INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

***AD HOC* WORKING GROUP TO STRENGTHEN THE DIALOGUE AMONG SCIENTISTS, MANAGERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ON MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION (WORKING GROUP ON MSE, MSEWG)**

2nd MEETING

(by videoconference)

17-18 December 2025

REPORT OF THE 2nd MEETING OF THE *AD HOC* WORKING GROUP ON MSE (MSEWG-02)

1. Opening of the meeting

The Director of the Commission, Dr. Arnulfo Franco, opened the meeting at 2:05 pm Pacific Standard Time (PST), welcomed the online participants, and then passed the meeting to the Co-Chairs, Dr. Juan-Carlos Quiroz (Ecuador) and Ms. Shana Miller (USA). The participant list is included in **Annex 1**.

The Co-Chairs noted that the MSEWG was established by Resolution C-24-08 and builds on the five tropical tuna MSE workshops hosted by IATTC between 2019 and 2025. They noted that this more formal working group was established by Resolution C-24-08 per recommendations by both the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and Commission to have a venue for more active dialogue among participants in the development of management strategy evaluations (MSEs) for IATTC stocks, noting that an MSE-tested harvest strategy is scheduled for adoption for bigeye tuna in 2026.

2. Adoption of agenda

The participants agreed to the proposed agenda with minor edits, including to consider this the second but first formal MSEWG meeting, noting that the May 31, 2025 MSEWG meeting was informal. The agenda was also modified to reflect the preliminary nature of the discussion to take place at this meeting, indicating that no decisions or recommendations would be made. The final agenda can be found in **Annex 2**.

3. Review draft MSEWG communications plan

The Co-Chairs introduced the MSEWG communications plan they had drafted per the request of participants at the May 2025 informal MSEWG meeting. Guatemala suggested extensive edits and restructuring of the document to emphasize its purpose to improve communication and facilitate mutual understanding among scientists, managers, and other stakeholders regarding matters related to harvest strategies and MSE. The new structure includes communication objectives along with strategies to achieve them, the purpose behind them, and indicators to track progress in communications. The United States supported the document's intent to report to both the SAC and Commission since the MSEWG includes both scientists and managers, despite Paragraph 5 of Resolution C-24-08, which calls for the group to report to the SAC.

Further review and revision of this lengthy and detailed communications plan was not attempted in the context of the meeting, and the Co-Chairs invited all participants to submit comments to them by January 23, 2026. The Co-Chairs will then produce a revised, consolidated document and share it via email. The communication plan will remain a living document that will guide the work of the MSEWG, subject to further revision as appropriate.

One of the Co-Chairs introduced a web platform called NA.io, which is designed to facilitate document sharing and announcements while encouraging virtual discussions. Ecuador kindly offered to provide access to the platform for MSEWG communications. Participants expressed broad support for trying the

system, seeing the value in having one place where relevant materials could be posted, although there were some concerns about who would moderate the discussions and how content would be handled in both English and Spanish.

Finally, the Group learned about the new, free FAO eLearning Academy course series, *Management procedures for sustainable tuna fisheries*. The course is currently available in English only, with Spanish and French versions to be launched in early 2026. The Co-chairs noted that additional educational content on harvest strategies and MSE is available in English, Spanish, and 11 other languages on www.HarvestStrategies.org. It was encouraging that gaps in the technical and implementation aspects of MSE-based management procedures can be addressed through these materials, supporting CPCs in their understanding of these concepts.

4. Review and provide feedback on preliminary results of the Bigeye Tuna MSE

IATTC Staff Scientist, Dr. Haikun Xu, presented the preliminary results of the bigeye tuna MSE, including operating model structure, estimation model specifications, and preliminary performance results of four candidate harvest control rules (HCRs). The Working Group commended Dr. Xu and the Secretariat for the considerable progress made on the MSE over the past several months.

The Working Group made a number of suggestions for future MSE work. The European Union recommended changing the uncertainty grid for effort creep to 0, 0.5% and 1% per year, as well as adding a performance indicator tied to the Stock Status management objective, and consideration of both input and output control systems for the longline fishery. The United States suggested adding implementation error to the operating model uncertainties.

Some participants expressed concern that the primary output of the HCRs was purse seine closure days, with assumed proportional changes to the longline fishing effort. They suggested that the HCR output could be total catch or spawning potential ratio (SPR), which could then be converted into closure days for the purse seine fishery and total allowable catch for the longline fishery. The Group questioned how the multi-stock nature of the fishery will be handled in the future, since separate harvest strategies are scheduled to be adopted based on distinct MSE processes for yellowfin and skipjack tunas in 2028 and 2030, respectively.

