

## PROGRESS MADE ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF WPTT25

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 18 MAY 2024

### PURPOSE

To provide participants at the 26<sup>th</sup> WPTT(DP) with an update on the progress made in implementing those recommendations from the previous Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT) meeting which were endorsed by the Scientific Committee (SC), 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 WPTT, 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 WPTT was provided to the SC for its endorsement at its December 2023 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.

In addition to the Recommendations endorsed by the SC at its 24<sup>th</sup> Session, the SC also made several requests which, although are not passed to the Commission for its endorsement, are considered actions which the Scientific Committee has the mandate to issue. The revised recommendations are contained in [Appendix I](#) for the consideration and potential endorsement by the WPTT24(DP).

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the WPTT:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2023–WPTT25(DP)–06 which detailed the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the WPTT24, and the requests of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Scientific Committee (SC25), taking into consideration the recommendations from the SC and decisions of the Commission;
- 2) **AGREE** to consider and revise as necessary, the recommendations, and for these to be combined with any new recommendations arising from the WPTT25(DP), noting that these will be provided to the SC for its endorsement.

#### **APPENDICES**

**Appendix I:** Progress made on the Recommendations and Requests of WPTT24

## APPENDIX I

## Progress made on the recommendations of WPTT25

WPTT25 Rec. No.		SC26 Rec. No.	Recommendation adopted by the SC26
WPTT25.01 (para 87)	<p><b>Skipjack tuna Stock Assessment</b></p> <p><b>NOTING</b> the substantial contribution of gillnet fisheries to the total catches of skipjack tuna and the limitations of the purse seine and pole and line indices of skipjack tuna abundance, the WPTT <b>RECOMMENDED</b> the SC to develop and implement a workshop on gillnet CPUE, with a major focus on the fleets from I.R. Iran and Sri Lanka, to potentially complement and corroborate the PS and PL CPUE.</p>	(para 84)	<p><b>Skipjack tuna stock assessment</b></p> <p>The SC <b>ACKNOWLEDGED</b> the significance of longline CPUE in the assessment but <b>NOTED</b> that there are still many problems with these CPUE indices, such as the unresolved impact of piracy. The SC <b>SUGGESTED</b> looking into the possibility of developing indices for other fisheries, like the gillnet fishery. It was noted, nevertheless, that the official gillnet data held by the Secretariat are insufficient for CPUE standardization since they lack geo-reference information and are not operational level. The SC <b>NOTED</b> that while some nations (like I.R.Iran) have gillnet data suitable for deriving CPUE indices, these data are typically restricted to coastal waters. Additionally, the Indian Ocean is home to a variety of gillnet fisheries where the data may be different. The SC <b>SUGGESTED</b> that some consultancy work be utilised to assess whether developing gillnet CPUE across the Indian Ocean is feasible.</p>
WPTT25.02 (para 96)	<p>The WPTT <b>RECALLED</b> that IOTC Resolution 21/03, which superseded Resolution 16/02 requires the skipjack tuna stock assessment estimates to be used to as inputs for the Harvest Control Rule (HCR) to calculate the TAC. The WPTT <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the SC endorse the stock assessment and that the median estimates from the model ensemble are used to calculate the TAC for skipjack tuna for 2024-2026 (The TAC calculated using the stock assessment is 628 605 t).</p>	SC26.15 (para 96)	<p>The SC <b>RECALLED</b> that IOTC Resolution 21/03, which superseded Resolution 16/02 requires the skipjack tuna stock assessment estimates to be used as inputs for the Harvest Control Rule (HCR) to calculate the TAC. The SC therefore <b>ENDORSED</b> the stock assessment and that the median estimates from the model ensemble are used to calculate the TAC for skipjack tuna. The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission endorse the calculated annual TAC of 628 606 t for 2024-2026.</p>
WPTT25.03 (para 124)	<p><b>Other tropical tuna</b></p> <p>The WPTT <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that purse seiner observer data protocols include the need to collect FOB material and construction characteristics and that protocols for that collection are harmonized among PS CPCs and adopted by IOTC WPDCS.</p>	(para 146)	<p><b>ACKNOWLEDGING</b> that Res. 23/08 requires the revision of the ROS data fields, the SC <b>ENDORSED</b> the request of setting up an intersessional working group (either by correspondence, or remotely) convening interested WPDCS and WGEMS participants to discuss and review:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The scientific need for each ROS data field (as proposed by the ROS expert workshop of 2018)</li> <li>The status (mandatory / mandatory when feasible / optional) of each ROS data field</li> <li>The possibility of adding EMS-specific elements to the list of ROS mandatory data fields</li> <li>The inclusion of proper mechanisms / classifications, within the ROS data fields, to better capture details on fins naturally attached to sharks</li> </ol>
WPTT25.04 (para 138):			

