

**10<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SPRFMO COMMISSION**

*Held virtually, 24-28 January 2022*

**COMM 10 – Obs 01**

**FAO ABNJ Deep-Sea Fisheries Project Update to SPRFMO COMM10**

*FAO*



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**



## **ABNJ Deep-sea Fisheries Project update for the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SPRFMO Commission**

**24-28 January 2022**

### **ABNJ Deep-sea Fisheries Project (2022-2027)**

**Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine  
Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction**



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## **Introduction/Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the development of the FAO Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) Deep-sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach (DSF) Project and to seek support from SPRFMO in becoming a project partner.

## **Background**

The DSF Project (2022-2027) follows on from the ABNJ Deep Sea Project (2014-2019). Information papers and interventions have been submitted to previous SPRFMO meetings<sup>1</sup>. The DSF project's concept note was approved by GEF in June 2020 and is available from FAO<sup>2</sup>. The DSF Project Inception workshop was held on 24 and 26 August 2020<sup>3</sup> and the Validation Workshop on 8 September 2021<sup>4</sup>. The full project document was submitted to the GEF Secretariat on 25 November 2021.

The DSF Project is part of the Common Oceans Programme, which includes four technical projects (DSF Project, Tuna Project, Cross-Sectoral Project and Sargasso Sea Project) as well as an overall Global Coordination Project.

## **DSF Project development**

The DSF Project is funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

The Project builds on earlier communication with committed and potential project partners to identify the Project's thematic work areas. These work areas will be implemented through activities funded by the project and through partner in-kind contributions. The project implementation is expected to start in 2022, with a duration of 5 years.

The project is global in scope and will collaborate with and support regional activities that lead to the project's objective:

**To ensure that DSF in the ABNJ are managed under an ecosystem approach that maintains demersal fish stocks at levels capable of maximizing their sustainable yields and minimizing impacts on biodiversity, with a focus on data-limited stocks, deepwater sharks and vulnerable marine ecosystems.**

The project's Theory of Change summarizes the activities, outputs and outcomes that underpin the project (Annex 1). The successful achievement of the Project's objective will require inputs and support from project partners, in particular the participating RFMOs and industry.

Many aspects of SPRFMO's management, compliance and scientific work support the project's objective (Annex 2). The SPRFMO partner activities outlined in Annex 2 cover general areas of cooperation with the DSF Project and will evolve in line with developments in SPRFMO and the Project.

## **Priority activities relevant to the 10<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting**

During discussions held with SPRFMO during the previous project, during the Inception and Validation workshops, and through email correspondence with the Secretariat, the SPRFMO activities listed in Annex 2 match well to the objectives of the DSF Project.

## **Next steps**

The DSF Project currently has partnership commitments from five RFMOs (NAFO, NEAFC, GFCM, NPFC, and SEAFO), from the science advisory body ICES, and from the industry groups ICFA and SIODFA. Other potential partners are expected to reach a decision soon.

Continuing from the valuable contributions made by SPRFMO during the last project, we hope that SPRFMO will agree to become a project partner and submit a co-financing letter at its earliest convenience (draft in Annex 3).. The draft co-finance letter includes a suggested co-financing amount. The final amount is to be determined by SPRFMO.

