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Relations with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)

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Prepared by the Secretariat

Purpose and Introduction

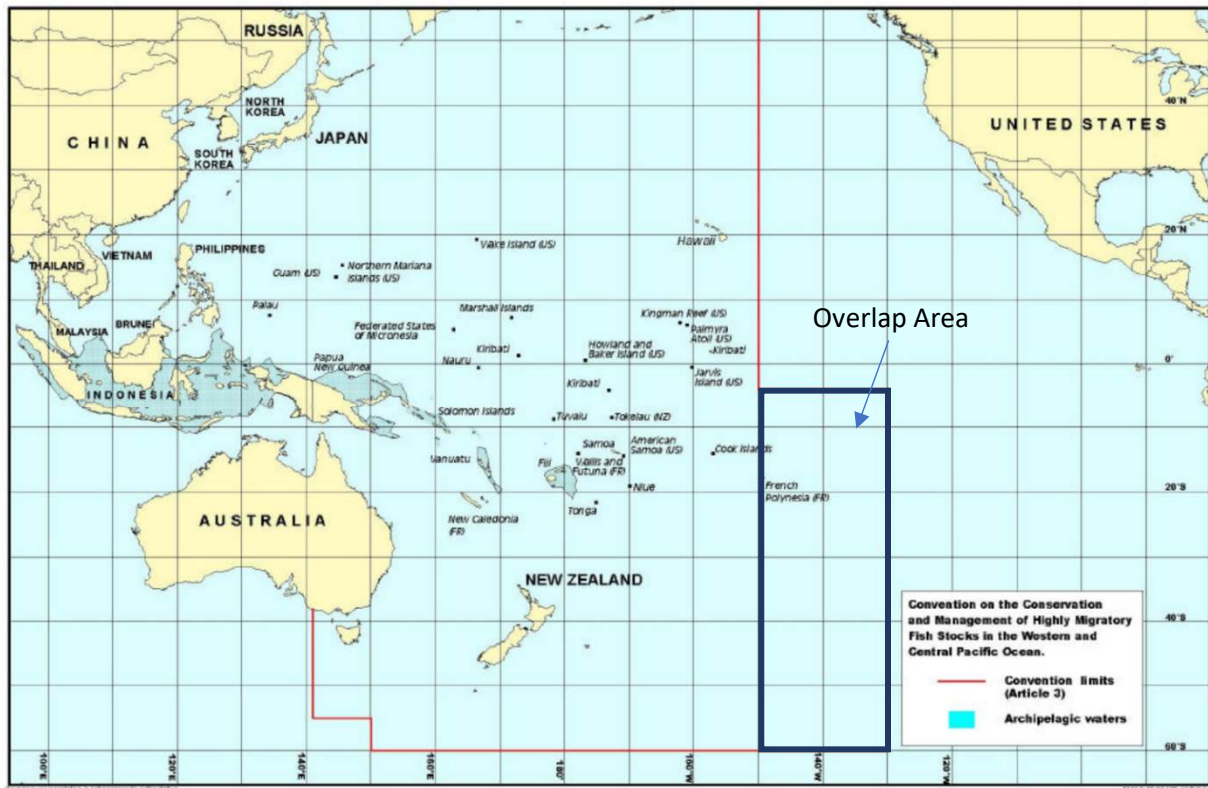
1. The purpose of this paper is to provide updated information to the Commission about the various ways in which the WCPFC and IATTC are currently working together with respect to shared interests that are relevant to fisheries activities in each RFMO.
2. WCPFC's need for cooperation with IATTC was acknowledged during the negotiating sessions of the Convention,¹ when participants agreed to the eastern boundary of the WCPFC Convention Area which resulted in an overlap with the IATTC Convention Area. Participants recognised the resulting need for close cooperation in respect of the overlap area between the WCPFC and IATTC.² The current formulation of WCPFC Convention Article 22.4 was developed and agreed at the final negotiating session, reflecting the significance of the relationship between WCPFC and IATTC on matters of shared interest.
3. Following the adoption of the WCPFC Convention in 2000, the series of Preparatory Conferences considered the matter of cooperation between WCPFC and IATTC, with a view to operationalizing and outlining a mechanism to ensure effective cooperation between the two organisations. Owing to a lack of time to complete discussions, the Preparatory Conference in its final session in 2004 tasked the newly established Commission to give effect to Article 22.4 as a matter of priority.³
4. Following two years of developmental work between the WCPFC and IATTC, the Commission at its 3rd Regular Annual Session (WCPFC3) welcomed the conclusion of a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) between the WCPFC and IATTC on 15 December 2006.

¹ Known as the Multilateral High Level Conferences (MHLC).

² "Annotation of the Convention on the Conservation of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean". Lui, F. Vitolio. 2000.

