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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)

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CC-10-19 / MoP-13-19

Proposal for New CMM for Fishery Independent Research Cruise

Delegation of China

Meeting	Compliance Committee ✓ Meeting of the Parties ✓
Document type	Working paper ✓ Information paper <input type="checkbox"/>
Distribution	Public ✓ Restricted ¹ <input type="checkbox"/> Closed session document ² <input type="checkbox"/>
Abstract	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

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² Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

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.

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.

Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CC10 recommend that MOP13 adopt the proposed CMM.• MoP13 adopt the proposed CMM

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 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));

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 sale of commercial catch is not the primary objective of the trip.
5. For the purpose of this CMM, "research 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.

Classification of Fishery Independent Research Cruise and Activities

6. Any CCPs or third-party planning to conduct non-bottom fishing for research purposes,
 - (a) if taking less than 30 tonnes during the whole trip(s), 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).
 - (b) if taking more than 30 tonnes during the whole trip(s), shall clearly define the approximate total catch and the corresponding main fish species to ensure the rationality of fishing production.
7. Any CCPs or third-party planning to conduct bottom fishing for research purposes,
 - (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) RCP shall be 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.

Catch Allocation

8. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. All research vessels (RVs) commissioned by any CCPs or third party shall be registered in the SIOFA Record of Authorised Vessels (RAV). 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).
14. A RV shall not conduct fishing activities inconsistent with its RCP.
15. The results of the research cruise are to be reported to the subsequent meeting of the SC following the submission of the data.
16. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.
21. The Scientific Committee may request updated reports on the outcomes of RCPs and amend them as necessary.

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

Meeting of the Parties

23. The Meeting of the Parties, taking into account the recommendations and advice of the Scientific Committee, shall decide whether to authorise RCPs.
24. The Meeting of the Parties may consider cost-effective ways to fund relevant RCPs in the SIOFA Area.

Review

25. The CMM shall be reviewed no later than three years of its implementation. The review shall also take into account the latest advice of the Scientific Committee on previous or ongoing FIRC's in the SIOFA Area.

Annex 1 Short Notification for Fishery Independent Research Cruise (FIRC)**Applicable to:** Non-bottom (pelagic) fishery research cruises with **total catch ≤30 tonnes**

No.	Item	Details
1	Notifying Party	Name, contact person, contact details
2	Research Vessel Info	Vessel name, port of registry, registration number, call sign, vessel type (dedicated research vessel / converted fishing vessel)
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, corresponding main fish species
7	Compliance Commitment	No commercial fishing; catch not for commercial sale; operate strictly in line with this notification
8	Data Submission	Submit scientific data to Secretariat within 12 months after cruise; publish aggregated results (no confidential info)
9	Notification Date	Signature, date

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

Applicable to: ① Bottom fishery research cruises; ② Non-bottom fishery research cruises with **total catch ≥30 tonnes**

Module	No.	Item	Requirements
Basic Information	1	Applicant Information	Full name, principal investigator, contact email, address
	2	Research Vessel Information	Vessel name, registration number, vessel type (dedicated research vessel / converted fishing vessel), overall length/tonnage, positioning equipment
	3	Cruise Schedule	Operation period (max 3 years), entry/exit dates, precise operating lat/long
Core Research Content	4	Research Purpose	Clear scientific objective; confirm non-commercial fishing
	5	Survey Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Bottom Fishery Research <input type="checkbox"/> Non-bottom Fishery Research
Gear & Operation	6	Gear Type	Bottom trawl, bottom longline, bottom pot, etc. (mandatory for bottom fishery); pelagic gear (mandatory for non-bottom)
Catch Confirmation	7	Catch Plan	Specify total catch & main species; justify the rationality of catch volume
Bottom Fishery Special Requirements	8	Benthic Ecosystem Protection	Impact assessment in accordance with <i>Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment Standardisation (BFIAS)</i>
	9	Operation in BFCs	Align with research & monitoring plan in Table 1 of CMM 18(2025) if operating in Benthic Fishery Closures (BFCs)
	10	VME Requirements	Describe potential harmful impacts & mitigation measures; define VME encounter protocol if operating in known/likely VME areas
Data & Reporting	11	Data Submission	Submit scientific data to Secretariat within 12 months after cruise; publish aggregated results (no confidential info)

Module	No.	Item	Requirements
	12	Research Report	Submit detailed cruise report to Scientific Committee
Compliance Commitment	13	Management Commitment	Operate only per approved RCP; catch counted against flag Party quota; vessel listed in SIOFA RAV
Approval	14	Scientific Committee Evaluation	Scientific necessity, ecological impact, recommendations
	15	MoP Decision	Approve / Approve with revision / Reject
	16	Application Date	Signature, stamp, date