REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT – ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE IOTC SCIENCE PROCESS IN 2026

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 2 NOVEMBER 2026

PURPOSE

To inform the Scientific Committee (SC) of work undertaken by the IOTC Secretariat in 2026 in support of the IOTC Science process, endorsed by the Commission.

The Scientific Committee is invited to note the activities taken by the IOTC Secretariat in 2026 in support of the IOTC science process.

1. Introduction

In 2026, the IOTC Secretariat continued to support the IOTC science process by facilitating meetings and providing the Scientific Committee with the data and scientific support it needs to fulfil its mandate. This included organising and facilitating the Working Party and Working Group meetings, together with the preparation of supporting documents and the participation of developing Members. The Secretariat also carried out data-related activities, from the processing, validation and management of fisheries data to technical assistance and capacity development for CPCs. Its scientific work covered stock assessments, research projects, and participation in external workshops and meetings. These activities were supported by the IOTC regular budget and by extra-budgetary funding. The main activities in each of these areas are summarised in the sections below.

2. IOTC meetings – Working parties

In 2026, fifteen (15) Working Party and Working Group meetings were organised and facilitated by the IOTC Secretariat (**Table 1**). The current Chairs and Vice-Chairs for each Committee and Working Party are provided in Appendix I.

Appendix II lists the documents produced by the IOTC Secretariat in support of Working Party meetings held in 2026. In addition, the IOTC Secretariat produced revised Executive Summaries for all of the IOTC stocks, as well as for sharks, seabirds, marine turtles and cetaceans in association with various experts, totalling 26 Executive Summaries.

The IOTC Secretariat facilitated the participation of invited experts that were selected to attend some of the Working Party meetings in 2025 (**Table 1)**.

Table 1. Working party and Working Group meetings in 2026

Working Party	Session	Dates and Location	Invited Expert
MSE Task Force of the Working Party on Methods Meeting (WPM-MSE)	17	23 – 25 March, Virtual	
Working Party on Social-Economics (WPSE)	03	1-2 April, Virtual	
Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (Data preparatory) (WPEB-DP)	22	15-17 April, Virtual	
Ad hoc Working Group on the Development of Electronic Monitoring Programme Standards (WGEMS)	06	13-14 April, Virtual	
Working Group on FADs (WGFAD)	08	8-9 Jun, Virtual	
Working Party on Tropical tunas (Data preparatory) (WPTT-DP)	28	10-12 Jun, Virtual	
Working Party on Neritic Tunas (WPNT)	16	6-9 Jul, Seychelles	Dr Paul Medley
Working Party on Temperate tunas (WPTmT-AS)	10	20-22 July, Seychelles	

Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (Assessment meeting) (WPEB)	22	14-18 Sep, Reunion
Working Party on Billfish (WPB)	24	9-12 Sep, Reunion
Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT-AS)	28	20-24 Oct, Tenerife, Spain
Working Party on Methods (WPM)	17	26-27 Oct, Tenerife, Spain
Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS)	22	24-28 Nov, San Sabastian

Meeting Participation Fund

The IOTC Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) was utilised for the indicated scientific meetings and/or Working Parties indicated in Table 1. In 2026, the Secretariat facilitated the participation of xx individuals from developing Members of the IOTC to the Working Party meetings held in 2026 as detailed in Table 2.

The total level of participation (including the Scientific Committee) by MPF recipients was 45 in 2026, compared with 2025 (50), 2024 (34), 2023 (42) and 2022(25) (Table 2).

Adoption of Working Party Meeting Report

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, all IOTC Working Party (WP) meetings were held in-person, and the meeting report was adopted during the meeting, usually on a day set aside at the end for that purpose. During the pandemic period (2020–2022), all meetings were held online, and reports were adopted via correspondence: the Secretariat circulated the draft report, incorporated the comments received and recirculated it as needed. This process took anywhere from a few weeks to several months. Since 2023, WP meetings have returned to an in-person format, usually hybrid, but meeting report adoption via correspondence has continued.

Adoption via correspondence has a clear advantage: it allows more time for writing and reviewing the report, which generally improves its quality. It also has a drawback. Participants sometimes reopen discussions on controversial points after the meeting, even when the Secretariat has done its best to reconcile differing views during the meeting. This can delay the meeting report adoption process considerably.

In recent years, Working Party meetings have consistently finished earlier than scheduled, for example a four-day meeting concluding in three days. In such cases, adoption via correspondence is no longer justified. The time saved should be used to adopt the report in-session and to resolve differences on the spot, so that the report faithfully reflects what was agreed and what was not. It would also make better use of meeting resources, since venues are usually hired for the full duration of the meeting and MPF participants are subsidised for all scheduled days despite not attending a meeting on the final day.

