PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 28th SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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PURPOSE

To provide participants at the 29th Scientific Committee (SC) with an update on the progress made in implementing the recommendations from the previous SC meeting, and to provide alternative recommendations for the consideration and potential endorsement by participants as appropriate given any progress.

BACKGROUND

At the 28th Session of the SC, participants agreed on a series of actions to be taken by participants, CPCs, and the IOTC Secretariat on a range of issues. The subsequent table developed and agreed to by the SC was endorsed at its December 2025 meeting.

DISCUSSION

The Rules of Procedure of the Scientific Committee include the following seven core tasks, which are to be supported by the various Working Parties.

a) recommend policies and procedures for the collection, processing, dissemination and analysis of fishery data;
b) facilitate the exchange and critical review among scientists of information on research and operation of fisheries of relevance to the Commission;
c) develop and coordinate cooperative research programmes involving Members of the Commission in support of fisheries management;
d) assess and report to the Commission on the status of stocks of relevance to the Commission and the likely effects of further fishing and of different fishing patterns and intensities;
e) formulate and report to the sub-commission, as appropriate, on recommendations concerning conservation, fisheries management and research, including consensus, majority and minority views;
f) consider any matter referred to by the Commission;
g) carry out other technical activities of relevance to the Commission.

Recalling that the SC, at its 16th Session adopted a set of reporting terminology SC16.07 (para23), which was subsequently endorsed by the Commission at its 18th Session in 2014 (S18, para 10), to further improve the clarity of information sharing from, and among the science bodies, the following two term levels should be noted when interpreting the Reports and Appendix I to this paper:

Level 1: From a subsidiary body of the Commission to the next level in the structure of the Commission:

RECOMMENDED, **RECOMMENDATION**: Any conclusion or request for an action to be undertaken, from a subsidiary body of the Commission (Committee or Working Party), which is to be formally provided to the next level in the structure of the Commission for its consideration/endorsement (e.g. from a Working Party to the Scientific Committee; from a Committee to the Commission). The intention is that the higher body will consider the recommended action for endorsement under its own mandate, if the subsidiary body does not already have the required mandate. Ideally this should be task specific and contain a timeframe for completion.

Level 2: From a subsidiary body of the Commission to a CPC, the IOTC Secretariat, or other body (not the Commission) to carry out a specified task:

REQUESTED: This term should only be used by a subsidiary body of the Commission if it does not wish to have the request formally adopted/endorsed by the next level in the structure of the Commission. For example, if a Committee wishes to seek additional input from a CPC on a particular topic, but does not wish to formalise the request beyond the mandate of the Committee, it may request that a set action be undertaken. Ideally this should be task specific and contain a timeframe for the completion.

The Recommendations endorsed by the SC at its 28th Session are contained in Appendix I for the consideration, review of progress, and revision/reiteration as necessary by the SC28. The SC participants are also encouraged to review the Progress on the Recommendations of Working Parties prepared by the Secretariat and presented to each Working Party for their consideration and revision.

RECOMMENDATION

That the SC:

1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2026–SC29–10 which detailed the progress made in implementing the recommendations and the requests of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC28);
2) **AGREE** to consider and revise as necessary, the recommendations, and for these to be combined with any new recommendations arising from SC29.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Progress made on the Recommendations of SC28.

