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**NOTE ON THE SITUATION OF COOPERATION WITH THE
FAO COMMON OCEANS/ABNJ TUNA PROJECT PROGRAM**

At its meeting in November 2012 in Agadir, the Commission gave its consent for the Secretariat to take the necessary steps to become a partner of the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project. For this purpose, the Secretariat wrote a letter addressed to the FAO and the GEF to inform that ICCAT would join the programme provided that ICCAT benefited from the activities envisaged. The Secretariat was asked by the Commission to provide an annual report on the state of cooperation with this programme.

Since implementation of this programme, the Secretariat has participated actively in various technical and administrative meetings. It has contributed efficiently to the work of the Steering Committee and to the discussion of the different work plans. At the 2015 ICCAT Commission meeting, it was decided to continue to cooperate with this programme provided that there are benefits to ICCAT. To this end, the ICCAT Secretariat has participated in several FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project initiatives. These include participation in the following meetings that were funded or partially funded by the Project:

- Joint tuna RFMO MSE meeting held at the Secretariat office, Madrid (1-3 November 2016);
- Joint Meeting of tuna RFMOs on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), which took place in FAO HQ in Rome, Italy (12-14 December 2016);
- 1st Regional Seabird By-catch Pre-assessment Workshop held at the Kruger Park, South Africa (23 February – 1 March 2017);
- Tuna compliance network meeting held in Vigo and Madrid, Spain (27-31 March 2017);
- 1st Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group Meeting, held in Madrid, Spain (19-21 April 2017);
- ICCAT Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance, held in Madrid, Spain (9-10 October 2017).

In addition, ICCAT has been coordinating a feasibility study on the development of an online reporting system (FORS). This includes both a feasibility study to determine the resources, costs, technologies required to implement an online reporting system, as well as the production of a demo online reporting tool. This study and demo are generic and could potentially be applied across the tuna RFMOs.

According to the project coordination team, the total amount spent with the abovementioned ICCAT activities in 2017 amounted to US\$252,041, as detailed below:

Activity	Contribution regarding ICCAT Secretariat coordinated activities (\$US)
Joint tuna RFMO MSE meeting held	26,758
Joint Meeting of tuna RFMOs on the Implementation of the EAFM	9,900
1st Regional Seabird By-catch Pre-assessment Workshop	10,000
Tuna compliance network meeting	1,000
1st Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group meeting	109,212
ICCAT Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance meeting	27,171
FORS	68,000
TOTAL	252,041

The Steering Committee of the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ tuna Project met at the FAO headquarters in Rome in July 2017 and reviewed the activities undertaken during the last year. Most activities were presented by the Coordinator of the programme, with some additional presentations by those leading individual activities. There was also a presentation on the mid-term evaluation of the project, followed by a brief discussion, and some consideration to a possible second phase of the Project under GEF-7.

The mid-term evaluation highlighted the lack of a role for ICCAT within the Project and recommended greater involvement. The visit to the Secretariat by the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project management team, with a similar intent, encouraged the Secretariat to put forward some proposals in areas which had been requested by the Commission. However, not all the Commission requests were put forward, as some of these did not fall into the categories of activities required, and hence could not meet with approval, most notably possible financing of AOTTP, as the Project design had been developed from the outset and any proposals must fall within the already agreed component areas.

The main proposals put forward are listed below and contained in the **Appendix**. Unfortunately, once again, ICCAT's attempts to increase collaboration with the Project were not particularly successful. Although the activities listed below were included in the final budget, the level of funding available is not clear in all cases:

1. Proposal for the 1st meeting of the Technical Working Group on FADs and a 2nd Joint t-RFMO FAD Working Group Meeting;
2. Proposed meeting of the t-RFMO MSE Working Group (and associated activities);
3. To lead and coordinate an Ecosystem Component: Common Oceans ABNJ tuna Project, including a follow-up meeting to that held in December 2016;
4. Capacity Building Workshops on Compliance issues.

While some of the proposals put forward by ICCAT were accepted, and others had already been foreseen in the work plan, some of the additional activities were not initially approved, on the basis at the time that they were activities stemming from the Kobe process and required consultation with other t-RFMOs to ensure that there was no duplication of effort. The proposals contained in the **Appendix** were circulated to all tuna RFMOs. CCSBT requested some additional information on the ecosystem component, but no objections have been received to date from our sister organisations.

