

Report of the Meeting of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change (JEG-CC)
(Online, 2-3 July 2024)

1. Opening of meeting and meeting arrangements

The meeting was held online on 2-3 July 2024. The JEG-CC and meeting Chair, Dr Kelly Kryc (USA) opened the meeting and welcomed participants (the “Group”) to the Meeting of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change (JEG-CC). The Chair also thanked participants for joining from various time zones to work together to advance ICCAT’s efforts to address Climate Change.

Dr Miguel Neves dos Santos, the Assistant Executive Secretary, welcomed the Group, provided some logistical remarks and reminded participants to consider the interpreters and speak slowly.

In attendance were Belize, Brazil, Canada, China (P.R.), Egypt, El Salvador, European Union, France (St Pierre and Miquelon), Ghana, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Panama, Senegal, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Chinese Taipei. In addition, three intergovernmental organisations (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), Ministerial Conference on fisheries cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO / COMHAFAT), Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC)) and five observers (Associação de Ciências Marinhas e Cooperação (SCIAENA), German Foundation for Marine Conservation (DSM), International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), Pew Charitable Trusts (PEW), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)) participated.

The Chair noted that, as a joint meeting of the Commission and the SCRS, it is critical for scientists and managers to work together to navigate the challenges associated with integrating Climate Change into ICCAT processes. As such, she introduced the SCRS Chair, Dr Craig Brown (USA) as a co-facilitator of the meeting. The SCRS Chair highlighted the need to work collaboratively with Commissioners to determine ICCAT’s approach to addressing the impacts of Climate Change in its work.

2. Nomination of Rapporteur

Ms. Robynn Laplante (Canada) was appointed as Rapporteur of the meeting.

3. Adoption of agenda

The Chair summarized the draft agenda and opened the floor for comments. The meeting Agenda was adopted without any changes and is attached as **Appendix 1**.

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

4. Presentation from the Chair on the Climate Change Experts Meeting held in July 2023, including presentation of the 2023 Draft ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change

Relevant documents: “Revised ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change”, [Report of the ICCAT Climate Change Experts Meeting](#)

The Chair provided a brief summary of the [Climate Change Experts Meeting](#) held in 2023 and pointed to the [Nextcloud](#) where all relevant presentations and documents from that meeting are available in each of the official languages of the Commission.

5. Presentation and discussion of a ‘stock-take’ review on Climate Change work within ICCAT’s subsidiary bodies, including discussion of how climate-related information can be incorporated into the ICCAT decision-making processes, from both a management and scientific perspective
Relevant document: “ICCAT Climate Change Stock-Take Analysis”

The Chair recalled the objective of the stock-take analysis, as agreed to in the [Resolution by ICCAT on next steps of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change in 2024 \(Res. 23-19\)](#), which is to summarize areas where Climate Change work is ongoing, where future and further exploration and work are needed, and what barriers and challenges may be present as we undertake this work. It is important to note that this stock-take analysis is not intended to reflect the view of the SCRS or provide SCRS advice. This was an exercise for the Commission and SCRS Officers to provide input into a document that could be used as a resource to inform the work of the JEG-CC. It is not an official or endorsed product.

[Resolution 23-19](#) provides a framework for the stock-take analysis exercise; to initiate the stock-take exercise, three sets of questions were disseminated to Commission Officers, the SCRS Officers and the SCRS Chair, respectively. The JEG-CC Chair received responses from 7 out of 13 Commission Officers, the SCRS Chair; and 9 SCRS Officers. A summary document is available as “ICCAT Climate Change Stock-Take Analysis”.

Generally, the stock-take exercise questions focused on how the Commission can integrate Climate Change impacts into scientific processes and management decisions by identifying ongoing and future efforts, challenges/barriers, the current SCRS structure/ICCAT resources, possible opportunities for collaboration, and the development of tools or approaches that can be used to formulate scientific advice.

In summary, ICCAT Officers noted that while the Commission and SCRS already incorporate Climate Change considerations into its scientific and management processes (through management strategy evaluations and stock assessments) there are potential other streams of work (long-term projections, methods for integrating environmental variables, and guidance on adaptive management strategies). Initially, this can be absorbed within the current ICCAT structure, but it should be noted that additional resources (human and financial) or prioritization exercises may need to be explored. Barriers and challenges identified in this exercise included lack of available knowledge and resources, particularly as the SCRS already has a heavy workload. To address this, it was suggested that CPCs provide additional data to the Commission to address identified gaps, continue to support and provide scientists to contribute to the work of the SCRS, and identify clear, specific feasible objectives related to Climate Change and make clear requests to the SCRS. It was also noted that increased collaboration with other regional fisheries management organisations or international organisations, such as the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), could be beneficial in addressing process-related questions and data gaps.