It is therefore recommended that the SC requests the Working Parties make every effort to adopt meeting reports during the scheduled meeting time. To allow flexibility where agendas are full and adopting the whole report is not feasible, the WP must, as a minimum, adopt all of the recommendations. Where a meeting is expected to finish early (for example, by one day) due to a lack of papers, or efficient discussions, the WP should aim to adopt the full report, at the discretion of the Chair.

Table 2. Scientific Meetings held in 2026, prior to the 29th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee meeting. Numbers in brackets represent numbers for the previous Working Party meetings.

Working Party	Dates and location of most recent meeting	No. of participants							Meeting Participation Fund							No. of documents (and for the previous meeting)
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
Working Groups																
Electronic Monitoring Programme Standards	13-14 June, Virtual		79	104	89	80	43	41								Total: (8) Working papers: (7) Information papers: (1)
FADs	8-9 June, Virtual		93	111	75 116	90	72	86								Total: (10) Working papers: (10) Information papers: (0)
Working Parties																
Neritic Tunas	6–9 July, Seychelles	43	33	36	35	47	40	35	0	0	0	8	6	10	5	Total: (18) Working papers: (18) Information papers: (0)
Temperate Tunas	 20-22 July, Virtual			51 42			24 22	25						 4		Total: (3) Working papers: (2) Information papers: (1)
Billfish	9–12 September, Reunion	55	55	51	97	47	36	36	9			8	5	5	5	Total: (27) Working papers: (26) Information papers: (1)
Ecosystems and Bycatch	15–17 April, Virtual 14–18 September, Reunion	108	68 93	103	100	92	55 87	48 83	13		7	6	7	 7	 6	Total: (61) Working papers: (50) Information papers: (11)
Methods	23-25 March, Virtual 26–27 October, Spain	55	41 54	46 60	31 39	18 46	29 47	33 34	0			 3	 3	 6	 4	Total: (20) Working papers: (19) Information papers: (1)
Tropical Tunas	10–12 June, Virtual 20 – 24 October, Spain	62 111	80 108	67 113	76 91	72 92	64 65	68 45				 4	 2	 8	 5	Total: (22) Working papers: (22) Information papers: (0)
Data Collection and Statistics	25– 29 November, Spain	76	94	117	55	110	89				4		3	5	8	Total: () Working papers: () Information papers: ()

Scientific Committee	30 November – 4 December, Spain	43	141	130	129	106	141		15	0	0	8	9	9	12	Working papers: TBC (4) Executive Summaries: TAC (26) National reports () Information papers: TBC ()

3. ***Data-related activities***

The IOTC Data Section is dedicated to the acquisition and processing of the data required under various IOTC Resolutions. These data are utilised in support of scientific analyses necessary for the assessment of the status of stocks, and in monitoring the compliance of CPCs with respect to currently standing data reporting requirements. The Data Section of the Secretariat also regularly addresses some data requests from the CPCs as well as from academics and other Regional Fishery Bodies.

The activities carried out by the Data Section encompass a wide range of capacity development and technical support initiatives, including in-country technical assistance missions, workshops, virtual technical meetings, and the hosting of fisheries officials from CPCs at the Secretariat for technical discussions. These activities aim to strengthen national capacities for fisheries data collection, processing and reporting, and to support the implementation of IOTC reporting requirements. Participation in external meetings relevant to fisheries data collection and management also forms an important component of the Data Section's work. In addition, data-related requests arising from WPDCS and other scientific meetings require follow-up actions by the Secretariat, including data calls, technical assistance missions, and other targeted support activities. Recommendations from previous WPDCS meetings are also reviewed to identify any actions or requirements arising from the Scientific Committee or the Commission.

During 2026, the IOTC Data Section conducted five in-country technical assistance missions and organised three workshops to support CPCs in fisheries data collection, processing and reporting (Table 3). These capacity development activities are guided by requests for technical assistance from CPCs, priorities identified through the review of national data submissions, and recommendations arising from IOTC scientific meetings. Alongside the preparation and dissemination of datasets for IOTC scientific and technical meetings, the Secretariat continued to develop reporting and validation tools, modernise databases and improve data management and dissemination services. These activities were complemented by cooperation with partner organisations and work supported through externally funded projects

Summary of data related activities are below, and detailed descriptions are provided in IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-09.

In-Country Missions

In 2026, the Secretariat conducted five technical assistance missions to Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Oman and Tanzania. These missions combined reviews of national fisheries data collection and management systems, technical discussions and practical support for implementing IOTC reporting requirements. They also provided opportunities to identify priorities for continued collaboration and capacity development.

Technical Workshops

To support further progress in the implementation of the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme (ROS), the Secretariat organised three capacity-building workshops in 2026, focusing on data collection and reporting requirements for purse seine, longline and gillnet fisheries. These workshops aimed to strengthen CPCs' understanding of reporting requirements, promote the use of standardised reporting forms and improve the quality and completeness of observer data.

