

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 27th SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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PURPOSE

To provide participants at the 28th Scientific Committee (SC) with an update on the progress made in implementing the recommendations from the previous SC meeting, and to provide alternative recommendations for the consideration and potential endorsement by participants as appropriate given any progress.

BACKGROUND

At the 27th Session of the SC, 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 SC was endorsed at its December 2024 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 16th Session adopted a set of reporting terminology SC16.07 (para23), which was subsequently endorsed by the Commission at its 18th 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.

The Recommendations endorsed by the SC at its 27th Session are contained in [Appendix I](#) for the consideration, review of progress, and revision/reiteration as necessary by the SC28. The SC participants are also encouraged to review the Progress on the Recommendations of Working Parties prepared by the Secretariat and presented to each Working Party for their consideration and revision.

RECOMMENDATION

That the SC:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2025–SC28–10 which detailed the progress made in implementing the recommendations and the requests of the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC27);
- 2) **AGREE** to consider and revise as necessary, the recommendations, and for these to be combined with any new recommendations arising from SC28.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Progress made on the Recommendations of SC27.

SC27 Report	SC recommendations	Update/Progress
SC27.08 (para 34)	National Reports from CPCs The SC RECOMMENDED that the Compliance Committee and Commission note the lack of compliance by 3 Contracting Parties (Members) that did not submit a National Report to the Scientific Committee in 2024, NOTING that the Commission agreed that the submission of the annual reports to the Scientific Committee is mandatory.	Update: Ongoing. (IOTC-2025-S29-R, Para 19) The Commission NOTED that 27 National Reports were submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2024 by CPCs and that this was an increase when compared with the 25 reports provided by CPCs in 2023.
SC27.09 (para 44)	Report of the 14th Session of the Working Party on Neritic Tunas (WPNT14) NOTING that there has been considerable recent advancement and emphasis on the length-based approach, which can estimate stock status and serve as a valuable monitoring tool for various fisheries, the SC thus ENCOURAGED the continued exploration and utilization of both methods. The SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission urge CPCs to collect more representative length composition data for the effective assessment of these species, with a particular focus on frigate and bullet tuna for which the stock status is still unknown. The SC further RECOMMENDED that the Commission urge CPCs to summarize the size data from their sampling programs for the next WPNT meeting	Update: Ongoing. The Commission has endorsed the recommendation. Several CPCs has presented a summary of their sampling program at the WPNT meeting in 2025.
SC27.10 (para 58)	Report of the 22th Session of the Working Party on Billfish (WPB22) NOTING that a joint analysis of fleet specific CPUE based on a consistent statistical framework which accounts for differences in catchability between fleets could be useful for assessing species under the mandate of WPB, the SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission urge the CPCs to dedicate effort to harmonising the standardised methods for different	Update: Ongoing. The Commission has endorsed the recommendation. A Joint tRFMO workshop on longline CPUE is planned to be held in 2026 which provided a forum to discuss the harmonization of the CPUE standardisation for different fleets and the method to develop Joint index.

