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**IOTC COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS – AN OVERVIEW****PREPARED BY: SECRETARIAT**

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**PURPOSE**

To draw to the attention of the Commission, the list of bodies with who it is currently collaborating.

**BACKGROUND**

Article XV of the IOTC Agreement which relates to *Cooperation with other organisations and institutions* states:

*The Commission shall cooperate and make appropriate arrangements therefore with other intergovernmental organizations and institutions, especially those active in the fisheries sector, which might contribute to the work and further the objectives of the Commission in particular with any intergovernmental organization or institution dealing with tuna in the Area. The Commission may enter into agreements with such organizations and institutions. Such agreements shall seek to promote complementarity and, subject to paragraph 2, to avoid duplication in and conflict with the activities of the Commission and such organizations.*

It must be noted that after consultations with the FAO legal department, it was made clear that as IOTC has no legal identity of its own, future agreements of any form will need to be approved by the FAO. In the past few years it was thought that a Collaboration Agreement was an instrument that would facilitate collaboration between the IOTC and other bodies that could be signed by the IOTC Executive Secretary on behalf of the organization. The FAO legal department has clarified that this is not the case.

**Current collaborations*****Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels Secretariat (ACAP)***

IOTC has a Letter of intent (2020) with ACAP to collaborate efforts to minimise the incidental bycatch of albatrosses and petrels in the area of competence of the IOTC.

***Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)***

IOTC has a Letter of Understanding (2019) with CCSBT regarding monitoring transshipment at sea by large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels. Within the IOTC area of competence, CCSBT and IOTC CMMs have similar transshipment provisions. The aim of the LOU is to minimise duplication of work and to minimise the associated costs for vessels that are required to comply with both the CCSBT and IOTC Resolutions.

***European Union (FAO Project GCP/INT/1024/EC)***

The Secretariat has received a voluntary extra-budgetary contribution of USD 797,646 from the European Union in support to the IOTC Scientific and Compliance Committees programs of work in 2023 and 2024. The contribution is administered through a project contract between the European Union and FAO, with the IOTC Secretariat managing the delivery of the project's activities.

***Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (ABNJ Tuna Project)***

The GEF FAO ABNJ Common Oceans Project on Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (Phase 2 of the ABNJ-Tuna Project) activities include strengthening management of tuna fisheries; strengthening MCS to improve fisheries data, compliance with CMMs and to tackle IUU fishing; and reduction of environmental impacts of tuna fisheries.

The Commission has agreed to collaborate with the project by pledging an in-kind contribution and allowing the Secretariat to act as a nominal executing agency for the project. The project is being executed by a Project Management Unit located in FAO Headquarters with support from the Divisional Support and Project Cycle Unit and other Headquarters staff.

***Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FIRMS)***

IOTC is a partner to the FAO Fishery and Resources Monitoring System ([FIRMS](#)) initiative, and regularly provides updated stock status reports on managed species (also in the context of the FIRMS Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries). Furthermore, IOTC actively collaborates to the FIRMS Global Tuna Atlas as a data provider and one of the five tuna-RFMO's.

#### ***Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (GIES)***

The IOTC ePSM system and the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) Global Information Exchange System (GIES) have commonalities. The IOTC Secretariat and FAO personnel are collaborating to ensure that there is no duplication of effort between the two systems i.e. for States that are both IOTC Contracting Parties and Parties to the PSMA to fulfil PSM related information exchange requirements under IOTC CMMs and the PSMA.

#### ***Indian Ocean – South-East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA)***

The IOTC cooperates informally with IOSEA on sea turtle interactions. Many IOTC members are also IOSEA Signatory States. The interaction between IOSEA and IOTC is mainly with the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch and the Scientific Committee.

#### ***Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)***

A draft Cooperation Agreement between the IOTC and the IOC to maintain cooperation and collaboration in respect of matters of common interest to both Parties was considered and endorsed by the Commission in 2023. As a result of the Cooperation Agreement, the EcoFish Project, which is managed by the IOC, has agreed to financially support nine areas of activities that are aimed at improving compliance to IOTC obligations in the beneficiary countries. Subsequently the FAO Legal Department has requested modifications to this Agreement so that it is consistent with their requirements.