Participation in External Meetings and Workshops

The Data Section participated in technical exchanges concerning EU data reporting and coordination, the Indian Ocean shark research plan, bycatch data, and abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), among other subjects. These activities supported dialogue on data requirements, harmonisation and data quality.

Data Management Activities

In addition to its regular responsibilities for validating, processing, maintaining and disseminating fisheries data, the Data Section prepared datasets and supporting information for IOTC scientific and technical meetings throughout 2026, including TCAC16, WPICMM09, WPSE03, WGFAD08, WPTT28 (data preparatory and assessment sessions),

WPNT16, WPB24, WPEB22, TCAC17 and WPDCS22. Alongside this recurrent work, the Secretariat continued to improve reporting tools, data validation, databases and online information services.

Data Reporting

The Secretariat updated the guidelines for reporting fisheries statistics and developed guidelines for Regional Observer Scheme (ROS) data. Reporting forms are increasingly managed through a dedicated GitHub repository, supported by revised form descriptions, including an updated Form 7PR. Proposed amendments to Form 1RC to implement Resolution 26/06 are described in IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-05. The IOTC Reference Data Catalogue was also further developed, including standardised descriptions and code lists.

Data Validation

Online validation tools are available for statistical reporting Forms 1DI, 1RC, 3BU, 3CE and 4SF, with associated development resources maintained in the IOTC form-management repository. Work continued on validators for Form 3DA and ROS reporting forms, including the use of the vrule R package to implement standardised validation rules. The validators are being migrated to FAO cloud infrastructure through the IOTC Shiny App Catalogue, while further tools are planned for Forms 2FC, 3AA, 5MB and 7PR. Further progress was made in modernising the Regional Observer Scheme (ROS) data processing and validation framework, with support from a dedicated consultancy under SWIOP

Data Management and Dissemination

The Data Section continued the annual processing and quality review of fisheries datasets, including work on discard and ROS data (see IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-10). Developments also included the migration of databases to a PostgreSQL/PostGIS environment, improvements to reproducible data-processing workflows, and publication and dissemination of datasets and associated documentation. Persistent identifiers and records are being developed through the IOTC Zenodo Community, covering data-related Conservation and Management Measures, fisheries statistics and ROS reporting forms, and IOTC code lists. DOI-based publication of nominal catch and tagging datasets remains in progress.

Tools and Online Services

In preparation for the new IOTC website, the Secretariat reviewed the organisation of data-related web content around six areas: Reporting, Regional Observer Scheme, Datasets, Tools, Data Services and Repositories, and Publications. Development of the Tools area and migration of online services are ongoing.

Table 3: Summary of data section activities held in 2026

Category	Country / CPC	Mode	Dates
Capacity Building Workshop	Seychelles	In Country	16- 19 May 2026
	Seychelles	Virtual	3-4 Nov 2026
	South Africa	In Country	16- 19 May 2026
External Meeting	Annual meeting of the EU RCG on Large Pelagics	Virtual	23-25 June 2026
	European Commission Fisheries Data Collection Liaison Meeting Enduser	Virtual	46287
	Regional and national ALDFG reporting frameworks	Virtual	46309
	ICCAT workshop - Revision of the Sub-committee's Data Collection and Research Program (PIRDCaF) - Joint RFMo group : Fisheries Bycatch : Shared Priorities and Global Action Projects	Virtual	46296
Technical Assistance Mission	Kenya	In Country	26-29 Apr 2026
	Madagascar	In Country	24-27 Aug 2026
	Oman	In Country	28-Sep - 2-Oct 2026
	Comoros	In Country	05-11 Apr 2026
	Tanzania	In Country	21-25 Apr 2026
External workshop	South Africa	In person	28-30 Jul 2026
	Spain	In person	30 jun - 2 Jul 2026

4. Science activities (2026)

In 2026, the Secretariat carried out a range of scientific activities to support the Scientific Committee's programme of work. These included stock assessments conducted by the in-house expert; science projects supported by the IOTC budget and EU funding (EU1350 and SWIOP 1.2); and participation by Secretariat staff in external workshops and scientific meetings.

The European Union periodically provides funding to the IOTC to support the implementation of conservation measures, data management, and scientific research. **EU1350** is a Direct Grant running from **2026 to 2028** to support scientific activities at the IOTC. The grant is managed by the IOTC Secretariat, and the activities within the grant relate to research activities that improve our scientific understanding of the fish populations and marine ecosystems managed by the IOTC, with a view to supporting the sustainable management of all species impacted by IOTC fisheries.

The Sustainable Western Indian Ocean Programme (**SWIOP**) is a multi-year EU project whose overall objective is to support sustainable, productive, and climate-resilient, governance and use of the Western Indian Ocean marine living resources. It includes a specific component, SWIOP 1.2, which supports the implementation of CMMs for shared fisheries resources between IOTC and the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA). SWIOP 1.2 began in January 2026; the project coordinator, based in Maputo, Mozambique, took up duties in June 2026, followed by the recruitment of the project team and the IOTC/SIOFA coordinator in September 2026. SWIOP 1.2 supports IOTC and its members in improving the collection, management, and protection of fisheries data; enhances the production and use of scientific knowledge on fish stocks and fish populations; and strengthens Member States' capacity to comply with IOTC resolutions. Most activities under SWIOP 1.2 will be running from **2027 to 2030**.

