

2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION

(March 2022 – March 2023)

Paragraph 1 of Article 29 of the **Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean** provides that:

“The Commission shall publish an annual report, which shall include details of decisions taken by the Commission to achieve the objective of this Convention. The report shall also provide information on actions taken by the Commission in response to any recommendations from the General Assembly of the United Nations or the FAO.

Copies of the report shall be publicly available and shall be provided to the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Director-General of the FAO”.

1. Membership

As of 31 March 2023, the SPRFMO Commission had 17 Members: Australia, Belize, Republic of Chile, People's Republic of China, Cook Islands, Republic of Cuba, Republic of Ecuador, European Union, Kingdom of Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Republic of Panama, Republic of Peru, Russian Federation, Chinese Taipei, United States of America, and the Republic of Vanuatu.

In addition, 2 countries held the status of Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CNCs): Country of Curaçao, and the Republic of Liberia.

2. Outcomes from the 2023 Commission Meeting

The 11th Meeting of the Commission (COMM11) of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation was held in hybrid modality in Manta, Ecuador from 13 to 17 February 2023.

Over 225 participants (from 16 SPRFMO Members, 3 CNCs, 2 Observer States, 6 IGOs, 8 NGOs along with invited experts) attended the meeting. The Commission reviewed and accepted recommendations made by the preceding meetings of its subsidiary bodies, including the 10th meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC10), the 10th meeting of the Compliance and Technical Committee (CTC10) and the 10th meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC10).

During the Commission meeting, 22 proposals were discussed and as a result, 12 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) were amended, a new decision was taken on Climate Change, and 2 observer programmes were accredited. One CMM decision was taken by vote with all other decisions taken by consensus.

The Commission discussed the timing of the 2nd SPRFMO Performance Review and tasked the Secretariat to bring forward a proposal to COMM12 based on suggestions made during COMM11.

Following a commemorative statement from the Secretariat and interventions from Members, the Commission recalled the significant achievements that the Organisation has made during the past 10 years, the commitment of SPRFMO to sustainability, the good progress and growth since the Organisation was created, the work done by the SC and the willingness of the Members to act on that advice, the ability of SPRFMO to take hard decisions, and the importance of the Convention.



1.1. Subsidiary Bodies

The Commission has three active subsidiary bodies that report, advise, and make recommendations to the Commission and contribute to regular reviews of the effectiveness of conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission. These subsidiary bodies are the Scientific Committee, Compliance and Technical Committee, and the Finance and Administration Committee.

The 10th meeting of the Scientific Committee was held in hybrid modality from 26 to 30 September 2022, in Seoul, Korea. The 10th meetings of the Compliance and Technical Committee and the Finance and Administration Committee were held immediately prior to the Commission meeting from 7 to 10 February 2023 in hybrid modality in Manta, Ecuador.

The report of the 10th Scientific Committee¹ was presented to COMM11, and the SC Chairperson reviewed progress against the 2022 SC multi-annual workplan, summarised the SC10 recommendations for the Commission, and introduced a proposed 2023 SC multi-annual workplan. The SC Chairperson noted that during 2022, 24 intersessional meetings were held over 39 days, and he acknowledged the work of member scientists in attending those meetings and supporting the work of the SC.

The Commission accepted and endorsed the SC10 report and commended the Chairperson of the SC, the Vice-Chairperson of the SC, and Members of the SC for their excellent work. The Commission thanked Panama for the offer to host the SC11 meeting in 2023. The Commission also adopted the SC workplan as revised².

The Chairperson of the 10th Finance and Administration Committee presented the FAC10 report³ and highlighted that the FAC had made good progress through its agenda in relation to SPRFMO's financial position and several staffing matters.

The Commission accepted the advice and recommendations of the FAC. In particular, the Commission agreed to establish a Consultation Group to assist in developing a Secretariat Staffing Strategy for consideration in 2024. The Commission adopted the budget for the 2023/24 financial year and an associated schedule of member contributions.

