

OUTCOMES OF THE 28th SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 06 OCTOBER 2026

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 17th Working Party on Methods (WPM17) of the recommendations arising from the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC28) held in December 2025, specifically relating to the work of the WPM.

BACKGROUND

At the 28th Session of the SC, the SC noted and considered the recommendations made by the WPM in 2025 that included updates on the MSE process for various IOTC species.

Based on the recommendations arising from the WPM16, the SC28 adopted a set of recommendations, provided in Appendix A of this paper.

The recommendations contained in Appendix A was provided to the Commission for consideration at its 30th Session held in May 2026. A separate paper, IOTC–2026–WPM17–04 addresses the responses and actions of the Commission from its 30th session.

A separate paper (IOTC–2026–WPM17–07) will outline the review and development process for a *Program of Work* for the WPM for the next five years.

DISCUSSION

In addition to the recommendations outlined in Appendix A and Appendix B, the following extracts from the SC28 Report (IOTC–2025–SC28–R) are provided here for the consideration and action of the WPM16:

Report of the 16th Session of the Working Party on Methods (WPM16)

203. The SC NOTED the report of the 16th Session of the Working Party on Methods ([IOTC–2025–WPM16–R](#)), including the consolidated list of recommendations provided as an appendix to the report. The meeting was attended by 47 participants (cf. 46 in 2024). Six participants received funding through the MPF funding.
204. The SC **NOTED** that the WPM has reviewed and discussed a wide range of issues including MSE progress for IOTC species, multi-species MSE, exceptional circumstances considerations for bigeye tuna MSE, joint CPUE standardisations, and close kin mark recapture design study for yellowfin tuna.
205. The SC **NOTED** the informative discussions and input on the technical aspects of MSE and related topics by the Working Party on Methods Management Strategy Evaluation Task Force meeting. The SC **NOTED** that the output of this meeting remains very important to the WPM as it provides an informal forum for the highly technical discussions necessary to advance the MSE process in IOTC for which there is insufficient time during the WPM meeting. The SC **ENDORSED** the inclusion of this meeting in the schedule of meetings for early 2026.

Update on TCMP09

206. The SC **NOTED** document [IOTC-2025-TCMP09-R](#) on the Report of the 8th session of the TCMP held in May 2025. The SC **NOTED** that the WPM had taken into consideration the recommendations and discussions held at that meeting.

Management Strategy Evaluation Progress

207. The SC **NOTED** that the albacore assessment in 2025 has a more pessimistic stock status, but the new stock assessment estimates still fall within the range of the OM, however a full evaluation of candidate Management Procedures could not be completed ahead of this meeting, and the SC **NOTED** that these will not be reviewed before the TCMP in January 2026. Therefore, the SC **AGREED** that the TCMP in January 2026 is not required.

Blue shark MP

208. The SC **NOTED** that the work of blue shark (BSH) MSE process has started, and that initial results suggest that both TAC- and length-based Management Procedures should be tested. The SC **ENDORSED** the plan of work for BSH, with results to be presented first to the MSE Taskforce, followed by the TCMP and then presented to the Commission for consideration.
209. The SC **AGREED** that the BSH fishery is a target fishery, and that the MSE and resulting MP should be built on this, and that it was important that the BSH was not confused with a bycatch species where the resulting MP would result in decreasing catches over time

Bigeye tuna MP (Resolution 22/03)

210. The SC **NOTED** the completed review of the BET MSE that highlighted an inconsistency in Resolution 23/03, which indicates that the MP is designed to achieve a 60% SSB>SSB_{MSY} when the MP was tuned to 60% probability of being in green. The SC **AGREED** that it was not urgent to correct as the issue is clearly noted and documented by the SC and Commission to be changed in future, perhaps in association with the next MP review.
211. The SC **NOTED** that 2024 catch of bigeye tuna (82,874 t) has exceeded the 2024 TAC (80,583 t), which is an exceptional circumstance, and as such, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission should ensure that the appropriate provisions (e.g., in paragraphs 4, 5 and 8) of 23/04 are implemented to ensure catches remain inside the TAC, conditional on the allowances and requirements of those provisions

Skipjack tuna MP (Resolution 24/07)

212. The SC **NOTED** the 2025 running of the SKJ MP **NOTING** that this generated an unconstrained TAC of 528,130 t, which is >10% lower than the TAC set for 2024–2026. By applying the maximum 10% decrease in the TAC as per Resolution 24/07, the SC **RECOMMENDED** the Commission to adopt the TAC for skipjack tuna of 565,745 t. per year for 2027–2029.
213. The SC **NOTED** that there are no exceptional circumstances regarding the application of the skipjack tuna Management Procedure (2024 catch < TAC & both CPUEs within 95th percentile of MSE OMs).
214. The SC **AGREED** not to use the target 40% SSB₀ to determine stock status for skipjack tuna, **NOTING** that the SC is still in discussion regarding appropriate ways to define the status of this species.