SC27.11 (para 62)	fleets and to develop a joint analysis combining catch effort data from key fleets for major billfish species where feasible. Revision of catch levels of marlins under Resolution 18/05 The SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission reassess the effectiveness of the current measures within this resolution and to revise Resolution 18/05 to update the catch limits based on the latest stock assessments and projections for the billfish species	Update: Ongoing. No Revision to Resolution 18/05 has taken place and no new management measures for billfish species have been adopted. Scientists from one CPC have submitted a research paper to discuss potential management options for billfish at the WPB meeting in 2025.
SC27.12 (para 70) SC27.13 (para 83)	Report of the 20th Session of the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB20) Status of development and implementation of national plans of action for seabirds and sharks, and implementation of the FAO guidelines to reduce marine turtle mortality in fishing operations The SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission note the current status of development and implementation of National Plans of Action (NPOAs) for sharks and seabirds, and the implementation of the FAO guidelines to reduce marine turtle mortality in fishing operations, by each CPC as provided in Appendix 6, recalling that the IPOA-Seabirds and IPOA-Sharks were adopted by the FAO in 1999 and 2000, respectively, and recommended the development of NPOAs.. LONGLINE BYCATCH MITIGATION MEASURES WORKSHOP The SC NOTED that the WPEB conducted a comprehensive research review pertaining to different potential shark mitigation options and produced a summary table listing the strengths and weaknesses of possible mitigation measures focused on longline gear, including limiting the use of wire trace as branch lines or leaders and shark lines (in Appendix VI of WPEB(DP) Report). The SC ACKNOWLEDGED that most of the existing research on this topic comes from the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and that the information is currently scarce in the Indian Ocean. The SC REQUESTED that the WPEB	Update: Completed. (IOTC-2025-S29-R, Para 28) The Commission ENDORSED the Scientific Committee’s 2024 list of recommendations as its own. Update: Ongoing. The Commission did not adopt a new Conservation and Management Measure regarding additional shark mitigation measures.

