CCSBT-ESC/2608/06

Capacity Building Needs Assessment

(ESC Agenda Item 6.2.1)

Background

At CCSBT 31 in 2024, Members adopted the CCSBT's Capacity Building Workplan[1], which aims at prioritising needs and delivering effective capacity building initiatives to improve performance in key areas, particularly for developing Members.

Following the Capacity Building Workplan, the Extended Scientific Committee (ESC) conducted its first Needs Assessment at ESC 30 in 2025, focusing on the science aspect, based on the initial assessment provided by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Chair of the ESC and the Scientific Advisory Panel.

ESC 30 supported the initial assessments and preliminary recommendations provided by the Secretariat and did not make recommendations to the EC for any additional capacity building initiatives in the science area. The ESC also encouraged the continued support of current capacity building initiatives such as the Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) and the port sampling work in Benoa.

In this paper, the Secretariat, in consultation with the ESC Chair, provides an updated initial assessment reflecting any changes since 2025.

Initial Assessment

The ESC's assessment will focus on Objectives 1 and 2 of the Capacity Building Workplan with Objective 3 (on compliance related activities) reserved for the Compliance Committee.

Objective 1: Improve Data Collection

Current Status

The Secretariat has not identified any deficiencies that raise immediate concerns in its analysis of scientific data submissions as part of the Scientific Data Exchange. Both South Africa and Indonesia are currently submitting data as part of the data exchange. However, some elements of the submission do not fully meet the requirements.

Indonesia has yet to meet the agreed scientific observer coverage targets set out in the Scientific Observer Program Standards (i.e. 10%) and its submission is therefore lacking for all data that is scientific observer dependent.

All Members except the European Union have a requirement to provide direct ageing data to the Scientific Data Exchange, using direct age estimates from otolith collections. South Africa has not submitted any of these data, but it is collecting otoliths and is in the process of embedding, slicing and mounting them for ageing[2].

The ESC already undertakes activities dedicated to improving the scientific capacities of developing Members for data collection. As a part of the Scientific Research Program (SRP)

[1] https://www.ccsbt.org/sites/default/files/userfiles/file/docs_english/basic_documents/CapacityBuildingPlan.pdf
[2] Noting also that Japan has not submitted direct age data since 2018.

and the ESC's three-year workplan, ESC 30 agreed to recommend the EC to implement a new project on capacity building to strengthen the capacity to assess SBT landing across Indonesia ports. Due to the Commission's budgetary constraint, CCSBT 32 decided to delay implementation of this project. Instead, Australia undertook to work with Indonesia to consider alternative sources of funding for this work. It is expected that the outcome of this intersessional work by Australia and Indonesia will be discussed under Agenda item 6.2.2

In addition, the EC has also approved the top-up of the Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) to provide support for developing Members to attend technical meetings of the CCSBT. The MPF has been utilised for two participants from Indonesia to participate in the OMMP 16 meeting.

Preliminary Recommendations

The initial assessment from the Chair and Secretariat maintains their previous conclusion that current efforts aimed at improving data collection are sufficient. Although, both the Chair and Secretariat recognise that Indonesia has had persistent issues in meeting its scientific observer coverage requirements, those issues appear to be driven by systemic and funding barriers rather than a need for capacity building activities through the ESC.

Objective 2: Improve Scientific Analysis

Current Status

This objective is somewhat subjective and cannot be readily assessed by analysing recent data or submission trends. All Members engage in discussions at the ESC, however, some of the more technical discussions tend to be led by a handful of experts.

This situation is not unique to developing Members and reflects a wider trend at the ESC. One of the ways to ensure that developing Members maintain their capacity to engage on ESC technical topics is to ensure attendance at technical meetings. This has been the role of the Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) in recent years.

The Secretariat would like to note that, despite the difficulties in recent years due to the reorganisation of the agencies involved, Indonesia has increased its contribution to the CCSBT's scientific process. In addition, several CCSBT-funded science projects, such as the close-kin mark recapture and sampling and aging of Indonesian otoliths, are implemented in collaboration between Indonesia and Australia/CSIRO.

Furthermore, CCSBT scientific meetings provide Members with capacity-building opportunities. For example, at the Sixteenth Operating Model and Management Procedure Technical Meeting (OMMP 16), held in Seattle from 22-26 June 2026, the group continued training for Members in the use of the new SBT software developed by Dr Darcy Webber using RTMB. It is expected that the outcome of this activity will be discussed under Agenda item 5 and/or 7.2. The CCSBT has also initiated a trial live streaming of the ESC meeting this year. This will enable Member managers and scientists to observe the meeting proceedings, thereby providing additional opportunities to deepen their understanding of the meeting documents and the discussions among Members. It is expected that this, in turn, will strengthen broader scientific capacity related to the CCSBT.

Preliminary Recommendations

The initial assessment from the Chair and Secretariat maintains its previous conclusion that current efforts aimed at improving scientific analysis are sufficient. The Chair and Secretariat recognise the role of the MPF and live streaming of the meeting in maintaining capacity and support its ongoing use.

Next Steps

Following the Capacity Building Workplan, the ESC this year is invited to:

1. Evaluate the current status and preliminary recommendations described in this paper;
2. Determine if the ESC recommends the EC to develop a Capacity Development Initiative from a science perspective; and
3. If the above 2 are the case, identify priorities for targeted engagement, specifying area, issue, urgency, relevant stakeholders and possible solutions to assist in developing the Capacity Development Initiative.

Prepared by the Secretariat