



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

Savoy Hotel, Beau Vallon, Seychelles, 1–3 July and 6–10 July 2026

~~CC-10-19~~ / MoP-13-19 rev1

Proposal for New CMM for Fishery Independent Research Cruise

Proposed by the delegations of China

Document type	Working paper ☒ Information paper ☐
Distribution	Public ☒ Restricted ¹ ☐ Closed session document ² ☐
Abstract Fishery independent research cruises play a critical role in supporting the conservation and management of fishery resources in the SIOFA area. While some CCPs and third parties have already conducted research cruises in the Area, SIOFA currently lacks a clear and comprehensive framework to govern fishery independent research cruise activities. Discussions on this issue were initiated by the European Union in Working Paper (MoP-12-48-Rev1) submitted at MoP12 in 2025, and were further elaborated during the Scientific Committee Workshop WS2025-ORS: Window of Opportunity – Research Vessels in SIOFA. During the deliberations on the proposed framework at SC11, some CCPs expressed fundamental divergences concerning the definitions of “research cruises” and “scientific research”. China is of the view that these two terms should be addressed and defined separately to avoid unnecessary ambiguity, improve clarity, and enhance management efficiency. Therefore, having taken into account the relevant proposals by the European Union and CCAMLR Conservation Measure 24-01 (2023), China has developed this CMM. The primary purpose of developing this CMM is to strengthen the effective management of research cruises, prevent activities conducted under the pretext of scientific research from being used for commercial fishing, and at the same time encourage genuine scientific research by providing appropriate facilitation.	

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.

China supports further development of this working paper and welcomes comments from CCPs' constructive intersessional engagement among CCPs, with a view to adopting a new CMM at the forthcoming MoP.

Rev1: revised preamble with the references of EU CMM;

defines third-party and Independently Funded Research

revised Classification of Fishery Independent Research Cruise and Activities, and make it more reasonable to the CCPs

added the scientific observer requirement with encourage

re-clarifies the regulatory requirements of the Scientific Committee (SC) and Meeting of the Parties (MoP) for different types of scientific research cruise.

revised the Annex I and II

added Annex III for a template of RCP

Recommendations

- ~~• CC10 recommend that MOP13 adopt the proposed CMM.~~
- ~~MoP13 adopt the proposed CMM~~Consider this working paper with some comments

New CMM XX(2026)
Fishery Independent Research Cruise in the SIOFA Area

The Meeting of the Parties to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement;

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;

RECOGNISING the importance of developing comprehensive arrangements for relevant scientific research to assist the Scientific Committee in performing its functions as outlined in Article 7 of the Agreement;

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 ~~the right to conduct marine scientific research as set out in Articles 238–240 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);~~

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.

~~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));~~
BEARING IN MIND the principles of Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) Conservation Measure 24-01;

~~RECOGNISING the need for a clear framework to govern research cruises that ensures data collection while minimizing administrative burdens for non-commercial activities~~

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));

RECOGNISING the need for a clear framework to govern research cruises that ensures data collection while minimizing administrative burdens for non-commercial activities

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

Objective

1. The objective of the “Fishery Independent Research Cruise CMM” is to govern the undertaking of dedicated and fisheries-related scientific research in the SIOFA Area and to set out a clear framework and consistent approaches for research cruises.
2. The specific “Fishery Independent Research Cruise CMM” is separated from the process adopted for exploratory fisheries (CMM 17(2025)) according to the decision made by MoP11.

Application

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

Terminology

4. For the purpose of this CMM, “Fishery independent research cruise (FIRC)” is defined as single or multiple trips conducted by a dedicated research vessel (RV), actively engaged in any scientific research under the scope of the SIOFA Scientific Committee (SC), where the primary objective of the trip is the collection of scientific information and not the sale of commercial catch~~is not the primary objective of the trip.~~
5. For the purpose of this CMM, “~~research~~Research ~~vessel~~Vessel” means a purpose-build and equipped vessel, permanently dedicated and used for research at sea. Any fishing vessel that has been converted for scientific purposes is also allowed to operate after undergoing evaluation by the SC and authorised by the MoP.
6. For the purpose of this CMM, “Independently Funded Research” means any fishery independent research cruise that is financed entirely by the government of any CCP(s), or domestic academic or research institutions, or affiliated entities, and does not request or receive any financial support, joint funding, or subsidies from the SIOFA budget or SIOFA-administered funds.

7. For the purpose of this CMM, "Third party" means refers to any State, fishing entity, non-governmental organization (NGO), intergovernmental organization, or academic institution that is not a Contracting Party, Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CNCP), or Participating Fishing Entity (PFE) to the SIOFA Agreement.