SC28 Report	SC recommendations	Update/Progress
SC28.09 (para 30)	***National Reports from CPCs*** The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Compliance Committee and Commission note the lack of compliance by 2 Contracting Parties (Members) that did not submit a National Report to the Scientific Committee in 2025, **NOTING** that the Commission agreed that the submission of the annual reports to the Scientific Committee is mandatory**.**	**Update:** Ongoing. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 19) The Commission **NOTED** that 28 National Reports were submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2025 by CPCs and that this was an increase when compared with the 27 reports provided by CPCs in 2024.
SC28.10 (para 71)	***Report of the 15th Session of the Working Party on Neritic Tunas (WPNT15)*** **ACKNOWLEDGING** the difficulties associated with deriving geo-referenced size-frequency data at the spatial resolution of 5° grids in most coastal longline and surface fisheries, and the fact that most analyses currently used in the assessments, do not require such fine resolution, the SC **RECOMMENDED** the Commission to align the spatial resolution of size-frequency data with that of geo-referenced catch and effort data. Consequently, the data may be provided using an alternative geographical area if it better represents the fishery concerned. The SC **NOTED** that this recommendation is relevant for many IOTC species and has been reiterated by other WPs	**Update:** Ongoing. The Commission has adopted Resolution 26/06 (On Mandatory Statistical Reporting Requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties) which supersedes Resolution 15/02. However, the spatial resolution of reporting size frequency data has not been revised.
SC28.11 (para 98)	***Report of the 23th Session of the Working Party on Billfish (WPB23)*** The SC **NOTED** that, for several years, joint analyses combining catch and effort data from major longline fleets have been proposed to improve the CPUE index for billfish species, and that the WPEB had previously recommended investigating methods to compare CPUE indices across fleets and to develop joint CPUE indices for bycatch species. The SC also	**Update:** Ongoing. The Commission has endorsed the recommendation. A Joint tRFMO workshop on longline CPUE was planned to be held in October 2026 which provided a forum to discuss the harmonization of the CPUE standardisation for different fleets and the method to develop Joint index. The

SC28.12 (para 112)	**NOTED** that these joint analyses could harmonize standardization methods, reconcile conflicts between indices developed from different fleets, and potentially produce more robust indices with broader spatial and temporal coverage. The SC further **NOTED** that it is at the discretion of CPCs to determine the feasibility of such collaboration, considering data confidentiality agreements and other logistical arrangements. The SC **AGREED** on the importance of establishing a process to discuss how to move forward. **NOTING** that joint CPUE analysis arrangements already exist for the standardization of tropical and temperate tuna, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission urge CPCs to explore ways to extend joint analyses to non-targeted species, such as marlins. ***Revision of catch levels of marlins under Resolution 18/05*** The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission to give consideration to how best to financially and logistically support an experimental fishing trial with gillnets to be conducted by CPCs which would: ○ Aim to test different setting depths and times of setting/soaking (e.g. day/night), on catch rates and mortality of interacting species ○ Collect data on all interacting species including billfish bycatch, target tuna and vulnerable species (e.g. cetaceans, turtles), in order to provide the Commission a quantified understanding of likely effects and possible trade-offs of various subsurface setting options, on each species ○ Prioritise accurate species identification.	workshop report will soon be published at the workshop website (Global Joint Tuna RFMO Longline CPUE Technical Workshop | FAME) **Update: Ongoing.** *(IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 42) The Commission **NOTED** the SC's recommendation that the Commission give consideration to how best to financially and logistically support experimental fishing trials (to be conducted by CPCs) in IOTC gillnet fisheries. The Commission **NOTED** that the intent of such trials would be to investigate the impact of different setting depths and times of setting/soaking (e.g. day/night), on catch rates and mortality of interacting species including billfish, target tuna and vulnerable species (e.g. including cetaceans, sharks, mobulids and turtles). The trials would aim to provide the Commission with a quantified understanding of the likely effects and possible trade-offs of various setting/soaking time and subsurface setting options, on each species, to inform its consideration of conservation and management options for the different species groups.* *(IOTC-2026-S30-R, para 43) As a first step, the Commission **ENCOURAGED** interested CPCs, including in particular those with gillnet fisheries, to collaborate intersessionally to develop a draft scoping paper that would outline the objectives, need, scope, design criteria, methodology and estimated funding required for conducting such trials. If possible, CPCs could*

		look to identify external funding and then the remaining funding that might be needed from the Commission. ..
	Report of the 21th Session of the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB21)	
SC28.13 (para. 116)	**NOTING** that data for bycatch species in IOTC fisheries are severely lacking, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission and Compliance Committee **ENCOURAGE** CPCs to provide observer data and work to reach at least the 5% minimum coverage level as required by Resolution 25/06.	**Update:** Completed. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 49) The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2025 list of recommendations as its own.
SC28.14 (para. 118)	**NOTING** that Resolution 15/01 includes a list of species for which reporting catch data is mandatory/optional and that varies by gear and by fishery type (i.e. artisanal vs commercial fisheries), the SC **NOTED** that many species of interest to the WPEB are not mandatory for reporting for all gears or fishery type. The SC **NOTED** concerns from some CPCs that making these species mandatory for reporting for all gears and fleets (including artisanal fleets) could place additional burden on many CPCs. This is particularly the case for many coastal fleets which are not necessarily targeting only tuna but instead target a wide range of species, making data collection complex. The SC therefore **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission review the list of species that are mandatory for reporting to species level while considering the feasibility of such data collection for all CPCs. The SC included the following suggested changes: • Silky sharks to be added also for gillnets fisheries • Hammerhead sharks to be reported at species level at least for scalloped, smooth and great • hammerhead sharks for all gear types (explicitly including purse seine fisheries) • Mantas and devil rays to be reported at species level differentiating at least between manta ray (giant manta and	**Update:** ongoing. The Commission has yet to revise Resolution 15/01

