



03 February 2026

## IOTC CIRCULAR 2026-09

Dear Madam / Sir

### REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS FROM THE UNION OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS (SBMI)

Please find attached a request letter from the Union of Indonesian Migrant Workers (SBMI) to participate as an Observer to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission processes.

In accordance with Rule XIV of the IOTC Rules of Procedure, Contracting Parties of the Commission may wish to allow the Union of Indonesian Migrant Workers (SBMI) to participate as an Observer given their interest in the IOTC as stipulated in the attached letter. Thus, unless any objections are received within 30 days of the date of this Circular, the IOTC Secretariat will consider that approval has been granted for the Executive Secretary to issue an invitation to the potential Observer to attend IOTC meetings accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Paul de Bruyn  
Executive Secretary

#### Attachments:

- Letter from the Union of Indonesian Migrant Workers (SBMI)

#### Distribution

**IOTC Contracting Parties:** Australia, Bangladesh, China, Comoros, European Union, France (Territories), India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Rep of), Japan, Kenya, Rep. of Korea, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, United Rep. of Tanzania, Thailand, United Kingdom, Yemen. **Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties:** Liberia, Panama. **Intergovernmental Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations.** Chairperson IOTC. **Copy to:** FAO Headquarters, FAO Representatives to CPCs.

This message has been transmitted by email only



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Ref.: 015/Spm/DPN-SBMI/I/2026

About : **Application to become an Observer in Indian Ocean Tuna Commision (IOTC)**

Your excellency,

Greeting from Indonesia,

**Jakarta, 30 January 2026**

The Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (SBMI) is an organization of Indonesian migrant workers and their family members that focuses on fighting for the advancement of the rights and interests of migrant workers and their family members, including migrant fishing vessel crew (migrant fishers) from Indonesia. We also fight for migrant workers and their family members to escape from vulnerable positions and structured, systematic, and massive exploitation by carrying out organizational work such as organizing, case advocacy, litigation, and policies, members education, and economic empowerment. Particularly for the marine and fisheries sector, up to now we have more than 1,700 members who work and have worked as migrant fishing vessel crew (migrant fishers), most of those members could be working on fishing vessels that are registered or authorized by Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and operate in the Indian Ocean region.

Since 2013-2025, we have assisted 998 cases of Indonesian migrant fishers, who experienced employment problems with the biggest problem being wage theft and then followed by forced labor and human trafficking. After a long journey of advocacy and organizing, we see that this problem cannot be solved by just one country, but must involve the countries in the entire supply chains, namely the sending country of migrant fishers, the fishing vessels owners, the port states or transit countries, the flag states, and also the business as well as market states. The IOTC Forum is a concrete form for all parties to work together to improve the working conditions of this global fishing industry for ensuring decent work for all fishers.

We learn the latest development in the Report of the 29th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) issues such as labour standards are more appropriately addressed at the national level, rather than through the IOTC, or at the other international organizations, such as IMO and ILO. The IOTC Secretariat will furthermore present a benchmark and comparative analysis of the existing labour condition standards throughout RFMOs and within IOTC membership.

However, we also see that the development of the Labor Standards [in every RFMO including IOTC will truly] provide many contributions to improving the protection of all fishers who are very vulnerable to experiencing both forced labor and IUU fishing situations. These labor standard measures will increase also the accountability of regional fisheries management.

Therefore, we intend to propose that our organization to be one of the observers at IOTC. This aims to provide input and consideration in mainstreaming the human rights-based approach (HRBA) to sustainable and equitable fisheries resource management in the Indian Ocean region.

As further consideration by IOTC secretariat, the profile of advocacy works that have been carried out by SBMI can be accessed further on our official website at [www.sbmi.or.id](http://www.sbmi.or.id).

We thank you for your attention, consideration, and cooperation.

Best regards,

  
  
Harivanto Suwarno  
Chairperson of SBMI  
DPN SBMI