

**Report of the Second Meeting of the  
Electronic Monitoring Systems Working Group (WG-EMS)**  
(Online, 7 September 2023)

### 1. Opening of the meeting and meeting arrangements

Mr. Camille Manel, the ICCAT Executive Secretary welcomed all participants attending the Second Meeting of the WG-EMS. The Chair of the WG-EMS, Mr. Neil Ansell, also welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

### 2. Nomination of Rapporteur

In the absence of any CPC nominations, the ICCAT Secretariat agreed to act as Rapporteur.

### 3. Adoption of Agenda

The Chair summarized the points of the Agenda and opened the floor to call for additional items for discussion under Agenda item 6. The Agenda was adopted (**Appendix 1**).

The List of Participants is included as **Appendix 2**.

### 4. Consideration of the outputs of the informal drafting group for the development of minimum standards (longline and purse seine) and finalization of minimum standards

The Chair opened the Agenda item and noted the “Draft Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish Minimum Standards and Program Requirements for the use of Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) on ICCAT Fisheries” (EMS\_SEP\_02/i2023) submitted by the European Union (EU).

The Chair gave the floor to the EU to present the draft document and provide details on how the draft has been revised since the [First Meeting of the WG-EMS](#) in February 2023. The Chair then opened the floor and suggested proceeding section-by-section to receive CPC comments and suggested edits.

The EU thanked the Chair and began their presentation with a brief introduction that noted the timeline of the draft’s development during previous Working Group meetings and four drafting sessions. The EU acknowledged the inclusion of comments received from three CPCs in addition noting two key revisions to the last two recitals.

One CPC stated that the minimum standards laid down in Annex 1 were detailed and hence proposed they be recommended rather than compulsory. There was then a general discussion on the level of detail in the draft and how best to proceed in light of the time available in the meeting. There was however an overall agreement to continue to review the draft section by section and cover as much ground as possible in the Working Group meeting.

In parallel several Working Group members stated they would be open to further discuss bilaterally with the EU and on the run-up to the annual meeting. It was also recalled at the outset that some sections of the draft were still subject to the inclusion of elements and appropriate review by the SCRS in the coming weeks.

The EU noted the relatively short timeframe for the availability of the current draft and acknowledged that the document was made available on 6 September 2023. They thanked those CPCs for their contribution received and further noted that the Working Group efforts were indeed ambitious and that the Group was indeed now working at a rapid pace.

The EU addressed the points received noting that revisions to the draft contained several minor changes that were mostly editorial and that there were only a minimal number of substantial changes, and these changes were introduced and approved at the July meeting of the drafting Group.

The EU underlined their view that the detailed provisions for the onboard use of EMS are intended only as minimum standards and that the draft need to reflect the joint efforts of the WG-EMS and the SCRS.

In response to some general points made by several developing CPCs on the implementation of EMS, the EU noted that the minimum standards also aimed to benefit developing countries with limited financial resources.

The EU questioned some of the cost projections made by some CPCs including Japan and noted that the EMS technology was not highly technical and in fact relatively inexpensive, furthermore the cost of implementation would need to be viewed in comparison to human observers and associated administrative costs.

In response to the Chair's call for general comments on the overall draft, a number of CPCs including the United States, expressed the importance for the draft to strike a balance that was consistent and robust enough to represent ICCAT standards without being too prescriptive and detailed.

Following some further interventions on the binding nature of the draft measures and possible use of EMS, the Chair clarified that the work of the WG-EMS would not imply the mandatory use of EMS, and that any decision on the use of EMS in ICCAT fisheries would rest with the relevant ICCAT subsidiary bodies.

Japan acknowledged the unfortunate nature of their unreadiness to agree on the finalization of the Draft Recommendation in the current Working Group meeting, but confirmed that they were prepared to explain their positions on the relevant points and suggest revisions where possible.

Based on the willingness expressed and time remaining, the Chair suggested the section by section discussion of the Draft Recommendation continue. In light of the comments received it was agreed that some elements would remain in brackets and proposals for possible superfluous information to be removed.

