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Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement
Accord relatif aux Pêches dans le Sud de l'Océan Indien

10th Meeting of the SIOFA Compliance Committee (CC10) and 13th Meeting of the Parties to SIOFA (MoP13)

Savoy Seychelles Resort & Spa, Beau Vallon, Seychelles, 1–3 July and 6–10 July 2026

CC-10-27 / MoP-10-27

Proposal

New CMM for Research Cruise by Research Vessel

Delegation of the European Union

Meeting	Compliance Committee ✓ Meeting of the Parties ✓
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Abstract	
<p>Research cruises have been conducted already in the SIOFA area by CCPs and non-CCPs. However, the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement has not developed a framework providing how research cruises should be considered.</p> <p>To address that loophole, the European Union submits this working paper that builds on our working papers presented to MoP12 in 2025 (MoP-12-48-Rev1) and to SC11 in 2026 (SC-11-56-Rev1).</p> <p>The main objective of this Working Paper is to continue the discussion on such a framework for research cruises in the SIOFA Area at MoP13, acknowledging that if SIOFA adopts a CMM for research cruises, it may become necessary to amend CMM 02(2025) (Data Standards) to clearly identify data derived from research cruises and its data access arrangements.</p> <p>The EU welcomes comments from CCPs towards the adoption of a new CMM at MoP13.</p>	

¹ Restricted documents may contain confidential information. Please do not distribute restricted documents in any form without the explicit permission of the SIOFA Secretariat and the data owner(s)/provider(s).

² Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the working paper and submit comments and language suggestions

New CMM 19(2026)
Research Cruise by Research Vessel in the SIOFA Area

RECALLING that Article 6(1) (b) of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (the Agreement) calls on the Meeting of the Parties to promote and, as appropriate, coordinate research activities as required on the fishery resources and on straddling stocks occurring in waters under national jurisdiction adjacent to the Area, including discarded catch and the impact of fishing on the marine environment;

FURTHER RECALLING that Article 10(1)(c) set out the duties relevant to the collection and exchange of scientific, technical and statistical data for Contracting Parties;

NOTING Part XIII, Section 1, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which recognises the right of States and competent international organisations to conduct marine scientific research, subject to the rights and duties of other States under the Convention, calling for the promotion and facilitation of marine scientific research and providing that such research shall be conducted for peaceful purposes, using appropriate scientific methods and means, without unjustifiable interference with other legitimate uses of the sea, and in compliance with relevant regulations for the protection and preservation of the marine environment;

NOTING the importance of collecting independent fishery data and cost-effective fishery-dependent data for the purposes of ensuring scientific stock assessment and implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries management;

NOTING the recommendation by the Ninth meeting of the Scientific Committee, and endorsed by the Eleventh Meeting of the Parties, to develop a specific “research cruise CMM” that is separate from the process that is proposed for exploratory fisheries.

NOTING the recommendation by the Eleventh meeting of the Scientific Committee to continue the efforts to establish a CMM for research cruises and to set out the process for approving research cruises by vessels flagged to CCPs and the data submission requirements for those cruises, and another process for approving research cruises by vessels flagged to non-CCPs and the data submission requirements for those cruises.

FURTHER NOTING that the Meeting of Parties has adopted policies and procedures for the maintenance of data standards CMM 02(2025) and data confidentiality (CMM 03(2025));

ADOPTS the following conservation and management measure (CMM) in accordance with Article 6 of the Agreement:

Objective

1. The objective of the “Research Cruise by Research Vessel CMM” is to govern the undertaking of fisheries-related scientific research by research vessels in the SIOFA Area and to set out a clear framework and consistent approaches for research cruises.

2. The specific “Research Cruise by Research Vessel CMM” is separated from the “Scientific Research by Fishing Vessel CMM” and from the process adopted for exploratory fisheries (CMM 17(2025)) ensuring that all three activities are appropriately sanctioned prior to the activity being undertaken and subsequently reported.

Application

3. This CMM shall apply to all Contracting Parties, cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CNCs), participating fishing entities (PFEs) and any third party engaged in a research cruise in the SIOFA Area to all gears for any fishery falling under SIOFA’s competence.

Terminology

4. For the purpose of this CMM, “research cruises” are defined as single/multi-part trips conducted by a dedicated research vessel (RV), actively engaged in any research under the scope of the SIOFA Scientific Committee (SC)³, where the sale of commercial catch is not the objective of the trip.
5. For the purpose of this CMM, “research vessel” means a purpose-built and equipped vessel, permanently dedicated and used for research at sea.

