



SIOFA | APSOI

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

**10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SIOFA Compliance Committee (CC10) and 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to SIOFA (MoP13)**

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

**MOP-13-INFO-15**

# Coordinated SIOFA Measures for New and Exploratory Fisheries, Research Cruises and Scientific Research using Fishing Vessels

Delegation of the European Union

<b>Meeting</b>	Compliance Committee <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting of the Parties <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Document type</b>	Administrative Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Proposal or Working Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Information Paper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Distribution</b>	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Closed session document <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Abstract</b>	
<p>This document is intended to provide a brief overview on how the two proposed measures on research cruises and fishing vessel scientific research would complement CMM 17 (2025) (New and Exploratory Fisheries).</p> <p>Taken together, the three measures will create a coherent three-track system: CMM 17 for potential fishery development, CMM 19 (2026) for independent research cruises by research vessels, and CMM 20 (2026) for scientific research using fishing vessels.</p>	

<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

# Coordinated SIOFA Measures for New and Exploratory Fisheries, Research Cruises and Scientific Research using Fishing Vessels

## 1. Introduction

SIOFA adopted CMM 17 (2025) on New and Exploratory Fisheries providing the precautionary gateway for any fishing activity that may develop into an established fishery, requiring a Fishery Operations Plan, a Data Collection and Analysis Plan, Scientific Committee review, Meeting of the Parties authorisation, and appropriate limits and safeguards before fishing may proceed. However, there is no framework to ensure that research carried out by research vessels and fisheries-related scientific research carried out by fishing vessels in the Agreement Area are authorised, reviewed and reported in a consistent manner like in the New and Exploratory Fisheries scenario.

### Research cruises

Research cruises in the SIOFA Agreement Area, have taken place in the past. Research cruises in SIOFA were discussed at the SC Workshop: Window of Opportunity - Research Vessels in SIOFA held on 4 November 2025.

The working paper [WS2025-ORS-02](#) “Past, current and upcoming research cruises in SIOFA” from that workshop, lists chronologically all past and forthcoming research cruises. The table below summarises those research cruises and highlights those authorised by the MoP.

**Table 1 Research cruises and MoP authorisation**

Year	Research Vessel	Research activity	MoP/SC Report Source	MoP Authorisation
2001-2002	R/V Tamgu No.1	Korean research trawler conducting research trawl fishing in the Southern Indian Ocean	■ SC-06-19 – Korea Annual National Report	No
2009	R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen	Southern Indian Ocean seamount survey	■ MoP-11-27-Rev1 – Research cruise of the R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen	No
2011	RSS James Cook	Benthic research between current Coral and Atlantis Bank BPAs		No
2015	R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen	Southern Indian Ocean survey legs		No
2018	R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen	Regional resources and ecosystem survey in the Indian Ocean		No

MoP-13-INFO-16 - Coordinated SIOFA Measures for New and Exploratory Fisheries,  
Research Cruises and Scientific Research using Fishing Vessels

Year	Research Vessel	Research activity	MoP/SC Report Source	MoP Authorisation
2021	MY Arctic Sunrise	Greenpeace research cruise in the Saya de Malha Bank (visual surveys, acoustics, underwater imagery and eDNA sampling) <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SC 10 Report</li> <li>▪ WS2025-ORS-02</li> </ul>	No
2022	S.A. Agulhas II	Monaco Explorations Indian Ocean expedition, with Saya de Malha Bank as a priority focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SC Circular 2021-08</li> <li>▪ SC-09-INFO25 – Monaco Explorations Indian Ocean Expedition</li> </ul>	No
2023-2024	Lanhai101 & Lanhai 201	Chinese fisheries scientific research vessels conducted fisheries resource surveys in the SIOFA Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MoP-11-31 – Draft Plan on the Research Cruise of China for 2024-2025</li> </ul>	No
2024-2025	Lanhai101 & Lanhai 201	The survey involved mid-water trawling, squid jigging, and tuna longlining to study fisheries resources, as well as the distribution of plankton and fish eggs and larvae, and measurements of oceanographic physical characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SC-10-54 – Survey report in SIOFA convention area from China in 20/24 cruise</li> <li>▪ MoP-12-50 – Draft Plan on the Research Cruise of China for 2025/26 survey year</li> </ul>	No
2025	R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen	FAO / Nansen research cruise in the Indian Ocean (acoustic, benthic and deep-water shark work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SC-10-59-Rev1 – Draft work plan for the 2025 cruise</li> <li>▪ MoP-11-27-Rev1 – Research Cruise RV Nansen</li> <li>▪ MoP11 Report</li> <li>▪ MoP12 Report</li> </ul>	Yes MoP11 Report Para 108
2025	Atlantida	Notification sent by the Russian research vessel Atlantida to the Secretariat regarding its plans to conduct research activities in the SIOFA Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MoP12 Report</li> </ul>	No

<sup>3</sup> Final report on research conducted from MY Arctic Sunrise in Saya de Malha Bank region, Indian Ocean, 2021 [https://www.greenpeace.to/greenpeace/wp-content/uploads/FINAL\\_Research\\_Report\\_SayadeMalhaBank\\_SEPT20221.pdf](https://www.greenpeace.to/greenpeace/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_Research_Report_SayadeMalhaBank_SEPT20221.pdf)

The Table above shows that only the R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen 2025 research cruise was clearly recorded and explicitly approved by the MoP as a research cruise plan.

### Scientific research

Fishing vessels are cost-effective platforms to collect fishery-dependent data. From the early years, SIOFA fishing vessels have been collecting relevant scientific data in support of specific Scientific Committee requests or projects considered under the SIOFA Scientific Committee Work Programmes beyond what is been requested by CMM 02 on Data Standards.