JEG-CC participants expressed general support for this document and some participants raised specific comments/questions as reflected below:

- Concerned with the SCRS workload and available resources. JEG-CC participants also agreed with the need to provide clear and concise requests to the SCRS. The SCRS Chair noted the importance of incorporating Climate Change impacts into science advice particularly as it is having an effect on the core functions of the SCRS.
- Highlighted the need to prioritize Climate Change work by developing short, medium, and long-term work plans that focus on species that are most likely affected by Climate Change impacts.
- Recognized the work underway to incorporate Climate Change considerations into ICCAT decisions and noted their preference to focus on improving existing tools and processes, rather than bringing in new elements at this time.
- Requested clarification on the future of the stock-take exercise document, particularly as it relates to Commission endorsement. The Chair noted that the purpose of the document is to serve as a resource to inform discussions and reemphasized that it was not envisioned to be a Commission-endorsed product.
- Considered the need to improve coordination internally within ICCAT subsidiary bodies, the SCRS, and with external experts.

6. Identification of other priority areas of Climate Change work, including engagement with stakeholder groups and other relevant international organizations

JEG-CC participants were generally supportive of the need to collaborate with external partners. Some CPCs referenced existing collaborative efforts such as work underway with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and through the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) Tuna Project. JEG-CC participants also highlighted the importance of collaborating with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in the Atlantic, but also in other oceans, especially as this topic is being discussed across various multilateral fora.

It was also noted though that ICCAT should focus on improving internal coordination first. Related to this point, one CPC noted the importance of the Group taking stock of what ICCAT is already doing in terms of Climate Change related work and vet this work through the SCRS before engaging externally.

A representative of ICES presented its work on incorporating Climate Change into scientific processes, including consulting relevant stakeholders through an advisory process and providing advice to managers that identify different scenarios and risks for management decisions. The ICES representatives highlighted the importance of collaborating with other organisations and mentioned the ongoing efforts between ICCAT and ICES, including the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate and strengthen such collaboration.

7. Consider, revise, and aim to agree on the Draft ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change

Relevant Document: "Revised ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change"

The Chair provided an overview of the "Revised ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change", which included 2024-2026 workplan tasks for the Commission, the SCRS, and STACFAD to further consider climate change in the work of ICCAT.

Significant discussion was had regarding the scope and workplan elements of this document. While most JEG-CC participants supported the need to incorporate climate change considerations into ICCAT work, common concerns expressed related to the practicality and feasibility of this work within the current ICCAT structure. Discussion focused primarily on whether or not a formal working group is needed at this time and if the topic of Climate Change should be a standing agenda item for the Commission. The group also generally agreed on the need to focus on Climate Change work already being done by ICCAT rather than undertaking new tasks and creating additional workload for the SCRS.

The Group pointed at the clear need for coordination between the Commission and the SCRS and agreed to ensure clear and concise questions are communicated to the SCRS, to ensure effective use of ICCAT resources.

A major point of discussion was with respect to Annex 1, which included topics related to the provision of climate-informed scientific advice. Some JEG-CC participants were not supportive of including a reference to Annex 1 in the Draft Plan of Action, as it was not formally endorsed by Commission bodies and should not be used to dictate the scope of future work. Other JEG-CC participants disagreed as they do not view this document as limiting future work, but rather as a tool to guide future discussions. Ultimately, a compromise was reached in which the meeting Chair agreed to move the list of topics from Annex 1 to the stock-take document.

Some discussion was also had on Commission finances and how to incorporate financial and human-resources considerations into this process. The Group agreed to task STACFAD to conduct a resource needs analysis by 2025 to support decision-making associated with this process.

Swift progress was made to reconcile the outstanding elements in the Draft Plan of Action, however some text still remains in brackets. A new version of the "Revised ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change", was produced and is attached as **Appendix 3**.

8. Consider whether another meeting is needed in 2024

Considering the Group was unable to finalize the draft text, the Chair offered an opportunity for an additional meeting to tackle the remaining items. It was agreed that the Chair would circulate a revised version of the draft Plan of Action for CPC comment and that the possibility of a short, third online meeting of the JEG-CC would be explored with the Secretariat.