WPTT25 Rec. No.		SC26 Rec. No.	Recommendation adopted by the SC26
WPTT25.05 (para 161):	<p>The WPTT <b>ENCOURAGED</b> interested CPCs to complement ISSF-data and provide sale data information to the IOTC Secretariat under strict confidentiality agreements. In this regard, the WPTT <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that external consultancy be made available to IOTC to carry out this analysis under the supervision of the IOTC Secretariat and included in the WPTT program of work.</p> <p>The WPTT <b>NOTED</b> that the yellowfin assessment model has evolved over time, with significant contributions from the independent expert to the model's initial and subsequent design and formulation. The WPTT also <b>NOTED</b> that there are a number of intricate problems with the model's input data, structure, and dynamics. Solving these problems calls for a collaborative approach that synthesises a wide range of expertise, as well as the expert's in-depth historical knowledge. Therefore, the WPTT <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the independent expert continue to be engaged in the enhancement and further development of the yellowfin assessment, with an emphasis on implementing the external review's recommendations.</p>	<p>(para 14)</p> <p>(para 82)</p>	<p>e) The summary of capabilities, advantages, and drawbacks of collecting ROS data fields through alternative methods such as EMS, human onboard observers, port-sampling, self-reporting, etc. (as well as a combination of these).</p> <p>The SC <b>ACKNOWLEDGED</b> the work of and <b>CONGRATULATED</b> the Data Section of the IOTC Secretariat for the several important activities carried on so far, such as the release of the Interactive Data Browser and the collation and clean-up of sales data from ISSF-associated canneries.</p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> that the independent panel has thoroughly examined a number of issues raised by the 2021 stock assessment and has offered suggestions for improvement. These issues include, but are not limited to, biological parameters, spatial structure, data weighting, selectivity assumptions, catch uncertainty, and model observations (CPUE indices, length composition, and tagging data). The SC <b>NOTED</b> that the recommendations called for a collaborative approach, with continued support from an independent expert, and that they placed more emphasis on the research area and process than on particular model configurations (or solutions).</p>
WPTT24.06 (para 208):	<p><b>Revision of the WPTT Program of Work (2024–2028)</b></p> <p>The WPTT <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the SC consider and endorse the WPTT Program of Work (2024–2028), as provided in Appendix VII.</p>	(para 181)	<p><b>Program of Work (2023–2027) and assessment schedule</b></p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> IOTC–2023–SC26–08 which provided the SC with a proposed Program of Work for each of its working parties, including prioritisation of the elements requested by each working party.</p> <p>The SC <b>NOTED</b> the proposed Program of Work and priorities for the SC and each of the working parties and <b>AGREED</b> to a consolidated Program of Work as outlined in Appendix 35a-g and in accordance with the IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2020-2024. The Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of each working party will ensure that the efforts of their respective working parties are focused on the core areas contained within the appendix, taking into account any new research priorities identified by the Commission at its next Session</p>

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WPTT25.07 (para 216)	<p><b>Date and place of the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Sessions of the WPTT</b></p> <p>The WPTT <b>NOTED</b> that the global Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in international travel being almost impossible and with no clear end to the pandemic in sight, it was impossible to finalise arrangements for the meeting in 2022. The Secretariat will continue to liaise with CPCs to determine their interest in hosting these meetings in the future as the SC is encouraging a return to physical meetings in 2023. The WPTT <b>RECOMMENDED</b> the SC consider late October 2023 as a preferred time period to hold the WPTT24 meeting in 2023..</p>	(para 191)	The SC <b>REQUESTED</b> that the schedule of Working Party and Scientific Committee meetings for 2024 and 2025 provided at Appendix 37 be communicated by the IOTC SC Chairperson to the Commission for its endorsement.
WPTT24.08 (para. 218)	<p><b>Review of the draft, and adoption of the Report of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the WPTT</b></p> <p>The WPTT <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Scientific Committee consider the consolidated set of recommendations arising from WPTT25, provided at Appendix VIII, as well as the management advice provided in the draft resource stock status summary for each of the three tropical tuna species under the IOTC mandate, and the combined Kobe plot for the three species assigned a stock status in 2023 (Figure 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bigeye tuna (<i>Thunnus obesus</i>) – Appendix IV</li> <li>○ Skipjack tuna (<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>) – Appendix V</li> <li>○ Yellowfin tuna (<i>Thunnus albacares</i>) – Appendix VI</li> </ul>	SC25.01 (para. 159)	<p><b>Tuna – Highly migratory species</b></p> <p>The SC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the Commission note the management advice developed for each tropical and temperate tuna species as provided in the Executive Summary for each species, and the combined Kobe plot for the four species assigned a stock status in 2023 (Fig. 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Albacore (<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>) – Appendix 8</li> <li>○ Bigeye tuna (<i>Thunnus obesus</i>) – Appendix 9</li> <li>○ Skipjack tuna (<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>) – Appendix 10</li> <li>○ Yellowfin tuna (<i>Thunnus albacares</i>) – Appendix 11</li> </ul>

