Terms of Reference for

Stage 1 Review of the Cape Town Procedure

Status	Adopted by the Commission
Review stage	Stage 1 - evaluation of the existing, unchanged CTP
Evaluation period	Prospective evaluation from the 2026 OM stock status through to 2041

Preamble: Current stock status and experience with the CTP

The Commission has committed to a performance review of the Cape Town MP (CTP) in 2027, as prescribed in the meta-rules adopted in 2020. The ESC agreed to recommend a two-stage review process. Stage 1 would summarise historical outcomes of the CTP, review the continuity, timeliness and reliability of its principal data inputs and the implications of potential changes to those inputs, and evaluate the expected future performance of the existing, unchanged CTP using the 2026 OM. The review would identify any substantive deviations from expected performance, together with aspects of the management approach that may warrant reconsideration. If Stage 1 indicates that revision may be needed, Stage 2, subject to Commission direction, would examine the relevant objectives and develop and evaluate potential revisions to the approach.

1. Purpose and scope

This section constitutes Stage 1 of the review of the Cape Town Procedure (CTP).

Principal question: Does the existing CTP continue to perform as expected under the 2026 OM, considering the Commission's objectives, the original data inputs, and potential changes to those inputs?

To answer this question, the ESC will:

a. Evaluate the existing, unchanged CTP using the 2026 reference OM and an appropriate set of robustness trials to characterize its conservation, catch and operational performance.
b. Identify any substantive deviations from expected performance and consider their potential management relevance.
c. Where substantive deviations are identified, or the existing management procedure may no longer be appropriate, identify the elements of the procedure that may require reconsideration.

Stage 1 will not establish a new management objective, retune the CTP, develop or select a replacement MP, or make final decisions about future monitoring and the associated expenditure. Those activities would require Commission direction and, where appropriate, a separately agreed Stage 2 work programme.

The final Stage 1 MP review will be delivered at ESC 32.

2. Future performance evaluation period

Period	Treatment	Purpose
2026-2029	Agreed TACs treated as fixed	Initial period evaluated under the 2026 OM stock state
2030-2035	First two future CTP-determined TAC blocks	Performance through the current rebuilding target year
2036-2041	Two post-target CTP-determined TAC blocks	Durability of rebuilding, catch performance and TAC stability

The performance evaluation will be prospective, beginning from the stock status estimated by the 2026 OM and extending through 2041. This horizon covers four CTP-controlled TAC blocks, while retaining the current 2035 rebuilding target as an explicit evaluation point.

The first simulated CTP-generated TAC will apply in 2030. Experience from implementation of the CTP since its adoption, including realized stock, catch, monitoring and exceptional-circumstances outcomes, will be summarized separately as context for interpreting the prospective evaluation.

The 2041 endpoint is presented provisionally because it would cover four future three-year CTP-controlled TAC blocks beginning in 2030. The final projection endpoint will be determined as the review develops.

3. Apply the unchanged CTP to the 2026 OM

The existing CTP will be applied, without retuning or structural modification, to the 2026 reference OM and to robustness trials representing material uncertainties or changes in data, knowledge, monitoring and fishery conditions that have arisen since the CTP was adopted.

The review will use the CTP's adopted operational rules, including three-year TAC blocks and current constraints on TAC changes. Although no technical modifications to the CTP are anticipated, any modification required solely to run the CTP with the 2026 OM must be documented and demonstrated not to change the CTP's intended behaviour.

4. Evaluation and identification of substantive deviations

The ESC will evaluate the conservation, rebuilding, catch and operational performance of the unchanged CTP under the 2026 reference OM and robustness trials. The review will use a concise set of measures and graphical summaries to show the range and trajectory of stock, catch and stability outcomes, responsiveness to changing conditions, and relevant lower-tail risks, rather than relying only on central estimates only.