Diverse scientific research has been carried out by fishing vessels, and it has been well documented along the years in several SIOFA Scientific Committee documents helping the Scientific Committee to provide a robust advice. From industry acoustic surveys for Orange roughy and Alfonsino (SC-01-INFO-15) or specific deep water shark data collection like the stomach-content or specimen collection (SC-06-INFO-03; SC-06-INFO-04; SC-11-INFO-15; SC-11-INFO-16) or deep water shark tagging and molecular identification of specimens in the SIOFA area (SC-09-40) or the latest nylon-vs-wire branch-line trial (SC-11-58), many scientific research activities have been carried out by SIOFA authorised fishing vessels.

Our appreciation to those scientific observers and crew of those fishing vessels<sup>4</sup> that facilitated and actively participated in all scientific research.

## 2. How the three measures complement each other

The three measures aim at creating a coherent three-track system where the main improvement is not conceptual but operational.

The Table below summarises how each of the three measures contributes to this coherent system whose purpose is to support SIOFA's scientific advice and management decisions ensuring prior authorisation, transparency and consistency in the evaluation/decision processes and data availability.

**Table 2 Research cruises and MoP authorisation**

Issue	CMM 17 (2025) New and exploratory fisheries	Proposed CMM 19 (2026) Research cruise by research vessel MoP-13-27	Proposed CMM 20 (2026) Scientific research by fishing vessel MoP-13-28
Primary purpose	To govern the undertaking and management of new and exploratory fisheries based on the precautionary approach	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	To establish an operational framework for the undertaking of fisheries-related scientific research by fishing vessels in the SIOFA Area and consistent procedures for scientific research

<sup>4</sup> F.V Will Watch; F.V. Ocean Explorer; F.V. Nikko Maru N1; F.V. Ibsa Quinto; F.V. Tronio.

MoP-13-INFO-16 - Coordinated SIOFA Measures for New and Exploratory Fisheries,  
Research Cruises and Scientific Research using Fishing Vessels

Issue	CMM 17 (2025) New and exploratory fisheries	Proposed CMM 19 (2026) Research cruise by research vessel MoP-13-27	Proposed CMM 20 (2026) Scientific research by fishing vessel MoP-13-28
Main activity regulated	Fishing activity that may develop into an established fishery	Research cruises by purpose-built research vessels	Research activities conducted from fishing vessels
Relationship to the other two frameworks	Explicitly excludes research cruises: <i>"This CMM shall not apply to research cruises"</i>	Explicitly separates research cruises from exploratory fisheries and from scientific research by fishing vessel	Explicitly separates fishing-vessel scientific research from research cruises and exploratory fisheries
Documentation process	Fishery Operations Plan (FOP) and Data Collection and Analysis Plan (DCAP)	Research Cruise Plan (RCP)	Scientific Research Plan (SRP).
Approval process	MoP approves the new and exploratory fishery in accordance with FOP and DCAP	MoP authorises the Research Cruise Plan considering SC and CC advice	MoP authorises the Scientific Research Plan, considering SC and CC advice
Scientific Committee Role	Reviews FOP/DCAP and advice on reference points, catch limits, impacts, cumulative impacts, BFIAS issues, level of precaution/degree of certainty and whether the approach is precautionary.	Reviews RCP and advice on scientific goals, technical requirements, logistics, operational constraints, safety, relevance to SC/MoP objectives, and impact on resources and risk-benefit balance.	Reviews the SRPs and advice on scientific merit, impacts, catch limits, research justification, and whether the research value justifies impacts.
Compliance Committee role	Reviews FOP (and associated draft CMM), including implications under CMMs 01 and 15, if applicable	Reviews compliance elements of RCPs and, for non-CCP vessels, compliance with the proposed CMM	Reviews compliance elements of SRPs and post-activity consistency with applicable SIOFA CMMs
Catch treatment	Precautionary catch limit as part of the FOP and fishery authorisation	Sale of commercial catch is not the primary objective of the research cruise.	Explicitly regulates associated catches (catches count against quotas, SIOFA catch limits, or MoP-authorised research catch limits)
Data	DCAP (required catch, effort, biological, ecological/environmental data, analysis methods, and submission dates)	Data should be provided at the lowest operational level at which observations were made	SRP must specify raw/processed data or metadata to be submitted, format, recipient, timing, ownership, access, and confidentiality category
Scientific Observers/Experts	One or more scientific observers required for the duration of the authorised activity	RCP must include compliance and observer arrangements	SRP must identify presence of a CCP observer or qualified expert trained under national observer programmes
Ecosystem / VME / BFC safeguards	Requires information on non-target, associated and dependent species,	Requires RCPs in Benthic Fishery Closures (BFC) to align with CMM 18	Requires Benthic Fishery Closures safeguards. For VMEs, requires expected

Issue	CMM 17 (2025) New and exploratory fisheries	Proposed CMM 19 (2026) Research cruise by research vessel MoP-13-27	Proposed CMM 20 (2026) Scientific research by fishing vessel MoP-13-28
	cumulative impacts, ecosystem effects, VMEs, VMEs encounters /interactions, ETP species, and BFIAS in any bottom fishing activity	(2025) and assess/minimise harmful impacts; also requires safeguards for known or likely VMEs	spatial footprint, VME encounter protocols and cumulative impact considerations

As we can see above, the three measures are broadly complementary. CMM 17 is the precautionary gateway for potential fishery development thru new and exploratory fisheries. Proposed CMM 19 would fill the current gap for dedicated research-vessel cruises while Proposed CMM 20 would fill the more sensitive gap for scientific research work from fishing vessels.