

**Report of the Meeting of the
Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance (PIEG)**
(online, 4 February 2026)

1. Opening of the meeting and meeting arrangements

The Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance (PIEG) was held online on 4 February 2026. In the absence of a Chair, it was opened by the Chair of the Permanent Working Group for the Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG), Mr Neil Ansell (European Union).

2. Nomination of Rapporteur

The PWG Chair requested a volunteer to serve as Rapporteur. In the absence of volunteers, the ICCAT Secretariat agreed to assume this responsibility.

3. Adoption of agenda

The draft agenda for the meeting was presented point by point to the PIEG and was adopted after an expert raised the issue of maritime boarding programmes under item 11 “Other matters”. This agenda is attached as **Appendix 1**.

The List of participants is contained in **Appendix 2**.

4. Election of the new chair

The position of Chair remains vacant as no nominations were received before or during the meeting.

5. Review of progress since previous meeting

Prior to summarizing the Group’s activities since the [Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance \(PIEG\)](#) in 2024, the Secretariat provided a restatement of the PIEG mandate. Established in 2017 under the [Recommendation by ICCAT to clarify and supplement the process for seeking capacity building assistance pursuant to ICCAT Recommendation 14-08 \(Rec. 16-18\)](#), the PIEG’s mission is to clarify and supplement the process for capacity-building assistance requests. This overview was considered essential due to significant shifts in PIEG membership: while 50% of the experts are returning members, the remainder consist of representatives from new CPC entrants (15%) and newly appointed experts (35%). The PIEG's mission is to optimize the process of assisting CPCs in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by assessing their specific needs and coordinating available technical and financial resources. The PIEG identifies CPCs with capacity-building programmes and is responsible for evaluating and, where possible, prioritizing requests for assistance, while also exploring opportunities for collaboration with external organizations to implement port inspections. Based on the self-assessment forms, the PIEG used a priority system (contained in the [Report of the 2018 Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance](#)) to plan technical assistance according to the requests received, distributed according to the volume of foreign vessels inspections carried out and the initial training level of the agents involved: Category A includes immediate priorities with moderate inspection activity (Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria); Category B includes those with more solid experience (Guinea (Rep.), Namibia and Senegal); and Category C includes CPC that have not yet carried out any foreign vessel inspections (Mauritania, São Tomé e Príncipe and Sierra Leone). To date, the CPCs that have already received assistance are those in Categories A and B. Since then, other requests have been submitted by two other CPCs: Equatorial Guinea and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Further information can be found in the [Report of the 2022 Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance \(PIEG\)](#), held in June 2022, and the [Report of the Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance \(PIEG\)](#), held in May 2023, which provide an overview of the activities already carried out by the PIEG.

Although the Expert Group did not formally meet in 2025, port inspection-related topics were included in the discussions in IMM in June 2025 as contained in the [Report of the 18th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures \(IMM\)](#). At that time, the report of the latest mission to Namibia, conducted with financial support from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) ABNJ¹ program (TUNA Project II), was presented: following an assessment of inspection capacities in December 2024, which identified needs in terms of knowledge of ICCAT measures and species identification, technical training was delivered in March 2025 to 37 inspectors and observers, strengthening their operational skills, evidence collection, and port control procedures. This programme was deemed successful and highlighted the importance of developing standardized training tools for future assistance missions. The Namibian expert expressed his gratitude to the Secretariat and the experts who played a key role in facilitating this training. He did, however, emphasize that the condensed format (two to three days) could be extended to allow for better assimilation of the information. Namibia indicated that it was preparing a feedback report to share its experience. Finally, during these discussions, broader questions were raised regarding the long-term continuity of PIEG activities.

Canada emphasized the paramount importance of the PIEG and its mandate, particularly in light of the recent revision of the [Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 18-09 on port State measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing \(Rec. 23-17\)](#) during the last Commission meeting, which will be replaced by [Recommendation by ICCAT replacing Recommendation 23-17 on port State measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated \(IUU\) fishing \(Rec. 25-11\)](#). Reflecting on the mission to Namibia, the expert described the experience as encouraging, noting a mutual exchange of knowledge between the experts and the Namibian inspectors, whose mix of senior and junior officers fostered fruitful discussions. Canada concluded by stressing the need to revise the evaluation forms to include new sections and ensure analysis based on uniform criteria.

