

**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 T 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_SEP_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 all, the ICCAT Secretariat and the interpreters and declared the Working Group meeting adjourned.

Agenda

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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

List of Participants¹**CONTRACTING PARTIES****ALGERIA****Ouchelli, Amar ***

Sous-directeur de la Grande Pêche et de la Pêche Spécialisée, Ministère de la pêche et des productions halieutiques,
Route des quatre canons, 16000 Alger
Tel: +213 550 386 938, Fax: +213 234 95597, E-Mail: amarouchelli.dz@gmail.com; amar.ouchelli@mpeche.gov.dz

Kacimi, Adel

Routes des quatre canons, 16000
Tel: +213 797 164 656, E-Mail: adelkacimi75@gmail.com

Tamourt, Amira ¹

Ministère de la Pêche & des Ressources Halieutiques, 16100 Alger

BELIZE**Constantino, Ian**

Keystone Building Suite 501, 304 Newtown Barracks
Tel: +50 122 34918, E-Mail: ian.constantino@bhsfu.gov.bz

Robinson, Robert

Deputy Director for High Seas Fisheries, Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, Ministry of Finance, Government of Belize,
Keystone Building, Suite 501, 304 Newtown Barracks, Belize City
Tel: +501 223 4918, Fax: +501 223 5087, E-Mail: deputydirector@bhsfu.gov.bz; robert.robinson@bhsfu.gov.bz

CANADA**Browne, Dion**

Senior Compliance Officer, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 80 East White Hills Road, St. John's, NL A1C5X1
Tel: +1 709 772 2152; +1 709 685 1531, E-Mail: dion.browne@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Cossette, Frédéric

200 Kent St., Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6
Tel: +1 343 541 6921, E-Mail: frederic.cossette@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Couture, John

Oceans North, 74 Bristol Drive, Sydney NS B1P 6P3
Tel: +1 902 578 0903, E-Mail: jcouture@oceansnorth.ca

MacDonald, Carl

Senior Advisor, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 1 Challenger Drive, PO Box 1006, Bedford Institute of Oceanography,
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 4A2
Tel: +1 902 293 8257, E-Mail: carl.macdonald@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

EUROPEAN UNION**Broche, Jerome**

Deputy Head of unit D.4, European Commission DG MARE, Fisheries Control and Inspections, Rue Joseph II 99 01/081,
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 229 86128, E-Mail: jerome.broche@ec.europa.eu

Miranda, Fernando

Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries - DG MARE, Fisheries Control and Inspections, Rue Joseph II St,
99 01/090, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +322 299 3922, E-Mail: fernando.miranda@ec.europa.eu

Amoedo Lueiro, Xoan Inacio

Biólogo, FIP Blues Technical team, Pza. de Ponteareas, 11, 3ºD, 36800 Pontevedra, España
Tel: +34 678 235 736, E-Mail: tecnico@fipblues.com

* Head Delegate

¹ Some delegate contact details have not been included following their request for data protection.

SECOND WG-EMS – ONLINE 2023

Ansell, Neil

European Fisheries Control Agency, Avenida García Barbón 4, 36201 Vigo, España
Tel: +34 986 120 658; +34 698 122 046, E-Mail: neil.ansell@efca.europa.eu

Coelho, Rui

Researcher, Portuguese Institute for the Ocean and Atmosphere, I.P. (IPMA), Avenida 5 de Outubro, s/n, 8700-305 Olhão, Portugal
Tel: +351 289 700 508, E-Mail: rpcoelho@ipma.pt

Males, Josip

Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, Šetalište I. Meštrovića 63, 21000 Split, Croatia
Tel: +385 214 08000, Fax: +385 213 58650, E-Mail: josip-males@hotmail.com; males@izor.hr

Maufroy, Alexandra

ORTHONGEL, 5 rue des sardiniens, 29900 Concarneau, France
Tel: +33 649 711 587, Fax: +33 2 98 50 80 32, E-Mail: amaufroy@orthongel.fr