The report of the 10th Compliance and Technical Committee⁴ was presented by the Chairperson of the CTC. She highlighted the CTC discussions and corresponding recommendations on proposals to introduce a new decision and to amend existing CMMs, Provisional IUU Vessel List, Provisional Compliance Report, renewal of CNCs, and the implementation reports presented by the Secretariat, including the accreditation of observer programmes.

The Commission accepted the CTC10 Report and adopted all its recommendations, including an approach for addressing possible VMS compliance issues in the future; adoption of three CMM amendments (refer below), granting observer programme accreditation to the People's Republic of China and CapMarine, and broadening the inspections implementation report to include information pertaining to boardings and inspections at sea.

In addition, the Commission adopted a Final (2023) Compliance report (with 1 issue deferred to the next annual meeting) as well as the 2023 final IUU Fishing Vessel List (containing no vessels).

Ecuador offered to host the 12th Commission meeting (COMM12) in Manta, Ecuador from 23 January to 2 February 2024, under a funding support arrangement with costs shared with the Commission. The Commission expressed its appreciation to Ecuador and encouraged Members and CNCs to consider hosting future meetings.

¹ <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Meetings/SC/10th-SC-2022/SC10-Report-Final-19Jan2023-v2.pdf>

² <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Meetings/01-COMM/11th-Commission-2022-COMM11/COMM11-Report/Annex-4a-SC-Multi-annual-plan.pdf>

³ https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Meetings/04-FAC/10th-FAC-2023/SPRFMO-FAC10-Report-2023-Final-with-annexes-rev_lop.pdf

⁴ https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Meetings/03-CTC/10th-CTC-2023/CTC10-Report-final-with-Annexes-rev_lop.pdf



1.1. Decisions taken by the Commission to achieve the objective of the SPRFMO Convention

COMM11 amended 12 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) including:

- CMM 01-2023, *Trachurus murphyi*, where a historical capacity limit was removed, catches of *Trachurus murphyi* in 2023 throughout the range of the stock were limited to 1,080,000 tonnes, and new percentages for the basis of allocation for catch limits from 2023 to 2032 were adopted.
- CMM 03-2023, Bottom Fishing, where several regulatory amendments were introduced and adopted based upon advice and recommendations arising from the 2022 intersessional process to review the CMM including establishing a 70% minimum level of protection for vulnerable marine ecosystem taxa.
- CMM 03a-2023, Deepwater Species, where several catch limits for orange roughy were updated based on scientific advice, a catch limit for the Westpac Bank area was extended and an annex describing the location of Fisheries Management Areas was included.
- CMM 05-2023, Record of Vessels, where technical edits were adopted to update and clarify data requirements associated with adding or authorising vessels and their associated photographs.
- CMM 06-2023, Commission VMS, where the wording was updated to reflect standardised reporting timeframes (to 1 hour), to clarify Members' roles activating manual reporting protocols and update the CMM review date (to 2026).
- CMM 08-2013, Gillnet prohibition, where vessel reporting was made consistent with the general VMS requirements, advance notification time before Convention Area entry was extended to 72 hrs, the Abandoned, Lost, and/or Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) provisions were incorporated, and a review date clause was added.
- CMM 11-2023, Boarding and Inspection, where specific measures to govern high seas boarding and inspection of fishing vessels in the Convention Area were adopted, in accordance with Article 27 of the Convention. The amended CMM sets forth general obligations and provisions regarding interpretation and implementation, participation, specific boarding and inspection procedures, the use of force, inspection reports, serious violations, enforcement, annual reporting to the Commission, Commission coordination and oversight, and settlement of disagreements.
- CMM 12-2023, Transshipment, where several amendments were adopted that improve reporting of transshipments of fishery resources caught in the Convention Area and strengthen data submission guidelines and associated data templates.
- CMM 14b-2023, Exploratory potting (Cook Islands), where the Cook Islands' exploratory fishery was extended for one additional year (to 2024) and a definition for a fishing trip was added.
- CMM 14e-2023, Exploratory toothfish (European Union), where the duration of the last exploratory trip was extended by two weeks (from 31 October to 15 November 2023) conditional upon implementing additional seabird mitigation measures during that two-week period.
- CMM 14e-2023, Observer programme, where an annex was added to enable Peru's alternative scientific monitoring programme.
- CMM 18-2023, Squid, where an effort limitation was introduced, access to fisheries for developing coastal states was clarified, and limitations on the number and total gross tonnage effort of squid fishing vessels was adopted.