	reef manta) and other devil rays adding them for mandatory reporting at least for purse seine fisheries and for gillnet fisheries instead of optional • Great white sharks as mandatory for all gear types • Oceanic whitetip sharks as mandatory for all gear types	
SC28.15 (para. 119)	The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission speak with CPCs to determine appropriate ways to improve data reporting from artisanal fisheries.	**Update:** ongoing.
SC28.16 (para. 120)	The SC **NOTED** that the WPEB had **REVIEWED** the minimum standards set out in Annex III of Resolution 25/08 and **ADOPTED** the revisions made by members of the group which can be found in Annex XVVII of the WPEB report. The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission consider these standards for adoption in 2026. The SC further **NOTED** that work on best practice handling guidelines is ongoing and frequently evolves. The SC therefore **SUGGESTED** that the Commission consider adopting a master document containing handling guidelines for all taxa, rather than requiring Resolutions containing such guidelines to be updated when new information becomes available. Future Resolutions could then refer back to this master document adopted by the SC. The SC **AGREED** that a small working group will work on compiling these intersessionally for review by the SC.	**Update:** Completed. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 49) The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2025 list of recommendations as its own. A master document of the best practice handling guidelines were compiled and developed by a small working group under the WPEB (Appendix XVVII of IOTC-2026-WPEB22-R), to be endorsed by the SC for consideration by the Commission, with the understanding that the master document would be reviewed and updated by the WPEB based on new information.
SC28.17 (para. 121)	The SC **NOTED** that in 2024, the WPEB recommended the adoption of a revised set of handling guidelines for mobulids while **NOTING** that work was required to further develop the guidelines for gillnets. The SC **NOTED** that the WPEB worked to further develop these guidelines which were revised and adopted. The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission consider these revised handling guidelines for mobulids for consideration for adoption in 2026. The details of the suggested revisions to the handling procedures can be found in Appendix XVVI of the WPEB report.	**Update:** Completed. The Commission adopted Resolution 26/03 On the Conservation of Mobulid Rays Caught in Association with Fisheries Managed by IOTC, (the Minimum Standards for Safe Handling and Live Release Procedure in included as ANNEX I in the resolution).

SC28.18 (para. 122)	The SC **NOTED** that while evidence on post-release survival of whale sharks from purse seine interactions suggests low mortality when best-practices are followed, data on bycatch in other fisheries, particularly gillnets, remains scarce. Therefore, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission **ENCOURAGE** CPCs to improve data collection and reporting for interactions with whale sharks involving all gear types as well as purse seine.	**Update:** Ongoing (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 48) The Commission **NOTED** that data currently remain insufficient for a full stock assessment for whale shark, but that ongoing efforts to improve data collection and analysis around the status of the stock, including Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) studies, would contribute to improved understanding of stock status and population structure. The Commission NOTED that the full results of this study will be presented to the WPEB this year/
SC28.19 (para. 123)	SC28.19 (para. 123) The SC **ENCOURAGED** efforts to clarify the extent and nature of whale shark interactions with IOTC fisheries, and to assess the current stock status within the IOTC area of competence, **ACKNOWLEDGING** that the extent of the vulnerability of whale sharks to IOTC fisheries is unknown. Based on the available information presented by the WPEB, the SC classified whale sharks in the Indian Ocean as a "taxon of the greatest biological vulnerability and conservation concern for which there are very few data", as defined in Resolution 25/08 and **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission take appropriate action based on this classification. The SC **NOTED** that this classification supports the consideration of precautionary management measures and prioritization of future research and data collection efforts by the Commission	**Update:** Ongoing (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 47) The Commission **NOTED** that the SC identified whale shark as a taxon with high biological vulnerability and had advised that precautionary measures should be considered.
	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	
SC28.20 (para 125)	The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission note the current status of development and implementation of National Plans of Action (NPOAs) for sharks and seabirds, and the implementation of the FAO guidelines to reduce marine turtle mortality in fishing operations, by each CPC as provided in Appendix 6, recalling that the IPOA-Seabirds and IPOA-Sharks were adopted by the FAO in 1999 and 2000, respectively, and recommended the development of NPOAs.	**Update:** Completed. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 49) The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2025 list of recommendations

