

---

**PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT**

Submitted by: IOTC Secretariat

---

**ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

**Membership**

1. The United Republic of Tanzania has acceded to the IOTC Agreement on April 18, 2007. Belize has submitted its instrument of acceptance on April 12th (although it has not been received yet at the Office of the D-G), and Indonesia is in the final stages of accession, following the final approval by presidential decree of March 5th. Currently, the 25 Members are Australia, People's Republic of China, Comoros, Eritrea, European Community (Member Organization), France, Guinea, India, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Kingdom and Vanuatu. The Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties are Belize, Indonesia, Senegal and South Africa.

**Staff issues**

2. Translation services continue to be outsourced. To-date this has been an efficient approach and has resulted in considerable savings in staff costs. Unless there is a substantial increase in the workload concerning translation, outsourcing these services would appear to be an effective way of proceeding under the current budget limits.

3. Mrs Claudia Marie has been hired locally for the past eight months on a temporary contract arrangement to provide secretarial services to the Secretariat.

**IOTC MEETINGS**

**Working Parties**

4. The 11th Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tunas took place on 24-28 July 2006, with the participations of 28 scientists from nine countries. The 2nd Session of the Working Party on Bycatch was convened on August 1, 2006 with the participation of 30 scientists. Both meetings were held in Victoria, Seychelles. The Secretariat provided support to these meetings through the preparation of datasets prior and during the meetings and the usual preparation of the meeting reports. Staff from the Secretariat also presented documents which covered status of databases, documentation on datasets preparation and discussion of some methodological issues.

**Organization of Scientific Committee and Commission Sessions**

5. The Secretariat organised the Eighth Session of the Scientific Committee in Seychelles with the attendance of 46 participants comprising 10 member States, the Third Special Session (52 participants comprising 15 member States) and the Tenth Session of the Commission (127 participants comprising 21 member States) in Goa, India following an invitation from the government of India.

**PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL MEETINGS**

6. As Supervisor of the Regional Tuna Tagging Project (RTTP), the Executive Secretary and the Tagging Expert, together with the staff from the Project Management Unit (PMU), attended the second Steering Committee meeting of the RTTP held in Seychelles, on October, 2006, with participation of stakeholders in the RTTP to review the progress. Two meetings of RTTP partners took place in Seychelles and Mauritius with the participation of PMU staff, the Executive Secretary and the Tagging Expert.

7. The Executive Secretary also participated in the second Steering Committee of the Pilot Project on Monitoring Control and Surveillance of the COI in Seychelles in October 2006.

8. The Executive Secretary attended the First Meeting of the Tuna Regional Fishery Management Bodies in Kobe, Japan on January 2007

9. The Executive Secretary attended the 27 th Session of FAO's Committee on Fisheries in Rome in March 2007

10. The Executive Secretary and RTTP staff attended the First Tuna Festival in Chabahar, Iran where they gave presentations on IOTC and the RTTP to representatives from government and industries.

## **CONSULTANCIES AND STAFF MISSIONS**

### **Consultancies**

11. Most of the consultancies during 2006, with the exception of the work by Prof. W. Edeson in preparation for the Eleventh Session, involved work done under the support and funding of the Joint Project between IOTC and the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan (IOTC-OFCF Project) or under the RTTP and other tagging projects and were funded from extra-budgetary resources.

12. Kim Stobberup, a former expert of the Indo-Pacific Tuna Management Programme, was hired to compile and develop a draft of the IOTC Field Manual. The final product will be published in hardcopy during 2007.

13. Ms Pauline Gauffier, a student of the University of Rennes, was hired for a period of six months under a consultancy arrangement to inventoried existing data sources on by-catch for tuna fisheries in the Indian Ocean, recovering as many of these datasets as possible, and establishing a network of scientists, NGOs and other experts interested on the subject.

### **Staff Missions**

14. In addition to attendance at meetings reported upon above, staff from the OFCF project travelled to Kenya and Tanzania to develop country reports for those countries. The Executive Secretary accompanied the mission to Tanzania to brief the Minister of Fisheries on the accession to IOTC.

15. The Data Coordinator travelled to Sri Lanka to coordinate with government officials and aid agencies future work in support of data collection activities in the country.

16. The Data Coordinator travelled to Yemen in March 2007 to assess the situation of the data collection system and study the feasibility of establishing a field programme to improve on the collection of data.

17. Other missions in the context of the IOTC/OFCF projects included trips to Indonesia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka to monitor progress of activities. The sampling programme missions were funded by the OFCF programme and are further reported on below.

18. The Tagging Expert participated in a field tagging experiment in Indonesia, conducted with extra-budgetary funds supplied by the Government of Japan.

