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COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON FISHERY STATISTICS

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IOTC activities report to CWP

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I. Introduction

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) is an intergovernmental organisation responsible for the management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean.

Its main objective is to promote cooperation among Contracting Parties (Members) and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, with a view to ensuring, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilisation of stocks covered by the organisation's establishing Agreement and encouraging sustainable development of fisheries based on such stocks.

The Commission has four key functions and responsibilities which enable it to achieve its objectives. They are drawn from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and are:

- to **keep under review the conditions and trends of the stocks** and to gather, analyse and disseminate scientific information, catch and effort statistics and other data relevant to the conservation and management of the stocks and to fisheries based on the stocks;
- to encourage, recommend, and **coordinate research and development activities in respect of the stocks and fisheries** covered by the IOTC, and such other activities as the Commission may decide appropriate (such as transfer of technology, training and enhancement) having due regard to the need to ensure the equitable participation of Members of the Commission in the fisheries and the special interests and needs of Members in the region that are developing countries;
- to **adopt – on the basis of scientific evidence – Conservation and Management Measures (CMM)** to ensure the conservation of the stocks covered by the Agreement and to promote the objective of their optimum utilisation throughout the Area;
- to **keep under review the economic and social aspects of the fisheries** based on the stocks covered by the Agreement bearing in mind, in particular, the interests of developing coastal States.

II. Review of relevant IOTC activities since CWP-25 (2016)

Improvement in the quality and timeliness of statistical data submitted by CPCs

[**SDG 14.4**¹] Late or incomplete reporting of the main statistical datasets² compromises the validation and verification of data by the IOTC Secretariat, as well as the data available for stock assessments, especially when data are submitted close to (or during) Working Party meetings. A number of activities aimed at improving both the timeliness and the quality of the reported information have been performed since CWP-25 and include:

1. Revision of IOTC data reporting templates and guidelines;
2. Ad-hoc support to CPCs to facilitate the reporting of mandatory data according to IOTC specifications, or CPCs transitioning towards more streamlined data collection and reporting processes (e.g., I.R. Iran, Kenya, Pakistan, Indonesia);
3. Revision of historical time series for some important species under IOTC mandate, in collaboration with national scientists;
4. Roll-out of the e-MARIS platform, for the future electronic monitoring and reporting of all statistical data (among others) by IOTC CPCs;

Support to the implementation of the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme

[**SDG 14.4**] IOTC Resolution 11/04 (“*On a Regional Observer Scheme*”, 2011) aims at collecting verified catch data and other scientific information related to the fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC area of competence. Since its inception, implementation of the ROS remained very low among CPCs due to a number of different factors.

With the entry in force of IOTC Resolution 16/04 (“*On the implementation of a pilot project in view of promoting the Regional Observer Scheme of IOTC*”, 2016) a number of initiatives to promote and support scientific observer data collection and reporting have been carried on by the IOTC Secretariat, including:

1. Thorough review and revision of the ROS data reporting requirements (ROS Expert Consultation Workshop, 9/2018);
2. Design and implementation of electronic tools to support data collection, management and reporting to the regional level (i.e., ROS e-tools, developed in collaboration with NOAA, WWF, SIOTI³);
3. Incorporation of historical observer data within the IOTC Observer ‘Regional database’ previously reported to the IOTC Secretariat in hard-copy or other electronic formats unsuitable for automated processing;
4. Delivery of national workshops (Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Mauritius) for the adoption of the ROS e-tools;
5. Feasibility study to trial electronic monitoring systems on-board small-scale coastal gillnet and gillnet / longline vessels in Sri Lanka;
6. Assessment of crew-based data collection programs as a possible complement to the collection of independent scientific observer data (WWF Pakistan).

Capacity building activities

[**SDG 14.4, SDG 14.A**⁴] Delivering activities in support of developing coastal states is one of the main goals and functions of the IOTC Secretariat. Since CWP-25, capacity building has been provided directly by the

¹ SDG 14.4 : *By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics*

² Nominal catches, catch-and-effort, size-frequency and discards information as per IOTC Resolution 15/02

³ Sustainable Indian Ocean Tuna Initiative.

⁴ SDG 14.A - *Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries*

IOTC Secretariat and also in collaboration with external partners (e.g., OFCF⁵ / EU DG-Mare) in a number of different fields including:

1. Data compliance and technical support missions (Tanzania, Mauritius, Indonesia, I.R. Iran, Maldives, Sri Lanka, La Réunion, Kenya);
2. IOTC-OFCE projects implementation (Indonesia – pilot sampling of artisanal fisheries / One Data Initiative, Seychelles – Fisheries Satellite Account);
3. Sports Fishery project (Seychelles, La Réunion, Kenya, Mauritius).

Improvement in the dissemination of all relevant data sets and related assets

[**SDG 14.A**] All information received, validated, managed and produced by the IOTC Secretariat (e.g., statistical data sets, stock assessment input files, scientific documents and reports) is usually disseminated through the IOTC website, in a relatively unstructured and non-interoperable way that does not fully comply to the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable).

A number of initiatives from the IOTC Secretariat have been put in place since CWP-25 (or are about to start) to ensure that access to all publicly available IOTC assets of scientific relevance can be streamlined and improved, by:

1. Contributing to the harmonization exercises promoted by the CWP *ad-hoc* Task Group on reference harmonization for capture fisheries and aquaculture;
2. Standardizing the provisions of IOTC data to the Global Tuna Atlas (Level 0 data set);
3. Streamlining the provision of IOTC stock statuses to FIRMS;
4. Contributing to the OpenAIRE project (IRD), to seamlessly obtain and disseminate a DOI⁶ for all relevant data sets and scientific papers managed by IOTC;
5. Disseminating collated scientific observer information through the ROS Regional Database.

Other science and compliance-related activities

[**SDG 14.C**⁷] The IOTC Secretariat is also involved in a number of other sub-projects and activities that do not necessarily fall into the categories above, yet are of relevance to the CWP audience, namely:

1. Updating the IOTC Record of Authorised Vessels (RAV) as well as the IOTC list of IUU-Vessels and the list of Authorised Supply Vessels (as per IOTC Resolution 18/01);
2. Support the operation of the Consolidated List of Authorised Vessels (CLAV), a tuna-org initiative in which the IOTC Secretariat acts as both data and service provider (through dedicated hosting of the platform);
3. Manage the information collected through the e-PSM platform, an IOTC-specific electronic implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement;
4. [**SDG 14.4**] Maintain the IO-RTTP database, containing the tagging information collected through the Regional Tuna Tagging Program.

⁵ Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan.

⁶ Digital Object Identifier.

⁷ SDG 14.C - *Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want.*