Swordfish tuna MP (Resolution 24/08)

215. The SC **NOTED** that although there was a new study published on stock structure of swordfish in the Indian Ocean, there is not sufficient evidence currently to conclude a different stock structure, or exceptional circumstance in relation to the swordfish MP TAC advice.
216. The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission urgently propose and adopt the TAC for swordfish resulting from the MP (Resolution 24/08, now superseded by 25/07) in 2026.

General MSE issues

217. The SC **ENDORSED** the inclusion of the MSE Task Force Meetings in the schedule of meetings for 2026, and **ENDORSED** the exclusion of the extra TCMP meeting in January 2026.
218. The SC **DISCUSSED** the funding for the ALB MSE work, **NOTING** that the project is expected to end at the end of 2025, but the process is not complete. The SC **DISCUSSED** ongoing funding, and whether there were plans to continue funding this work in 2026, and the SC **NOTED** the Secretariat would assess the progress of the developer against the ToRs before confirming funding options and future projects relating to this work.
219. The SC **NOTED** that although YFT does not have a Management Procedure, the SC was encouraged by the presentation of work that has started on an MSE process and **ENDORSED** the timeline as follows – that a high level summary will go to the TCMP in May in 2026, followed by a progress report in WPM in 2026 then the MSE Taskforce at the SC (2027) at the TCMP (2027) and at the Commission (2027). The MP may be adopted then, or in 2028.
220. The SC **DISCUSSED** the issue of multi-species MPs, with the implementation of a MP for BET that would impact catches of BSH. The SC **NOTED** that the current PoW and work plans prioritise single species MP, but that this is not realistic in the long term. The SC **NOTED** that this topic used to be included in the PoW for the MSE Taskforce, but that it is no longer included. The SC **SUGGESTED** that this be included in the PoW moving forward.
221. The SC **NOTED** concerns from CPCs regarding the additional pressure that CPUE standardisation teams are facing, with two CPUE indices needing to be developed – for MPs and stock assessments. The SC **NOTED** that there have been difficulties in providing the indices to WP on time and **SUGGESTED** that additional resources are to facilitate the timely provision of indices.

222. The SC **NOTED** that there are confidentiality agreements between longline countries and various tuna RFMO Secretariats regarding the use of operational data (such as those in place with the WCPFC and IATTC) and **NOTING** the provisions to ensure confidentiality of the operational data submitted to the Secretariat in IOTC Resolution 12/02, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission explore potential arrangements between longline-fleet CPCs and the IOTC Secretariat, under strict confidentiality rules (similar to those outlined in Resolution 12/02), so that the Secretariat can use operational data and participate in, as well as support, the development of the joint longline CPUE index. The SC further **RECOMMENDED** exploring similar arrangements for other fleets.
223. The SC **NOTED** that several capacity-building workshops are planned in 2026, including a joint workshop on CPUE indices across tRFMOs that will be led by SPC and will occur late 2026 (October / November). Additionally, the SC **NOTED** that the FAO Common Oceans project will be holding a MSE workshop for tRFMOs led by ICCAT in Rome in January 2026, and **ENCOURAGED** CPCs interested in workshops to contact organisers to access funding.
224. The SC also **NOTED** that the FAO Common Ocean Project launched an e-learning course on MSE and MP, which can be completed by any interested scientists.

RECOMMENDATION

That the WPM:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2026–WPM17–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee, specifically related to the work of the WPM.
- 2) **UPDATE** Appendix B as required.
- 3) **CONSIDER** how best to progress these issues at the present meeting.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consolidated set of recommendations of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee to the Commission, relevant to the Working Party on Methods.

