
IOTC MEETING PARTICIPATION FUND STATUSPREPARED BY: SECRETARIAT

PURPOSE

1. To submit for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Administration and Finance (SCAF), the Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) historical and future expenditure levels in support of the annual budget decision making process. This report is a requirement in accordance with Rule XVI.4: of the IOTC Rules of Procedure.

BACKGROUND

2. The IOTC Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) was set up by the Commission in 2010 through the adoption of Resolution 10/05 for the purpose of supporting scientists and representatives from IOTC Members and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) who are developing States to attend and/or contribute to the work of the Commission, the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties.
3. Since 2014, the IOTC Rules of Procedure (Appendix VIII) have guided the administration of the MPF. The rules detail a range of eligibility criteria for gaining access to the IOTC MPF. However, the core requirement is that the applicant must be from a developing Contracting Party, which is defined as any Contracting Party (Member) that is under the categories of 'Low' or 'Middle' income, according to the criteria used in the most recent calculation of the annual IOTC budget contributions (see the Annex of the IOTC Financial Regulations).
4. The MPF currently serves nine scientific bodies (seven working parties, the Technical Committee on Management Procedures and the Scientific Committee); and five non-scientific bodies (the Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria, the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures, the Standing Committee on Administration & Finance, the Compliance Committee, the Commission and the Special Sessions of the Commission).
5. A core exclusion criterion for the MPF is that any Contracting Party of the Commission that is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Commission is not eligible to benefit from the MPF.
6. The Commission endorsed the revised guidance provided by the Small Working Group in paragraph 14 of document IOTC-2025-SCAF22-05 on an interim basis and until a review is conducted in 2027. In particular, the ratio of science/other meetings should be adjusted for a trial period of two years from 75:25 to 60:40.

More than \$3.2 million has been spent from the MPF since 2010. The average annual expenditure is approximately \$253,752.

7. Between 2011 and 2025, the number of IOTC bodies benefitting from the MPF has increased from 8 to 15, this is due to an increase in the number of non-scientific bodies being convened in recent years. The TCAC (sometimes having multiple meetings), special sessions of the Commission and the addition of the WPICMM has increased demand on the MPF. This was one of the main drivers for considering a revision to the previous 25% allocation of the MPF to non-scientific meetings (Rule XVI.5: of the IOTC Rules of Procedure).
8. The total MPF expenditure from the MPF for the period 2010 to 2025, was \$3,280,968 (Table 2). Of this, \$2,577,053 was funded from the IOTC regular budget (including the initial allocation from 'accumulated funds') and \$703,711 was funded from extra-budgetary contributions.
9. Noting that the first two years of the MPF were financed from 'accumulated funds' and that the process had not yet been fully developed, the annual average expenditures for the ensuing eight years (2012-19) together

with the years 2022-2025 was \$253,752. The years impacted by COVID-19 (2020 and 2021) were excluded from this calculation.

2025 BUDGET AND USAGE

10. The Commission set the approved budget for 2025 at \$300,000. A total of \$300,000 was therefore transferred from the IOTC main fund into the MPF. The MPF was further augmented by \$9,000 of extra-budgetary contributions received from China, \$19,474 of extra-budgetary contributions received from Australia and \$10,311 interest paid into the account by FAO.

11. The total expenditures for the MPF in 2025 amounted to \$272,526 and this covered the costs of 117 participants. According to the FAO Financial System, the balance of funds in the MPF as of 31 December 2025 was \$166,842.

Table 1. Numbers of participants supported by the MPF at IOTC meetings since 2014.

	Meeting Participation Fund											
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
WP Neritic Tunas	13	9	10	11	7	6	0	0	0	8	8	10
WP Temperate Tunas	3	-	4	-	-	1 Prep + 4 main	0	0	0	0	0	4
WP Billfish	8	9	6	8	5	8	0	0	0	6	5	8
WP Ecosystems and Bycatch	5	8	10	7	6	9	0	0	0	5	6	8
WP Methods	6	6	9	5	2	7	0	0	0	4	2	4
WP Data Collection & Statistics	3	5	6	10	9	8	0	0	0	4	8	6
WP Tropical Tunas	6	6	12	11	9	12	0	0	0	5	3	8
Technical Committee on Management Procedures	-	-	-	13	8	6	0	0	0	17	12	12
Scientific Committee	12	14	12	14	13	11	0	0	26	8	12	13
Compliance Committee	12	10	14	13	10	10	0	0	18	14	12	12
Standing Committee on Administration & Finance	8	10	14	11	7	10	0	0	20	17	15	11
Commission	13	10	14	15	10	11	0	0	22	17	14	14
Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria	-	-	10	-	13	7	0	0	25	11	10	7
Technical Committee on Performance Review					13	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
WP Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures					10	0	7	0	0	6	0	0
Total MPF participants	89	87	121	118	122	117	7	0	111	122	107	117
Expenditure (US\$)	\$242,517	\$207,073	\$285,088	\$202,945	\$250,903	\$246,546	\$21,324	0	\$288,671	\$300,179	\$237,127	\$272,526

Table 2. Historical expenditures against the IOTC Meeting Participation Fund, including from the initial allocation of 'accumulated funds', regular budget and extra-budgetary sources for the period 2010-25.