It should be noted that the proposals were not rejected outright and it was indicated that the possibility of funding by the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project these activities remained. In addition, the Project set aside €300,000 in concept of *Support to replicate Shark By-catch activities area of ICCAT/IOTC*. Further details on this foreseen activity were not available at the time, but it was noted that ICCAT could put forward proposals under this line item for consideration. Such proposal is included in the **Appendix**.

It is to be noted with regret that ICCAT does not always benefit from the desired support from this programme. The ICCAT Secretariat has been sidelined with the framework of implementation of this programme, because nothing was contained in the initial work plan. Despite the goodwill of the ICCAT Secretariat, it has been noted that there is inexplicable resistance from the programme to accommodating and seeking constructive cooperation. Unless the Commission determines otherwise, the Secretariat proposes suspending all cooperation with this programme.

**Activities proposed by ICCAT for the work plan and budget for Project year four of the FAO
Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project 2017/18**

Output 1.1.2

1st meeting of the Technical Working Group and 2nd Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group Meeting

The 1st Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group Meeting took place in Madrid, between 19-21 April 2017. In total, 35 Contracting Parties from three t-RFMOs (ICCAT, IOTC and IATTC) attended the meeting, together with eight Non-governmental Organisations and entities, totaling 140 participants. In addition to revising the most up to date knowledge as regards FAD fisheries related issues, a list of key areas for future action for the joint t-RFMO FAD Working Group were discussed by the Group. It was the general opinion that the process conducted during the meeting was extremely productive and it was recommended that a technical working group on FADs should be created under the KOBE process to continue the work initiated during the 1st joint t-RFMO FAD meeting. Moreover, the 2nd Joint t-RFMO FAD Working Group meeting should be held in 2018 under the coordination of ICCAT. The envisioned budget for this task would be on the order of €180,000* to organize a 1st meeting of the Technical Working Group on FADs (**€30,000**), and to organize the 2nd joint t-RFMO FAD meeting (**€50,000**) and support the attendance of the selected participants from developing Contracting Parties of the three t-RFMOs (**€100,000**).

* In 2017 ICCAT benefited from €50,000 funding by the EU to organize the meeting, and €100,000 by the FAO Common Oceans /ABNJ Tuna Project which supported the attendance of some of the participants from developing CPs of the three t-RFMOs. The EU funding for the 2nd joint t-RFMO FAD meeting is not guaranteed for 2018.

Total requested €180,000

ICCAT understands that €150,000 towards the 2nd joint t-RFMO FAD and the support of the attendance of the selected participants from developing Contracting Parties has been approved, but that the funding for the Technical Working Group is subject to agreement of the other tuna RFMOs.

Capacity Building Workshops on Compliance issues

The number of reporting requirements continues to increase at a greater pace than the capacity of many CPCs to deal with them. The Secretariat notes that many CPCs have continued difficulties in both understanding the requirements and in filling in the forms developed by the Commission and/or Secretariat. The move toward online reporting will necessitate a good understanding by all of what is required, as online reporting will require the enforcement of strict parameters. The Secretariat is not sufficiently staffed to conduct full scale compliance missions to each CPC; in order to try to assist those interested, it is proposed that a brief workshop(s) be held at the Secretariat offices to explain the requirements and to give instruction on the more complex forms. Although requirements and forms will continue to change, this could provide a basis for better understanding which would equip CPCs to meet current and future challenges in complying with ICCAT reporting. It is suggested that three workshops initially be held, one in each of the official languages, depending on demand, and that invitations be extended to the relevant technical person in each CPC. Funding for one person from each developing CPC would be sought; exact costs will not be known until after the event, but it is envisaged that less than €100,000 would be sufficient to cover the three workshops.