#### ***Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD)***

The IRD has developed the “Grand Observatoire de l’Océan Indien” project (G2OI) to enhance the value of research data in the south-west Indian Ocean region, in partnership with national institutions from Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion and Seychelles. The overarching objective of the project is that the partners will create and feed a regional data infrastructure that will allow end-users (scientists, managers, and general public) to easily exploit the regional data heritage through web services made available on a data portal dedicated to the infrastructure. The IOTC Secretariat is providing some technical assistance and advice on project elements that are relevant to IOTC. Through this collaboration, IRD funded a training workshop on metadata and their management with a focus on the use of Digital Object Identifiers for improving the management of IOTC datasets and documents which the IOTC Secretariat attended.

#### ***International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)***

IOTC has a Memorandum of Understanding (2009) with ICCAT regarding monitoring transshipment at sea by large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels.

#### ***International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF)***

The IOTC Secretariat is working with the ISSF to clean-up cannery data submissions, with the aim of eventually being able to compare species composition estimated from cannery data with that from IOTC data submissions and making these data available to the IOTC science community. Data from ISSF-affiliated canneries will continue to be received by the Secretariat, with the Data Section staff of the Secretariat regularly engaged in the update of the cleaned-up dataset. The IOTC Secretariat is also collaborating with ISSF on a study for the definition of minimum EMS standards for Indian Ocean fisheries.

#### ***International Whaling Commission (IWC)***

IOTC has a Cooperation Agreement with IWC (2023) which aims to strengthen the expertise within the Scientific Committee on cetacean bycatch issues as well improve the data available on cetaceans at the IOTC Secretariat.

#### ***Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control for the Indian Ocean Region (IOMOU).***

IOMOU works with 20 Indian Ocean State authorities on Port State Controls (including 19 IOTC Members). The LOI between IOTC and IOMOU (2021) aims to raise the awareness of national inspectors under the different regimes of IOTC and IOMOU to improve the coordination and efficiency of the implementation of port State measures and port State controls.

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***Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan (OFCF)***

IOTC has a Cooperation Agreement with OFCF (2022) aiming to improve the accuracy of tuna and tuna-like fishery statistics and information provided by IOTC coastal States; and develop capacity in the collection, management and reporting of tuna fishery statistics by IOTC coastal States.

***Tuna RFMO's (t-RFMO's)***

The Secretaries of IOTC, IATTC, ICCAT, CCSBT and WCPFC meet to exchange information and oversee the activities of the joint tuna working groups (FADs, Bycatch, MSE, EMS and EAF).

***Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)***

The IOTC has a MOU (2007) with WCPFC to maintain consultation, cooperation and collaboration with respect to matters of common interests.

**Proposed collaborations*****Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)***

A draft Cooperation Agreement between IOTC and SIOFA was approved by the Commission in 2022 to establish and maintain consultation, cooperation and collaboration in respect of matters of common interest to both the IOTC and the MOP to SIOFA. The agreement was substantially revised by SIOFA in 2023 requiring further legal consultation with FAO. FAO have subsequently requested that this Collaboration Agreement be converted to a Memorandum of Understanding between SIOFA and FAO. The SIOFA secretariat sent a letter to the IOTC Secretariat on the 5 September 2024 outlining SIOFA's stance on the current draft of the MoU, which was discussed at the 11th Meeting of the Parties to SIOFA in July 2024. The letter was forwarded to the Director Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI) at FAO as requested. The letter reiterated SIOFA's desire to enter into an agreement with IOTC directly and not FAO. The IOTC Secretariat responded noting that cooperation was still possible, but as IOTC has no legal identity of its own, a direct agreement using a formal instrument would not be possible as the IOTC Executive Secretary did not have the authority from the DG of the FAO to sign the agreement.

***Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna***

A proposed update to the existing LoA signed between between CCSBT and IOTC in 2019 was requested by the Secretariat of the CCSBT. As noted during the 2024 Session of the Commission, the IOTC Secretariat may not enter directly into agreements with other organisations and so a proposed MoU has been sent by CCSBT to FAO. The overarching MoU is a generic collaboration between CCSBT and FAO but includes a workplan that is specific to IOTC. The workplan was reviewed and endorsed by the Commission in 2025 (Para 156 of [IOTC-2025-S29-R](#)), however small modifications were made based on comments received by CCSBT and FAO. The slightly revised workplan is found in Annex I. It is awaiting final signature by FAO.

**RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Commission:

1. **NOTE** paper IOTC-2026-S30-05 regarding IOTC's current collaborative arrangements.
2. **NOTE** the revised workplan for the MoU with CCSBT as approved by FAO contained in [Annex I](#).

