



OUTCOMES OF THE 27TH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, LAST UPDATED: 13TH NOVEMBER 2025

Purpose

To inform participants at the 21st session of the IOTC Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS21) of the recommendations arising from the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC27), specifically concerning the work of the WPDCS.

Background

At its 27th Session, held as a hybrid meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, from 2 to 6 December 2024, the Scientific Committee (SC27) noted and considered the recommendations made during the 20th Session of the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS20), which took place from 26 to 30 November 2024.

Based on these recommendations, SC27 adopted a set of proposals that were submitted to the Commission for consideration at its 29th Session held in Réunion Island, France, in April 2025 ([Appendix A](#)).

In addition, SC27 reviewed and endorsed a Programme of Work for the WPDCS. A separate paper (IOTC-2025-WPDCS21-29) outlines the review and further development of the WPDCS *Programme of Work* for the next five years.

Discussion

In addition to the recommendations outlined in [Appendix A](#), the following extracts from the SC27 Report (IOTC-2024-SC27-R) are provided here for the consideration and action of WPDCS21.

Report of the Secretariat – Activities in support of the IOTC science process in 2024

(Para. 17) The SC **NOTED** that the Secretariat conducted four data support missions in 2024 with the EU funding. These missions took place in Tanzania, Bangladesh, Mozambique, and Sri Lanka to review and improve their data collection and reporting systems, aiming to meet IOTC standards.

(Para. 18) The SC **NOTED** that Pakistan has requested a similar data support mission to enhance their data reporting system. The SC asked Pakistan to work with the Secretariat to plan future missions.

(Para. 19) In response to the request from the Commission for developing a gillnet CPUE index, the SC **NOTED** that a consultant was hired and joined the data support mission in Sri Lanka in 2024 to assess the feasibility of its gillnet data for developing such an index. Since Pakistan and Iran also have significant gillnet fisheries, Pakistan suggested that an index covering a broader range of fleets would be more beneficial. However, due to different data systems and logistical challenges (e.g., data access), the SC considered that it would be more feasible to start with country-specific data and gradually work towards combining data from multiple fleets.

National Reporting to the Scientific Committee: overview

(Para. 29) The SC **NOTED** that some countries such as Indonesia do not include catches of neritic species in their national reports despite the significant amount of catch of these species by these CPCs. The SC **NOTED** that while Indonesia did not include neritic tuna catch data in the national report, they did submit the data on neritic tunas catch to the Secretariat. The SC **ENCOURAGED** all CPCs to include catches of all IOTC species including the neritic species in their National Reports in future.

(Para. 30) The SC **NOTED** that mandatory scientific and statistical information such as discard levels, observer coverage, fleet statistics etc., which are of relevance for several IOTC Resolutions, is often only reported by CPCs in their national reports but not made available to the IOTC Secretariat in due time and in accordance with the reporting requirements prescribed in the Resolutions.

(Para. 31) The SC **RECALLED** that the National Report does not replace the need for submission of data according to the IOTC Mandatory Data Requirements listed in the relevant IOTC Resolutions (and in particular Resolution 15/02).

(Para. 32) For these reasons, the SC **REQUESTED** all CPCs to ensure that information and data presented in the respective national reports and the official submissions available to the IOTC are in agreement.

Report of the 14th Session of the Working Party on Neritic Tunas (WPNT14)

(Para. 38) The SC **NOTED** that no scientists from Pakistan have attended the WPNT meeting in recent years despite the fact that they have large catches of these species and therefore **ENCOURAGED** scientists from this and other CPCs with significant neritic catches to attend these meetings in the future and **REQUESTED** these CPCs to provide scientific papers providing information on the neritic tuna fisheries in these CPCs.

(Para. 44) **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.

Report of the 22nd Session of the Working Party on Billfish (WPB22)

(Para. 55) The SC **AGREED** that the abundance indices derived from longline CPUE analyses will be critical for future assessments and **ENCOURAGED** all concerned CPCs to allocate adequate time and resources to support this work.

Report of the 20th Session of the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB20)

(Para. 65) The SC **NOTED** the concern by some CPCs that there is very poor data at a species level for marine turtles incidentally caught in IOTC fisheries in general and **SUGGESTED** that CPCs prioritise collecting and providing these data at species level.

Report of the 26th Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT2)

(Para. 114) The SC **NOTED** that there are some observations that some CPCs such as Sri Lanka have had of their own domestic fisheries data, that do not seem to align with the assessments results. The SC **ENCOURAGED** CPCs to develop abundance indices using these observations to improve the assessment model

Report of the 20th Session of the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS20)

(Para. 131) The SC **NOTED** a recommendation from the WPDCS for the following revisions for submission to the Commission:

- Res. [15/01](#). Annex 2 should be revised to align with the provisions of Resolution 15/02, which mandates data collection and reporting at the species level, regardless of the fishing gear used
- Res. [15/02](#). The spatial resolution of geo-referenced catch, effort, and size-frequency data for coastal fisheries should be clearly defined and aligned, i.e., size-frequency data shall be provided using an alternative geographical area if it better represents the fishery concerned.
- Res. [19/07](#). The content, format, and timeline for datasets to be collected and reported by the chartering CPC should be clearly specified.