Nuevo, Miguel

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), Avenida García Barbón 4, 36201 Vigo, Pontevedra, España
Tel: +34 698 122 058, E-Mail: miguel.nuevo@efca.europa.eu

Nuñez, Álvaro

Zunibal, C/ Idorsolo 1, 48160 Derio, Bizkaia, España
Tel: +34 689 688 521, E-Mail: alvaro.nunez@zunibal.com

Orozco, Lucie

Chargée de mission affaires thonières, Direction générale de affaires maritimes, de la pêche et de l'aquaculture (DGAMPA), Bureau des Affaires Européennes et Internationales (BAEI), 1 place Carpeaux, 92055 La Défense, Ile de France, France
Tel: +33 140 819 531; +33 660 298 721, E-Mail: lucie.orozco@mer.gouv.fr

Raftery, Paul

Zunibal, Calle Idorsolo 1, 48160 Bizcaya, España
Tel: +34 619 806 245, E-Mail: paul.raftery@zunibal.com

Ruiz Gondra, Jon

AZTI-Tecnalia, Txatxarramendi z/g, 48395 Sukarrieta (Bizkaia), España
Tel: +34 94 6574000; +34 667 174 375, Fax: +34 94 6572555, E-Mail: jruiz@azti.es

Sbinne, Mathilde

Chargée de mission Lutte contre la pêche INN, SPMAD/SDRHA/Bureau du Contrôle des Pêches, Direction Générale Des Affaires Maritimes, De La Pêche Et De L'Aquaculture, 1 place Carpeaux, 92800 Ile de France, France
Tel: +33 140 818 980, E-Mail: mathilde.sbinne@mer.gouv.fr

Thasitis, Ioannis

Department of Fisheries and Marine Research, 101 Vithleem Street, 2033 Nicosia, Cyprus
Tel: +35722807840, Fax: +35722 775 955, E-Mail: ithasitis@dfmr.moa.gov.cy; ithasitis@dfmr.moa.gov.cy

Wain, Gwenaëlle

ORTHONGEL, 5 rue des sardiniens, 29900 Concarneau, France
Tel: +33 631 045 147, E-Mail: gwain@orthongel.fr

JAPAN

Hiwatari, Kimiyoshi

Assitant Director, International Affairs Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo 100-8907
Tel: +81 3 3502 8460, Fax: +81 3 3504 2649, E-Mail: kimiyosi_hiwatari190@maff.go.jp

Kumamoto, Jumpei

Technical Official, Fisheries Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, International Affairs Division, Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo 100-8907
Tel: +81 3 3502 8460, Fax: +81 3 3504 2649, E-Mail: jumpei_kumamoto270@maff.go.jp

SECOND WG-EMS – ONLINE 2023

Miura, Nozomu

Assistant Director, International Division, Japan Tuna Fisheries Co-operative Association, 2-31-1 Eitai Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0034
Tel: +81 3 5646 2382, Fax: +81 3 5646 2652, E-Mail: miura@japantuna.or.jp; gyojyo@japantuna.or.jp

Nagai, Daisaku

Manager, Japan Tuna Fisheries Co-Operative Association, 31-1, Eitai 2-CHOME, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0034
Tel: +81 356 462 382, Fax: +81 356 462 652, E-Mail: nagai@japantuna.or.jp

KOREA REP.