³ [Final Report of the Preparatory Conference](#), paragraphs 86-87.

5. The need for close cooperation between WCPFC and IATTC arises primarily from the shared management area, known as the “overlap area” and depicted in the map shown below. Participants in the WCPFC negotiating sessions and preparatory conferences were motivated by a need to avoid duplication of measures in the shared management area, as well as to promote consistency of measures,⁴ particularly for those members that participated in both organisations.



6. Subsequently, the [MOU](#) between the two organisations sets up the areas of cooperation as follows:
 - i. exchange of data and information, in a manner consistent with the information-sharing policies of each Commission;
 - ii. collaboration on research efforts relating to stocks and species of mutual interest, including Pacific-wide stock assessments;
 - iii. conservation and management measures for stocks and species of mutual interest.

In addition, the MOU establishes a Consultative Meeting between the Secretariats with the purpose of reviewing and enhancing the cooperation between the WCPFC and the IATTC. Generally this consultation takes place when either of the Executive Directors are attending meetings of the other organisation.

7. In 2012, the WCPFC and IATTC Commissions each agreed to a common decision on the application of measures in the part of the WCPF Convention Area that overlaps with the IATTC Convention Area. This says that in the case of a WCPFC member who is also an IATTC member, and who has

⁴ <https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/wcpfcprepconwp12/cooperation-iattc>

vessels on both records/register of IATTC and WCPFC, the corresponding flag Member shall decide and notify both organisations under which of the two Commission measures those vessels shall operate when fishing in the overlap area with IATTC and WCPFC. If a CCM is a member of only one RFMO, the rules of that RFMO will apply in the overlap area between WCPFC and IATTC, even if the CCM is a cooperating non-member of the other RFMO.⁵

8. In 2022, the Secretariat received two updates of Member’s choice of WCPFC/IATTC measures in the Overlap Area.⁶ Accordingly, in 2021 - 2023, or as otherwise specified the following six CCMs could apply IATTC measures in the Overlap Area:⁷
 - a. Ecuador – As a WCPFC Cooperating Non-Member which is a contracting party of IATTC;
 - b. El Salvador – As a WCPFC Cooperating Non-Member which is a contracting party of IATTC;
 - c. Nicaragua - As a WCPFC Cooperating Non-Member which is a contracting party of IATTC;
 - d. Panama – As a WCPFC Cooperating Non-Member which is a contracting party of IATTC;
 - e. European Union – In accordance with letter received by WCPFC on 2 April 2013; and
 - f. Commencing 8 July 2020, the United States of America – In accordance with letter received by WCPFC on 8 July 2020.
9. Cooperation with IATTC is further embodied in several WCPFC CMMs in respect of conservation and management measures for shared stocks, including those fisheries that occur in the overlap area.

Conservation and Management Measure, Resolution, or Decision	Relevant Provisions on WCPFC-IATTC Cooperation
CMM 2022-03: Harvest Strategies	(Preamble) Mindful of the work underway on the development of reference points and harvest control rules for a number of highly migratory fish stocks in the Eastern Pacific Ocean by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).
CMM 2021-02: Pacific Bluefin Tuna	(Preamble) Recalling that paragraph (4) of the Article 22 of the WCPFC Convention, which requires cooperation between the Commission and the IATTC to reach agreement to harmonize CMMs for fish stocks such as Pacific bluefin tuna that occur in the convention areas of both organizations. 15. The WCPFC Executive Director shall communicate this CMM to the IATTC Secretariat and its contracting parties whose fishing vessels engage in fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna in EPO and request them to take equivalent measures in conformity with this CMM.

⁵ see WCPFC9 Summary Report, paragraph 80.

⁶ France advised that French Polynesia would apply WCPFC rules in the overlap area from 1 Jan 2022 – 31 Dec 2024. China has advised that will apply both IATTC and WCPFC rules in overlap area, including VMS and HSBI, but catches in the overlap area are to be attributed to WCPFC.

⁷ The list is a subset of the list of notifications received for the overlap area, the complete list of notifications can be accessed by authorized CCM users from the WCPFC Secure CCM side: <https://www.wcpfc.int/overlap-area-iattc>