*The ICCAT Secretariat has been informed by the Program Management Team that funding of up to €100,000 to support the attendance of the selected participants from developing Contracting Parties **may** be possible, but they were not in a position to confirm this at the time of writing.*

Output 1.1.4

Proposed meeting of the tRFMO MSE Working Group

A key finding of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project was that there is a clear need for follow-up to the regional and global workshops (on both HS/MSE) conducted under the project to strengthen understanding, and to continue to improve the linkage between scientists and managers and decision makers within and between t-RFMOs. The key challenge is how to communicate and promote HS and EAFM/EBFM most effectively with fisheries managers, and the Project needs a more structured, strategic approach towards raising awareness and training on HS and EAFM/EBFM, which will require greater input from communications staff on the Project (see below). However, in addition to building capacity through workshops the Project should help deliver targeted actions that result in a specific deliverable that is working towards a commonly agreed goal, e.g. set of guidelines, or model for testing.

In addition, a specific recommendation from that report was to identify specific opportunities for project support for follow-up activities for the Joint MSE Technical Working Group being led by ICCAT (this would also allow opportunity for the Project to rebalance activities between the t-RFMO), which could include developing a standard operating model to enhance suitable management plans for tuna stocks as a specific product deliverable.

As such ICCAT would like to propose that several activities be funded by the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project in 2017 and 2018 to address some of these issues raised during the mid-term report:

1. Another meeting of the joint t-RFMO MSE Working Group. The aim of this meeting will be to continue the work being conducted by the Joint MSE Technical Working Group. As all t-RFMOs are advancing on their MSE processes, this meeting will be important to continue the momentum being developed. The object is to continue to provide a mechanism for sharing of experiences. To this end it is intended that a meeting be held to evaluate the progress made intersessionally since the previous meeting in 2016. A key outcome of the latter meeting was the development of work plans on key themes. These work plans should be evaluated and updated, while work on software and code should be revised. This meeting will be coordinated by the ICCAT Secretariat in conjunction with the Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Project. Participation will be similar to the past meeting with participants from each t-RFMO and invited relevant experts. Attendees should again cover a range of stakeholders, i.e. not just modeller but people who have an interest in the results. This list would be drawn up by the t-RFMO-MSE Chair and the Global Coordinator for the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project. The workshop should be scheduled for early 2018. Final dates need to be determined as soon as possible, in order to ensure the availability of participants. Once the date has been set, the venue will be determined. To allow time to achieve the work programme, a full week for workshops and discussions is considered necessary. The deliverable from this meeting should be to elaborate a set of guidelines, or models for testing. Envisioned budget - **€70,000**.
2. Peer/external review of MSE processes in the RFMOs. The success and sustainability of the MSE work within the RFMOs is dependent on the confidence the managers have in the advice being provided. With several of the RFMOs in an advanced state of development of HCRs and the MSE to evaluate them, rigorous review of the code used to conduct the MSEs is necessary. The process has been advanced by several manager-scientist dialogue meeting within the RFMOs, but equally important to the process is the revision of the software and code used to conduct the MSE. ICCAT for example would require a review of the northern albacore MSE code. This could then be published and made available to other RFMOs as a tool to conduct similar exercises. This could contribute to the observation made in the mid-term review regarding developing a standard operating model to develop suitable management plans for tuna stocks. The envisioned budget for this task would be around **€100,000** to contract external experts to review code for several different RFMO MSEs.
3. For consideration – To organize a set of capacity building courses aiming to enhance participation of scientists and managers of developing countries on the MSE processes which are currently being developed in the different t-RFMOs. A group of core scientists, mostly from developing Contracting Parties, will be involved in a course to take place throughout a one year period (e.g. including attending

three specific workshops and conducting intersessional work; these workshops will begin with the basics of MSE followed by more advanced aspects of the MSE process). As such, scientists would have the chance to develop their expertise between intersessions and enhance their participation on the MSE processes being currently carried out. The second component would be dedicated to managers and would cover two major components: i. what is expected from managers as regards the MSE process; ii. to present them a shiny app to allow them to play and understand own MSE works. The envisioned budget for this task would be around **€80,000** to organize the workshops/courses, contract the experts/instructors and support the attendance of the selected participants.

Total requested: €250,000

ICCAT understands that only €50,000 to hold the meeting under (1) above have been approved, but activities under 2 and 3 are subject to agreement by other tRFMOs.