Year	Start of year balance	Additional Regular Funds	Additional Extra Budgetary Funds	Extras (interest/FAO payments)	Total expenditure (US\$)	Regular budget expenditure (US\$)	Extra budgetary expenditure (US\$)	End of Year Balance	Extra budgetary source
2010	200,000				57,429	57,429	0	142,571	Initial MPF Allocation from 'accumulated funds' (US\$200,000)
2011	142,571	14,615			157,186	157,186	0	0	
2012	0	126,010	69,492		195,502	126,010	69,492	0	Australia
2013	0	240,547	75,405		315,952	240,547	75,405	0	Australia
2014	0	118,519	124,000	(2)	242,517	118,517	124,000	0	Australia, BOBLME, ABNJ Tuna Project
2015	0	118,387	88,417	(1,497)	207,073	118,656	88,417	(1,766)	Australia, China, ABNJ Tuna Project
2016	(1,766)	200,000	77,604	(3,461)	285,088	211,022	74,066	(12,711)	Australia, China, ABNJ Tuna Project
2017	(12,711)	200,000	20,000	1,150	202,945	182,945	20,000	5,494	China
2018	5,494	200,000	49,439	3,784	250,903	200,000	50,903	7,814	Australia, China
2019	7,814	200,000	46,337	1,683	246,546	200,000	46,342	9,288	Australia, China
2020	7,814	250,000	31,414	1,582	21,324	0	21,324	269,486	Australia (US\$ 13,414), China (US\$ 18,000)
2021	269,486	25,000	18,000	495	-	0	0	312,981	China (US\$ 18,000)
2022	312,981	25,000	18,000	1,787	288,671	270,671	18,000	69,097	China (US\$ 18,000)
2023	69,097	220,000	17,000	2,235	300,179	283,179	17,000	8,153	China (US\$ 17,000)
2024	8,153	250,000	70,288	9,269	237,127	166,839	70,288	100,583	China (US\$ 18,000), Australia (US\$ 52,288)
2025	100,583	300,000	28,474	10,311	272,526	244,052	28,474	166,842	China (US\$ 9,000), Australia (US\$ 19,474)
TOTAL					3,280,968	2,577,053	703,711		

DISCUSSION

Demand on the MPF in 2025 was significantly higher than the previous year but did not reach the expected budget of \$300,000. This in part was due to the ineligibility of some members who have not paid their contributions. The 2026 MPF budget provides a similar allocation of \$300,000 and together with a positive balance from 2025, and voluntary contributions, should be sufficient to cover demand.

The 2027 MPF budget and proposed 2028 budgets should be sufficient to meet the expected increased demand and higher travel costs

The proposed 2027 and 2028 MPF budgets (\$300,000 in both years) should be sufficient to meet the demand for the MPF. However, there is always a risk that demand may exceed the funds.

The current rules of procedure for the administration of the IOTC Meeting Participation Fund (Appendix VIII of the IOTC Rules of Procedure) are highly prescriptive but given the high demand for the MPF, they have become difficult to operationalize and do not contain explicit instructions on how to proceed should the demand exceed the available budget.

12. The SCAF20 therefore requested a review of the MPF Rules of Procedure through a small working group, including the budget and efficacy of procedure for the administration of the IOTC Meeting Participation Fund (Appendix VIII of the IOTC Rules of Procedure). This small working group met in January 2025 to address the concerns raised at the SCAF20 and SCAF21 and presented recommendations at the SCAF22.

13. The Commission, at its 29th session, endorsed the small working group recommendations that:

- the ratio of 75:25 (Science:Others) be adjusted to 60:40 which closely aligns with the observed ratio of expenditures for the past two years.
- this ratio should be applied for a trial period of two years to see if it is suitable, whereafter the issue should be revisited and reassessed (in 2027).
- the ratio be applied to the balance of the MPF funds available at the beginning of the year (i.e. \$300,000 + any savings from the previous year).
- the Secretariat may request the use of the WCF on an exceptional basis should there not be sufficient funds available in the MPF to cover attendance at the scientific meetings at the end of the year (due to unforeseen expenses such as Special Sessions of the Commission, additional sessions of Technical Committees, or meetings held in expensive destinations).

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

That the SCAF:

- a) **NOTE** paper IOTC-2026-SCAF23-05 on the Meeting Participation Fund.
- b) **NOTE** the extra-budgetary contribution made to the MPF.