



RECOMMENDATION 12/15 ON THE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECOGNIZING the importance of sound scientific advice as the centre piece for the conservation and management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas in line with international law and the information needs of the Commission;

AWARE that the availability of adequate scientific information is fundamental to carrying out the objectives of the IOTC Agreement laid down in its Article V;

EMPHASIZING the importance of the effective participation by all CPCs in the work of the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties;

RECOGNIZING the limited financial resources of developing coastal States and wishing to assist in building their scientific capacity;

ACKNOWLEDGING the need to improve the availability and quality of data and analysis used for the provision of scientific advice, including on bycatch and discards;

NOTING that participation of invited experts may advance the quality assurance of the scientific work of the Scientific Committee;

RECOGNIZING the need for broadening and streamlining the scope of financial support for capacity building for the purpose of this Recommendation;

BUILDING on the deliberations and recommendations of the Scientific Committee and of the Kobe process;

NOTING the importance of regular assessments of the performance of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, including the functioning of their scientific committees;

RECOMMENDS, in accordance with the provisions of Article IX, paragraph 8 of the IOTC Agreement, that CPCs undertake to:

1. Take all measures which would be appropriate:
 - i. To improve the communication between CPCs, the Commission and the Scientific Committee by enabling a continuous dialogue, for example, through the use of electronic discussion groups and tele-/video conferencing
 - ii. To improve the collection and submission of data to the Secretariat, including on bycatch
 - iii. To support research programs and projects relevant to the information needs of the Commission
 - iv. To facilitate participation in meetings of the Scientific Committee, its Working Parties as well as in other relevant scientific bodies of scientists with suitable scientific qualifications
 - v. To contribute to the training of scientific researchers, including young scientists
2. Preserve and promote the professional independence and excellence of the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties, and the relevance of their work to the information needs of the Commission, by:
 - i. Enhancing the participation of scientists in meetings of the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties, including scientists involved in other tuna RFMOs and other relevant scientific bodies



- ii. Drafting a code of conduct for the Scientific Committee, including for its Working Parties, for adoption by the Commission. For this purpose, the Scientific Committee may develop rules to avoid conflict of interests, to ensure the quality, relevance and professional independence of scientific activities and, where applicable, to maintain the confidentiality of the data used
 - iii. Drafting a strategic plan for the Scientific Committee, including its Working Parties, for adoption by the Commission. The strategic plan shall be used to guide the work of the Scientific Committee, and Working Parties, in assisting the Commission to effectively achieve its mandate
 - iv. Ensuring that relevant, professionally independent and objective scientific advice, based on the best available and peer-reviewed scientific analysis, is presented by the Scientific Committee to the Commission
 - v. Ensuring that sources and history of revisions of all documents submitted to and assessed by the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties are fully documented
 - vi. Providing clear, transparent, and standardized formats for the provision of advice to the Commission
 - vii. Providing for well-defined rules for formulating scientific advice to the Commission, reflecting different views while striving for consensus, to promote consistency and transparency
3. Strengthen peer review mechanisms within the Scientific Committee by participation of invited experts (e.g. from other RFMOs or from academia) in the Scientific Committee activities. These experts shall be subject to the data confidentiality rules and procedures currently applicable in the IOTC.
 4. Continue to support the Scientific Committee's initiatives to publish its scientific findings in the scientific peer-reviewed academic literature.
 5. With the aim of meeting the above-mentioned objectives, consider broadening financial support and mechanisms, including *inter alia*, contributing to the "Meeting Participation Fund" for Developing IOTC Contracting Parties, for the purpose of the implementation of this Resolution, in particular to:
 - i. Contribute to the scientific capacity building of the developing CPCs and to enhance their effective participation in the work of the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties
 - ii. Provide necessary resources for the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties, including consideration of alternative funding models for the commissioning of research
 6. The next independent performance review of IOTC should assess the functioning of the Scientific Committee and its Working Parties as a total quality management process, including an evaluation of the potential role of external reviews.