Other comments highlighted interest in considering linkages between this eastern Pacific bigeye MSE and harvest strategy and the MSE-tested harvest strategy scheduled to be adopted next year at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) for bigeye in that region, noting likely overlap of the two stocks.

5. Review Working Document on Management Objectives for bigeye tuna from May 2025 informal MSEWG

The Co-Chairs shared a slide containing a set of strawman management objectives for bigeye from the report of the May 2025 informal MSEWG meeting. Participants suggested a number of edits, including to reconcile the Spanish and English versions. The revised draft set of objectives is included as **Annex 3** to this report, with the addition of the corresponding performance indicators from Dr. Xu's preliminary MSE results.

There was a discussion on limit reference point options, with the United States adding $20\%S_0$ as a candidate since that is WCPFC's limit reference point for bigeye. The European Union highlighted that the probability of maintaining the stock above the limit reference point should be determined based on the final limit reference point. For example, $7.7\%S_0$ could be considered a hard limit, with only a 0-1% probability of breaching it, while $20\%S_0$ could be considered a soft limit, with a 20-25% probability of breaching it.

Participants stressed the preliminary and draft nature of these management objectives for the BET MSE and that the contents should be considered to stimulate future discussion, not as foreclosing other options

or specifications for consideration. Guatemala emphasized that an expanded understanding of the management objective categories is required before finalizing the objectives, especially given the multi-gear, multi-stock nature of the fishery. The United States suggested that this be a focus of the next MSEWG meeting, featuring a presentation on management objectives and how they are used, using this table of objectives as an example.

6. **Review Working Document on Candidate Harvest Strategies for the BET MSE from May 2025 informal MSEWG**

The Group recognized Appendix II of the report of the May 2025 informal MSEWG meeting, as well as the four HCRs presented by Dr. Xu as the candidate harvest strategies tested to date for bigeye tuna. The staff noted that eight HCRs could reasonably be tested and refined in advance of the 2026 SAC, but more than that might be problematic due to time limitations. The Group supported this approach, requesting that a broad range of reference points and control points be tested as part of the HCRs. It was suggested that this should include the use of the limit reference point as a control point in at least a couple of the rules, reducing fishing mortality to F_{min} (such as 10%F_{MSY}) if the limit reference point is breached. There was also interest in using other parameters, such as a 10-15% change as the stability clause, rather than the more narrowly defined 10-day change in the purse seine closure.

The group considered that the list of candidate harvest strategies should remain comprehensive for the next round of MSE testing. The staff proposed a subset of eight of the May 2025 list of candidate harvest strategies, eliminating redundancies and unrealistic HCRs based on the preliminary results presented in this meeting, and the Group supported the Secretariat's recommendations, trusting them to further define the HCRs to test.

There was further discussion about how to handle longline management under the harvest strategy. The staff suggested that if the assumed fixed total allowable catch (TAC) of the longline fleets is exceeded, it could trigger an exceptional circumstance. Since the catch limits have remained largely stable within the conservation and management resolutions adopted in the previous two decades, and they are currently about twice the longline catch level, the staff do not anticipate an issue in the near-term. However, they committed to explore MSE methodologies to allow dynamic management of the longline fleets under the bigeye harvest strategy.

Multiple participants expressed an eagerness to have a more substantive discussion of the candidate harvest strategies at the next MSEWG meeting once more results are available.

7. **Review the draft timeline and workplan for completion of the bigeye tuna MSE from May 2025 informal MSEWG**

The Co-Chairs presented a draft timeline and workplan, which was briefly discussed. It is included in **Annex 4** and should be considered adaptive, with updates to be made as appropriate. Three intersessional meetings were proposed: MSEWG-03 to be held via videoconference February 3-4, 2026, MSEWG-04 to be held in a hybrid format June 5-6, 2026, and MSEWG-05 to be held via videoconference July 21-22, 2026. The Secretariat will proceed to add the meetings to the intersessional calendar.