Specific provisions for research cruises

Vessel Register

6. Any research vessel, regardless of the flag, conducting a research cruise authorised under this CMM in the SIOFA Area, shall be registered on the SIOFA Record of authorised vessels (RAV) in accordance with CMM 07(2025) prior to commencing the authorised research cruise, and shall comply with the relevant provisions of this CMM and other applicable SIOFA CMMs.

Research Cruise Plan

7. All research cruises, regardless of the RV flag, require SIOFA authorisation on the basis of a Research Cruise Plan (RCP).
8. A RV shall not conduct fishing activities inconsistent with its RCP.
9. Any RCP shall contain at a minimum the following key elements:
 - a. Administrative
 - b. Scientific purpose - Objectives
 - c. Spatial and temporal research design
 - d. Methods and gears

³ SIOFA Agreement Article 7.

- e. Data collection and sampling protocols
- f. Data management
- g. Analysis plan
- h. Ecosystem and precautionary safeguard
- i. Compliance and observer arrangements
- j. Catch handling and sample disposition
- k. Reporting and deliverables
- l. Annexes: Maps, sampling stations, gear diagrams...

The Research Cruise Plan should underline where RV provide an added scientific value that would not be achieved otherwise.

10. RCPs shall be submitted to the Secretariat no later than 30 days before the annual meeting of the Scientific Committee.
11. A RCP is submitted to the SIOFA SC for assessment and advice prior to consideration by the Meeting of the Parties.
12. The data collected during the research cruise regarding the scope of the SC activity are submitted to the Secretariat within 12 months of the end of the cruise. Data should be collected and exchanged ensuring that data is collected in sufficient detail as to facilitate its evaluation by the SC, while the underlying data should be submitted at the lowest operational level at which the observations were made.
13. The results of the research cruise are to be reported to the next meeting of the SC following the submission of data.
14. No subsequent research cruise will be permitted by the organisation undertaking the cruise unless the data emanating from the cruise and a final detailed research cruise report is submitted to the SIOFA Secretariat.
15. The SC will evaluate the research cruise report to assess the outcomes and to refine future operations.
16. Proponents should encourage participation from other CCPs scientists to join in the research cruise as early career development or to provide relevant expertise.
17. Where a research cruise is to be undertaken by a vessel flagged to a non-CCP, the RCP shall identify the responsible entity for ensuring compliance with this CMM.

Specific provisions for data collected in the context of a research cruise

18. Data made available shall be used only for the purpose of research within the scope of the Scientific Committee.
19. Any publication of scientific results should be in an aggregated format without any confidential information regarding individual vessels or flag States as per CMM 03(2025).

Minimising the harmful impacts of research cruises

20. Contracting Parties who intend to conduct research cruises in Benthic Fishery Closures (BFCs) in the Agreement Area, shall:
 - a. Align their Research Cruise Plan with the research and monitoring plan for the BFCs listed in Table 1 of CMM 18 (2025).
 - b. Elaborate in their RCP on the potential harmful impact that such activities may have on the BFCs and how to minimise them.
21. Contracting Parties who intend to conduct research cruises in areas where VMEs are known to occur, or likely to occur in the Agreement Area shall:
 - a. Elaborate in their RCP on the potential harmful impact that such activities may have on the VMEs and how to minimise them including the encounter protocol.

Scientific Committee

22. The Scientific Committee will comprehensively review the RCP assessing the scientific goals, technical requirements, logistics, operational constraints and safety protocols.
23. The SC would also need to consider whether the objectives of any proposed research cruise address the objectives of the SC and the Meeting of the Parties.
24. The SC should prioritise those RCP tasks that:
 - a. cannot easily be undertaken by fishing vessel during their normal operations.
 - b. have a solid international cooperation foundation.
25. At its annual meeting, the SC shall consider any new RCP submitted, and any other relevant information.
26. The SC at each annual meeting shall review available data and reports from ongoing or ended RCPs, in view to enabling an assessment of the stocks covered by these plans, the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing a fishery and the impact of fishing activities on non-target, associated or dependent species and the marine ecosystem in which these plans apply.
27. The SC would need to consider the objectives of any proposed research and evaluate whether the importance of research activities is greater than their impact on resources in the SIOFA Area.