There was a debate and exchange of views on the use of binding and non-binding language in particular on Annex 1 and also how this would also be reflected in the main body of the text. Some CPCs noted that it was currently too restrictive and called for more flexibility on how the measures could voluntarily be implemented, while others noted the importance of retaining standards in a binding manner and recalled other instruments that apply minimum standards in ICCAT, including those for scientific observer programmes (*Recommendation by ICCAT to establish minimum standards for fishing vessel scientific observer program (Rec. 16-14)*).

A number of observers noted the importance of being specific on the wording of catch, bycatch and discards, however it was noted the importance of aligning the terminologies used in other ICAC measures in particular [Rec. 16-14](#).

There were also discussions on technical elements including but not limited to maintenance of the EMS cameras, catch handling and the importance of some elements for compliance purposes.

There were detailed exchanges on the follow-up and role of the WG-EMS in particular with regard to the development, submission and evaluation of national and/or domestic EMS plans as well as the role of ICCAT Secretariat and Commission.

As a response to an invitation from the Chair, the EU expressed its preference to continue the presentation and review by Annex, and with the approval of the Chair, invited comments. With reference to Annex 1 some CPCs noted the need for more time for detailed review and questioned the effectiveness of a blanket proposal for making Annex 1 non-binding. The Chair asked the EU for their view on whether the annexes could be tackled intersessionally but noted the willingness of CPCs to continue discussing.

In the interest of time and efficiency, the EU proposed that CPCs individually comment on the sections of Annex 1 after the meeting. There was a broad agreement and some CPCs also responded by asking the EU to consider ways to streamline various EMS standards including the self-test function and automatic real-time malfunction and also noted the challenges small-scale fisheries may present to the use of EMS.

A number of questions were then made on Annex 2 including to the SCRS and EMS Subgroup Chairs.

The Chair thanked the SCRS/Subgroup Chairs and expressed the desire to devote the remaining time to more detailed presentations and updates from them as foreseen in the next Agenda item.

In light of the work done and various interventions made, the EU offered for CPCs to send additional comments and committed to offering a further informal drafting group in late September or early October 2023 for the purpose of finalizing the Draft Recommendation prior to the Annual Meeting.

#### **5. Consideration of information from the pilot projects and review of any other new information/trials since the last meeting of the Electronic Monitoring Systems Working Group (WG-EMS)**

Following invitation from the Chair, the SCRS Chair was asked for updates on the SCRS work relevant to the WG-EMS. The SCRS Chair noted that June and July 2023 drafting groups asked the SCRS to review the scientific tables. The SCRS Chair further noted that final advice will come from the SCRS Plenary in the two weeks prior to adoption by SCRS, and that WG-EMS will have the requested advice from SCRS needed to finalize the “Draft Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish Minimum Standards and Program Requirements for the use of Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) on ICCAT Fisheries” (document EMS\_02/2023). The SCRS Chair then gave the floor to the Chair for the Subgroup on EMS to elaborate on the specifics of their recent work.

The Chair of the SCRS Subgroup on EMS provided further details, noting the importance for EMS to remain complementary and that it will not replace the need for human observers, in particular for the removal and evaluation of biological samples. Furthermore, capacity building in the use of EMS may be required to support implementation of EMS and future reviews will be needed to ensure the minimum standards stay abreast of emerging technology, including by way of performance standards. In parallel, it will be important to maintain minimum levels of human observer coverage.

#### **6. Other matters**

No additional matters were suggested from the floor.

#### **7. Adoption of report and closure**

At the conclusion of the Second Meeting of the WG-EMS, the Chair expressed his appreciation to all participants and noted the Working Group agreement for parties to continue working together on the draft including in further informal drafting sessions following the offer from the EU.

It was agreed that a summary report will be made available to the Permanent Working Group (PWG) at the 28th Regular Commission Meeting.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to the ICCAT Secretariat and the interpreters and declared the Working Group meeting adjourned.

## **Agenda**

1. Opening of the meeting and meeting arrangements
2. Nomination of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Consideration of the outputs of the informal drafting group for the development of minimum standards (longline and purse seine) and finalization of minimum standards
5. Consideration of information from the pilot projects and review of any other new information/trials since the last meeting of the Electronic Monitoring Systems Working Group (WG-EMS)
6. Other matters
7. Adoption of report and closure

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