## **SECRETARIAT DATA-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

### **Data Acquisition, support to scientific activities and compliance-related activities**

19. A large proportion of the time of the Data Section staff is dedicated is currently devoted to the acquisition and edition of the data required under several IOTC Resolutions. These data are utilized in monitoring compliance or in scientific analyses necessary for the assessment of the status of the stocks.

20. Some of these submissions (like those related to updates in the IOTC Record of Authorised Vessels) require minimal intervention from the Secretariat, other than ensuring a prompt response to a request for modification of the Record by a Member. By contrast, other data submissions, such as the scientific data to be utilized in stock assessments, require processing and validation before they are integrated into the IOTC databases. This processing phase is a major task of the Secretariat as it often leads to several requests for clarifications from data liaison officers.

21. The maintenance of an IOTC Record of Active Vessels, so far a unique activity amongst the tuna regional fishery bodies, requires also active involvement of the staff of the Secretariat, as submissions from various parties often reveal discrepancies and inconsistencies that the staff attempts to resolve through contacts with the various parties involved.

22. Further development of software to automate these data management tasks has continued, in order to improve the ability of the Secretariat to respond to the increasing demands for data services. The Secretariat maintains support and development of FINSS, software for integrated management of fisheries information. Training sessions and deployment of the software are available free of charge to interested parties. Cooperation with the Indian Ocean Commission has continued in developing specific modules for maintenance of licensing information and monitoring of port inspection programmes. Some of this development has also been implemented at the Seychelles Fishing Authority.

23. The Secretariat continues to act as depository for the data of the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), as agreed during the Ninth Session..

24. The Scientific Committee has indicated its desire that the Secretariat increases its current level of support of the activities of the Working Parties, by producing more analyses for review during the meetings. The Secretariat has noted that the current staffing level is insufficient to increase its scientific output, in particular when considering the new obligations on compliance mandate by the Commission and the workload imposed by the supervision of the RTTP.

25. In view of this situation, the Secretariat has prepared, upon the request of the Scientific Committee, a document inviting the Commission to consider a plan for future adjustment of the resources commensurate with current and future requirements.

### **Other Programmes**

26. In addition to the core activities related to data acquisition and processing, the Secretariat staff were involved in two important technical programmes: Supervision of the Regional Tuna Tagging Programme<sup>1</sup>, and other small-scale projects that constitute the Indian Ocean Tuna Tagging Programme (IOTTP) and the IOTC/OFCF2 Project on strengthening of data collection and processing systems in the region.

### **Indian Ocean Tuna Tagging Programme (IOTTP)**

27. The major component of the IOTTP, the Regional Tuna Tagging Project, has surpassed its initial estimates with the release of more than 125,000 tagged fish since April 2005, by the two chartered vessels operating under IOTC supervision. As the Supervisor, the Secretariat is responsible for the overall execution of the project, involving the participation of the Tagging Expert and the Executive Secretary, as well as for the certification of expenditures, approval of reports and technical advice to the Commission de l'Océan Indien, the Contracting Authority for the project. The area of operations of the vessels has been primarily in the south-western Indian Ocean, but in recent months the vessels have operated in the northern Arabian Sea. Scientific personnel from countries in the region have participated in the cruise, receiving training in tagging techniques, and becoming familiar with the objectives of the project.

28. A dedicated Project Management Unit is currently operating in Seychelles, in offices provided by the government of Seychelles, to carry out the main activities of the RTTP, including a Chief Coordinator, a Tag Recovery Officer, three administrative support staff, and six field tag and data collectors.

29. The Secretariat has a major responsibility in the execution of the tag recovery schemes, funded through a Contribution Agreement that was signed between the FAO and the EC Delegation in Mauritius. Tag-recovery efforts, including publicity campaigns, have been set up in the main points of unloading in the Indian Ocean (Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar, Kenya and Tanzania) and in Europe (Spain). Further expansions of the publicity activities have continued in other countries in the region including India, Iran, Oman and Thailand.

30. Tagging activities<sup>3</sup> in the eastern Indian Ocean were conducted in November 2006 with the participation of the Tagging Expert and scientists from Indonesia and Australia, although environmental conditions were not favourable, and future experiments had to be rescheduled. These activities are to be followed, before the end of 2007, by a project in the Andaman Islands, in collaboration with Indian scientists.

---

<sup>1</sup> Funded by the EU under the 9<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund.

<sup>2</sup> OFCF: Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan

<sup>3</sup> Funded by the Government of Japan.