~~5.~~

Classification of Fishery Independent Research Cruise and Activities

~~6-8.~~ Any Contracting Party or Fishing Entity~~CPs or third party~~ planning to conduct non-bottom fishing for research purposes, shall be managed based on catch volume and funding sources to ensure an appropriate level of scientific oversight without undue interference in independent research:

(a) Independently Funded Research (< 30 tonnes): if taking less than 30 tonnes during the whole trip(s) and independently funded, shall notify the Secretariat before 30 days of conducting the Research Cruise, and the Secretariat will notify all CCPs immediately. Research Vessels to which the provisions of paragraph 5 above apply, shall be exempt from conservation measures relating to mesh size regulations, prohibition of types of gear, ~~closed areas~~, fishing seasons and size limits, and reporting system requirements (Annex I). To ensure basic regulatory oversight, the SC shall review the submitted scientific data and cruise reports post-cruise.

(b) Independently Funded Research (≥ 30 tonnes): if taking more than 30 tonnes during the whole trip(s) and independently funded, shall submit a Research Cruise Plan (RCP) to the SC to clearly define the approximate total catch and the corresponding main ~~fish~~-species to ensure the rationality of fishing production, and prevent commercial fishing under the guise of research. The SC shall evaluate the RCP to provide scientific oversight, and require formal authorization by the Meeting of the Parties (MoP) with recommendations.

(c) SIOFA-Funded Research: if seeking financial support or joint funding from SIOFA, regardless of the catch volume, shall submit a detailed RCP to the SC for evaluation and subject to the explicit authorization of the MoP.

~~7-9.~~ Any Contracting Party or Fishing Entity~~CCPs or third party~~ planning to conduct bottom fishing for research purposes, due to the potential harmful impact on benthic ecosystems, shall be strictly subject to SC evaluation and authorization by the MoP regardless of their funding sources:

(a) shall provide ~~a detail~~ Research Cruise Plan (RCP) to the Scientific Committee (SC). The SC should evaluate the RCP based on the scientific needs, including minimise the

harmful impact of each FIRC on benthic ecosystem. Based on the submitted RCP and any advice provided by any CCPs, the SC will provide advice to the MoP where the review process will be concluded. Until the review process is complete, the planned Research Cruise shall not proceed (Annex II).

(b) a detail RCP (Annex III) shall be subject to annual review~~no longer than three years~~ and shall be reported in accordance with the Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment Standardisation guidelines (BFIAS) adopted by the Scientific Committee.

(c) who intend to conduct FIRC in Benthic Fishery Closures (BFCs) in the Agreement Area, shall:

1. Align their RCP with the research and monitoring plan for the BFCs listed in Table 1 of CMM 18 (2025).

2. Elaborate in their RCP on the potential harmful impact that such activities may have on the BFCs and how to minimise them.

(d) who intend to conduct FIRC in areas where VMEs are known to occur, or likely to occur in the Agreement Area shall

3. Elaborate in their RCP on the potential harmful impact that such activities may have on the VMEs and how to minimise them.

4. The encounter movement scheme for VMEs shall be clearly defined and elaborated in the RCP

(c) When the review process in paragraph 6(a) is complete, the MoP shall make a decision based on the advice by the SC, all applicable requirements and any exemptions pursuant to the relevant CMM, should also be considered by the MoP.

10. Any Cooperating Non-Contracting Party or third-party planning to conduct any fishery independent research cruise in the SIOFA Area, regardless of the target fishery, catch volume, or funding source, shall submit a detailed RCP to the SC for comprehensive evaluation. The planned research cruise shall not proceed until explicit authorization is granted by the Meeting of the Parties (MoP).

Catch Allocation

8.10. Catches taken by any vessel during the implementation of FIRC shall be counted against the quota allocated to the flag CCP for each species taken, if it has catch limitation.

9.11. If a FIRC is conducted by any third party, the allocation of quotas for the species to be caught in the FIRC shall be discussed by SC and subject to deliberation and decision by the Meeting of the Parties (MoP).

Data collection and submission

~~10-12.~~ Data submitted to SIOFA may only be used by the Scientific Committee to support its work within the SIOFA mandate. Any other use shall require prior approval from the data owner.

~~11-13.~~ Pending the adoption of the relevant CMM governing scientific survey data, any scientific results derived from submitted data and published by or on behalf of the Scientific Committee shall be presented solely in aggregated form, excluding confidential information pertaining to individual vessels or flag States, in accordance with CMM 03 (2025). Any other use shall require prior authorization from the data owner.

~~12-14.~~ 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.

Miscellaneous

~~13-15.~~ All research vessels (RVs) commissioned by any CCPs or third party shall be registered in the SIOFA Record of Authorised Vessels (RAV) in accordance with CMM 07(2025) prior to commencing the authorised research cruise. Except for matters exempted under this CMM, such vessels shall also comply with the applicable provisions of all other SIOFA Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs).