Performance will be interpreted in light of the Commission's current objective, the present stock status and the uncertainty represented in results for the 2026 OM. The review will examine the influence of estimated initial stock status, population dynamics, data inputs and observation processes, structural assumptions, the representation of parameter uncertainty, the response of the CTP itself, and the operational availability and reliability of monitored inputs. It will identify any substantive deviations from expected CTP performance and assess their potential management relevance, including whether they may warrant reconsideration of the management procedure. Greater variation resulting from a more complete representation of uncertainty will not automatically be interpreted as deterioration in CTP

performance. The specific measures, summaries and presentation methods will be determined as the review develops.

5. Review of input data and monitoring assumptions

The ESC will review direct inputs to the CTP (i.e., CPUE, gene-tagging, and CKMR) for their continuity, timeliness and reliability, potential sources of bias and uncertainty, and the consequences of missing, delayed or materially changed data. The review will also consider costs and feasible alternatives and provide these for consideration by the Extended Commission.

The review will consider data used to condition the OM, including direct-age, composition, conventional-tagging, aerial-survey and unaccounted-mortality information, where changes could materially affect the evaluation of the CTP performance. The precise methods and implementation of trials will be determined as the review develops.

5.1 CPUE

Review whether the CPUE series and analysis provide an appropriate abundance signal for operation and evaluation of the CTP, including the implications of recent observations, alternative standardisations, changes in fishery behaviour, and relevant observation uncertainty.

5.2 Close-kin mark-recapture

Review the information provided by the CKMR data, the continuity and adequacy of sampling, and the principal sources of uncertainty that may affect operation and evaluation of the CTP.

5.3 Gene tagging

Evaluate the contribution of gene-tagging information to CTP performance. Gene-tagging data scenarios will be considered in combination with robustness trials designed to create conditions under which the value of the associated information can be demonstrated, including conditions under which recruitment information or continuity of the monitoring series may be particularly important. The range and implementation of scenarios will be determined as the review develops. The review should also evaluate the implications of alternative gene-tagging programme frequencies and sampling intensities, including their effects on CTP performance, uncertainty, and programme costs, to inform consideration of the long-term financial sustainability of monitoring programmes.

6. Robustness trials

The ESC will develop and justify a set of robustness trials to identify conditions under which the existing CTP may exhibit substantive deviations from expected performance, particularly in relation to new knowledge about the resource gained since the CTP was adopted in 2019. Trials may address uncertainty in recruitment and productivity, stock and fishery dynamics, abundance indices and observation processes, monitoring continuity and precision, unaccounted mortality, and combinations of adverse conditions. They will also allow the influence of individual monitoring inputs, including gene-tagging data, to be examined where conditions under which the information may materially affect CTP performance can be demonstrated. The selection, priority, combination and technical implementation of trials will be determined as the review develops, while distinguishing plausible high-priority cases, informative lower-priority cases and extreme stress tests used to identify potential failure modes.

7. Stage 1 determination

Stage 1 is a screening review of the existing CTP, rather than a process for developing or selecting an alternative MP. Its findings therefore lead to two possible recommendations: continue the existing management procedure, potentially with routine technical or monitoring improvements, or seek Commission direction for a Stage 2 process where substantive deviations or other concerns indicate that revision of the procedure may be required.

8. Work programme and review arrangements

The ESC will specify:

- required analyses and software development;
- the agreed reference and robustness trials;
- responsible analysts and participating Members;
- independent checking and quality assurance;
- opportunities for Member participation and capacity development;
- technical meetings, milestones and deadlines; and
- budget and personnel requirements.

9. Stage 1 deliverables

- An evaluation of the unchanged CTP under the 2026 OM over the agreed prospective evaluation period, including the reference case and an appropriate set of robustness trials.
- An assessment of the role and influence of the CTP's principal monitoring inputs, including gene-tagging information where relevant conditions can be demonstrated.
- An assessment identifying any substantive deviations from expected performance and their potential management relevance.
- A recommendation either to continue the existing management procedure or to seek Commission direction for Stage 2 of the revision.