Shim, Soobin *

Deputy Director, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, International Cooperation Division, Government Complex Bldg.5, Dasom 2-ro, 30110 Sejong
Tel: +82 44 200 5333, Fax: +82 44 200 5349, E-Mail: sbin8shim@korea.kr

Jeong, Yoonkyung

Korea Overseas Fisheries Association, 6th fl. Samho Center Bldg "A" 83, Nonhyeon-ro, Seocho-gu, Seoul, 06775
Tel: +82 258 91615, Fax: +82 258 91630, E-Mail: dbsrud1106@kosfa.org

Jo, Soyoun

Researcher, 4, Idong-gil, Ilgwang-eup, Gijang-gun, Busan
Tel: +82 51 718 2484, E-Mail: syjo@fira.or.kr

Kwon, Youjung

Distant Water Fisheries Resources Division, National Institute of Fisheries Science, 216 Gijang-Haeanro, Gijang-eup, Gijang-gun, 46083 Busan
Tel: +82 51 720 2325, Fax: +82 51 720 2337, E-Mail: kwonuj@korea.kr

Lee, Sukyung

Researcher, Korea Fisheries Resources Agency, 4, Idong-gil, Ilgwang-eup, Gijang-gun, Busan
Tel: +82 51 718 2481, Fax: +82 51 742 3220, E-Mail: sue@fira.or.kr

Lee, Haewon

National Institute of Fisheries Science, 216, Gijanghaean-ro, Gijang-eup, 46083 Busan
Tel: +82 51 720 2330; +82 102 564 4476, E-Mail: roundsea@korea.kr

Lee, Soojeong

Korea Fisheries Resources Agency, 4, Idong-gil, Ilgwang-eup, Gijang-gun, 46041 Busan
Tel: +82 517 182 486, E-Mail: sjlee@fira.or.kr

Won, Tae-hoon

Policy Officer & Multilateral Fisheries Negotiator, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, International Cooperation Division, Government Complex Building 5, #94, Dasom 2-ro, Sejong, 30110
Tel: +82 44 200 5334, Fax: +82 44 200 5349, E-Mail: th1608@korea.kr

Yang, Jae-geol

Policy Analyst, Korea Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Center, 6th FL, S Building, 253, Hannuri-daero, 30127 Sejong
Tel: +82 44 868 7364, Fax: +82 44 868 7840, E-Mail: jg718@kofci.org

MEXICO

Soler Benítez, Bertha Alicia

Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y pesca (CONAPESCA), Av. Camarón Sábalo 1210 Fracc. Sábalo Country Club., 82100 Mazatlán, Sinaloa
Tel: +52 669 915 6900 Ext. 58462, E-Mail: bertha.soler@conapesca.gob.mx; berthaa.soler@gmail.com

MOROCCO

Abid, Noureddine

Chercheur et ingénieur halieute au Centre Régional de recherche Halieutique de Tanger, Responsable du programme de suivi et d'étude des ressources des grands pélagiques, Centre régional de l'INRH à Tanger/M'dig, B.P. 5268, 90000 Drabed, Tanger
Tel: +212 53932 5134; +212 663 708 819, Fax: +212 53932 5139, E-Mail: nabid@inrh.ma

Bensbai, Jilali

Chercheur, Institut National de Recherche Halieutique à Casablanca - INRH/Laboratoires Centraux, Ain Diab près du Club équestre OULAD JMEL, Rue Sidi Abderrhman / Ain Diab, 20100 Casablanca
Tel: +212 661 59 8386, Fax: +212 522 397 388, E-Mail: bensbaijilali@gmail.com

NORWAY

Mjorlund, Rune

Senior Adviser, Directorate of Fisheries, Department of Coastal Management, Environment and Statistics, Strandgaten 229, 5004 Bergen (P.O. Box 185 Sentrum), 5804 Bergen
Tel: +47 95 25 94 48, E-Mail: Rune.Mjorlund@fiskeridir.no; rumjo@fiskeridir.no

PANAMA

Aguilar Sánchez, Mario Enrique

Autoridad de los Recursos Acuáticos de Panamá-, Calle 45, Bella Vista, Edificio Riviera, 0819-05850, REPUBLICA DE PANAMA
Tel: +507 511 6098, E-Mail: meaguilar@arap.gob.pa

SENEGAL

Diouf, Ibrahima

Ingénieur des Pêches, Direction des Pêches Maritimes, Chef de la Division de la pêche industrielle, Diamniadio, Sphère ministérielle Ousmane Tanor DIENG, Immeuble D, 2e étage, BP 289 Dakar
Tel: +221 541 4764, Fax: +221 338 602 465, E-Mail: ivesdiouf@gmail.com