Capacity-building activities for port inspections continue to progress with the financial support of the FAO. Senegal, the final CPC in Category B, is currently the beneficiary of this training. Despite several postponements due to scheduling constraints and the limited availability of francophone experts, the initial evaluation phase was successfully conducted by FAO experts in December 2025. This mission analyzed the port inspection procedures of the Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DPSP) and identified priority needs. The main challenges identified concern the independent quantification of landings, the identification of juvenile and processed species, and the lack of standardized operational procedures. These elements will serve as the basis for in-depth practical and operational training scheduled for March 2026 to improve compliance with the Advance Request for Port Entry (ARPE), within the framework of ICCAT.

6. Determination of next steps in the assessment of needs and review of training requests

The Group discussed whether the classification of CPCs (Categories A, B, and C), as established in 2018, remains relevant to the current operational landscape. In support of this review, the Secretariat highlighted the resources available on the [ICCAT website](#) (under *Home > MSC > Port Inspection Scheme*) and provided a brief overview of the self-assessment forms. Indeed, the ICCAT Port Inspection Self-Assessment Forms (available in both [preliminary](#) and [full](#) versions) allow CPCs to identify their technical, legal, and operational needs, including the entities involved, for the procedures of controlling foreign vessels entering ports, with a minimum follow-up of 5% of inspections required.

The Secretariat clarified that the submission or updating of these forms can be done at any time for all CPCs. Although Namibia had already benefited from capacity building, it inquired whether an updated form should be submitted to indicate the list of new needs, including those requiring reinforcement, or to request an additional session for inspectors who were unable to attend. The ICCAT Secretariat confirmed that any CPC can revise and resubmit self-assessment forms at any time, noting that new submissions will be formally reviewed at the next meeting. Regarding training requests for a large number of inspectors, the Secretariat clarified that the current strategy is founded on a "train-the-trainer" model. This approach is designed to empower CPCs to develop internal expertise and reduce long-term dependency on external assistance, to provide trained inspectors with the standardized tools and pedagogical resources necessary to cascade their skills, and to ensure the efficient use of the Group's resources by avoiding the repetition of identical training sessions, except in truly exceptional circumstances.

¹ Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ).

Equatorial Guinea reiterated its strong interest in participating in the capacity-building programme, noting its ongoing requirement for assistance while acknowledging the priorities and scheduling already established by the Group.

Panama expressed its strong desire to benefit from this capacity-building programme, despite already receiving support from partners such as the FAO and Global Fishing Watch. It emphasized the importance of integrating the specific ICCAT framework to address strategic challenges, given the high volume of maritime traffic associated with the Canal and its major Atlantic port. Panama underscored the urgent need to expand its inspection staff. Receiving targeted ICCAT training is considered essential to ensure that these new officers can effectively meet the Commission's rigorous port State control requirements.

7. Review the self-assessment forms for port inspection capacity building needs

The PIEG addressed the need to revise and update the two self-assessment forms originally developed in 2017-2018. It was proposed that these discussions be conducted during the intersessional period to ensure a thorough technical review. Canada suggested that CPCs who have already undergone capacity-building missions should share their practical experiences regarding the questionnaire process. By identifying specific difficulties encountered, the PIEG can better prioritize and summarize the information requested, making the tools more user-friendly and effective. The Secretariat confirmed the importance of this intersessional work and agreed that it would also ensure all references align with the most recent ICCAT Recommendations and streamline the questionnaires based on expert feedback to improve the quality of submitted requests. Following these discussions, the Secretariat will issue a circular to all CPCs to gather broad observations and comments before finalization.

8. Reporting to PWG and feedback report of beneficiary CPCs

The PIEG noted the request from the PWG and the necessity of submitting a comprehensive report of the activities of the PIEG at the 19th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrate Monitoring Measures (IMM) in June 2026.

The Secretariat clarified that, while mission reports are systematically drafted and shared, a standardized framework for post-training feedback or long-term monitoring of capacity development is currently lacking. The Secretariat underlined that this information is crucial for accurately identifying successes and remaining obstacles, providing the necessary justification for the continued allocation of funds from partners such as the FAO, measuring the actual impact of training, and demonstrating the level of commitment of the CPCs and the Secretariat.

The European Union expressed its support for the establishment of a follow-up mechanism, particularly for Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) training, although this training has been conducted primarily for its activities in projects in West Africa to date. It has recommended the implementation of systematic feedback from participants and beneficiary countries to, for example, verify the actual number of staff trained, assess whether identified gaps have been addressed, and determine whether the training has led to concrete results for assessing the long-term sustainability of the programme, such as the effective monitoring of cases of infringement.

Canada suggested that ICCAT should enhance the promotion of its field activities to better showcase the progress achieved and ensure the long-term sustainability of project funding. Increasing the visibility of these successful interventions is seen as essential for maintaining donor confidence and member engagement. In response, the Secretariat informed the PIEG of a new initiative from the FAO to conduct interviews during the upcoming training of port inspectors in Senegal. These interviews would aim to highlight activities, recognize partners, and underscore its commitment to tuna fisheries management. Additionally, publishing press releases on the ICCAT website could be considered. These communication efforts would serve a dual purpose: increasing the organization's visibility and demonstrating support for direct technical assistance to the CPCs.