In addition, COMM11 adopted one new [Decision](#) being:

- Decision 13-2023, Climate Change, to make climate change a priority and a standing agenda item in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.



1.2. International Cooperation

The 11th Meeting of the Commission continued to make suitable arrangements for consultation, cooperation, and collaboration with such other organisations by:

- Renewing the Memorandum of Understanding with the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC);
- Renewing the Memorandum of Understanding with Red LAC de Pesca Ilegal No Declarada No Reglamentada (INDNR);
- Supporting the continuation of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding process with the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC); and,
- Agreeing to support the involvement of the Secretariat in the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Common Oceans Cross-sectoral project.

1.3. Office Holders

The annual meeting confirmed that Mr Luis Molledo, European Union, will serve as the Chairperson of the Commission until 1 July 2023, with Ms Alexa Cole, United States of America, as the Vice Chairperson.

Ms Katherine Bernal, Chile, continues as Chairperson of the Compliance and Technical Committee with Ms Rebeca Espinoza, Ecuador, accepting the position as Vice Chairperson of the CTC.

Mr Jimmy Villavicencio, Ecuador, continues as Chairperson of the Finance and Administration Committee and Mr Andres Couve, Chile, continues as Vice Chairperson of the FAC.

The meeting of the Scientific Committee agreed that Dr Jim Ianelli, United States of America, continues as the Chairperson of the Scientific Committee, with Dr Niels Hintzen, European Union, as the Vice Chairperson of the SC.

The full report of the Commission and all related documents are available on the SPRFMO website at www.sprfmo.int.



3. SPRFMO meetings and working group activities during the previous year.

Activity/meeting	Format	Date
Scientific Committee web meeting	virtual	22 March 2022
Scientific Committee web meeting	virtual	4 May 2022
Scientific Committee web meeting	virtual	15 June 2022
Scientific Committee web meeting	virtual	16 July 2022
Scientific Committee web meeting	virtual	17 August 2022
Scientific Committee web meeting	virtual	16 September 2022
Habitat monitoring working group web meeting	virtual	29-30 April 2022
Habitat monitoring working group web meeting	virtual	19 May 2022
Habitat monitoring working group web meeting	virtual	23 June 2022
Habitat monitoring working group web meeting	virtual	15 September 2022
Jack mackerel modelling workshop	virtual	8-10 June 2022
Jack mackerel benchmark workshop (SCW14)	hybrid	5-9 July 2022
Jack mackerel connectivity task group	virtual	8 September 2022
Jack mackerel working group web meeting	virtual	14 September 2022
Squid working group web meeting	virtual	11 June 2022
Squid working group web meeting	virtual	22 July 2022
Squid working group web meeting	virtual	22 August 2022
Squid working group web meeting	virtual	2 September 2022
Squid working group web meeting	virtual	9 September 2022
Squid working group web meeting	virtual	21 September 2022
Deepwater working group web meeting	virtual	6 September 2022
Deepwater working group web meeting	virtual	13 September 2022
Deepwater working group web meeting	virtual	16 September 2022
Bottom Fishing intersessional working group	virtual	20 April 2022
Bottom Fishing intersessional working group	virtual	20 May 2022
Bottom Fishing intersessional working group	virtual	7-8 September 2022
Bottom Fishing intersessional working group	virtual	10-11 November 2022
Bottom Fishing intersessional working group	virtual	8 December 2022
Bottom Fishing intersessional working group	virtual	13 December 2022
10 th Scientific Committee (SC10)	hybrid	26-30 September 2022
10 th Compliance and Technical Committee (CTC10)	3 days, hybrid	7 to 10 February 2023
10 th Finance and Administration Committee (FAC10)	2 days, hybrid	9, 10 and 14 February 2023
Jack mackerel MSE workshop with Commissioners	1 day	11 February 2023
11 th SPRFMO Commission (COMM11)	5 days, hybrid	13 to 17 February 2023