

Working paper regarding the IOTC meeting operation  
(by Japan)

**Background**

The Scientific Committee (SC) discussed the general meeting operation and logistics in IOTC at its Session in 2024. It noted the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in meeting operations allowing adequate time for discussion on the priority topics, especially for WPEB that has increasing workloads, participants, and documents (cf. SC27 Report, para 90). After that, Japan correspondently asked the Secretariat about how IOTC meetings are organized and operated. Japan found some inconsistencies between the current IOTC practice and the Rules of Procedure (RoP). The Secretariat suggested that Japan should raise this issue at the Commission.

The overall aim of this paper is to improve the performance of the IOTC's scientific work through more organized meeting operations by clarifying the interpretation of the RoP on this matter and aligning the IOTC meeting operations with the RoP.

● **Issue 1**

The increasing works of IOTC attracts more people to its meetings. The RoP, RULE VI, paragraph 2 states that “The meetings of the Scientific Committee, the sub-commissions, the committees, working parties and other subsidiary bodies, which may be established, shall be open to Delegations\* only unless otherwise decided by the Commission.” While only delegations/Contracting Parties (CP) are explicitly allowed to attend a meeting under this paragraph, the Commission and the SC have allowed Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CNCs), observers, and invited experts to attend meetings based on the decision by the Commission in 2012, but not others. The IOTC Agreement and the RoP do not have the justification to make meetings public.  
(\*Representative of a CP)

However, under the current practice, some IOTC meetings, especially working parties under the SC, are practically open to everyone who wishes to attend. In terms of logistics, for meetings without credential requirements, the current meeting registration form allows anyone to register themselves online and attend the meeting, even if they do not have an IOTC status (i.e., CP, CNC, observer, or invited expert). The Secretariat cannot know who is attending the meeting with what status, either at the time of registration or during the meeting. It should be also noted that the current practice cannot prevent a person without IOTC status but with a certain motivation to influence the discussion from participating in meetings.

**Suggested action**

- The Commission clarifies that IOTC meetings are open to only those with an IOTC status (i.e., CPs, CNCPs, observers, and invited experts).
- The Commission ~~also~~ requests the Secretariat to confirm the online registration form for meetings is up to date and reflects the requirements of the rules of procedure for attending meetings including eligibility for attending. ~~develop a registration form in which each person declares under which status they wish to attend so that meeting registration of a person without IOTC status cannot be accepted.~~

## ● Issue 2

Under the current practice, participants attend meetings in their individual capacity, not part of a delegation or observer organization, especially at working parties under the SC. However, based on the RoP, persons from CPs attend a meeting as a delegation (RoP, RULE VI, para 2), those from observers attend as an observer organization (RoP, RULE XIV, paras 1 through 5) except for the Director-General of FAO, and only invited consultants or experts attend a meeting in their individual capacity (RoP, RULE XIV, para 9). Under the current practice, participants cannot know who from where is speaking in what capacity during a meeting.

### Suggested action

- The Commission requests the Secretariat to ensure that meeting attendees' names, affiliation and IOTC Status is summarised in a meeting info paper on the meeting website in time for the start of the meeting.
- The Commission requests the Secretariat to make sure that persons from CPs and CNCPs attend a meeting as a part of delegation, and those from observers attend as a part of their observer organization. During a meeting, participants participate in the discussion under their respective status.

## ● Issue 3

Increasing number of documents to the SC and its subsidiary bodies is making it difficult to have adequate time for discussion on each document. In general, the RoP, RULE I categorizes meeting documents into two: 1) working paper which requires the direct attention of the meeting body to develop conclusions and/or decisions, and 2) information paper which does not require a decision or conclusion to be developed, and which are provided for information purposes. However, in the current IOTC practice, some documents are posted on the meeting website in a different category, such as reference documents. The RoP itself also refers to other document types but does not clearly define which documents fall under the category of working paper or information paper. Also, some documents posted as a working paper lack clear points from which the meeting body is expected to draw conclusions and/or decisions. These practices make it difficult for meeting participants to prioritize documents and have fruitful discussions.

### Suggested action

- The Commission clarifies the scopes of working papers and information papers as follows:
  - Working papers include, but are not limited to, Implementation Reports, National Reports, and scientific papers that require a decision or conclusion to be developed. A working paper must be submitted to the SC by 15 days prior to the meeting in accordance with the RoP, APPENDIX IV, para 9;
  - Information papers include, but are not limited to, previous meeting reports, reference data/documents, memoranda, and documents submitted to the SC less than 15 days prior to its meeting.
- The Commission also encourages authors submitting working papers to clearly state in their paper what they expect the meeting body to conclude and/or decide based on the paper.