Conservation and Management Measure, Resolution, or Decision	Relevant Provisions on WCPFC-IATTC Cooperation
	<p>16. To enhance effectiveness of this measure, CCMs are encouraged to communicate with and, if appropriate, work with the concerned IATTC contracting parties bilaterally.</p> <p>Work plan for the development of a PBF CDS.</p>
CMM 2021-01: Tropical Tunas	<p>Overlap Area</p> <p>10. Where flag CCMs choose to implement IATTC measures in the overlap area, any calculation of limits for the Convention Area (excluding the overlap area) that are done on the basis of historical catch or effort levels, shall exclude historical catch or effort within the overlap area. Notwithstanding decisions on application of catch and/or effort limits, all other provisions of this measure apply to all vessels fishing in the overlap area.</p>
CMM 2019-03: NP Albacore	<p>(Preamble) Recalling further Article 22(4) of the WCPFC Convention that provides for cooperation with the IATTC regarding fish stocks that occur in the Convention Areas of both organizations and Recognizing that the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) adopted, at its 73rd meeting, conservation and management measures on North Pacific albacore, and that it adopted supplemental measures at its 85th meeting that were amended at its 93rd meeting;</p> <p>7. The WCPFC Executive Director shall communicate this resolution to the IATTC and request that the two Commissions engage in consultations with a view to reaching agreement on a consistent set of conservation and management measures for North Pacific albacore, and specifically, to propose that both Commissions adopt as soon as practicable uniform conservation and management measures and any reporting or other measures needed to ensure compliance with agreed measures.</p>
CMM 2009-03: Swordfish	<p>(Preamble) Acknowledging IATTC’s recognition of the importance of establishing complementary conservation and management measures for species of mutual interest, and that swordfish stocks in the central Pacific are likely to occur in waters under the competence of both the WCPFC and IATTC;</p> <p>(Preamble) Recognising the need for both IATTC and WCPFC to adopt conservation and management measures to provide for the sustainable management of swordfish stocks across the Pacific Ocean.</p>
Resolution 2012-01: Best Available Science	(Resolves) To promote the scientific collaboration between WCPFC and IATTC
Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring	This prescribes the minimum data fields to be collected by transshipment observers during transshipment events, as of 1 April 2023.

Key Areas of Cooperation

Pacific Bluefin, North Pacific Albacore, and South Pacific Albacore Tunas

10. At present, cooperation between WCPFC and IATTC is most active through the Joint IATTC and WCPFC-NC Working Group Meeting on the Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna, including development of a harmonized CMM for Pacific Bluefin Tuna ([CMM 2021-02](#) and [Resolution C-21-05](#)) and Harvest Strategy for Pacific Bluefin Tuna Fisheries ([HS 2021-01](#) and [Resolution C-23-01](#)). Cooperation is also occurring through the convening of a series of Catch Documentation Scheme Technical Meetings for Pacific bluefin. The NC19's recent agreement to a harvest control rule in its harvest strategy for NP albacore also complements a decision taken earlier in 2023 by IATTC ([HS 2022-01](#) and [Resolution C-23-02](#)) in respect of the same stock. In December 2023, the Commission will review updated revisions of [CMM 2021-02](#), [HS 2021-01](#) and [HS 2022-01](#), which are harmonized versions of relevant IATTC Resolutions.
11. At SC19, discussions on harvest strategy development for SP albacore acknowledged the implications of measures that may be adopted by the IATTC in respect of the same stock, which is shared between the two organisations. Specifically, several CCMs noted that catches of SP albacore in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) could be fixed at recent levels for the purpose of MP evaluation and development, and the Commission was encouraged to seek compatible measures in the IATTC to address the management gap of SP albacore that may impact the effectiveness of an adopted MP.

Data Exchange

12. In addition to the overarching MOU between the two organisations, an additional [Memorandum of Cooperation](#) (MOC) was signed on 11 December 2009 covering the exchange and release of data between WCPFC and IATTC. The MOC covers the exchange of operational level data, aggregated data, and MCS data between the organisations, subject to the internal data security requirements of each body. Some of the key activities that involve data exchange and collaboration in both organizations include the annual exchange of aggregated catch and effort data and there are regular Pacific Ocean wide stock assessment activities including for bigeye, yellowfin, skipjack tuna, SP albacore, south Pacific Ocean billfish and shark assessments. Other more specific collaborative activities include the peer review of 2011 bigeye and 2020 yellowfin stock assessments, the Pacific-wide tuna tagging project, and the continued enhancement of SEAPODYM.
13. The recent adoption by the Commission of the Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring provides an opportunity to generally contrast and compare transshipment requirements and processes in IATTC, and to in the future consider any issues that may be apparent through data exchange through within the limitations of the data rules and procedures. For example there may be future opportunities to consider, similar to the arrangement with CCSBT, a cross-endorsement arrangement between IATTC and WCPFC for observing transshipments and for data exchange in support of transshipment monitoring and verification.

Cross Endorsement of Fisheries Observers

14. A [second MOC](#) was signed on 9 August 2011 covering the "Cross-endorsement of WCPFC and IATTC approved observers when observing on the high seas of the Convention Areas of both

organizations.” The information in Box 1 was provided in the required annual report⁸ to TCC19 on the Commission’s Regional Observer Programme, in respect of the cross-endorsement activities between WCPFC and IATTC.

Box 1.