CPC contributions to the Scientific Work of the IOTC, as requested in Para 16 of IOTC-2018-SC21-R are provided in Appendix III. The text below contains links from the individual activities to the grants they are supported by.

IOTC Species ID guides: Work is ongoing to translate, typeset, format, and print the IOTC Species ID Guides into the priority languages identified by the SC. Funding for translating and delivering ID cards was provided by OFCF. In 2026, IOTC ID cards have been translated into: Arabic and Divehi. OFCF has continued to develop a suite of web-based tools including YouTube videos, ODK Apps, an online library of fish species photos, and a dedicated website ("Guide for Identification of IOTC Species") to support species identification. OFCF has been testing these tools with field enumerators in collaboration with institutions in several coastal countries including Seychelles, Sri Lanka and India. The current set of identification guides available is provided here: www.iotc.org/science/species-identification-cards.

IOTC Sampling Project (Pilot): In 2026, funded under EU 1350, a consultancy is being initiated through a Letter of Agreement (LoA) between FAO/IOTC and INFOFISH to launch a pilot sampling project addressing three interconnected gaps in the biological and ecological knowledge of IOTC species. The first aim of the project is , to establish a formal framework for collecting, managing, and analysing biological samples, including a regional sampling programme for size and biological data. This aim responds to the persistent gaps in size-frequency data at IOTC; the outdated or inconsistent species-specific morphometric conversion factors across CPCs. This project will be initiated at three pilot sites. The second aim of the project is to improve our understanding of fish population structure in neritic tuna species. Currently, as we do not fully understand population and/or stock structure in IOTC neritic tuna species, they are assessed as single stocks across the Indian Ocean. There is some genetic evidence to suggest that these species likely have more complex population structure, with multiple stocks across the Indian Ocean. This project will provide further genetic samples to help improve stock delineation across the Indian Ocean, in neritic tunas. The third aim of the project is , to improve age and growth (length-at-age) estimates of yellowfin tuna using DNA methylation-based methods of estimating ages of male and female fish. Rates of DNA-methylation can be used to construct genetic 'clocks' for individual species when combined with otolith-based ages (or a 'reference age'). Once the model has been constructed, further ageing of individual fish can continue using samples of DNA, thereby providing a non-destructive (e.g. does not kill the fish), scalable alternative to ageing using otoliths. Overall, the project aims to strengthen long-term capacity to obtain representative biological data, reducing uncertainty and improving the accuracy of integrated stock assessments for priority IOTC species.

Albacore stock assessment: A stock assessment consultant (Joel Rice) funded by the IOTC regular budget, carried out a stock assessment of albacore tuna (1950 – 2024) using Stock Synthesis. The consultant was aided by the IOTC stock assessment scientist. The results for the Albacore assessment indicated that the stock is currently not overfished and is not subject to overfishing. The work addressed issues within the model which were not resolved at the scheduled assessment meeting in 2025, due to the delayed availability of the integral CPUE indices.

Blue shark and shortfin mako shark catch reconstruction: Joel Rice was also funded by the IOTC regular budget to investigate and update plausible catch time series for shortfin mako and blue shark in the Indian Ocean; and to develop and test alternative approaches and parameterisations relevant to the estimation of catch scenarios, such as using species composition, effort standardisation, and scaling procedures across fleets, areas, and time periods. The work also aimed to evaluate the influence of alternative catch data series and assumptions, including those available from the IOTC Secretariat and any additional reconstructions or data compilations presented by WPEB22(DP) participants. The work produced a range of catch scenarios, and all code is reproducible and available publicly on Github, and with the IOTC Secretariat. The work was presented at the WPEB22(AS).

Skipjack tuna stock assessment: The IOTC stock assessment scientist carried out a stock assessment of skipjack tuna (1950-2025) using Stock Synthesis III. The results indicated that the stock is currently not overfished and not subject to overfishing.

Swordfish assessment: The IOTC stock assessment scientist carried out a stock assessment of swordfish (1950-2024) using Stock Synthesis III. The results for the Swordfish assessment indicated that the stock is currently not overfished and not subject to overfishing.

Neritic tuna assessment: The IOTC stock assessment scientist carried out stock assessments for three neritic tuna species: longtail tuna, narrow-barred Spanish mackerel, and kawakawa (1950-2024) using several data limited methods. The results of the assessments indicated that longtail tuna is currently overfished and is subject to overfishing; narrow-barred Spanish mackerel is currently not overfished and is not subject to overfishing; and kawakawa is not overfished and is not subject to overfishing.