WPTT25 Report	WPTT25 REQUESTS	Update/Progress
Para. 23	<p><b>Data available at the Secretariat</b>  <b>NOTING</b> the large interannual variability observed in the size-frequency data reported for skipjack tuna caught on free-swimming schools in the Maldivian baitboat fishery between 2013 and 2022, the WPTT <b>REQUESTED</b> the Secretariat to work in collaboration with Maldives and analyse the size-frequency data available from scientific observers deployed on Maldivian baitboats.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. The Secretariat is liaising with CPCs to provide this information.</p>
Para. 24	<p>The WPTT <b>RECALLED</b> the availability of revised ROS data reporting forms for pole-and-line and <b>REQUESTED</b> that future observer data be submitted using these forms</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. The Secretariat is liaising with CPCs to provide this information.</p>
Para. 39	<p><b>ACKNOWLEDGING</b> the differences in species composition across fishing modes in the Maldivian baitboat fishery, and the unavailability of information on fishing mode in the geo-referenced catch and effort data reported by Maldives to the IOTC Secretariat, the WPTT also <b>REQUESTED</b> Maldives to assess the feasibility of re-estimating the composition of the catch of all IOTC species for each fishing mode for the longest time possible.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> CPC to complete.</p>
Para. 90	<p>The WPTT <b>NOTED</b> that the length frequencies from the Maldivian PL fishery have two distinctive modes, which were known to be associated with different type of fishing mode (smaller fish from FADs and larger fish from free schools). The multimodal distribution had a large impact on the estimated selectivity and the associated fishing mortality for the PL fleet. The WPTT <b>NOTED</b> that in more recent years, vessels have been fishing in wider areas and targeting free schools more often but that the change has not been reflected in the sampling distribution which appears to be counter intuitive. The WPTT <b>NOTED</b> that sampling from different locations ought to be weighted by the catch to reduce bias and further that length data associated different fishing modes should be treated as different fisheries. However, The WPTT <b>NOTED</b> that while the length data has limited information on fishing modes, the catches are currently able to be segregated by fishing modes. The WPTT <b>REQUESTED</b> the secretariat worked with the Maldives to update the historical record accordingly.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Ongoing. The Secretariat is liaising with CPCs to provide this information.</p>
Para 99	<p><b>Selection of Stock Status Indicators for bigeye tuna</b>  The WPTT <b>ADOPTED</b> the stock status advice developed for bigeye tuna as provided in the draft resource stock status summary and <b>REQUESTED</b> that the IOTC Secretariat update the draft stock status summary for bigeye tuna with the latest 2021 catch data (if necessary), and for the summary to be provided to the SC as part of the draft Executive Summary, for its consideration:</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> Completed.</p>
Para 122	<p><b>OTHER TROPICAL TUNAS</b>  The WPTT <b>REQUESTED</b> other CPCs with purse seine fisheries (in particular EU,Spain and Seychelles) to conduct similar analysis using observer data to be presented at the next WGFADs and WPTT.</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> CPC to complete.</p>
Para 130	<p>Subsequently, to account for the changes in methodology implemented by EU,Spain starting with the statistical year 2018, the WPTT <b>REQUESTED</b> that EU,Spain re-submit the T3 data series from 2018 until 2022, including a) the derived annual total catches by fishing mode, IO</p>	<p><b>Update:</b> CPC to complete.</p>

	<p>area, quarter, and species, b) the geo-referenced catches and effort by fishing mode, 1x1 grid, month, and species, and c) size-frequency data (both raised and unraised) by fishing mode, month, 5x5 grid, and species, to allow the Secretariat to revise the species composition of tropical tunas for the years and fishery concerned. However, the WPTT <b>NOTED</b> that the EU, Spain stopped using the T3 system as of right now because it was deemed unsuitable for vessel catch monitoring and unable to produce accurate estimates of catch (Abascal 2022 )</p>	
Para 185	<p><b>UPDATE ON MSE FOR TROPICAL TUNAS</b></p> <p>The WPTT was informed that updating the skipjack OMs with the new 2023 skipjack assessment will not require much time/resources and, therefore, the WPTT <b>REQUESTED</b> the developers to update skipjack OMs with the updated 2023 skipjack assessment and evaluate the current empirical MPs against the new OMs for 2024 TCMP presentation. The WPTT <b>NOTED</b> that this will facilitate communication, and potential recommendations by TCMP to the Commission in 2024 of a preferred MP.</p>	<b>Update:</b> Completed.
Para 207	<p><b>Revision of the WPTT Program of Work (2024–2028)</b></p> <p>The WPTT <b>REQUESTED</b> that the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the WPTT, in consultation with the IOTC Secretariat, develop Terms of Reference (TOR) for each of the high priority projects that are yet to be funded, for circulation to potential funding sources.</p>	<b>Update:</b> Completed.