Output: 1.1.5

Ecosystem Component: Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project

At the 2016 ICCAT Sub-committee on Ecosystem and By-catch meeting, substantial discussions were held, building on the work initiated in 2013 and continuing through into the work plan for 2017, regarding the implementation of Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM). ICCAT is moving along a line to increase the understanding of the concept amongst its members, and how the work being conducted by the various Scientific Committee Species Groups can feed into and compliment the process. Although “ecosystem-based management” can have very different meanings to different people, the Sub-committee is endeavouring to provide operational steps to facilitate a common understanding of the concept. Additionally, the Sub-committee discussed the level of detail that would be necessary for practical implementation of an EBFM. It was acknowledged that ICCAT, and in fact most RFMOs are conducting activities that could be considered part of EBFM. The process has yet to be formalized or clearly defined.

In 2016, noting that the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project, funded by the Global Environmental Facility, was promoting and supporting the preparation of long-term plans for operationalizing the ecosystem approach in fisheries in each of the t-RFMOs, encouraging consideration of the impacts of fishing activities, the Sub-committee agreed to develop an ICCAT led proposal for this component of the Project. It was agreed that the ABNJ Project could provide support for joint meetings of the t-RFMOs led by ICCAT to discuss experiences and proposed approaches to implement the EBFM. The first of these meetings was carried out in December 2016 at the FAO headquarters in Rome, with the financial support of the Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project. The objective of the first of these meetings was to establish dialogue between other RFMOs on the issue of EBFM and its implementation, while inviting several external experts on EBFM to provide input and guidance on this process. The meeting was considered a success by the participants and representation was achieved from all the tRFMOs.

It was noted, however, that the process is ongoing and substantial additional work is required. At that stage, The Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project pledged its support for an additional meeting, tentatively in mid-December 2017 or beginning of 2018. This meeting would need to be different in terms of participants, engaging Commissioners. Participants proposed a three day meeting (including one or two days with Commissioners and one additional day for scientist to process and elaborate. Thus, a mix between scientists and managers is required to continue to advance the process, much like what has been done for Management Strategy Evaluation.

The proposed budget for this second workshop is **US\$100,000** in order to cover the travel expenses (including flights and per diem) of 15 individuals (2 from each of CCSBT, IATTC, ICCAT, IOTC and WCPFC Secretariats and 5 external experts), the time and expenses of the workshop coordinator, meeting preparation and hosting costs, as well as associated consumables required during the meeting. Future workshop budgets will be determined based on identified needs and participations.

Although some progress is being made, the Mid-Term Evaluation of the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project clearly stated that even though the Project supported the Joint t-RFMO workshop on the implementation of ecosystem based fisheries management in December 2016 and ICCAT has advanced the considerations of EAF plans by identifying key elements needed to operationalize EAF plans and conducted comparisons with the approaches taken by other RFMOs, there has been limited achievement of Outcome 2 (Roadmaps to operationalise EAFM/EBFM in t-RFMOs developed and submitted for adoption) with no development, to date, of any EAFM/EBFM plans. It goes on to state that the Project is supporting a number of open-ended processes, some of which are being led by partners (i.e. not the Project), such as support to the ICCAT-led workshops on EAFM/EBFM, which will continue after the Project finishes, and, as yet, it is not clear how sustainability of these initiatives will be secured.

Thus it is clear that substantial additional work is required under the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project to ensure the EBFM progress is sustainable. The support for an EAFM/EBFM study group, to plan the way forward for this crucial work is also therefore highly desirable. ICCAT would like to open the discussion on the possibility for the FAO Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Project funding for this group, entailing further virtual and face to face meetings. The former will require funding in terms of cloud sharing tools (for maintaining and sharing the key inputs/documents for this work), as well as additional funding for an expert Technical Working Group to discuss the future of the EBFM work after the Project finishes. This will be conducted after the meeting described above, once input from the managers has been received and synthesized. The budget for this ongoing work will need to be planned in conjunction with the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project coordination team depending on the envisioned needs of the process.

The estimated costs required to the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project is:

Follow-up meeting in 2017/2018 – **US\$100,000**

Cloud computing and sharing tools – **US\$5,000**

Expert Technical Working Group to discuss the future of the EBFM – **US\$80,000**

Total Requested: €185,000

ICCAT understands that only €50,000 towards holding the follow-up meeting in 2017/2018 have been approved, but the remaining funds required, as well as funding for cloud computing and sharing tools and the expert Technical Working Group are subject to agreement by other tRFMOs.