) and hosting of the VMS system during the implementation of the Pilot Project for in-house or externally hosted VMS system.

The Pilot Project on VMS shall take into consideration the following elements:

- IT costs - inter alia software, maintenance, upgrades and operation; maintaining a secure database and IT hardware; managing, storing and processing the data;
- Extra costs - including any additional costs not considered above (e.g. costs associated to CPCs and to vessels not currently equipped with a VMS unit),
- Existing data confidentiality rules/requirements of the IOTC and whether any additional data rules or specifications may be required for the Pilot Project.

***NOTE:** Once the implementation plan with budget is delivered and endorsed by the Commission, a dedicated budget shall be made available by the Commission for the implementation of the IOTC VMS Pilot Project or budget provided under external funding.*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> PHASE**

Implementation of the Pilot Project on VMS in accordance to the plan by the consultant(s) / VMS provider.

## **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

<b>Tasks:</b>	<b>Working days (indicative)</b>	<b>Required Completion Date:</b>
<b>PHASE 1:</b> Kick off meeting (virtual) with IOTC Secretariat and other meetings as required by the project	10	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2023
Technical proposal and design for an IOTC Pilot project on VMS <i>To be reviewed and adopted by the WG. Presentation at VMS WG meeting and availability for questions from VMSWG Members. Will serve to formulate the IOTC VMS Pilot Project implementation plan.</i>	45	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2024
Detailed plan for the implementation of the Pilot project on VMS <i>Presentation at CoC/SCAF/Commission meetings for endorsement. Budget to be allocated by the Commission or budget provided under external funding</i>	15	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter 2024  CoC21 / SCAF21/S28

<b>PHASE 2:</b> Implementation of the IOTC VMS pilot project with volunteer CPCs. To be discussed at next VMSWG meeting(s).	100 to 150 (TBD) <sup>1</sup>	From 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter 2024 (July 2024) to (June 2025) 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter 2025.
Mid-term report on the implementation of the IOTC VMS Pilot Project	5	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2025
Final report on the implementation of the IOTC VMS Pilot Project	5	End 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter 2025
	Max 230	

The implementation calendar may be changed and agreed at the kick off meeting (virtual) with the IOTC Secretariat.

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<sup>1</sup> Depending of the number of volunteer CPCs.

**Annex:****1.1. IOTC**

The IOTC is an intergovernmental organization established under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. The IOTC agreement was concluded in 1993 and entered in force in March 1996. The IOTC is mandated to manage tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas with primary objective the conservation and optimum utilization of the stocks for long term sustainability.

Since 1998, the members of the IOTC have dedicated most of their effort to the scientific component of fisheries management, to manage the tuna and tuna-like resources. Since the mid 2000's, more emphasis has been placed on the compliance component of this tuna RFMO. A Compliance Section has been created to assist the Compliance Committee in the task of assessing and reviewing all aspects related to the compliance with IOTC conservation and management measures and to provide support to Contracting and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) in the implementation of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) tools adopted by the IOTC Members (e.g. IUU vessel lists, authorized & active vessels lists, documents on board, marking of fishing vessels and gears, Vessel Monitoring System, fishing logbooks, regional observers scheme, transshipments programme, catch certification/trade documentation schemes).

The CoC16 noted paper [IOTC-2019-WPICMM02-VMS Study](#), which provided options for strengthening the IOTC VMS and further noted paper [IOTC-2019-CoC16-05a](#), which summarised the work of the Steering Group, and subsequently recommended the formation of a VMS Working Group (VMSWG). CoC16 (CoC16.33 Para 109) recommended the establishment of a VMS Working Group, to progress the work associated with strengthening the IOTC VMS, as per the ToR in Appendix 8 of [IOTC-2019-CoC16-R](#). This was subsequently endorsed by S23 ([IOTC-2019-S23-RE Rev1 FINAL](#)).

To date, the VMS Working Group has held six meetings, the last one being on 14 February 2023. The reports of all meetings of the VMS Working Group are available in [IOTC-2023-VMSWG](#). Given the necessity to continue discussions, a seventh meeting is scheduled for the 26 September 2023.

The objective of the proposed activities is to design, propose and implement an IOTC VMS Pilot Project.

**2. Scope of work**

Consultant(s)/VMS provider are required to implement the IOTC VMS Pilot Project. The consultant(s) /VMS provider are recruited to provide reports on the IOTC VMS Pilot Project and implement the VMS Pilot Project.

**3. Duration**

A maximum of 230 working days over 2023 to 2025 (inclusive of days for presentations, as required, to IOTC's VMS Working Group, CoC, SCAF and Commission meetings).

The implementation calendar may be changed and agreed at the kick off meeting (virtual) with the IOTC Secretariat.

Activity	Timing / Deadline
Start of contract	Fourth quarter of 2023 or upon signature of contract.
End of contract	Second quarter of 2025

**4. Deliverable**

- Draft report on design & technical proposal for an IOTC Pilot project on VMS,
- Detailed plan for the implementation of the Pilot project on VMS,
- Implementation of the IOTC VMS pilot project with volunteer CPCs,
- Mid-term report on the implementation of the IOTC VMS pilot project;
- Final report on the implementation of the IOTC VMS pilot project.

**5. Supervision responsibility**

The consultant(s) /VMS provider will work under the supervision of the IOTC Secretariat.

**6. Consultant(s) /VMS provider Qualifications**

Profile and specific qualifications of the Consultant(s):

- Demonstrable experience in setting, designing, managing and operating of VMS and/or VMS Pilot Project at national level or regional level;
- Degree or equivalent in a discipline related to science or fisheries management or living marine resources management or computer science or related field pertinent to the study; or a minimum of 15 years' experience related to VMS;
- Demonstrable experience working with/for RFMOs in the field of MCS/VMS will be an added advantage;
- Strong report writing and analytical skills; and
- Proficiency in English and French.