SC27.14 (para 87)	and WPSE evaluate the potential impacts of limiting wire leader and shark lines on fleet operation and the potential social and economic impacts in the Indian Ocean. In addition, the SC ENCOURAGED CPCs to conduct region specific analyses on these mitigation methods. The SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission consider the research from the summary tables (Appendix VI of WPEB(DP) Report) should they wish to consider additional mitigation measures to strengthen the conservation of vulnerable sharks. The WPEB literature review highlighted that a prohibition on the use of wire leaders and shark lines by longline and other fisheries operating in the IOTC would likely result in a reduction in both the observed catch and the fishing mortality of shark species, particularly in situations where the use of wire leaders and shark lines are common. The SC also considered that further investigation on mitigation measures should be continued. OTHER MATTERS The SC NOTED the revised handling and release guidelines for mobulids endorsed by the WPEB, and RECOMMENDED that the Commission consider revising the live release handling procedures provided in Annex 1 of Resolution 19/03. The SC NOTED that further development of the guidelines for gillnets is required and that this will be done intersessionally with the aim of reporting to the WPEB21. The details of the suggested revisions to the handling procedures can be found in IOTC-2024-WPEB20(AS)-R.	Update: Ongoing. The Commission did not adopt a new Conservation and Management Measure to revise the live release handling procedures provided in Annex 1 of Resolution 19/03. The Secretariat then worked intersessionally with the Manta Trust to further develop these guidelines which were reviewed by the WPEB. After these had been reviewed, the WPEB meeting in 2025 adopted the revised handling guidelines for mobulids and recommended that the SC endorse these handling guidelines for consideration by the Commission in 2026. The details of the suggested revisions to the handling procedures can be found in Appendix XVVI of IOTC-2025-WPEB21(AS)-R.
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	<i>Report of the 26th Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT26)</i> <i>Yellowfin tuna stock assessment</i> SC27.15 (para 104) The SC NOTED that the Joint CPUE workshop had limited participation and was conducted over a short time period. However, it was noted that the workshop format and standardisation methods have remained the same for a long time. The SC NOTED the importance of the Joint Longline CPUE Index as a primary input for the stock assessments of several key IOTC species, including yellowfin, bigeye and albacore tunas, and AGREED on the need to ensure a transparent, inclusive, and replicable process in the development of the Joint CPUE Index using operational data. The SC therefore, RECOMMENDED that the Commission investigate options to allow independent scientists or Secretariat stock assessment experts to provide inputs and advice through attending meetings of the Joint Longline CPUE standardisation group. The SC RECALLED that during the 2015–2019 period analysis was conducted by a consultant by participating in the meetings. SC27.16 (para 108) Given the uncertainty associated with the new CPUE, the SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission set a TAC for 2026 only, of no more than the estimated median MSY, which is comparable to the average catch of the last five years, as a precautionary measure to allow time for further investigation (i.e. resolving of uncertainty associated with the new CPUE) and development of advice for 2027 onwards <i>Update on the WGFAD06</i> SC27.17 (para 116) The SC NOTED that after the recent resolutions on FAD were adopted, CPCs seem less inclined to submit papers to WGFAD. This led to the shortening of WGFAD06 to a single day and the cancellation of WGFAD07 this year due to a shortage of papers. Therefore, the SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission schedule only one WGFAD meeting in 2025. The SC also suggests that this meeting should take place before the WPEB, as	Update: Completed. The Joint CPUE workshop, which took place February 6–12, 2025, invited the Secretariat and an external expert to participate virtually for several sessions to provide suggestions and feedback. The Secretariat was also invited to a second workshop (online) that was held in April. Update: A proposal (<u>IOTC-2025-S29-PropJ</u>) to update the <i>interim plan for rebuilding the Indian ocean yellowfin tuna</i> was deferred at the S29, as some CPCs believe that the adoption of a Resolution for yellowfin in 2025 would be premature, given the review that will be undertaken on the yellowfin tuna stock assessment and the joint CPUE series that is driving the assessment. Those CPCs expressed their opinion that the findings of the SC’s review should be incorporated into any updated management measure.
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SC26.17 (para 106) SC27.18 (para 117)	FAD issues are relevant to WPEB, to allow the findings to be reported to both WPEB and WPTT. The SC NOTED that the Jelly-FAD is an example of how the implementation of biodegradable DFADs can be achieved, further NOTING that other actions have been also carried out in the Indian Ocean for BIOFAD testing using alternative designs and materials and this work has been presented to the WGFAD and WPEB for many years. The SC further NOTED that the IATTC has recently adopted a step-wise approach to the full adoption of biodegradable DFADs (IATTC C-23-04). The SC therefore RECOMMENDED that the Commission initiate an ambitious step-wise approach for the implementation of biodegradable DFADs as soon as possible. Other Matters The SC NOTED that exceptional circumstances of adopted MPs need to be considered at both species WPs and WPM. The SC also NOTED that there is benefit in species WPs being held before WPM to allow discussions on issues such as new information on biology before the consideration of potential modelling implications and as such RECOMMENDED that in the future the WPM be held after the WPTT	Update: Completed. Only one WGFAD meeting took place in 2005 and was scheduled before the WPEB. Update: Ongoing. The Commission did not adopt a new Conservation and Management Measure for the implementation of biodegradable DFADs Update: Completed. The WPM was scheduled after the WPTT in 2025. Until the Commission decides otherwise, this arrangement will remain in place.
SC27.19 (para 121) SC27.20 (para 122)	<i>Report of the 15th Session of the Working Party on Methods (WPM15)</i> <i>Management Strategy Evaluation Progress</i> The SC NOTED that the work of albacore is not mature enough that would require a TCMP in February and, therefore, RECOMMENDED that an extra TCMP meeting in February 2025 is not organized. <i>Bigeye tuna MP (Resolution 22/03)</i> The SC NOTED that a standardised CPUE index based on the agreed methodology (as per Resolution 22/03) was not yet available to run the Bigeye Tuna MP, but needs to be available in time for the Scientific Committee to review (as required by Resolution 22/03). However, a member of the joint CPUE group responsible for producing the index indicated that logistically (due to the need to have a physical workshop to share the data) it would not be possible to provide the CPUE index in time for SC, but that it might be possible to provide following a meeting of the	Update: Completed. Only one TCMP meeting was organized in 2025.