Gueye, Assane

Conseiller Technique auprès du Directeur, Direction de la Protection et de la Surveillance des Pêches (DPSP), Cité Fenêtres Mermoz – Dakar – Corniche Ouest, BP: 3656
Tel: +221 776 342 953; +221 338 602 465, E-Mail: assaneg@hotmail.fr

Sèye, Mamadou

Ingénieur des Pêches, Chef de la Division Gestion et Aménagement des Pêcheries de la Direction des Pêches maritimes, Sphère ministérielle de Diamniadio Bâtiment D., 1, Rue Joris, Place du Tirailleur, 289 Dakar
Tel: +221 77 841 83 94, Fax: +221 821 47 58, E-Mail: mdseye@gmail.com; mdseye1@gmail.com; mdouseye@yahoo.fr

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Head of Blue Belt Compliance, MMO, Marine Management Organisation, Lutra House. Dodd Way. Walton House. Bamber Bridge. Preston Office, PR5 8BX
Tel: +44 782 766 4112, E-Mail: andrew.deary@marinemangement.org.uk

Dyer, Claire

DEFRA

E-Mail: Claire.Dyer@defra.gov.uk

Nelson, Paul

Chi Gallos, Hayle Marine Renewables Park, North Quay, Hayle, Penzance TR27 4DD
Tel: +44 208 026 9084, E-Mail: Paul.Nelson@marinemangement.org.uk

Townley, Luke

International Fisheries Policy Officer, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Marine & Fisheries Directorate, Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AH
Tel: +44 782 782 4514, E-Mail: luke.townley@defra.gov.uk

UNITED STATES

Harris, Madison *

Foreign Affairs Specialist, Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce (F/IATC), NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Tel: +1 202 480 4592, E-Mail: madison.harris@noaa.gov

Blankenbeker, Kimberly

Foreign Affairs Specialist, Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce (F/IATC), NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring Maryland 20910
Tel: +1 301 427 8357, Fax: +1 301 713 1081, E-Mail: kimberly.blankenbeker@noaa.gov

Clarke, Raymond

PO Box 463, Waialua 96791

Tel: +1 808 722 0486, E-Mail: ray.clarke@bumblebee.com

Díaz, Guillermo

NOAA-Fisheries, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 75 Virginia Beach Drive, Miami, Florida 33149
Tel: +1 305 361 4227; +1 305 898 4035, E-Mail: guillermo.diaz@noaa.gov

Heberer, Craig
2119 Wedgewood Dr., Oceanside, California 92056
Tel: +1 760 805 5984, E-Mail: craig.heberer@tnc.org

URUGUAY

Domingo, Andrés *
Dirección Nacional de Recursos Acuáticos - DINARA, Laboratorio de Recursos Pelágicos, Constituyente 1497, 11200 Montevideo
Tel: +5982 400 46 89, Fax: +5982 401 32 16, E-Mail: dimanchester@gmail.com

VENEZUELA

Novas, María Inés
Directora General de la Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales, Ministerio del Poder Popular de Pesca y Acuicultura - MINPESCA
Tel: +58 412 456 3403, E-Mail: oai.minpesca@gmail.com; asesoriasminv@gmail.com

OBSERVERS FROM COOPERATING NON-CONTRACTING PARTIES, ENTITIES, FISHING ENTITIES

CHINESE TAIPEI

Chou, Shih-Chin
Section Chief, Deep Sea Fisheries Division, Fisheries Agency, 8F, No. 100, Sec. 2, Heping W. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist., 10060
Tel: +886 2 2383 5915, Fax: +886 2 2332 7395, E-Mail: chou1967sc@gmail.com; shihcin@ms1.fg.gov.tw