28. The SC may request updated reports on the outcomes of SRPs and RCPs and amend the SRPs and RCPs as necessary.

29. The SC shall provide recommendations and advice on RCPs to the Meeting of the Parties.

Compliance Committee

30. The Compliance Committee shall review the compliance elements of the RCPs against the provisions of all SIOFA CMMs and provide advice to the Meeting of the Parties.

31. For research cruises involving vessels flagged to non-CCPs, the Compliance Committee shall review the RCP ensuring compliance with this CMM.

Meeting of the Parties

32. The Meeting of the Parties, taking into account the recommendations and advice of the Scientific Committee and, where relevant, the Compliance Committee, shall decide whether to authorise RCPs.

33. Once the Meeting of the Parties authorise the RCP, this will be shared with relevant international fisheries agreements, organisations and arrangements scientific/technical committees.

34. The Meeting of the Parties may consider cost-effective ways to fund relevant RCPs in the SIOFA Area.

Secretariat

Notification of Research Vessel Activity

35. Following authorisation of a RCP by the Meeting of the Parties, the responsible Contracting Parties, cooperating non-Contracting Parties, participating fishing entities or any third party authorised to conduct a research cruise in the SIOFA Area, shall notify the Secretariat no later than 30 days before the research vessel commences the authorised research activity, using the form in Annex 3: Notification of Research Vessel Activity in the SIOFA Area.

36. The Secretariat shall circulate such notification to all CCPs.

Research cruises inventory

37. The Secretariat shall keep a research cruises outcome inventory, including placing it on the SIOFA website, in a manner consistent with any applicable confidentiality requirements.

Review

38. The CMM shall be reviewed no later than two years of the start of its implementation. The review shall also take into account the latest advice of the Scientific Committee on previous or ongoing research activities in the SIOFA Area.

Annex 1 – Research Cruise Plan (RCP) Template

Paragraph 7 of CMM 19(2026) (Research Cruise) requires all research cruises, regardless of the RV flag SIOFA authorisation on the basis of a Research Cruise Plan (RCP) and paragraph 9 requires that any RCP shall contain a minimum of key elements:

- a. Administrative
 - Lead organisations/countries
 - Research vessel
 - Dates
 - Sailing
 - Location of work
 - Previous research work in the SIOFA Area
- b. Scientific purpose – Objectives
- c. Spatial and temporal research design
- d. Methods and gears
- e. Data collection and sampling protocols
- f. Data management
- g. Analysis plan
- h. Ecosystem and precautionary safeguard
- i. Compliance and observer arrangements
- j. Catch handling and sample disposition
- k. Reporting and deliverables
- l. Annexes: Maps, sampling stations, gear diagrams...

Annex 2 – Scientific Committee RCP Assessment checklist

Paragraph 22 of CMM 19(2026) (Research Cruise) requires the Scientific Committee to comprehensively review the RCP. The SC should review the RCP based, as a minimum, on the following criterion to assure consistency between proposals.

Criteria	Core question
Relevance	Does the cruise address SC/MoP priorities?
Necessity	Why can this not be done through existing fishery-dependent data?
Design adequacy	Are survey design, sample size and methods robust enough?
Risk proportionality	Are the potential impacts justified by the expected scientific value?
Data Usability	Will the outputs feed stock assessment, BFIA, ecosystem assessment, VME work, or monitoring?
International cooperation	Are collaborative efforts considered in the RCP?
Capacity building	Are other CCP scientists able to participate meaningfully?
Catch (if any) adequacy	Is catch limited proportional to scientific needs?
Analysis and reporting	Is there a clear analysis and reporting plan?

Annex 3 - Notification of Research Vessel Activity in the SIOFA Area

Notification of research vessel activity in accordance with paragraph 35 of SIOFA CM-19(2026)

Information required	Remarks:
Vessel name	<i>Name of vessel</i>

Vessel flag	<i>Flag where the vessel is registered (3-alpha country code)</i>
Vessel type	<i>Vessel research capabilities</i>
IMO number	<i>IMO number of the vessel</i>
Purpose of research	<i>As per the Research Cruise Plan authorised by MoP</i>
Name of research institute or authority responsible for planning and coordinating the research	Name of the responsible research institute or authority
Location in which research is to be carried out	<i>Specify where in the SIOFA Agreement Area as per the Research Cruise Plan authorised by MoP</i>
Estimated dates of entering and leaving SIOFA Convention Area	<i>Date using the format YYYY-MM-DD</i>