Blue shark Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE): In 2024, the Commission requested that the SC initiate MSE for blue shark, which was subsequently adopted as a high priority in the SC's programme of work. Fishery MSE expert Charles Edwards was recruited in 2025 under the IOTC regular budget to conduct a preliminary scoping study.

In 2026, this work continued to advance the MSE, which is funded under EU 1350, building on the scoping study's results. The project has explored options for operating model construction and the development of candidate blue shark management procedures (MPs) with harvest control rules, aiming for potential adoption by the Commission in 2028. Progress on the blue shark MSE was presented to the WPEB and WPM this year.

Yellowfin Tuna Spatiotemporal Tagging Model: The external review of the IOTC yellowfin stock assessment in 2022 recommended that tagging data be analysed outside the stock assessment, to address concerns with tag-mixing within the stock. In 2026, a consultancy was initiated through a LoA between FAO/IOTC and DTU, which is funded under EU 1350, under which Anders Nielsen and Tobias Mildenberger will apply a spatiotemporal tagging model, originally developed for eastern Pacific Ocean skipjack tuna, to the IOTC's IOTTP tagging data for yellowfin tuna. The full modelling framework consists of two related components: a novel spatiotemporal population model that estimates movement and natural mortality rates from available tagging and effort data, and a spatiotemporal Petersen-type model that estimates absolute biomass using available tag-recapture and catch data. This project, conducted under the LOA, focuses on the first phase of the tagging data analysis initiative, i.e., estimating movement rates for yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean using tagging data. The results of the modelling exercises, movement rates, abundance estimates, and natural mortality, are expected to inform the stock assessment with key model parameters and processes.

Analyses to support the yellowfin stock assessment: A fishery modelling expert, Philipp Neubauer, was recruited under SWIOP 1.2 to conduct two main analyses to address recommendations from the review of the 2022 yellowfin tuna stock assessment. The first involves standardising length composition data for yellowfin tuna, using state-of-the-art modelling approaches that have been successfully applied in another tRFMO (WCPFC). This standardisation accounts for key sources of variability and aims to produce population length compositions for the index fishery and catch length compositions for the capture fisheries. While the primary focus is yellowfin tuna, the analytical scripts will be designed to be reusable, enabling standardisation of length composition data for other key species, including skipjack, bigeye, and albacore. The second analysis involves exploring a suitable platform and package for an alternative yellowfin tuna assessment model and evaluating its suitability for modelling the stock. This work will implement a yellowfin stock assessment using the proposed platform and develop a fully functional exploratory diagnostic model to support comparison with the main Stock Synthesis assessment. The exploratory model is expected to use the same data (catch, length composition, and key biological parameters) as the main assessment. Both analyses are expected to be completed in 2027**.**

CPUE development: The IOTC Secretariat continues to conduct missions and projects to develop standardised CPUE indices from coastal fisheries, in support of stock assessments of IOTC species. Work is currently being planned for several CPCs, including Seychelles, Comoros, and Thailand. A fishery expert, Paul Medley, funded by SWIOP 1.2, has been recruited to conduct CPUE standardisation analysis of tropical tuna for the Seychelles industrial longline fishery, with the work planned for 2027. This follows review work Paul conducted in 2025, which examined the catch and length composition data for tropical tuna collected from Seychelles longline vessels, assessing their suitability for inclusion in the stock assessment. Further, following successful missions to Comoros and Thailand in 2026, consultancy projects are being planned for 2027 to collaborate with the two CPCs on the analysis of fishery data and development of potential CPUE indices — including for small and medium-sized vessels targeting tuna and tuna-like species in Comoros, and for port sampling/logbook data from the purse seine fishery in Thailand.

eDFAD register: In 2025, the IOTC Secretariat launched a project to develop a DFAD register to support the effective management of DFAD, as required by Resolution 24/02. The first phase of the project, funded by an EU grant (**EU1317**), comprised a scoping study to design the functional and technical specifications for the register system. The second phase, funded by the IOTC regular budget, saw the creation of the DFAD register, eDFAD, and was completed in December 2025. A Pilot phase ran from January to June 2026, during which the application remained open for user testing, and e-DFAD became fully operational as of 1 July 2026. The development team continues to provide user support, training, application maintenance, and bug fixing under the IOTC regular budget. Enhancement and extension of the system's key features, as requested by users, is expected to be carried out from 2027 onwards, with potential funding from SWIOIP 1.2

The Indian Ocean Digital Atlas (IODA): The Indian Ocean Digital Atlas (IODA) forms part of the tools requested in Res 25/01, to provide the SC with an easy access to oceanographic and climate data, for a better integration of such information in the development of management measures, and to support climate changes related research, the IODA has been designed to explore ocean data in the three dimensions (longitude, latitude, depth) over time (since 1993) in the simplest possible way. Francis Marsac, an expert oceanographer and fisheries scientist, and Eric Noel, an IT engineer, were recruited in 2026 to develop the IODA, funded under the IOTC regular budget. The work was

conducted from March to June 2026 with further minor complementary tasks being developed in July-August to allow the tool to be fully delivered for the WP on Ecosystems and Bycatch in September 2026. During WPEB22, Francis Marsac also organised a tutorial session on the margins of the meeting to familiarise interested participants with the use of IODA.

