



CCSBT-ESC/2508/05

Report Against Strategic Plan (ESC Agenda Item 6)

Background

At CCSBT 30 in 2023, Members adopted a revised Strategic Plan¹ that outlines a common vision for how the Commission will operate in order to meet the overall objective of the Convention. The Strategic Plan also provides the following vision and set of goals in support of the overall objective.

Vision and goals

Management of SBT

The Commission agrees the SBT tuna stock is to be managed at a biomass level that supports the maximum sustainable yield, and the risks related to fishing for SBT and impacts from fishing for SBT on ecologically related species are mitigated.

- This includes strategies concerning stock rebuilding, allocation and ecologically related species.
- This also includes consideration and review of all other risks including, but not limited to, marine pollution and human safety.

Operation/Administration of the Commission and Secretariat

It was agreed the Commission should operate effectively and efficiently, to responsibly manage fishing for SBT.

- This includes strategies for effective and efficient operation of Commission, its subsidiary bodies and Secretariat, including harmonisation with other RFMOs.

Participation and implementation by Members, including Compliance.

Members are actively participating in management of SBT through the Commission and implementing its decisions.

- This includes strategies concerning MCS, sanctions and assistance to developing countries.

¹ www.ccsbt.org/sites/default/files/userfiles/file/docs_english/operational_resolutions/CCSBT_Strategic_Plan.pdf

Strategic Plan Items of Relevance to ESC

The Strategy also includes several actions that are to be carried out by the Commission's various subsidiary bodies. The following elements of the Action Plan and Ongoing Work Plan have been identified as relevant to the work of the ESC.

Action Plan

- **PR2021-02:** Explore the need for additional measures (such as protected areas and area closures) to support spawning and recruitment.
- Further increase efforts, including analysis on the application of electronic monitoring, to improve and supplement observer coverage in accordance with Scientific Observer Program Standard (SOPS).
- Prioritise the establishment and ongoing review of long-term research strategic planning in the ESC.

Ongoing Work Plan

- **PR2021-24:** CCSBT should continue to implement CMMs based on ESC and ERSWG advice for both target and non-target species.
- **PR2021-01:** Members continue to support the MP, by remaining within their allocation limits, and eliminating areas of uncertainty such as Non-Member catches that could undermine its performance.
- **PR2021-26:** Continue monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the rebuilding strategy for SBT
- **PR2021-12:** Continue to develop and embed innovative methods such as gene-tagging and close kin mark-recapture to improve scientific processes.
- **PR2021-55:** ESC to improve accessibility of reports to non-technical readers.
- Ensure members are submitting high quality, clear, consistent and completed reporting.
- **PR2021-16:** Continue to study the spatial aspects of the SBT stock structure and movements, and the fleets that exploit SBT.

Monitoring and Implementation

To ensure that the objectives of the Strategic Plan are met, the plan outlines a process that commits to annual monitoring and reporting against the actions agreed under the plan. The Extend Commission (EC) will review the progress made with the Secretariat holding responsibility for compiling the information necessary for the EC to conduct its annual monitoring review.

The Strategic Plan states that “Subsidiary bodies holding responsibility for particular action items are expected to report back on the progress of those activities as part of their respective meeting reports”. In 2024, the ESC agreed on a template to enable this reporting (provided at **Attachment A**), which will again be used this year.

Next Steps

In 2024, the ESC considered ESC-relevant items of the Strategic Plan following the agreed template and provided its “Report from CCSBT Subsidiary Bodies on Progress Against Strategic Plan” to the Extended Commission, as Attachment 7 of the report of ESC 29.

At ESC 30 this year, Members are asked to update the assessment of progress against those activities assigned to the ESC, by updating the previously agreed reporting template in **Attachment A**.

In **Attachment A**, the Secretariat provided some preliminary updates as tracked changes. Yellow-highlighted sections must be updated following the ESC 30’s discussion.