8. **Next Steps**

The Co-Chairs outlined the next steps for the MSEWG, including the following action items:

- MSEWG members will submit comments to the Co-Chairs by January 23, 2026 on the plan to improve communications (version: Draft Communication Plan-GTM.docx). The Co-Chairs will produce a consolidated draft in advance of the next MSEWG meeting in February 2026.
- The Co-Chairs will provide a draft document outlining the scope of NA.io as a communication platform.
- The staff will continue MSE testing, modifying the approach based on the feedback received at this meeting (e.g., on candidate harvest strategies, performance indicators, and longline catch).
- The Secretariat will schedule three intersessional meetings of the MSEWG in 2026.

9. **Other Business**

No topics were discussed under other business.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was closed at approximately 5:30 pm PST, with the understanding that the Co-Chairs would draft and circulate a meeting report in January 2026.

Annex 1
List of participants

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Annex 2

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2nd MEETING

(by videoconference)

17-18 December 2025

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Review draft MSEWG communications plan
4. Review and provide feedback on preliminary results of the Bigeye Tuna MSE
5. Review Working Document on Management Objectives for bigeye tuna from May 2025 informal MSEWG
6. Review Working Document on Candidate Harvest Strategies for the BET MSE from May 2025 informal MSEWG
7. Review the draft timeline and workplan for completion of the bigeye tuna MSE from May 2025 informal MSEWG
8. Next steps
9. Other Business
10. Adjournment

Annex 3

Working Document on Management Objectives

These objectives should be considered preliminary and draft in nature, serving as a starting point for future discussions but not foreclosing other options for consideration. There was no endorsement of or agreement to the text other than the broad categories of objectives – safety, status, stability, yield, abundance and effort. The brackets indicate the key text still to be agreed, but everything is open for negotiation.

BET MSE Management objectives	**Objetivos de Ordenación patudo**
· **Safety:** Maintain the stock above the limit reference point [7.7% S_0, $0.5SB_{MSY}$, 20% dynamic S_0, other?] with a [X% depending on the limit] or greater probability in each of the 30 years of the projection period.	· **Seguridad:** Mantener la población sobre el punto de referencia limite [7.7% S_0, $0.5SB_{RMS,}$ 20%S_0, otro?] con un [X% dependiendo del limite] o mayor probabilidad en cada uno de los 30 años de periodo de proyección.
· **Status:** Maintain the stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot (i.e., $SB \geq dSB_{MSY}$ and $F \leq F_{MSY}$) with greater than a [50%, 70%, X%] probability over the 30-year projection period.	· **Condición:** Mantener población en cuadrante verde de grafica de Kobe (i.e., $SB \geq dSB_{RMS}$ and $F \leq F_{RMS}$) con probabilidad mas grande que [50%, 70%, X%] en los 30 años de proyección.
· **Stability:** Limit average interannual changes in catch to no more than [10%, 15%, X%] and effort to no more than [10%, 15%, X%], over the short- (1-3 years), medium- (4-15 years), and long- (16-30 years) terms, except when $SB < SB_{Control}$, when the stability cap on decreases would be lifted.	· **Estabilidad:** Limitar cambios interanuales en captura a no más de [10%,15%, X%] y [10%, 15%], de esfuerzo en el corto- (1-3 años), mediano (4-15 años), y largo- (16-30 años) plazo, excepto cuando $SB < SB_{Control,}$momento en el cual se levantaría el límite de estabilidad en disminuciones.
· **Yield:** Maintain average catch at or above the [2017-2019/1994-2019] levels for purse seine and at or above the [2017-2019/1994-2019] levels for longline fisheries over the short- (1-3 years), medium- (4-15 years), and long- (16-30 years) terms.	· **Captura:** Mantener captura promedio a o sobre niveles de [2017-2019/1994-2019] de cerco y a o sobre niveles de [2017-2019/1994-2019] para palangre en el corto (1-3 años), mediano- (4-15 años), y largo- (16-30 años) plazo.
· **Abundance:** Maintain average CPUE at or above the [2017-2019/1994-2019] levels for purse seine and at or above the [2017-2019/1994-2019] levels for longline fisheries over the short- (1-3 years), medium- (4-15 years), and long- (16-30 years) terms.	· **Abundancia:** Mantener la CPUE promedio a o sobre niveles de [2017-2019/1994-2019] para cerco y a o sobre niveles de [2017-2019/1994-2019] para palangre en el corto (1-3 años), mediano- (4-15 años), y largo- (16-30 años) plazo.
· **Effort:** Maintain average effort at or above the [X] levels for purse seine and at or above the [X] levels for longline fisheries over the short- (1-3 years), medium- (4-15 years), and long- (16-30 years) terms.	· **Esfuerzo:** Mantener esfuerzo promedio a o sobre niveles de [2017-2019/1994-2019] para cerco y a o sobre niveles de [2017-2019/1994-2019] para palangre en el corto (1-3 años), mediano- (4-15 años), y largo- (16-30 años) plazo.