Shark research plan workshop: In July 2026, the IOTC Secretariat organised a workshop, in collaboration of the current and former WPEB Chairs, supported under IOTC regular budget, to update the Shark Research Plan (SRP), first adopted in 2014 to guide research on shark biology, ecology, and fisheries interactions and to support implementation of the FAO IPOA-Sharks. The workshop was held in response to a request from the WPEB and Resolution 25/08, which called for the plan's development. The workshop brought together CPC representatives, regional experts, and partner institutions to assess progress since 2014, identify remaining data and knowledge gaps, and review the continued relevance of existing research priorities in light of new scientific and policy developments. The workshop developed a structured work plan for 2026–2030 that covers key research themes, capacity-building, and avenues for collaboration amongst CPCs. The resulting updated SRP is intended to serve as a unifying reference for IOTC Members, that will assist in the improvement of consistency in in data collection. The SRP outlines potential for joint species stock or risk assessments and supports compliance with global conservation commitments.

Participation in external meetings and workshops. The IOTC Secretariat science officers participated several workshops in 2026 including (1) Global tuna RFMO management strategy evaluation workshop, Rome, 20-22 January; (2) "Distributional issues around tuna fisheries" workshop, Sete, 24–25 March 2026; (3) GEO Blue Planet Fisheries Workshop, London & Online, 21-22 April 2026; (4) Sharks International conference, Colombo, 1-10 May; (5) Regional Technical Workshop on Introduction from the Sea for Southeast Asian and East Asian countries (CITES), online, 3 August; (6) Ocean Foundation MSE web seminar on MSE exceptional circumstances, online, 23 July; (7) "FAO-CITES Regional Workshop on CITES and Fisheries for Countries in Africa", online from 29 September – 1 October; (8) Regional workshop on conservation and management of sharks and rays in the Western Indian Ocean, online 13-15 October; and (9) ICCAT Workshop on the Bycatch Research and Data Collection Programme (BReP), online, 27 to 30 October. The Science Officers presented information to the meetings on the relevant information and progress that IOTC has made on these topics.

IOTC publications and information products Documents

In 2026, the Secretariat (including consultants) produced 72 (77 in 2025, 90 in 2024, 83 in 2023, 91 in 2022, 77 in 2021, 59 in 2020, 71 in 2019 and 62 in 2018) papers/reports (Appendix II) in support of the IOTC Science process, not including the reports of the various working parties and working groups (16) or the species Executive Summaries (26).

EC1350 and **SWIOP** also provide additional support for fisheries data management, biological sampling and scientific capacity development. Their activities include modernisation of information systems, improvements to coastal fisheries data collection and processing, harmonisation of biological sampling, and regional training. The principal data-related components are summarised in IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-09.

5. ***Appendices***

Appendix I: List of Chairs, Vice-Chairs and their respective terms for IOTC Science meetings.

Appendix II: Papers from the IOTC Secretariat (or co-authorship) submitted to the IOTC Working Parties or Scientific Committee in 2026.

Appendix III: IOTC Extra-Budgetary Funded Projects related to science

APPENDIX I

List of Chairs, Vice-Chairs and their respective terms for the IOTC Scientific Committee and its subsidiary bodies

