



24 August 2026

## IOTC CIRCULAR 2026-35

Dear Madam / Sir

### REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS FROM REEFWATCH MARINE CONSERVATION

Please find attached a request letter from ReefWatch Marine Conservation 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 ReefWatch Marine Conservation 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 ReefWatch Marine Conservation

#### 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



To,

Mr. Adam Ziyad  
Chairperson  
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)  
PO Box 1011 – Victoria,  
Mahé, Seychelles

**Subject: Request for Observer Status – ReefWatch Marine Conservation**

Dear Mr. Ziyad,

I write on behalf of ReefWatch Marine Conservation to request Observer status at meetings of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

ReefWatch is a marine conservation organisation operating along India's west coast, focused on the protection of marine megafauna and coastal ecosystems through stranding response, veterinary care, community engagement, and field science. Our work spans cetacean and sea turtle stranding response, ghost net recovery and circular-economy reuse, and coastal community training across the Karnataka and Goa coastline.

We are particularly interested in contributing to the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB). ReefWatch's ghost net recovery and community buy-back programme engages directly with gear-related entanglement and marine debris – issues central to the WPEB's mandate. Our stranding response network also generates field data on entanglement incidence and megafauna mortality along the west coast of India that may be of value to the Commission's ecosystem monitoring work. More broadly, we are committed to building the evidence base around bycatch impacts on non-target species – cetaceans, sea turtles, and elasmobranchs – in Indian Ocean tuna fisheries.

Please find attached our Organisational Profile for further detail. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to and learn from the Commission's work, and are happy to provide any additional information required.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Shantanu Kalambi  
ReefWatch Marine Conservation

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ReefWatch Marine Conservation, Sthala, 1A- Milkman Street, Someshwarpura, Halasuru, Bengaluru – 560008.  
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Registered Address: Priyanka Building, 50 St. Paul's Road, Bandra (W), Mumbai 400 050, India.



## ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE:

### ReefWatch Marine Conservation

#### Protecting India's marine megafauna and coastal ecosystems

Established - 1993

ReefWatch Marine Conservation is a registered public charitable trust with PAN AAATR4013Q and Charity Registration No. F17007 (Mumbai, Maharashtra). For over three decades, the organisation has worked at the intersection of veterinary science, marine ecology and community-based conservation, building extensive field knowledge, institutional experience and information on marine wildlife and coastal ecosystems across India.

Its work is rooted in frontline marine megafauna conservation, combining veterinary expertise, community-based reporting, rapid-response protocols, scientific documentation and capacity building. This experience has enabled the development of practical knowledge and systems for responding to cetaceans, sea turtles and other marine megafauna, while also supporting coastal habitat monitoring, marine wildlife research and community-focused conservation initiatives.

Current field operations span Karnataka, Goa and the Andaman Islands, with work in Maharashtra, Odisha and Kerala now being initiated and developed as new project landscapes. Across these states, the organisation works closely with relevant Forest, Fisheries, Biodiversity and other government departments, providing technical expertise, field support, capacity building, scientific inputs and assistance in strengthening conservation and response systems.

A growing area of work is an integrated approach bringing together ghost-net recovery, coastal communities, sports and One Health. The programme works with fishing communities to recover discarded fishing gear, reduce risks to marine megafauna, and explore recycling and upcycling pathways. Initiatives such as 'Serve The Sea' connect recovered nets with sports infrastructure, youth engagement and community participation, while creating opportunities for sports partners to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the model.

The organisation's approach is built around long-term partnerships and locally relevant conservation systems, bringing together government agencies, scientific institutions, local communities and private-sector partners. The experience and knowledge accumulated over three decades provide a strong foundation for developing, testing and scaling conservation models that can strengthen government-led systems and contribute to broader marine conservation frameworks across India.



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