	group in February 2025. The SC DISCUSSED options for ensuring that the WPM is able to review and participate in the running of the MP. Following this discussion, the SC RECOMMENDED that: - the joint CPUE working group produce a BET CPUE index, as per the requirements/specifications of Williams et al (2022), at its meeting in early February 2025, and provide this for the WPM(MSE)Taskforce. - the WPM(MSE) Taskforce meet online on 24-25 February 2025 with one day to review and run the BET MP and one day to consider progress on the Albacore Tuna MSE. - the Scientific Committee convene a special session, online (for two hours) on 26 February 2025, to review and if appropriate endorse the BET MP run and its associated BET TAC outcomes.	
SC27.21 (para 124)	<i>Swordfish tuna MP (Resolution 24/08)</i> The SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission implement a TAC for 2026-2028 for swordfish based on the amended and retuned MP1 if the Commission wishes to ensure that it achieves the current objective in Res 24/08 to be in the Kobe green zone with at least 60% probability during 2034-2038 period. This would require a minor amendment to the Target CPUE value in Annex I of Res 24/08 from 0.7125 to 0.75. The SC NOTED that should the Commission continue to implement the current MP1, without retuning, it has a lower probability (54%) of being in the Kobe green zone and higher TAC variability, but otherwise similar performance statistics (Table 1 of IOTC–2024–WPM15–R). The TAC derived from running SWO MP1 with or without retuning is 30527 t (i.e. the same and therefore not a severe impact) because the max TAC change constrain is reached in both MPs.	Update: Completed. The BET CPUE index was produced by the Joint CPUE workshop, which was held from February 6–12, 2025. the WPM(MSE) Taskforce convened virtually 24-25 February 2025 and used the CPUE index as input to run the BET MP. The BET MP run, and the TAC results were examined and approved by the SC during its special online session on February 26, 2025.
SC27.22 (para 125)	Irrespective of the MP chosen by the Commission, the SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission endorse the resultant TAC of 30,527 t for swordfish for 2026-2028.	Update: Completed. The Commission ENDORSED the Scientific Committee’s 2024 list of recommendations as its own.

SC27.23 (para 127)	General MSE issues The SC ENDORSED the WPM’s RECOMMENDATION that the Commission ensure that the IOTC Secretariat is provided with the necessary resources to manage the curation of relevant documents and code to enable users to re-run assessments and other analyses, NOTING that the most important information to be curated would be the input file, executables and control files.	Update: Ongoing. The Secretariat has been endeavoring to curate and store input files for major assessments conducted by various working parties or facilitating with modelers in making the input files available upon request.
SC27.24 (para 141)	Report of the 20th Session of the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS20) The SC NOTED that the WPDCS had discussed and reviewed the summary on best practice guidelines for safe handling and release of small cetaceans and the SC RECOMMENDED the Commission to consider these guidelines when developing conservation measures for cetaceans.	Update: Ongoing. The Commission did not adopt a new Conservation and Management Measure for cetaceans.
SC27.25 (para 159)	Invited Expert(s) at the WP meetings Given the importance of external independent review for working party meetings, the SC RECOMMENDED the Commission continues to allocate sufficient budget for invited scientific experts to be regularly invited to scientific working party meetings.	Update: Ongoing. The Commission has provided budget for invited experts for 2025.
SC27.26 (para 165)	IOTC species identification guides: Tuna and tuna-like species The SC reiterated its RECOMMENDATION that the Commission allocates budget towards continuing the translation and printing of the IOTC species ID guides so that hard copies of the identification cards can continue to be printed as many CPC scientific observers, both on board and at port need to have hard copies.	Update: Ongoing. Budget has been made available through the IOTC main budget and the OFCF project to continue the translation of ID cards and this has continued in 2025 and will do again in 2026.