Group	Chair/Vice-Chair	Chair	CPC/Affiliation	1st Term commencement date	Term expiration date (End date is until replacement is elected)	Comments
SC	Chair	Dr Sylvain Bonhommeau	EU,France	6-Dec-2025	End of SC in 2027	1st term
	1st Vice-Chair	Dr Jiangfeng Zhu	China	6-Dec-2025	End of SC in 2027	1st term
	2nd Vice-Chair	Dr Charlene da Silva	South Africa	6-Dec-2025	End of SC in 2027	1st term
WPB	Chair	Dr Jie Cao	China	08-Sep-23	End of WPB in 2027	2nd term
	Vice-Chair	Dr Sylvain Bonhommeau	EU,France	08-Sep-23	End of WPB in 2027	2nd term
WPTmT	Chair	Dr Toshihide Kitakado	Japan	29-Jul-22	End of WPTmT in 2028	1st term
	Vice-Chair	Dr Jiangfeng Zhu	China	29-Jul-22	End of WPTmT in 2028	1st term
WPTT	Chair	Dr David Kaplan	EU, France	26-Oct-25	End of WPTT in 2027	1st term
	Vice-Chair	Mr Mohamed Shimal	Maldives	26-Oct-25	End of WPTT in 2027	1st term
WPEB	Chair	Dr Charlene da Silva	South Africa	14-Sept-25	End of WPEB in 2027	1st term
	1st Vice-Chair	Dr Philippe Sabarros	EU,France	14-Sept-25	End of WPEB in 2027	1st term
	2nd Vice-Chair	Dr Yanan Li	China	14-Sept-25	End of WPEB in 2027	1st term
WPNT	Chair	Dr Farhad Kaymaram	I.R. Iran	7-Jul-23	End of WPNT in 2027	2nd term
	Vice-Chair	Mr Bram Setyadji	Indonesia	7-Jul-23	End of WPNT in 2027	2nd term
WPDCS	Chair	Mr Nuwan Gunawardane	Sri Lanka	30-Nov-25	End of WPDCS in 2027	1st term
	Vice-Chair	Dr Yang Wang	China	30-Nov-25	End of WPDCS in 2027	1st term
WPM	Chair	Dr Ann Preece	Australia	29-Oct-25	End of WPM in 2027	1st term
	Vice-Chair	Dr Giancarlo Correa	EU,Spain	29-Oct-25	End of WPM in 2027	1st term
WPSE	Chair	Dr Umi Muawanah	Indonesian	25-Oct-24	End of WPSE in 2028	2nd term
	Vice-Chair	Ms Sheriffa Morel	Seychelles	25-Oct-24	End of WPSE in 2028	2nd term
WGFAD	Chair	Dr Maitane Grande	EU,Spain	09-June-26	End of WGFAD in 2028	1st term
WGEMS	Chair	Dr Don Bromhead	Australia	6-May-25	End of WGEMS in 2027	1st term

	Vice-Chair	Dr Hilario Murua	ISSF	6-May-25	End of WGEMS in 2027	1st term

APPENDIX II

Papers from the IOTC Secretariat (or co-authorship) submitted to the IOTC Working Parties or Scientific Committee in 2026

Document number	Title
6th Ad-hoc Working Group on the Development of Electronic Monitoring Programme Standards	
IOTC-2026-WGEMS06-04	Outcomes of the 30th session of the Commission and the 28th session of the Scientific Committee relating to the WGEMS (IOTC Secretariat)
8th Working Group on FADs	
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-03	Outcomes of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-04	Outcomes of 30th Session of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-05_Rev3	Preliminary evaluation of IOTC Form 3DA implementation and proposed improved dataflow (IOTC secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-10Presentation	e-DFAD: state of play
22nd Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB): Data preparatory meeting	
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (DP)-03	Review of the statistical data available for IOTC bycatch species
28th Working Party on Tropical Tuna (WPTT): Data preparatory meeting	
IOTC-2026-WPTT28(DP)-03	Outcomes of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPTT28 (DP)–04	Outcomes of 30th Session of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPTT28 (DP)-05	Review of Conservation and Management Measures relevant to tropical tuna (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPTT28 (DP)-06	Progress made on the recommendations of WPTT27 (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPTT28 (DP)-07-1	Overview of Indian Ocean tropical tuna fisheries (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPTT28 (DP)-07-2	Overview of Indian Ocean skipjack tuna fisheries (IOTC Secretariat)
16th Session of the IOTC Working Party on Neritic Tunas	
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-03	Outcomes of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-04	Outcomes of the 30th Session of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-05	Review of current Conservation and Management Measures relating to neritic tuna species (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-06	Progress made on the recommendations and requests of WPNT15 and SC28 (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-07	Overview of Indian Ocean neritic tuna and seerfish species fisheries (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-08	Revision of the WPNT Program of Work (2027–2031) (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-14	Stock Assessment of Indian Ocean longtail tuna (Thunnus tonggol) using data-limited methods (Phillips G)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-15	Stock Assessment of Indian Ocean kawakawa (Euthynnus affinis) using data-limited methods (Phillips G)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-16	Stock Assessment of Indian Ocean Narrow-Barred Spanish Mackerel (Scomberomorus commerson) using data-limited methods (Phillips G)
IOTC-2026-WPNT16-17	An application of the Bayesian Length Interval Catch Curve Analysis (FISHBLICC) to Indian Ocean longtail tuna and (Thunnus tonggol) and narrow-barred Spanish mackerel (Scomberomorus commerson) (Fu D)
10th Working Party on Temperate Tuna (WPTmT):	