9. Consideration of opportunities and partners to deliver training in 2026, including under ABNJ funding

The Secretariat reported that the ABNJ funding has successfully supported the training missions in Namibia and Senegal, and confirmed that resources remain for two additional missions. The recipient for the next training course was confirmed by the PIEG to be the Guinea (Rep.), as originally proposed during the last PWG sessions. The last two training missions should be granted to one or two of the three CPCs within Category C (Mauritania, São Tomé e Príncipe and Sierra Leone) or to those that have reconfirmed their need (Guinea Equatorial, Panama). This will be discussed at the 19th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrate Monitoring Measures (IMM) in June 2026 and confirmed by the Commission. However, the Secretariat noted that the renewal of this programme beyond the current cycle remains unconfirmed. In this context, providing comprehensive feedback and documenting the impact of the completed missions was considered essential. Such data could serve as the primary justification for any requests to extend or renew the project with international partners. The PIEG acknowledged that the future of these capacity-building activities depends directly on the ability to demonstrate their concrete value and operational success.

The European Union reiterated its commitments to regional programmes in West Africa. The now-completed Improved regional fisheries governance in western Africa (PESCAO) programme strengthened capacities through numerous regional training sessions and significant national support, including Category A Country Partners (Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria), reinforcing synergies with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). The new West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme (WASOP) project aims to support the integrated and sustainable management of marine and coastal resources across 13 coastal countries. It includes, inter alia, support for the Marine Conservation Strategy (MCS) component, extensive legal assistance (training of magistrates and judges) and support for at-sea inspections using new technologies. The integration of a specific ICCAT module into these missions could be considered, if appropriate.

The European Union reaffirmed its support and emphasized the importance of coordinating activities to prevent the duplication of efforts. Both Canada and the United States also reaffirmed their continued support. Canada further indicated that a new action plan, potentially including new projects, will be developed in 2026.

The Secretariat took the opportunity to express its sincere gratitude to Canada, and the United States for their continued commitment in providing experts for these missions. It also noted that without this direct staff support, the Secretariat would have to resort to external recruitment, which would significantly increase its budget. It issued a formal call for qualified experts from all CPCs. Interested individuals with the necessary technical background in port State measures are encouraged to contact the Secretariat to support future capacity-building initiatives.

10. Development of baseline training programme (including ICCAT Port State Measures (PSM) Inspector Training Manual)

The Group discussed the necessity of establishing a more structured and harmonized training programme. In this context, the Secretariat reminded that the *ICCAT Port State Measures (PSM) Inspector Training Manual* is now available online and distributed during training sessions. Canada advocated for a more streamlined approach. While acknowledging the manual's comprehensive nature, Canada noted that its current volume makes it difficult for trainers to extract and compile information efficiently for short-term missions. Canada further indicated that consideration must be given to the PIEG's capacity to synthesize these tools internally or to the need to outsource this work by hiring external consultants (with the specific financial implications). Furthermore, training should focus on conservation and management measures and recommendations to ensure that inspectors are proficient in the applicable standards. Canada reaffirmed its availability to lead or support work on this proposal.

11. Other matters

Canada reiterated the strategic importance of expanding the current scope of training to include inspections at sea, ensuring full alignment with broader boarding and inspection programmes. While High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) is not yet formally integrated into the ICCAT regulatory framework, Canada suggested using the next IMM meeting to explore the potential avenues forward, including the creation of a dedicated working group. The objective would be to pool expertise and create synergies between port and high seas inspections, two areas with highly complementary control and evidential procedures.

The EU confirmed that HSBI will be discussed by the IMM, while reiterating that any changes to the PIEG mandate remains a Commission decision.

12. Adoption of report and adjournment

It was agreed that the Secretariat will prepare the draft report of this meeting and circulate it to PIEG members by email, in order to proceed with its adoption by correspondence.

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting and meeting arrangements
2. Nomination of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Election of the new chair
5. Review of progress since previous meeting
6. Determination of next steps in the assessment of needs and review of training requests
7. Review the self-assessment forms for port inspection capacity building needs
8. Reporting to PWG and feedback report of beneficiary CPCs
9. Consideration of opportunities and partners to deliver training in 2026, including under ABNJ funding
10. Development of baseline training programme (including ICCAT Port State Measures (PSM) Inspector Training Manual)
11. Other matters
12. Adoption of report and adjournment

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