Cross Endorsement of ROP Observers to collect data on behalf of other tuna RFMOs

31. The IATTC/WCPFC Cross-Endorsement arrangement was initiated to permit a WCPFC ROP observer to continue their duties on vessels that may operate in both the WCPO and the Eastern Pacific on the same trip. Pre-pandemic, there were many observers from Pacific Island countries who had IATTC/WCPFC cross endorsement qualifications. During the pandemic, there was little demand for cross-endorsed observers and several cross-endorsed observers left their programmes. Since the resumption of 100% observer coverage requirements there has been a high demand for observers who have completed the cross-endorsement training particularly from the USA fleet. Early in 2023, a training in Tuvalu was completed which saw 12 new observers certified by the IATTC trainer which helped increase the availability of cross-endorsed observers. Table 6 shows pre pandemic cross-endorsement placements noting that 2021 and 2022 had no placements. But since the recommencement of 100% observer coverage, 37 cross-endorsement placements have been made on USA vessels so far in 2023, 19 vessels of which have crossed over to the IATTC Convention Area.

Table 6 ROP Trips with fishing activities in the WCPO & EPO by year by flag and Provider

Flag CCM	ROP Provider	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Ecuador	KI	1	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
El Salvador	KI	0	4	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	11
EU- Spain	VU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
USA	FFA	1	0	3	7	12	14	14	22	6	0	0	79
Total 2012 - 2022		2	13	9	10	12	14	15	22	7	0	0	104

15. In October 2023, the Commission’s ROP Programme Coordinator conducted joint observer training with IATTC in Fiji and Kiribati. To date, three CCM national observer programmes have received cross endorsement observer training to enable their observers to work on fishing vessels operating in both the WCPFC and IATTC Convention Areas. Funding for WCPFC’s cross-endorsement training activities is partially included in the Commission’s budget and supplemented by a voluntary contribution provided by the United States.

Climate Change

16. Climate change is an emerging issue that significantly alters the distribution of shared (straddling, transboundary, and highly migratory) stocks. Recent studies predict that by the end of this century, nearly half of the shared marine fish stocks will have relocated, and this relocation of fish stocks could pose challenges on the existing fisheries management framework. Understanding how climate change affects shared fish stocks is crucial for robust, climate-resilient international fisheries governance. In this regard, collaboration on research and management activities related to the possible impacts of climate change on the shared stocks between IATTC and WCPFC is important to the work of members of both organisations.

17. The [Spatial Ecosystem and Populations Dynamics Model](#) (SEAPODYM), together with the projected changes to the tropical Pacific Ocean derived from Earth system models (ESMs) is being used to simulate the spatial dynamics of tuna under the effects of fishing and key environmental variables or with climate change. Development of the SEAPODYM since its early days has been

⁸ [WCPFC-TCC19-2023-RP02](#) (9 September 2023)

facilitated through collaborations with IATTC, WCPFC, SPC, and member countries (e.g. Indonesia – INDESO Project). This kind of collaboration is essential and should be pursued for the continued development of SEAPODYM to better predict climate change impacts that will assist member countries of both RFMOs to mitigate its impacts on various sectors. The collaborative work that is being coordinated through the second phase of the Common Oceans Tuna Project, entitled “Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the ABNJ (2022-2027)”, includes climate change impact related work (see WCPFC20 working paper 12 and [WCPFC20-2023-OP03](#) *Common Oceans Tuna Project 2022-2027 – Update*).

RFMO and RFB Compliance Manager Informal Networks

18. Informal collaboration between tuna RFMO Secretariat compliance counterparts (CCSBT, IATTC, ICCAT, IOTC and WCPFC) has been continuing under the umbrella of the Tuna Compliance Network since 2017 with the support of the International MCS Network, and supported by limited funding from the current and previous GEF-funded FAO Common Oceans Tuna Project. In late 2020, similar informal collaboration commenced under the umbrella of the Pan-Pacific Fisheries Compliance Network (PPFCN), also supported by the International MCS Network, amongst Fisheries Secretariat Compliance counterparts with areas of responsibility in the Pan Pacific region (CCAMLR, CCSBT, IATTC, NPAFC, NPFC, SPRFMO and WCPFC). As obligations in each of the tRFMO’s and Pan-Pacific RFBs continue to increase annually, the respective Secretariats must be adaptive and innovative in their approaches to managing processes that can be complex and that produce high volumes of information and the associated required analyses. The TCN and PPFCN discussions have allowed the respective fisheries compliance practitioners to share their experiences with effective monitoring and handling of member’s data, with a view to strengthening collaboration among the Secretariats and identifying options for best practice support mechanisms. WCPFC and IATTC Secretariat Compliance staff are active participants in both TCN and PPFCN activities.

Recommendation

19. The Commission is invited to note the status of cooperation between WCPFC and IATTC and request the WCPFC Secretariat to provide an annual update of collaboration between the two organisations.