The Secretariat recommends that:

- 1) As part of the pre-meeting discussion process, Members are requested to provide their suggested changes and additions to **Attachment A**, in tracked mode, by 11 August 2025 (two weeks prior to the meeting). The Secretariat will send a link to the shared document so that Members can edit the same file simultaneously.
- 2) The Secretariat will, in consultation with the ESC Chair, submit the initial edited version to the ESC as a Working Paper by 18 August 2025 (one week prior to the meeting’s commencement).
- 3) During the ESC meeting, ESC will determine if further discussion of the Working Paper is required. If necessary, the ESC will convene a small group to discuss the Working Paper. The Small Group will meet outside of the plenary meeting time or communicate through email to reflect outcomes from ESC 30 as appropriate and finalise the draft progress report.
- 4) The Small Group submits a draft revised progress report as a new Working Paper for the ESC’s plenary discussion.
- 5) ESC includes the agreed report as an Attachment to its meeting report.

Prepared by the Secretariat

Report from CCSBT Subsidiary Bodies on Progress Against Strategic Plan

Subsidiary Body: **ESC**

Year: ~~2025~~2024

Vision and Goals

	Comments from Subsidiary Body
Management of SBT The Commission agrees the SBT tuna stock is to be managed at a biomass level that supports the maximum sustainable yield, and the risks related to fishing for SBT and impacts from fishing for SBT on ecologically related species are mitigated. - This includes strategies concerning stock rebuilding, allocation and ecologically related species. - This also includes consideration and review of all other risks including, but not limited to, marine pollution and human safety.	ESC supports the vision as described here. ESC has contributed to SBT stock rebuilding and management advice based on scientific evidence. The ESC considers that the SBT tuna stock is being rebuilt towards a biomass level that will support the MSY. The most recent stock assessment indicates that the stock is rebuilding at approximately 5% per year and is currently estimated at 23% of TRO₀. The ESC notes that demonstrating progress towards stock rebuilding has and will continue to rely on the significant investment in innovative science including genetic studies that have allowed a robust estimate of population size to support decision making on TAC's, monitoring stock recovery and demonstrating progress towards the rebuilding targets. The current MP is based on sound science and processes which are unique in their approach to tuna fisheries management relative to approaches in other relevant RFMOs. The ESC provides advice on TACs based on a fully tested management procedure (MP). The ESC also runs an annual metarule process to assess whether or not exceptional circumstances have occurred. The ESC notes advice from the ERSWG to the EC on ecologically related species, including seabirds. While not the responsibility of ESC, marine pollution and human safety is an important issue.
Operation/Administration of the Commission and Secretariat It was agreed the Commission should operate effectively and efficiently, to responsibly manage fishing for SBT. This includes strategies for effective and efficient operation of Commission, its subsidiary bodies	ESC supports the strategic goals on the operation/administration of the Commission and Secretariat and considers that opportunities for harmonising with other RFMOs should continue to be pursued including for developing electronic monitoring (EM) standards. The ESC has regularly reviewed and updated the Scientific Research Plan as well as the schedule and budget implications. The Commission and Secretariat should be aware of any implications that arise from the BBNJ agreement.

