OUTCOMES OF THE 30TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

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Purpose

This paper aims to inform participants at the 22nd Session of the IOTC Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS22) of the main decisions and discussions arising from the 30th Session of the Commission (S30), held in the Maldives from 11 to 15 May 2026, that are relevant to data collection, statistical reporting and the work of the WPDCS.

The WPDCS is invited to:

1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2026–WPDCS22–04, outlining the outcomes of S30 relevant to the work of the WPDCS, including the Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) adopted in 2026;

2) **CONSIDER** the implications of the new statistical reporting requirements under Resolution 26/06, particularly those concerning spatial catch attribution, historical data revisions, vessel statistics and data submission procedures, taking account of its entry-into-force status and objections;

3) **PROVIDE ADVICE** on the proposed approach for reporting catches by national jurisdictional area and high seas under Resolution 26/06, including the revision of IOTC statistical reporting forms and the use of geographical reference data to support catch attribution.

Abstract

This paper summarises the main outcomes of the 30th Session of the IOTC Commission relevant to the WPDCS, with particular emphasis on Conservation and Management Measures adopted in 2026 and their implications for fisheries data collection, reporting and management.

Background

At its 30th Session, the Commission considered 17 proposals for Conservation and Management Measures and adopted eight Resolutions (S30, paras. 84–85):

- Resolution 26/01: On establishing interim catch limits for yellowfin tuna in the IOTC Area of Competence
- Resolution 26/02: On establishing interim catch limits for swordfish in the IOTC Area of Competence
- Resolution 26/03: On the conservation of mobulid rays caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC
- Resolution 26/04: Concerning the IOTC record of vessels authorised to operate in the IOTC Area of Competence
- Resolution 26/05: On establishing a programme for transhipment by large-scale fishing vessels
- Resolution 26/06: Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)
- Resolution 26/07: On the promotion of the implementation of IOTC Conservation and Management Measures
- Resolution 26/08: On promoting the objectives of IOTC through cooperation with the BBNJ Agreement.

Discussion

Statistical reporting requirements – Resolution 26/06

Resolution 26/06 Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) was adopted by the Commission at its 30th Session to replace Resolution 15/02. As of 10 November 2026, Somalia had lodged an objection to Resolution 26/06. Following an extension of the objection period, the Resolution is scheduled to enter into force on 18 November 2026, subject to any further objections.

While retaining most of the existing statistical reporting requirements, the Resolution introduces several changes of relevance to the work of the WPDCS:

- **Geographical attribution of catches** (para. 4(d)–(f)): CPCs are required to report annual catches from surface and longline fisheries separately for areas under their national jurisdiction, the high seas, and areas under the jurisdiction of other coastal States, including catches taken under access or chartering arrangements. These requirements also apply to the most commonly caught elasmobranch species
- **Historical geospatial data** (para. 4(e)): CPCs shall provide historical geospatial catch-and-effort data, to the extent possible, within three years of the adoption of the Resolution. These data are to be validated and endorsed by the WPDCS and Scientific Committee
- **Coastal fisheries** (para. 4(c)): Catch, fishing gear and effort data are to be submitted annually, replacing the previous requirement for frequent reporting of fishing gear and effort
- **Fishing vessel statistics** (para. 7): From 1 January 2030, CPCs shall provide annual aggregated statistics on vessels contributing to reported catches. These statistics should include information on the fishery, vessel type, mechanisation, onboard fish preservation and vessel size class

- **Historical data revisions** (para. 8(d)): Developing coastal CPCs with limited data collection and validation systems may request an extension of the two-year timeline for historical data revisions, up to a maximum of five years. Such requests must be supported by a detailed plan and, if approved, followed by annual progress reports to the WPDCS

- The Resolution also updates references to other CMMs concerning the reporting of non-target species and the characteristics of fish aggregating devices (FADs).

To support the implementation of the new geographical reporting requirements, the Secretariat has initiated the revision of IOTC reporting Forms 1RC and 1DI to allow CPCs to report catches by national jurisdictional area and high seas. The Secretariat is also exploring the development of tools to facilitate the attribution of catches to these areas using geo-referenced fishing-operation data and spatial reference layers. The geographical reference data and associated attribution procedures, particularly for disputed areas, will require further technical review and consultation with CPCs.

Other CMMs with data-related provisions

- **Resolution 26/01 (yellowfin tuna)**: Establishes interim CPC-specific catch limits; catch estimates and their attribution are relevant to implementation. The Commission **REQUESTED** that future catch-limit estimates and Circulars separate catches for China and Taiwan, Province of China (S30, para. 88)

- **Resolution 26/02 (swordfish)**: Establishes interim catch limits implementing the management procedure under Resolution 25/07 (S30, para. 94); reliable catch data are needed to monitor implementation

- **Resolution 26/03 (mobulid rays)**: Includes reporting of interactions, discards and releases through logbooks or observer programmes, in addition to conservation provisions

- **Resolution 26/04 (authorised vessels):** Updates reporting of authorised vessels and their characteristics. The proposed expansion of the record to better encompass coastal fleets was not included in the adopted Resolution (S30, para. 99)

- **Resolution 26/05 (transhipment):** Revises the transhipment monitoring programme, including authorisations, declarations, observer information and annual reporting.

The remaining Resolutions, 26/07 and 26/08, concern implementation of CMMs and cooperation with the BBNJ Agreement, respectively, and are not discussed in detail here.

Other Commission discussions of interest to the WPDCS

Catch data quality, revisions and observer coverage

(S30, para. 35) The Commission **NOTED** concerns regarding substantial revisions to catch data submitted by some CPCs and the significant impacts these revisions may have on stock assessments. The Commission further **NOTED** the view that finalisation of catch data should be prioritised prior to undertaking assessments.

(S30, para. 37) The Commission **NOTED** that mandatory species-level reporting remains challenging for some CPCs in relation to their artisanal fleets and **AGREED** on the need for practical and achievable pathways to improve data recording and reporting.

(S30, para. 38) The Commission **NOTED** that the 5% minimum observer coverage required by Resolution 25/06 has not been achieved by some CPCs.

(S30, para. 39) The Commission **NOTED** the importance of joint longline CPUE indices for stock assessments and concerns regarding previous errors, as well as the need for greater transparency in future analyses.

DFAD registry and data standardisation

(S30, paras. 69–72) The Commission discussed outstanding questions concerning notifications of buoy deactivation, associated geographic coordinates, exchanges of FADs and buoys between vessels and changes to FAD designs. Several questions were referred to the WPICMM.

(S30, para. 73) The Commission **AGREED** that a standardised format for buoy identifiers would improve data quality and should be implemented, with further development by the Secretariat and members.

(S30, para. 74) The Commission **AGREED** to extend the mandatory testing phase by 30 days and launch the DFAD register by 1 July 2026.

Historical catches, allocation and artisanal fisheries

(S30, para. 133) The Commission **NOTED** unresolved TCAC issues including the attribution of historical catches, jurisdictional considerations and the treatment of artisanal and coastal fisheries

(S30, para. 135(g)–(h)) Some CPCs considered that an agreed definition and treatment of artisanal fisheries was fundamental to allocation; others considered that the definition should be referred to other subsidiary bodies, including the WPDCS. Par virement