- Res. [24/02](#). The reporting of buoy purchases to the IOTC and their incorporation into the compliance assessment procedure should be clearly specified.
- Res. [24/04](#). The spatio-temporal resolution of reported observer data should be aligned with the IOTC observer reporting templates and standards, as originally established in Resolution 22/04.
- Res. [24/04](#). The timeliness for reporting fisheries observer reports and data collected through the ROS should be harmonised with those for the main IOTC datasets. Specifically, each CPC shall submit observer data collected during a year to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 June of the following year. For longline fisheries, final data shall be submitted no later than 30 December.

(Para. 136) The SC **NOTED** the ongoing review of the data collection system in Oman covering the period 2014-2023, **ACKNOWLEDGING** Oman's efforts to understand the reasons behind the increased yellowfin tuna catches in the handline fishery and to improve the estimates of effort and catch in this fishery.

(Para. 139) The SC **ACKNOWLEDGED** the interest of CPCs in developing a collaborative procedure and reporting forms for voluntarily sharing individual biological data (e.g., morphometrics), samples, and fish photographs through the Secretariat.

(Para. 140) The SC **NOTED** the project initiated by France-OT to develop an online digital ocean atlas covering the IOTC Area of Competence, which was also presented at the 2024 sessions of the WPEB and WPTT. The atlas aims to support the objectives of Resolution [24/01](#) by serving as a tool to assess the impacts of climate change on IOTC fisheries. The SC **AGREED** on the significant value of this digital atlas in supporting the Commission's work and **ACKNOWLEDGED** that the project will be developed over six months by an expert team. Additionally, the SC **THANKED** Sri Lanka for its commitment to hosting the web portal and ensuring the long-term operation and maintenance of the atlas (see document [IOTC-2024-SC27-INF04](#)).

(Para. 143) The SC **ACKNOWLEDGED** that the WPDCS conducted a comprehensive review of all ROS data fields for purse seine, longline, and pole-and-line fisheries but did not address the gillnet-specific fields due to the absence of gillnet fishery experts at the meeting.

(Para. 144) The SC **NOTED** the recommendation from the WPDCS based on this review:

- That the SC **ENDORSE** the following revised lists of ROS minimum data fields (including their stated collection and reporting requirement) for purse seine, longline and pole and line (include associated "general" fields) provided in [IOTC-2024-SC27-DATA01](#).
- That the SC **ENDORSE** the revised collection and reporting requirement categories as follows:
 - Mandatory – mandatory for collection and reporting
 - Optional – optional for collection and reporting
- That the SC **ENDORSE** the revised ROS data fields (and associated collection and reporting requirements) as a living document, for which CPCs can, if necessary, in future years, bring forward proposals for amendments or improvements, to the WPDCS and SC for review.
- That the SC **advise** the Commission to take actions for all CPCs to ensure that the Record of Authorised Vessels (RAV) details are completely accurate and up to date.

(Para. 145) The SC **REQUESTED** the WPDCS to undertake an online intersessional review in collaboration with the IOTC Secretariat to check and where necessary amend field definitions and reporting requirements to ensure that they appropriately recognise (where necessary) the potential use of additional ROS data collection tools (e.g., EM and port sampling) and are otherwise also clear and easy to understand for observers.

Recommendation

That the WPDCS:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2025–WPDCS21–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee, specifically related to the work of the WPDCS.
- 2) **CONSIDER** how best to progress these issues at the present meeting.

Appendices

[Appendix A](#): Consolidated set of recommendations of the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee (2 - 6 December 2024) to the Commission, relevant to the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics.

Appendix A

Consolidated set of recommendations of the 27th session of the Scientific Committee (2 – 6 December 202) to the Commission and relevant to the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics

*Extract of the Report of the 27^h Session of the Scientific Committee
(IOTC–2024–SC27-R; Appendix 39, Pages 215-221)*

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE 14TH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON NERITIC TUNAS (WPNT14)

SC27.09 (para. 44) **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.

REPORT OF THE 20TH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON DATA COLLECTION AND STATISTICS (WPDCS20)

SC27.24 (para. 141) 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.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF MATTERS COMMON TO WORKING PARTIES

IOTC species identification guides: Tuna and tuna-like species

SC27.26 (para. 165) 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.