Annex 4

Draft Timeline and Workplan for the Bigeye Tuna MSE

Note: This timeline and workplan comprise a living document that will be updated regularly as the process continues.

		Dialogue - Diálogo		Technical - Técnico
		Meeting objectives Objetivos de la reunión	Format Formato	
	17-18 Dec	-Review & provide input on operationalizing management objectives -Amend list of HCRs for testing -Review & agree more detailed workplan -Review & agree communications plan for the WG, including for stakeholder engagement - Review the progress of MSE technical implementation - Revisar y contribuir a la puesta en marcha de los objetivos de ordenación. - Modificar la lista de las RCE para las pruebas. - Revisar y acordar un plan de trabajo más detallado. - Revisar y acordar el plan de comunicación del GT, incluyendo la participación de las partes interesadas. - Revisar el progreso de la implementación técnica de la EEO.	MSEWG-02 (4 hrs/day – virtual) (4 hrs/día – virtual)	First MSE runs and outcomes from list of EM, HCR and other specifications proposed by MSEWG Introduce MSEWG communication platforms and tools. Primeras ejecuciones de EEO y resultados de la lista de especificaciones del ME, RCE y otras propuestas por el MSEWG. Presentar las plataformas y herramientas de comunicación del MSEWG.
	Dec			Proceed with MSE runs in accordance with the specifications and recommendations of

2026	Jan	Members to provide to the Co-chairs by January 23, comments on plan to improve communication. Los miembros deberán enviar a los copresidentes, antes del 23 de enero, sus comentarios sobre el plan para mejorar la comunicación.		MSEWG -02. Update the web-based interactive online tools and platform. Proceder con las ejecuciones de EEO de acuerdo con las especificaciones y recomendaciones de MSEWG-01. Actualizar la plataforma y las herramientas interactivas en línea.
	Feb 3-4 (TBC) (por confirmar)	-Review & provide feedback on preliminary MSE results - Revisar y comentar los resultados preliminares de la EEO.	MSEWG-03 (4 hrs/day – virtual) (4 hrs/día – virtual)	Conduct any changes from MSEWG input Realizar cualquier cambio a partir de las aportaciones del MSEWG.
	Feb			
	Mar			
	Apr			

	May 27-28 [preference for June/Junio 5-6, if possible](hybrid format) [Preferencia por el 5 y 6 de junio, si es posible. (formato híbrido)	-Review & provide feedback on draft final MSE results - Revisar el borrador de los resultados finales de la EEO y aportar comentarios al respecto.	MSEWG-04 2-day in-person pre-SAC & at SAC-17 Dos días en persona antes de la reunión del CCA y durante la 17ª reunión del CCA	
	June			Conduct any changes from SAC-17 input & finalize results presentation Realizar cualquier cambio a partir de las aportaciones de la 17ª reunión del CCA y finalizar la presentación de resultados.
	July 21-22 (TBC) (por confirmar)	-Review and ask clarifying questions on final MSE results - Revisar y hacer preguntas aclaratorias sobre los resultados finales de la EEO.	MSEWG-05 (4 hrs/day – virtual) (4 hrs/día – virtual)	

	Aug 31-Sep 4	Comm to consider an MSE-tested BET MP for adoption La Comisión estudiará la adopción de un PO para el BET probado con EEO.	104th meeting 104ª reunión	

Acronyms: BET-bigeye tuna, EM-estimation model, HCR-harvest control rule, HS-harvest strategy, MSE-management strategy evaluation, TRP-target reference point, MSEWG-*Ad hoc* Working Group to Strengthen Dialogue Among Scientists, Managers and Other Stakeholders on Management Strategy Evaluation

Siglas: BET: atún patudo; ME: modelo de estimación; RCE: reglas de control de extracción; EE: estrategia de extracción; EEO: evaluación de estrategias de ordenación; PRO: punto de referencia objetivo; GTEEO: Grupo de Trabajo Especial para Fortalecer el Diálogo entre Científicos, Administradores y Otros Interesados sobre la Evaluación de Estrategias de Ordenación.