IOTC-2026-WPTmT10-2	Stock assessment of albacore tuna (Thunnus alalunga) in the Indian Ocean using Stock Synthesis (Rice J)
22nd Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB)	
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (AS)-03	Outcomes of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (AS)-04	Outcomes of the 30th Session of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (AS)-05	Review of Conservation and Management Measures relevant to ecosystems and bycatch (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (AS)-06	Progress made on the recommendations and requests of WPEB21 and SC28 (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (AS)-07	Review of the statistical data and fishery trends for ecosystems and bycatch species (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (AS)-07a	Review of the statistical data and fishery trends for FAL, OCS, SPL
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (AS)-08	Status of development and implementation of National Plans of Action for seabirds and sharks, and implementation of the FAO guidelines to reduce marine turtle mortality in fishing operations (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22 (AS)-09	Revision of the WPEB Program of Work (2027–2031) (IOTC Secretariat & Chairperson)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22(AS)-12	Application of per-recruit and length-based data-limited assessment methods to pelagic sharks in the Indian Ocean (Coelho R, Fu D)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22(AS)-15_rev1	Management Procedure for blue shark in the Indian Ocean: current project status (Edwards C)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22(AS)-30	Reconstructing Historical Catch Series for Blue Shark (Prionace glauca) and Shortfin Mako (Isurus oxyrinchus) in the Indian Ocean: Methodological Approaches and Uncertainty Quantification (Rice J)
IOTC-2026-WPEB22(AS)-32	Report of the Indian Ocean shark research plan workshop (Secretariat)
24th Session of the IOTC Working Party on Billfish	
IOTC-2026-WPB24-03	Outcomes of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPB24-04	Outcomes of the 30th Session of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPB24-05	Review of Conservation and Management Measures relevant to billfish (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPB24-06	Progress made on the recommendations and requests of WPB23 and SC28 (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2025-WPB24-07	Review of the statistical data available for Indian Ocean billfish (1950-2025) (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2025-WPB24-08	Revision of the WPB Program of Work (2027-2031) (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2025-WPB24-24	Preliminary exploration of CPUE standardization of swordfish using IOTC catch effort dataset (Fu D)
IOTC-2025-WPB23-27	Indian Ocean Swordfish Stock Assessment 1950-2024 (Stock Synthesis) (Phillips G)
17th Working Party on Methods	
IOTC-2026- WPM17-03	Outcomes of the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026- WPM17-04	Outcomes of the 29th Session of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026- WPM17-05	Review of Conservation and Management Measures relating to methods (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026- WPM17-06	Progress made on the recommendations and requests of WPM15 and SC27 (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026- WPM17-07	Revision of the WPM Program of Work (2027–2031) (IOTC Secretariat & Chairpersons)
IOTC-2026- WPM17-18	Management procedures for blue shark in the Indian Ocean: current project status (Edward C)
28th Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tunas: Assessment Meeting	
IOTC-2026-WPTT28-05	Revision of the WPTT program of work (2027-2031) (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WPTT28-18	Preliminary 2026 stock assessment of skipjack tuna
IOTC-2026-WPTT28-07 IOTC-2026-WPTT28-07a	Overview of Indian Ocean tropical tuna fisheries (Secretariat) Review of Indian Ocean skipjack tuna statistical data (Secretariat)
22nd Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics	
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-03	Outcomes of the 28th session of the SC

IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-04	Outcomes of the 30th session of the Commission
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-05	Review of current data-related CMMs and data reporting forms updates
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-06	Updated calculations of tropical tuna and swordfish catch limits for 2027 / 2028
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-07	Report on IOTC data section activities
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-08	2025 Fisheries Data Reporting to the IOTC: Status and Issues
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-09	Review of statistical data reported by CPCs exhibiting significant changes in recent years
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-10	Compilation and review of discard data reported to the IOTC
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-11	Evaluation of IOTC Form 3DA implementation and proposed improvements
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-12	Progress on the Regional Observer Scheme (ROS) system
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-13	Regional Observer Scheme data review
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-19	Update of IOTC coastal fisheries characterization with the FAO matrix approach
IOTC-2026-WPDCS22-29	Estimating the required catch sample weight for small-scale purse seiners in Thailand's Andaman Sea
29th Session of the Scientific Committee	
IOTC–2026–SC29–03	Outcomes of the 30th Session of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC–2026–SC29–04	Previous decisions of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC–2026–SC29–05	Report of the Secretariat – Activities in support of the IOTC science process in 2026 (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC–2026–SC29–06	Status of development and implementation of national plans of action for seabirds and sharks, and implementation of the FAO guidelines to reduce marine turtle mortality in fishing operations (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC–2026–SC29–07	Update on the implementation of the regional observer scheme (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC–2026–SC29–08	Revision of the program of work (2027–2031) for the IOTC science process (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC–2026–SC29–09	Proposed schedule of Working Party and Scientific Committee meetings for 2027 and 2028 (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC–2026–SC29–10	Progress on SC28 recommendations (IOTC Secretariat)

APPENDIX III
IOTC Extra-Budgetary Funded Projects related to Science

Project No.	Area of Work	Donor	Description	Total Funding Amount US$	Start Date	End date
GCP/INT/1350/EC	Science	EC	Support to the IOTC Scientific and Compliance Committees programmes of work (2026 and 2027)	570,693	01/01/2026	31/12/2027
MPF Extra-budgetary	Meetings	China	Extra funds for meeting participation	18,000	01/01/2026	31/12/2026