~~16.~~ A RV shall not conduct fishing activities inconsistent with its RCP.

~~14-17.~~ Any FIRC are encouraged to deploy scientific observers on board during the research cruises to ensure robust data collection and compliance.

~~15-18.~~ The results of the research cruise are to be reported to the subsequent meeting of the SC following the submission of the data.

~~16-19.~~ No subsequent FIRC 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.

~~17-20.~~ Research cruise operators shall, according to actual circumstances (e.g., funding sources, survey content), endeavour to offer participation opportunities in the cruises to scientists from other CCPs for the early career development or the provision of relevant professional expertise. In the meantime, the capacity-building needs of developing States and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) shall be fully considered.

~~18-21.~~ In addition to CMMs relevant to bottom fisheries, appropriate exemptions from certain CMMs should be granted to facilitate scientific cruises to the greatest extent possible, so as to encourage scientific surveys within the SIOFA Area.

Scientific Committee

~~19-22.~~ 22. For the bottom fishing research purposes:

(a) The SC should prioritise those RCP tasks that (i) cannot easily be undertaken by fishing vessel during their normal operations; or (ii) have a solid international cooperation foundation.

(b) The SC would need to consider the objectives of any proposed FIRC and evaluate whether the importance of research activities is greater than their impact on resources in the SIOFA Area.

~~20-23.~~ 23. For the non-bottom fishing research purposes:

(c) The SC shall evaluate the fishery independent research cruise results and make further recommendations to meet the needs of its work plan. For independently funded non-bottom research cruises under paragraphs 8(a) and 8(b), the SC's purview is strictly limited to reviewing the submitted scientific data, post-cruise reports, or evaluating the RCP for scientific oversight, and does not include requiring pre-approval of the cruise by the MoP.

~~21-24.~~ 24. The Scientific Committee may request updated reports on the outcomes of RCPs and amend them as necessary.

~~22-25.~~ 25. The Scientific Committee shall provide recommendations and advice on RCPs to the MoP.

Meeting of the Parties

~~1-26.~~ 26. The Meeting of the Parties, taking into account the recommendations and advice of the Scientific Committee, shall explicitly decide whether to authorise RCPs for the classified Research Cruise Activities in paragraph 8(b), (c), 9 and 10. As stipulated in paragraph 8(a), independently funded non-bottom research cruises (< 30 tonnes) conducted by CCPs shall be reviewed by the SC and verified by the CC without requiring formal MoP authorization.

~~2-27.~~ 27. The Meeting of the Parties may consider cost-effective ways to fund relevant RCPs in the SIOFA Area.

Review

~~3-28.~~ 28. The CMM shall be reviewed no later than ~~three~~ two years of its implementation. The review shall also take into account the latest advice of the Scientific Committee on previous or ongoing FIRCs in the SIOFA Area.

Annex ~~1-I~~ Short Notification for Fishery Independent Research Cruise (FIRC)

Applicable to: ~~Independently funded non-bottom research cruises (< 30 tonnes)~~ ~~Non-bottom (pelagic) fishery research cruises with total catch <30 tonnes~~

No.	Item	Details
1	Notifying Party	Name, contact person, contact details, <u>confirming CCP status</u>
2	Research Vessel Info	Vessel name, port of registry, registration number, call sign, vessel type (dedicated research vessel / converted fishing vessel), <u>SIOFA RAV registration status</u>
3	Cruise Basic Info	Estimated entry/exit dates of SIOFA Area, operating area (lat/long range)
4	Gear Type	Pelagic trawl, longline, purse seine, etc. (non-bottom gear)
5	Core Research Purpose	Brief description (resource survey, ecological monitoring, data collection, etc.)
6	Estimated Catch	Estimated total catch <u>(must be < 30 tonnes)</u> , corresponding main fish species
7	<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Confirm 100% independently funded by CCP, with no SIOFA financial support</u>
78	Compliance Commitment	No commercial fishing; catch not for commercial sale; operate strictly in line with this notification, <u>ensure vessel is registered on RAV and VMS is operational at all times</u>
89	Data Submission	Submit scientific data to Secretariat within 12 months after cruise; publish aggregated results (no confidential info)
910	Notification Date	Signature, date

Annex ~~2-II~~ Detailed Research Cruise Plan (RCP) Application Form for Fishery Independent Research Cruise (FIRC)

Applicable to: ~~① ④~~ Bottom fishery research cruises; ~~② ②~~ Independently funded non-bottom research cruises (> 30 tonnes); ~~Non-bottom fishery research cruises with total catch ≥30 tonnes~~; ③ Third-party fishery research cruises; ④ All SIOFA-funded non-bottom research cruises