APPENDIX A

CONSOLIDATED SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 28TH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (1 – 5 DECEMBER 2025) TO THE COMMISSION RELEVANT TO THE WORKING PARTY ON METHODS

*Extract of the Report of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee
(IOTC–2025–SC28–R; Appendix 39)*

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE 16TH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON METHODS (WPM16)

Bigeye tuna MP (Resolution 22/03)

SC28.22 (para. 211) The SC **NOTED** that 2024 catch of bigeye tuna (82,874 t) has exceeded the 2024 TAC (80,583 t), which is an exceptional circumstance, and as such, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission should ensure that the appropriate provisions (e.g., in paragraphs 4, 5 and 8) of 23/04 are implemented to ensure catches remain inside the TAC, conditional on the allowances and requirements of those provisions.

Skipjack tuna MP (Resolution 24/07)

SC28.23 (para. 212) The SC **NOTED** the 2025 running of the SKJ MP **NOTING** that this generated an unconstrained TAC of 528,130 t, which is >10% lower than the TAC set for 2024–2026. By applying the maximum 10% decrease in the TAC as per Resolution 24/07, the SC **RECOMMENDED** the Commission to adopt the TAC for skipjack tuna of 565,745 t. per year for 2027–2029.

Swordfish tuna MP (Resolution 24/08)

SC28.24 (para. 216) The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission urgently propose and adopt the TAC for swordfish resulting from the MP (Resolution 24/08, now superseded by 25/07) in 2026.

General MSE issues

SC28.25 (para. 222) The SC **NOTED** that there are confidentiality agreements between longline countries and various tuna RFMO Secretariats regarding the use of operational data (such as those in place with the WCPFC and IATTC) and **NOTING** the provisions to ensure confidentiality of the operational data submitted to the Secretariat in IOTC Resolution 12/02, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission explore potential arrangements between longline-fleet CPCs and the IOTC Secretariat, under strict confidentiality rules (similar to those outlined in Resolution 12/02), so that the Secretariat can use operational data and participate in, as well as support, the development of the joint longline CPUE index. The SC further **RECOMMENDED** exploring similar arrangements for other fleets.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF MATTERS COMMON TO WORKING PARTIES (CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES – STOCK ASSESSMENT COURSE; CONNECTING SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT, ETC.)

Observed issues related to IOTC Working Party meetings

SC28.27 (para. 245) The SC **NOTED** the increasing utilisation of the Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) during working parties, observing that this is a positive development which aligns with the Commission's objectives and the original purpose of the MPF. However, the SC **NOTED** a few cases where applicants did not fully meet the MPF requirements, such as failing to submit a complete paper or submitting papers not sufficiently relevant to the meeting's agenda. The SC **NOTED** that there is currently no precedent requiring a recipient to return funds in such situations. Consequently, to ensure the effective use of MPF resources, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission and SCAF discuss further actions.

Invited Expert(s) at the WP meetings

SC28.28 (para. 260) Given the importance of external independent review for working party meetings, the SC **RECOMMENDED** the Commission continues to allocate sufficient budget for Invited Experts to be regularly invited to scientific working party meetings. The SC **NOTED** that there are generally funds to support 3 or 4 Invited Experts to attend IOTC's working parties.

IOTC species identification guides: Tuna and tuna-like species

SC28.29 (para. 262) 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.

Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the SC and its subsidiary bodies

SC28.30 (para. 266) The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission note and endorse the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons for the SC and its subsidiary bodies for the coming years, as provided in [Appendix 7](#).

PROGRAM OF WORK AND SCHEDULE OF WORKING PARTY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETINGS***Consultants***

SC28.31 (para. 293) **NOTING** the highly beneficial and relevant work done by IOTC stock assessment consultants in previous years, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the engagement of consultants be continued for each coming year based on the Program of Work. Consultants will be hired to supplement the skill set available within the IOTC Secretariat and CPCs.

Data preparatory meetings and Hybrid meetings

SC28.32 (para. 295) **ACKNOWLEDGING** that holding data preparatory meetings prior to stock assessments is considered to be best practice and **NOTING** that since 2019 data preparatory meetings were successfully held for the WPTmT, WPTT and WPEB, the SC **AGREED** to continue the practice of having data preparatory meetings in addition to stock assessment meetings for the main IOTC species. The SC **RECOMMENDED** that data preparatory meetings could continue to be held virtually so as not to increase the travel and costs required for the already full IOTC timetable of meetings.