and Secretariat, including harmonisation with other RFMOs.		
Participation and implementation by Members, including Compliance Members are actively participating in management of SBT through the Commission and implementing its decisions. This includes strategies concerning MCS, sanctions and assistance to developing countries.	The ESC also considers there has been progress with participation in ESC meetings and will continue to work toward the goal of maximising participation by all Members. The ESC notes that a robust monitoring control and surveillance (MCS) program is critical to the assessment of the SBT and its recovery. The ESC also notes the importance of adequate observer coverage. The ESC has encouraged timely data collection and submission, and there has been some improvement recently. The ESC notes the importance of identifying any non-compliance, and the reasons for that non-compliance.	
Action Plan		
Action	Progress since previous report	Planned work
PR2021-02: Explore the need for additional measures (such as protected areas and area closures) to support spawning and recruitment.	As noted in the ESC28 Report, the ESC considers that there is no need for protected areas or area closures to protect the SBT spawning grounds.	Nil for ESC.
Further increase efforts, including analysis on the application of electronic monitoring, to improve and supplement observer coverage in accordance with Scientific Observer Program Standard (SOPS).	The ESC undertook a recent review of the potential impacts of EM on the collection of data currently required under the existing SOPS. <u>Members agreed to include an agenda item to address issues relating to EM/S in future meetings of the ESC.</u> <u>At ESC 29, Members with operational EM programs agreed to work together intersessionally and present to ESC 30 on how information is collected by EM and how this meets the requirements of the SOPS.</u>	The ESC considers that there is merit in ensuring the development of the CCSBT EM standards are aligned with other relevant RFMOs. The ESC notes the planned work taking place as part of the Seabird Project to support capacity development in the area of electronic monitoring.
Prioritise the establishment and ongoing review of long-term research strategic planning in the ESC.	Each ESC includes a standing item on the Scientific Research Plan, including a procedure for evaluating new research proposals.	Continue current annual process.

Ongoing Work Plan

Action	Changes since previous report	Planned work
PR2021-01: Members continue to support the MP, by remaining within their allocation limits, and eliminating areas of uncertainty such as Non-Member catches that could undermine its performance.	ESC Members actively participated in the MP development and implementation through their research activities. This also includes assessing whether there have been exceptional circumstance including catch beyond their allocation, and concluded there is no need to update the TAC in 2025 through the metarule process. The ESC considered non-member catches in the 2023 stock assessment and recommended a TAC to CCSBT based on a level of unaccounted mortality.	The ESC notes the importance of strong compliance framework to ensure catch limits are maintained. Consider further analysis of markets to better understand possible non-member catch. <u>Non-member catch estimation is planned for 2026 as part of CCSBT's SRP project.</u>
PR2021-26: Continue monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the rebuilding strategy for SBT	The ESC supports this action and notes that this action has been made possible through the implementation of the Close Kin, Gene Tagging and efforts to improve the standardisation of CPUE projects. The ESC has monitored and discussed the national reports and results and progress of the research activities. Ongoing work around development of EM standards for CCSBT.	ESC recommends continued support for and implementation of science projects to meet this action under the CCSBT Strategic Plan.
PR2021-12: Continue to develop and embed innovative methods such as gene-tagging and close kin mark-recapture to improve scientific processes.	Updates to the Operating Model have been progressed, and the upgraded OM was used for the MP run in 2025 for TAC recommendation. ESC has discussed and reviewed the progress and results of gene-tagging and Close Kin regularly.	Finalise upgrades to the operating model which will be used for the MP in 2025 and the stock assessment in 2026.
PR2021-24: CCSBT should continue to implement CMMs based on ESC and ERSWG advice for both target and non-target species.	Implementation of CMM's has been possible with a robust stock assessment conducted in 2023. Updates to the operating model has progressed in preparation for running the management procedure in 2025 and stock assessment in 2026.	The ESC supports progress towards this action and notes effective monitoring of fishing activity including through observer coverage or EM program is essential.

	ESC notes the updated advice from the ERSWG15 on seabirds.	The ESC also notes that implementation of CMM's relies on a strong compliance program.
PR2021-55: ESC to improve accessibility of reports to non-technical readers.	ESC has developed and made each meeting report available. This has included a Chair's summary for each ESC in non-technical language to help facilitate communication with EC/other subsidiary bodies.	<u>Continue the current process.</u>
Ensure members are submitting high quality, clear, consistent, and completed reporting.	ESC has encouraged all members to submit annual reports, and there have been some improvements recently. The ESC notes that not all members submit reports as required.	The ESC will continue to encourage all members to submit high quality, clear, consistent, and completed reporting.
PR2021-16: Continue to study the spatial aspects of the SBT stock structure and movements, and the fleets that exploit SBT.	Tagging projects continue to be delivered to improve understanding of stock structure. <u>Now the ESC has the standing Agenda Item "Potential impacts of climate change".</u>	