

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

17TH MEETING

La Jolla, California (USA)

08-12 June 2026

DOCUMENT SAC-17 RD-A

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IMPROVING SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY AT THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In recent years, some IATTC members have expressed growing concern about the work of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) becoming more legal and policy oriented while straying from its intended scientific functions, as set out in Annex 4 of the Antigua Convention. In this spirit, Article XI of the Antigua Convention, in paragraph 1, imposes on the Parties, and by extension on all CPCs, the obligation that *“The Commission shall establish a Scientific Advisory Committee, which shall be composed of a representative designated by each member of the Commission, **who shall have appropriate qualifications or relevant experience in the area of competence of the Committee**, and who may be accompanied by such experts or advisers as that member may deem advisable.”*

[Resolution C-12-10](#), on the Best Available Science, expands the mandate of Antigua, stating that the Commission should take measures *“to facilitate participation in meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee and its Working Groups as well as in other relevant scientific bodies of **scientists with suitable scientific qualifications**.”* Furthermore, paragraph 2 of C-12-10 contains several relevant provisions intended to preserve and promote the professional independence and excellence of the scientific staff, the Scientific Advisory Committee and its Working Groups, and the relevance of their work to the information needs of the IATTC, by:

- i. Enhancing the participation of scientists in meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee and its Working Groups, including scientists involved in other tuna regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and other relevant scientific bodies;
- iv. Ensuring that relevant, professionally independent, and objective scientific advice, based on the best available and peer-reviewed scientific analysis, is presented by the scientific staff and the Scientific Advisory Committee to the IATTC;
- viii. Ensuring that the key role of the Scientific Advisory Committee as established by Annex IV of the Antigua Convention is respected;

Finally, the provisions contained in paragraph 4 of Resolution C-12-10 must be observed: *“**Strengthen, as appropriate, peer-review mechanisms within** the scientific staff and **the Scientific Advisory Committee**”*

by the participation of invited experts (e.g. from other RFMOs or from academia) in the scientific staff and Scientific Advisory Committee activities. These experts shall be subject to the data confidentiality rules and procedures currently applicable in the IATTC.”

At its 17th meeting in La Jolla, the SAC should discuss how it could improve its scientific functions and better meet the mandate of the Antigua Convention and the relevant provisions of Resolution C-12-10. Several topics which should be addressed include:

1. What are “appropriate qualifications or relevant experience in the area of competence of the Committee?” For example, should Heads of Delegations for the SAC have CVs showing that they have sufficient scientific background to understand the technical discussions that occur at the SAC? The SAC should deliberate on appropriate criteria and how criteria would be conveyed to the SAC (*i.e.*, via opening introductions and/or in writing during meeting registration).
2. How can relevant, professionally independent, and objective scientific advice, based on the best available and peer-reviewed scientific analysis, be presented by the SAC to the IATTC? The SAC has a long history of inviting and hearing presentations and input from scientists who meet these criteria. However, when translating these scientists' advice into recommendations to the Commission, non-scientific advice is increasingly being incorporated.
3. Explore having an outside entity conduct a performance review of the IATTC and include the SAC functions in this review. The recommendations from the review could be provided to the Commission for considerations on how to improve the SAC functions.