## **IOTC/OFCF Project.**

31. The IOTC/OFCF Project continued its last year of operations during 2006, culminating the first phase on the Project in March 2007, with the following main activities during the last year:

- a) Sampling programmes in various ports in Indonesia, in collaboration with Australian and Indonesian counterparts.
- b) Sampling programmes in Sri Lanka, to improve catch estimation and collection of biological data, with emphasis on billfish information.
- c) Sampling programmes in Thailand, to assess alternative catch estimation schemes for neritic tunas, and to monitor the activities of the fresh-tuna longline fleet in Phuket.
- d) Data recovery from sport-fishing club in Kenya to develop indices of abundance in the future.
- e) Hardware support in Tanzania (mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar) for data collection activities.
- f) Development of training material, to be incorporated into the IOTC Field Manual.

32. All these activities involved, in addition to the two Japanese experts attached to the Secretariat, the participation of the Field Data Manager, Data Coordinator, Data Analyst, the Deputy Secretary and, to a lesser extent, the Executive Secretary. In the course of the activities in each of the countries, collaboration with national scientists and, when required, training, were fundamental in the success of the Project.

33. Among the successes of the first five-year phase, the IOTC/OFCF Project contributed to establish sustainable sampling programmes in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, expansion of sampling in Maldives, design of sampling schemes for Iran, various training sessions on data collection and processing and deployment of dedicated software.

34. Upon completion of the first phase, contacts with OFCF officials continue to assess the possibility to implement a second phase of the Project for a further two-year period, starting in 2007.

## **Contacts with other organizations**

35. The Secretariat routinely maintains contacts with other organizations in the region with the purpose of coordinating activities to the extent possible. This is essential to avoid duplication of efforts with similar organizations.

36. The Executive Secretary maintains regular contacts with the other tuna RFMOs (CCSBT, IATTC, ICCAT, and WCPFC) and participates when possible of the meetings of the tuna Secretariats. The Secretariats have a number of joint activities, including the publication of a joint list of authorised vessels, and lists of IUU vessels in the joint website for the tuna RFMOs ([www.tuna-org.org](http://www.tuna-org.org)). The joint technical work agreed by all Commissions at the Kobe meeting will be mostly channelled through this informal arrangement.

37. As mentioned above, the Secretariat maintains close links with the Commission de l'Océan Indien (COI) primarily through the work of the RTTP and the project on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance of fisheries for Large Pelagics.

38. The Southwest Indian Ocean Fishery Commission is an advisory body under the FAO umbrella that deals with non-tuna species in the EEZ of the member countries. The Southwest Indian Ocean Fishery Project is a multinational project partly financed by the World Bank and Global Environment Fund. Although neither of these institutional arrangements have a mandate to manage tuna fisheries, they can contribute actively to the scientific work of IOTC and assist in its management actions, so coordination is essential. To the extent possible the Secretariat will attend the meetings of these two organizations.

39. The Secretariat continues to develop working relationships with various intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations interested in the activities of the Commission, including the Indian Ocean Sea Turtle Memorandum of Understanding, an intergovernmental organizations for the protection of sea turtles, BirdLife International, World Wildlife Fund, Traffic, and has established contacts with the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) a multilateral agreement to coordinate international activity to mitigate threats to albatross and petrel populations.

## **Supplementary Administrative Tasks**

40. Since IOTC is the only FAO office with an Imprest Account in the Seychelles therefore it routinely provides administrative support for FAO activities in Seychelles (for example, the post-tsunami reconstruction project). The Secretariat also coordinated the implementation of the UN Security Plan for Seychelles, including the production of monthly reports on the security situation to the UN relevant agencies. The establishment of a UNDP office in Seychelles allowed the Secretariat to transfer the responsibility as Country Security Focal Point as of the end of March 2007.

## **IOTC PUBLICATIONS AND INFORMATION PRODUCTS**

41. The Secretariat continues with the publications of reports of the Sessions of the Commission and the Scientific Committee. Following the current instructions, the Secretariat published most of its dissemination products in electronic format. This includes the publication of the volumes of the Proceedings of the IOTC Working Parties for the years 1999 through 2006, which are distributed on a CD-ROM to interested parties, free of charge.

42. The IOTC website has been updated with the most recent reports from the Working Parties and information concerning meetings. Electronic version of all the IOTC publications can be downloaded from the website.

43. The Secretariat continue its participation with the FIGIS/FIRM initiative to create a web-based portal of information related to worldwide stocks by supplying summary information on the stocks under IOTC mandate.

44. FAO has concluded inclusion of scientific documents presented in IOTC bodies in the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA), covering all documents presented since 1999-2004. The Secretariat has recently received software to incorporate future entries on an annual basis.

45. Also, in support of the work of the species' Working Parties, datasets in standard formats were distributed to scientists interested in conducting analysis for the Working Party of Tropical Tunas. The main datasets were available for download from the IOTC website prior to the meeting of the Working Party.

## **SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION**

46. The Commission is invited to note the information contained in this document.