## Annex I. – Workplan for MoU with CCSBT

*On the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between CCSBT and FAO acting on behalf of IOTC and in view of the need to ensure that collaboration through partnerships are based on areas of mutual interest benefiting and synergizing FAO/IOTC's work, as outlined in the legal agreement signed, the areas of collaborative activities indicated in this Workplan have been jointly identified for the implementation period established.*

### Overarching responsibilities

FOR FAO: Executive Secretary, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

FOR CCSBT: Executive Secretary, Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna

<p><b>Objective:</b> Foster reciprocal collaboration to promote sustainable and effective fisheries management through the exchange of data and information, joint research efforts, and the development of conservation and management measures for stocks, species, and fisheries of mutual interest</p>	<p><b>Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (Targets):</b> SDG14 Live below Water – conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.</p>
<p><b>Impact Indicator(s) and target at the end of the period.</b></p> <p>Degree of enhanced cooperation and effectiveness between IOTC and CCSBT in the sustainable conservation and management of tuna and tuna-like species, as measured by the successful implementation of joint data exchange, collaborative activities, capacity building, and adoption of harmonized conservation measures.</p>	<p><b>Contribution to FAO's Strategic Framework</b></p> <p>Better Production: BP2 Blue Transformation – more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable blue food systems promoted through improved policies and programmes for integrated science-based management, technological innovation, and private-sector engagement.</p> <p><b>Contribution to CCSBT's Strategic Plan</b></p> <p>Operation/Administration of the Commission and Secretariat: the Commission should operate effectively and efficiently, to responsibly manage fishing for SBT. This includes strategies for effective and efficient operation of the Commission, its subsidiary bodies and Secretariat, including harmonisation with other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations.</p>
<p><b>Area of cooperation 1: Exchange of data and information about stocks, species, and fisheries of mutual interest and activities related to those stocks</b></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Activities</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange of data on stocks, species and fisheries of mutual interests.</li> <li>• Exchange of relevant information and documents such as meeting reports, technologies, research data and results, and publications etc. regarding matters of mutual interest.</li> </ul>	

<b>Time frame</b>	Throughout the MoU implementation period	<b>Geographic Scope</b>	IOTC and CCSBT's Member Nations of the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas
<b>Performance Indicator</b> # of joint data-sharing initiatives completed between IOTC and CCSBT. Percentage of relevant stock, species and fisheries data sets exchanged between IOTC and CCSBT.		<b>Mean(s) of verification</b> Data-sharing agreements or protocols. Secretariat(s) mutually reporting on data exchanged	
<b>FAO Contact</b> Executive Secretary, IOTC		<b>CCSBT Contact</b> Executive Secretary, CCSBT	
<b>Area of cooperation 2: Collaboration on research and compliance efforts relating to stocks and species of mutual interest, including stock assessments</b>			
<b>Activities</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct joint research on stocks and species of mutual interest, including stock assessments.</li> <li>• Exchange of relevant research and compliance data and results (consistent with information-sharing policies) regarding matters of mutual interest.</li> <li>• Facilitation of reciprocal participation as observers in relevant meetings of the Parties, including those of relevant subsidiary bodies.</li> </ul>			
<b>Time frame</b>	Throughout the MoU implementation period	<b>Geographic Scope</b>	IOTC and CCSBT's Member Nations of the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas
<b>Performance Indicator</b> # of joint research activities developed and implemented between IOTC and CCSBT. # of collaborative activities developed and conducted between IOTC and CCSBT that support improved compliance with relevant conservation and management measures.		<b>Mean(s) of verification</b> Joint research outcomes & Session observer lists Secretariat reporting on collaborative work completed.	
<b>FAO Contact</b> Executive Secretary, IOTC		<b>CCSBT Contact</b> Executive Secretary, CCSBT	
<b>Area of cooperation 3: Conservation and management measures for stocks and species of mutual interest</b>			
<b>Activities</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jointly develop processes to promote harmonization and compatibility of conservation and management measures where relevant.</li> </ul>			

<b>Time frame</b>	Throughout the MoU implementation period	<b>Geographic Scope</b>	IOTC and CCSBT's Member Nations of the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas
<b>Performance Indicator</b> Processes developed and documented that promote harmonization and compatibility of conservation and management measures (where relevant). Conservation and management measure provisions that are harmonized.		<b>Mean(s) of verification</b> Process documents developed (if applicable) Secretariat reporting on work to harmonize CMMs.	
<b>FAO Contact</b> Executive Secretary, IOTC		<b>CCSBT Contact</b> Executive Secretary, CCSBT	