Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
Commission des Thons de l'Ocean Indien
iotc ctoi

IOTC–2026–SC29-09[E]

PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF IOTC WORKING PARTY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2027 AND 2028

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT AND SC CHAIRPERSON, 30 OCTOBER 2026

PURPOSE

To provide the Scientific Committee (SC) with the proposed list of dates and locations for each Working Party and Scientific Committee meeting to be held in 2027 and 2028, for its consideration.

BACKGROUND

The number of IOTC working party meetings has increased in recent years and the current length and timing of these meetings continues to stretch the limited resources of the IOTC Secretariat and CPCs alike. As such, in recent years, the IOTC Secretariat has made efforts to increase the level of efficiency (e.g. monetary and time) of the IOTC scientific process. In addition, it is necessary to plan two years in advance to give potential hosts enough time to incorporate meeting costs into their budgets.

DISCUSSION

In recent years, there has been substantial discussion among participating IOTC scientists aimed at encouraging, wherever it is logical/feasible, the consolidation of IOTC meetings thereby reducing the financial and logistical burden upon the IOTC. Discussion has revolved around what would be the most sensible combination of working party meetings and the timing of those meetings, taking into account data reporting deadlines and other timing demands. It has been suggested that where feasible meetings should be held in localities most relevant to the participating CPCs. This would help increase the profile of the work that the IOTC is undertaking by exposing scientists from the region to fisheries matters most relevant to their own fleets.

The need for forward planning is highlighted by the fact that many of those invited to attend IOTC meetings as Invited Experts have indicated that their schedules are often planned more than 12 months in advance. As such, there is a clear need to secure meeting dates and locations well in advance.

In identifying potential venues and dates for IOTC meetings, other key international meetings in 2027 need to be considered:

2027 IOTC Meetings (non-scientific)

- Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria (TCAC): 1 to 4 February
- Working Party on Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM): 25-27 January
- 1st Special Session of the Compliance Committee: 28-29 January
- Working Party on Social-Economics (WPSE): 1-2 April
- Compliance Committee (CoC): 3-5 May
- The Standing Committee on Administration and Finance (SCAF): 6 May
- Technical Committee on Management Procedures: 8 May
- Commission (S31): 10 to 14 May

Proposed revisions to working party meetings scheduling

There have been a number of proposed revisions to the usual scheduling of working party meetings in recent years.

Meeting structure and operations

In 2025, the SC made several observations about the future of meeting formats (IOTC-2025-SC28-R):

(para 250) The SC **NOTED** the importance of supporting participation through the use of hybrid meeting formats, while also **NOTED** the need to discuss the constraints this presents.

(para 251) The SC **NOTED** that the costs associated with the audio-visual equipment required to hold hybrid meetings are very high, particularly for meetings held in Seychelles, and that this is leading to increasing reluctance among CPCs to host meetings. The SC also **NOTED** issues during meetings where online participants request special arrangements for presentations and may not be following the proceedings closely, leading to repetition of questions and discussions. However, the SC **NOTED** that many CPCs have constraints on their human resources which make it challenging to attend all meetings in person despite the support of the MPF and so highlighted the need of such CPCs to maintain meetings in a hybrid format where possible.

(para 252) The SC further **NOTED** concerns that the Secretariat may be under-resourced and overstretched to manage these arrangements effectively. However, it was **AGREED** that this issue would be more appropriately addressed at the Commission level. The SC **SUGGESTED** that SCAF could be dedicated to discussing matters related to the MPF and resources required for meetings.