Huang, An-Chiang

Coordinator, Fisheries Agency, 8F, No.100, Sec. 2, Heping W. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist., 10060
Tel: +886 2 238 35911, Fax: +886 2 233 27395, E-Mail: hac7222@gmail.com; anchiang@ms1.fg.gov.tw

Kao, Shih-Ming

Associate Professor, Graduate Institute of Marine Affairs, National Sun Yat-sen University, 70 Lien-Hai Road, 80424 Kaohsiung City
Tel: +886 7 525 2000 Ext. 5305, Fax: +886 7 525 6205, E-Mail: kaosm@mail.nsysu.edu.tw

Yang, Shan-Wen

Secretary, Overseas Fisheries Development Council, 3F., No. 14, Wenzhou Street, Da'an Dist., 10648
Tel: +886 2 2368 0889 #151, Fax: +886 2 2368 6418, E-Mail: shenwen@ofdc.org.tw

COSTA RICA

Álvarez Sánchez, Liliana
Funcionaria de la Oficina Regional del Caribe – Limón, Instituto Costarricense de Pesca y Acuicultura, 4444
Tel: +506 863 09387, Fax: +506 263 00600, E-Mail: lalvarez@incopesca.go.cr

Pacheco Chaves, Bernald

Instituto Costarricense de Pesca y Acuicultura, INCOPECA, Departamento de Investigación, Cantón de Montes de Oro, Puntarenas, 333-5400
Tel: +506 899 22693, E-Mail: bpacheco@incopesca.go.cr

OBSERVERS FROM INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION - FAO

Stobberup, Kim
FAO, Viale di Terme Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy
Tel: +351 961 688 973, E-Mail: kim.stobberup@fao.org

OBSERVERS FROM NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL - BI

Gianuca, Dimas
Birdlife International, David Attenborough Building, Pembroke Street., Cambridge CB2 3QZ, United Kingdom
Tel: +55 53 999 245 393, E-Mail: dimas.gianuca@savebrasil.org.br

Wade, Helen

Birdlife International - RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, United Kingdom
E-Mail: Helen.Wade@rspb.org.uk

INTERNATIONAL SEAFOOD SUSTAINABILITY FOUNDATION – ISSF

Murua, Hilario

Senior Scientist, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), 3706 Butler Street, Suite 316, Pittsburgh PA 15201-1802, United States

Tel: +34 667 174 433; +1 703 226 8101, E-Mail: hmurua@iss-foundation.org

Restrepo, Víctor

Chair of the ISSF Scientific Advisory Committee, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation, 3706 Butler Street, Suite 316, Pittsburgh PA 15201-1802, United States

Tel: + 1 305 450 2575; +1 703 226 8101, Fax: +1 215 220 2698, E-Mail: vrestrepo@iss-foundation.org; vrestrepo@mail.com

PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS - PEW

Gibbon, James

Pew Environment Group, 901 E Street NW, Washington, DC 20004, United States

Tel: +1 202 640 5667, E-Mail: jgibbon@pewtrusts.org

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

SCRS CHAIRMAN

Brown, Craig A.

SCRS Chairman, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, 75 Virginia Beach Drive, Miami, Florida 33149, United States

Tel: +1 305 586 6589, E-Mail: craig.brown@noaa.gov

ICCAT Secretariat

C/ Corazón de María 8 – 6th floor, 28002 Madrid – Spain

Tel: +34 91 416 56 00; Fax: +34 91 415 26 12; E-mail: info@iccat.int

Manel, Camille Jean Pierre

Neves dos Santos, Miguel

Ortiz, Mauricio

Taylor, Nathan

Mayor, Carlos

Cheatle, Jenny

Parrilla Moruno, Alberto Thais

De Andrés, Marisa

Baity, Dawn

Samedy, Valérie

ICCAT INTERPRETERS

Baena Jiménez, Eva J.

Calmels, Ellie

Gelb Cohen, Beth

Liberas, Christine

Linaae, Cristina

Pinzon, Aurélie