SC27.27 (para 170)	General - Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the SC and its subsidiary bodies The SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission note and endorse the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons for the SC and its subsidiary bodies for the coming years, as provided in Appendix 7.	Update: Completed. (IOTC-2025-S29-R, Para 40) The Commission ENDORSED those officials elected for the SC and its subsidiary (scientific) bodies for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2024 Scientific Committee Report.
SC27.28 (para 174)	Other matters The SC NOTED the occasional need of technical workshops, corresponding to a request by the SC or Commission. The SC RECOMMENDED that: • Technical workshops are not to be nested within Working Party meetings • The terms of reference for such technical workshops should be established ahead of time to clarify their role and decision-making process, including whether they can make direct recommendations to the SC.	Update: Completed. The Commission ENDORSED the Scientific Committee's 2024 list of recommendations as its own.
SC27.29 (para 199)	General - Consultants NOTING the highly beneficial and relevant work done by IOTC stock assessment consultants in previous years, the SC RECOMMENDED that the engagement of consultants be continued for each coming year based on the Program of Work. Consultants will be hired to supplement the skill set available within the IOTC Secretariat and CPCs.	Update: Ongoing. Several consultants were contracted in 2025.
SC27.30 (para 201)	Data preparatory meetings and Hybrid meetings ACKNOWLEDGING that holding data preparatory meetings prior to stock assessments is considered to be best practice (as identified by the yellowfin stock assessment external reviewer, the WPTT and the WPDCS) and noting that since 2019 data preparatory meetings were successfully held for the WPTmT, WPTT and WPEB, the SC AGREED to continue the practice of having data preparatory meetings in addition to stock assessment	Update: Completed. All data preparatory meetings as well as working group meetings were held virtually in 2025.

SC27.31 (para 202) SC27.32 (para 203)	meetings for the major IOTC species. The SC RECOMMENDED that data preparatory meetings could continue to be held virtually so as not to increase the travel and costs required for the already full IOTC timetable of meetings. The SC NOTED that there had been a few teething problems holding meetings in a hybrid format in 2023 and 2024, especially related to the costs associated with the audio-visual equipment required, as well as the issues associated with ensuring the equipment was suitable to ensure full participation of both those in person as well as those connecting virtually. However, the SC AGREED on the utility of facilitating both in-person and virtual participation at future meetings to ensure increased participation and reduce the logistical costs for many CPCs and observers. As such, the SC RECOMMENDED that future Scientific Committee meetings continue to be held in a hybrid format, as well as working parties if possible. The SC further RECOMMENDED that all presentations at these meetings be made in person to ensure the aforementioned issues did not adversely affect the quality of the advice being provided. The SC NOTED all IOTC working party meetings this year (except the WPDCS and WPSE) were held in Seychelles, as there were no offers to host them. The SC meeting was originally planned in Seychelles but this was not possible due to unavailability of the venue. There has been an increasing reluctance for CPCs to offer to host IOTC scientific working party and SC meetings. This reluctance may be due to budget constraints, as well as the logistical burdens of Hybrid meetings. The SC NOTED that there has been a number of issues when hosting meetings in Seychelles (e.g., high cost). The SC RECOMMENDED this issue be discussed at the Commission in order to find a way forward.	Update: Completed. All working party meetings as well as the Scientific Committee meeting were held in a hybrid format in 2025.
SC27.33 (para 208)	<i>IOTC Scientific Strategic Research Plan</i> The SC AGREED that the draft updated IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2025–2029 will be distributed to Heads of Delegation from each CPC for comment during early 2025. Thereafter comments will be collated and consolidated and another version sent to CPCs for final review. Pending agreement of CPCs, and noting that the IOTC Strategic Science Plan would be a dynamic document that would change over time, the SC	Update: Completed. The draft updated IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2025–2029 was distributed to Heads of Delegation for comment during early 2025 via the IOTC circular 2025-01. The revised draft was presented to the Commission at its 29th Session in April. The Commission adopted the IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2025–2029.

	RECOMMENDED that the revised draft of the IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2025–2029 be tabled at the Commission meeting in 2025.	
SC27.34 (para 214)	<i>REVIEW OF THE DRAFT, AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 25TH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE</i> The SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission consider the consolidated set of recommendations arising from SC25, provided at Appendix 39 .	Update: Completed. The Commission ENDORSED the Scientific Committee's 2024 list of recommendations as its own.