In 2026, the Commission adopted several measures to strength the operations of IOTC meetings, based on feedback from the Feedback from the Small Working Group on reviewing IOTC Processes

Para 15. The Commission **ENDORSED** the following process to ensure participation is properly endorsed and vetted prior to the meeting commencing:

i. All interested participants are required to register online using the web form provided on the meeting webpage. A deadline for registration of 5 days before the meeting commences will be implemented and the ability to register online will be removed at this time.
ii. The registration list will be sent by the Secretariat to Heads of Delegations and/or pre-specified Alternates for validation. Only registered and validated participants will be permitted to attend IOTC meetings. Should a delegation not respond to the Secretariats request for validation, the participants will be informed and asked to contact their delegation to endorse their participation. A non-response will not constitute consent for a participant to attend the meeting for which they have registered. In such cases, participants may be granted provisional attendance status pending endorsement, but will not be able to participate in technical discussions and present documents until validation is received.
iii. Member states may choose to submit a list of pre-authorized participants (which may be updated at any time) that may register and attend the IOTC meetings. These individuals will still be required to register online, but they will automatically be considered to be validated by the HOD/Alt.
iv. HODs or pre-specified Alternates may submit in writing, nominations to a meeting after the 5 day deadline as it will be considered that these participants have been pre-approved by their delegations and do not require validation.

Para 16. The Commission **ENDORSED** the recommendation that a cover sheet be attached to each document upon submission, ensuring that the main elements of the document are immediately clear for both the chair and participants.

Para 17. The Commission **AGREED** that information papers should not be presented during meetings and should be kept for background information purposes only.

Para 18. The Commission **NOTED** that two of the remaining recommendations by the small working group were addressed in the proposed revisions to the Rules of Procedure (ROPs), as noted in Section 7.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Scientific Committee:

1) **DISCUSS** the structure and scheduling of meetings across the working parties and **AGREE** on the best format in terms of data preparation, stock assessment cycles and meeting duration.
2) **FINALISE** the draft schedule of IOTC Working Party meetings and the Scientific Committee meeting for 2027 and 2028 (Appendix I).
3) **RECOMMEND** that the Commission endorse the schedule of IOTC Working Party meetings and the Scientific Committee meeting to be held in 2027 and 2028.

APPENDIX I

DRAFT: SCHEDULE OF IOTC WORKING PARTY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETINGS (2027 AND 2028)

Dates and locations

	2027			2028		
Meeting	**No.**	**Date**	***Location**	**No.**	**Date**	***Location**
Management Strategy Evaluation Task Force of the Working Party on Methods (WPM)	18th	22 – 24 March	Virtual	18th	March	Virtual
Working Party on Social-Economics (WPSE)	4rd	1-2 April (2d)	Virtual	5th	April	Virtual
Ad hoc Working Group on Electronic Monitoring Systems (WGEMS)	7th	12-13 April (2d)	Virtual	8th	April	Virtual
Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (Data Preparatory meeting) (WPEB-DP)	23nd	14-16 April (3d)	Virtual			
Working Group on FADs (WGFAD)	9th	7-8 June (2d)	Virtual	10th	June	Virtual
Working Party on Tropical Tunas (Data Preparatory meeting) (WPTT-DP)	29th	9-11 June (3d)	Virtual	30th	June	Virtual
Working Party on Neritic Tunas (WPNT)	11th	5-8 July	Virtual	12th	July	
Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB)	23nd	7-11 September (5d) (with WPB)	China	24rd	September (5d) (with WPB)	TBC
Working Party on Billfish (WPB)	25th	13-16 September (4d) (with WPEB)	China	26th	September (4d) (with WPEB)	TBC
Working Party on Tropical Tunas (Assessment meeting) (WPTT-AS)	29th	19 October – 23 October (5d) (with WPM)	TBC	30th	October (5d) (with WPM)	TBC
Working Party on Methods (WPM)	18th	25-27 October (2d) (with WPTT)	TBC	19th	October (2d) (with WPTT)	TBC
Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS)	23nd	23 – 27 November (5d) (with SC)	TBC	24rd	November (5d)	TBC
Scientific Committee (SC)	30th	29 November - 3 December (5d)	TBC	31th	December (5d)	TBC

*In accordance with the SC Recommendations, Data Preparatory and Working Group meetings will remain virtual. The Secretariat will endeavour to ensure all remaining meetings are held in a hybrid format if possible.