9. Prepare a report to the Commission setting out proposed next steps, including the potential need for future meetings, the appropriate body or forum for those meetings, and their frequency

The Chair will circulate a draft meeting report along with the revised version of the Draft Plan of Action, for review by CPCs. The Group agreed to adopt the meeting report via correspondence.

10. Any other matters

No other matters were raised.

11. Adoption of the report and adjournment

The report will be adopted by correspondence. The meeting was adjourned.

Agenda

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6. Identification of other priority areas of Climate Change work, including engagement with stakeholder groups and other relevant international organizations
7. Consider, revise, and aim to agree on the Draft ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change
8. Consider whether another meeting is needed in 2024
9. Prepare a report to the Commission setting out proposed next steps, including the potential need for future meetings, the appropriate body or forum for those meetings, and their frequency
10. Any other matters
11. Adoption of the report and adjournment

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Revised ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change

(Explanatory Note from the Chair of the Meeting of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change in consultation with the SCRS Chair)

The draft ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change was last considered at the 2023 ICCAT Annual Meeting. The document is intended to serve as the workplan, called for in the [Resolution by ICCAT on Climate Change \(Rec. 22-13\)](#) to guide the Commission and the SCRS's future work on relevant issues associated with Climate Change. The Plan of Action is designed to be a living document that is continually reviewed and revised by the Commission and the SCRS as ICCAT builds upon this line of work.

The [Resolution by ICCAT on next steps of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change in 2024 \(Res. 23-19\)](#) indicated that the 2024 Meeting of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change would include a presentation and discussion of a “stock-take” review of relevant ongoing ICCAT work that relates to, or is impacted by, Climate Change. Then, discussion of the results of the “stock-take” and any other priority areas of Climate Change work may be accounted for in a revised draft Plan of Action for consideration first by the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change and then the full Commission in November.

Accordingly, I have worked with the Chair of the SCRS to revise the draft Plan of Action based on the results of the “stock-take.” The revised draft Plan of Action follows a similar structure to previous versions and reflects much of the input provided by CPCs at the Annual Meeting. However, there are elements that have been refined to reflect the input provided by the Commission and the SCRS Officers as part of the “stock-take” exercise.

As reflected in the agenda, the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change will have an opportunity to further refine this draft, in line with [Res. 22-13](#), as a key next step to organizing and prioritizing ICCAT's future climate-related work. Adopting an initial Plan of Action will serve as an important tool for ICCAT to focus its resources both internally and externally with other RFMOs and/or international organizations pursuing similar goals of climate-adaptive fisheries management strategies.

Revised ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change

(presented by the Climate Change Experts Meeting Chair in consultation with the SCRS Chair)

With a view to advancing the implementation of the [Resolution by ICCAT on Climate Change \(Res. 22-13\)](#) and the [Resolution by ICCAT on next steps of the Joint Expert Group on Climate Change in 2024 \(Res. 23-19\)](#), the Commission endorses the following Plan of Action on Climate Change, noting that it is intended to be a living document of priority Commission and SCRS actions that should be reviewed and revised, as appropriate, as new information becomes available:

2024

Commission and SCRS

- *“Stock-take” exercise:* As called for in [Res. 23-19](#), the Chair of the Joint Experts Meetings on Climate Change, working with the SCRS, its Officers, Commission Officers, and Chairs of Ad Hoc Working Groups as necessary, will prepare and circulate in advance, a ‘stock-take’ review of relevant ongoing ICCAT work which relates to, or is impacted by, Climate Change.
- *Second Meeting of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change:* As called for in [Res. 23-19](#), convene a Second Meeting of the Joint Experts Group in order to build upon initial discussions held at the 2023 two-day Climate Change Experts Meeting and at the 2023 ICCAT Annual Meeting to explore new or identify existing pathways for the SCRS to further consider and advise the Commission on the issues specified in [Res. 22-13](#), including the opportunity to consider, revise, and aim to agree on the draft ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change.
- *[Climate Change Experts Group:* Establish a Standing Joint Expert Group on Climate Change (SJEG-CC) at the 2024 ICCAT Annual Meeting to provide a dedicated forum to further consider and advise the Commission on the issues specified in [Resolution by ICCAT on Climate Change \(Res. 22-13\)](#), to ensure continued close coordination between the SCRS and Commission, and to guide cooperation with the FAO and other RFMOs.]