Module	No.	Item	Requirements
Basic Information	1	Applicant Information	Full name, principal investigator, contact email, address
	2	<u>Applicant & Funding Status</u>	<u>Specify if applicant is CCP, Non-CCP, or Third Party; Specify if Independently Funded or SIOFA-Funded</u>
	23	Research Vessel Information	Vessel name, registration number, vessel type (dedicated research vessel / converted fishing vessel), overall length/tonnage, positioning equipment, <u>SIOFA RAV registration</u>
	34	Cruise Schedule	Operation period (max 3 years), entry/exit dates, precise operating lat/long
Core Research Content	45	Research Purpose	Clear scientific objective; confirm non-commercial fishing
	56	Survey Type	☐ Bottom Fishery Research ☐ Non-bottom Fishery Research
Gear & Operation	67	Gear Type	Bottom trawl, bottom longline, bottom pot, etc. (mandatory for bottom fishery); pelagic gear (mandatory for non-bottom)
Catch Confirmation	78	Catch Plan	Specify total catch & main species; justify the rationality of catch volume
Bottom Fishery Special Requirements <u>(bottom research survey applicable only)</u>	98	Benthic Ecosystem Protection	Impact assessment in accordance with <i>Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment Standardisation (BFIAS)</i>
	910	Operation in BFCs	Align with research & monitoring plan in Table 1 of CMM 18(2025) if

Module	No.	Item	Requirements
			operating in Benthic Fishery Closures (BFCs)
	10 <u>11</u>	VME Requirements	Describe potential harmful impacts & mitigation measures; define VME encounter protocol if operating in known/likely VME areas
Data & Reporting	11 <u>12</u>	Data Submission	Submit scientific data to Secretariat within 12 months after cruise; publish aggregated results (no confidential info)
	13 <u>2</u>	Research Report	Submit detailed cruise report to Scientific Committee
Compliance Commitment	13 <u>14</u>	Management Commitment	Operate only per approved RCP; catch counted against flag Party quota; vessel listed in SIOFA RAV
Approval	14 <u>15</u>	Scientific Committee Evaluation	Scientific necessity, ecological impact, recommendations, <u>for independently funded non-bottom cruises by CCPs ≥ 30 tonnes, evaluation is limited to scientific oversight for catch rationality</u>
	15 <u>16</u>	MoP Decision	Approve / Approve with revision / Reject
	16 <u>17</u>	Application Date	Signature, stamp , date

Annex III Guidelines for the Technical Content of the Research Cruise Plan (RCP)

In accordance with the provisions of this CMM, where a detailed Research Cruise Plan (RCP) is required to be submitted to the Scientific Committee (SC) and/or the Compliance Committee (CC), the RCP narrative document shall contain, at a minimum, the following key elements to ensure comprehensive scientific and compliance evaluation.

<u>No.</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Details</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>Administrative and</u>	<u>Lead organisations/countries, principal investigators, and research vessel details (including SIOFA RAV registration status)</u>
		<u>Dates, sailing schedule, location of work, and previous research work in the SIOFA Area.</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>Scientific Purpose and Objectives</u>	<u>Clear articulation of the scientific goals and how they address SC/MoP priorities</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>Research Design, Methodology, and Catch Handling</u>	<u>Spatial and temporal research design</u>
		<u>Precise description of gear types. Applicants must strictly distinguish between bottom-contacting gears and non-bottom gears.</u>
		<u>Catch handling and sample disposition, including a scientific justification for the anticipated catch volume and species composition, and confirmation that the catch is not for commercial sale</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>Data Collection, Management, and Analysis Plan</u>	<u>Data collection, sampling protocols, and data management frameworks</u>
		<u>Analysis plan, highlighting advanced methodologies where applicable (e.g., multi-source data integration, automated morphological identification methodologies, or genetic/isotopic analysis plans) to demonstrate the scientific value of the cruise</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>Ecosystem Safeguards and Impact Mitigation</u>	<u>For bottom fishing research: Detailed alignment with the Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment Standardisation (BFIAS), assessment of potential harmful impacts on BFCs or VMEs, and mitigation measures (including VME encounter protocols)</u>
		<u>For non-bottom fishing research: A clear statement confirming the lack of benthic impact, specifying the</u>

<u>No.</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Details</u>
		<u>operational water depths to ensure complete separation from the seabed.</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>Reporting, Deliverables, and Capacity Building</u>	<u>Timeline for submitting data and detailed cruise reports</u>
		<u>Provisions for international cooperation, including offering participation opportunities to scientists from other CCPs, with special consideration for the capacity-building needs of developing States and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>Annexes</u>	<u>Maps, sampling stations, gear diagrams, and any other relevant technical schematics</u>