SC28.21 (para 145)	***OTHER MATTERS*** The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission **ENCOURAGE** ongoing trials with these gears (i.e., loop gears) to better understand their effect on target and bycatch species.	**Update:** Completed. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 49) The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2025 list of recommendations as its own. A pilot project to study in detail the new terminal gear by the Portuguese pelagic longline fleet operating in the Indian Ocean was presented and discussed at the WPEB22.
	Report of the 16th Session of the Working Party on Methods (WPM16)	
SC28.22 (para 211)	***Bigeye tuna MP (Resolution 22/03)*** 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:	**Update**: Ongoing. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 49) The Commission has yet to adopt new measures for bigeye tuna.
SC28.23 (para 212)	***Skipjack tuna MP (Resolution 24/07)*** The SC **NOTED** the 2025 running of the SKJ MP **NOTING** that the 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	**Update**: Completed. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 49) The Commission ENDORSED the Scientific Committee's 2025 list of recommendations as its own. The implementation of skipjack TAC is mandated by Resolution 25/03
SC28.24 (para 216)	***Swordfish tuna MP (Resolution 24/08)*** The 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.	**Update**: Completed. The Commission adopted Resolution 26/02 On Establishing Interim Catch Limits for Swordfish in the IOTC area of Competence, which established the TAC for swordfish for year 2027-2028
	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.	**Update**: Ongoing.
SC28.26 (para 236)	***Report of the 21th Session of the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS21)*** The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission ensures that the transition from the current website to the FAO one does not affect the operations of the Commission and set aside enough resources for this transition.	**Update**: Ongoing. 173. The Commission **ENDORSED** the SCAF23 list of recommendations as its own, NOTING. • *(Para. 66). The SCAF **RECOMMENDED** that if funds are required for work to migrate IOTC's systems and website to the FAO infrastructure in 2026, they will first be taken from savings in other budget lines, then, only if required, on an exceptional basis, from the Working Capital Fund.*
SC28.27 (para 245)	***Observed issues related to IOTC Working Party meetings*** 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	**Update**: Ongoing. The Commission adopted new measures to enhance the operations of IOTC meetings. Details are available in the Commission report.
SC28.28 (para 260)	***Invited Expert(s) at the WP meetings*** 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	**Update**: Ongoing. The Commission has provided budget for invited experts for 2026.

	working party meetings. The SC **NOTED** that there are generally funds to support 3 or 4 Invited Experts to attend IOTC's working parties.	
SC28.29 (para 262)	***IOTC species identification guides: Tuna and tuna-like species*** 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.	**Update**: Ongoing. Budget has been made available through the IOTC main budget and the OFCF project to continue the translation of ID cards and this has continued in 2026 and will carry on in 2027.
SC28.30 (para 266)	***General - Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the SC and its subsidiary bodies*** 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.	Update: Completed. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 50) The Commission **ENDORSED** those officials elected for the SC and its subsidiary (scientific) bodies for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2025 Scientific Committee Report.
SC28.31 (para 293)	***General - Consultants*** **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.	**Update:** Ongoing. Several consultants were contracted in 2026.
SC28.32 (para. 295)	***Data preparatory meetings and Hybrid meetings*** **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.	**Update:** Completed. All data preparatory meetings for stock assessments, and working group meetings (WGFAD and WGEMS) were held virtually in 2026.

SC28.33 (para 303)	***REVIEW OF THE DRAFT, AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 28TH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE*** The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission consider the consolidated set of recommendations arising from SC28, provided at Appendix 40.	**Update**: Completed. (IOTC-2026-S30-R, Para 49) The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2025 list of recommendations as its own.