2025

SCRS

Organization and structure

- Include Climate Change as an agenda item for SCRS subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to provide a dedicated time to discuss how the ongoing climate science can benefit the ICCAT management and scientific processes.
- Include Climate Change as a standing agenda item for the SCRS Plenary meeting to promote coordination and information exchange among SCRS subsidiary bodies and external groups with expertise in the field. As part of the SCRS annual report and other SCRS meeting reports, include as appropriate, updates related to the execution of this Plan of Action. Additionally, include where relevant a section on climate change considerations in the executive summaries for each Species Group.
- As the SCRS continues work to update the SCRS Strategic Plan, identify opportunities for incorporating Climate Change considerations in the scientific work of ICCAT, including prioritizing needed scientific research and data collection and specifying associated time frames and resource needs, where possible.

Research, data collection, and scientific tools and approaches

- As outlined by the 2024 stock-take exercise, the SCRS should identify and provide to the Commission for review a draft list of proposed climate-related questions with implications for management that the SCRS can use to continue integrating, as appropriate, climate considerations into management advice to the Commission. These questions could consider the areas of interest already identified by Commission Officers in the stock-take exercise, such as productivity, recruitment, growth, and species distribution as well as how to better reconcile the different timeframes used for climate science and fisheries management .
- In addition to developing these questions, the SCRS should continue advancing work related to climate as indicated in the 2024 stock-take exercise. This work includes CPUE standardization and incorporation of relevant oceanographic and environmental changes into the stock assessment process, continuing to incorporate climate-related considerations into MSEs and Management Procedure (MP) development, and continuing to develop an Ecosystems Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) framework for ICCAT and an ecosystem report card, and explore dynamic reference points.

Commission and SCRS

Alternative text

- The SCRS should initiate a process early in 2025 to begin drafting climate-related questions with implications for management with a goal that the SCRS subsidiary bodies and SCRS plenary review these questions before being discussed and endorsed by the Commission at their annual meeting.

Commission

- *Commission Agenda:* Starting in 2025, include an agenda item on climate change as a standing item. [“Matters pertaining to incorporating Climate Change considerations into the work of the Commission”] on the Commission’s Plenary agenda for the Annual Meeting to review this Plan of Action as needed and consider other relevant issues related to Climate Change each year, including Climate Change impacts, mitigation, and adaptation.
- Review, provide feedback, and, if appropriate, endorse the proposed climate-related questions with implications for management drafted by the SCRS.
- Provide feedback to the SCRS on matters stemming from the tasks outlined above.
- *Panel Agendas:* Starting in 2025, incorporate the issue of Climate Change, as appropriate, into items of the Panel agendas, particularly those agenda items related to conservation and management measures and research.

2026

Commission and SCRS

- [Hold a Third Meeting of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change][Hold a meeting of the Standing Joint Expert Group on Climate Change (SJEG-CC)][to review execution of this Plan of Action and coordinate and review, if not adopted in 2025, the draft list of climate-related management questions for cooperative development of the questions with the SCRS.]
- *Resource needs analysis:* Working with the ICCAT Secretariat and STACFAD Chair, consider if current human and financial resources are sufficient to undertake research and data collection/evaluation related to Climate Change in terms of the climate-related management questions developed in cooperation between the SCRS and Commission. The resource needs analysis should include consideration of existing databases and collaboration with other organisations. Based on this analysis, the Commission will consider the need to prioritize questions and tasks for SCRS for progressing the incorporation of climate considerations into management advice.

SCRS

- *Organization and structure:* Following any updates to the Plan of Action, consider if the SCRS meeting structure or operations are fit for purpose to provide scientific advice taking into account Climate Change impacts on ICCAT target stocks, non-target species, related ecosystems, and other scientific aspects included in [Res. 22-13](#).
- *Research, data collection, and scientific tools and approaches:* The SCRS should continue its work to incorporate climate considerations into scientific processes with the goal of providing advice that is more robust to Climate Change and supports climate resilient fishery management in ICCAT, while ensuring the robustness of the overall ICCAT management framework
- *Plan of Action review:* Review this Plan of Action and, as appropriate, suggest revisions and/or provide other relevant feedback to the Commission.

Commission

Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD)

- Consider, if appropriate, possible additional approaches to reduce the organization's environmental and climate impacts, including those related to its headquarters operation and meetings.
- Consider and prioritize any SCRS/ICCAT Secretariat requests for supplementary funds or other resources needed to carry out expanded scientific work associated with Climate Change.