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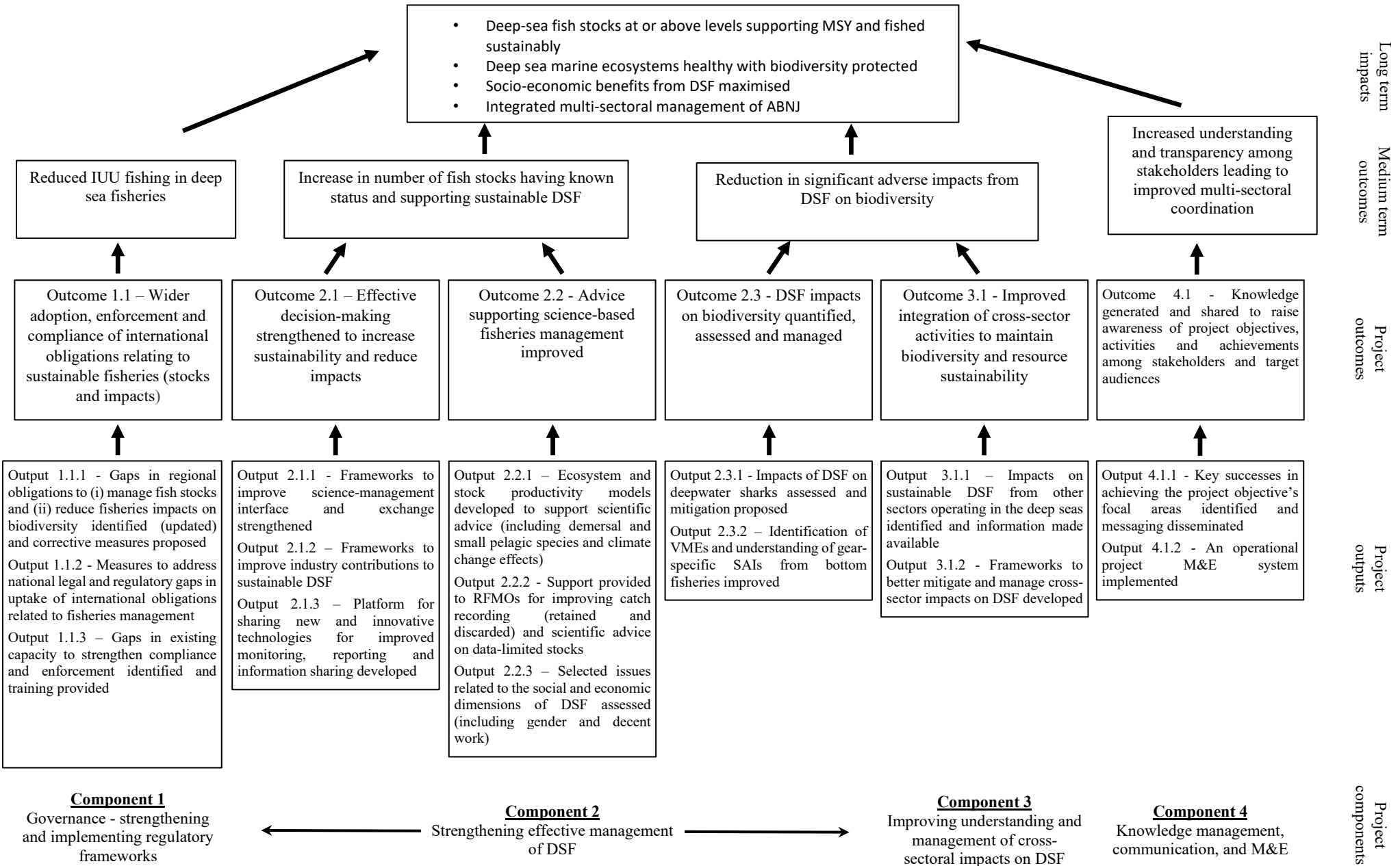
<sup>1</sup> Commission (COMM 7 - Doc10 (via Secretariat)), Scientific Committee (SC8-Obs04, SC9-Doc13 (via Secretariat))

<sup>2</sup> [DSF Concept Note](#)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/cb2909en/cb2909en.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> A Report from the Validation Workshop will be available shortly.

**ANNEX 1. DSF PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE (VER 10 06 2021)**



**ANNEX 2. DSF PROJECT WORKPLAN AND ACTIVITIES OF RELEVANCE TO SPRFMO**

Component 1: Governance -strengthening and implementing regulatory frameworks

Outcome 1.1 – Wider adoption, enforcement and compliance of international obligations relating to sustainable fisheries (stocks and impacts)

Project Outputs	Project Activity	SPRFMO Partner Activity (in kind)
1.1.1 - Gaps in regional obligations to (i) manage fish stocks and (ii) reduce fisheries impacts on biodiversity identified (updated) and corrective measures proposed.	<p>Scoping study on international obligations (under UNCLOS, UNFSA, and other instruments<sup>1</sup>) in managing fish stocks and reducing impacts in ABNJ, including reference to data-limited and bycatch species.</p> <p>Workshop and report developed under participatory process.</p> <p>Run by project consultant</p>	<p>Take part in scoping study workshop to identify international obligations.</p> <p>Compliance and Commission meetings and reports</p> <p>SPRFMO measures and national legislation</p> <p>In-kind support from Secretariat to support project consultant</p>
1.1.2 - Measures to address RFMO and national legal and regulatory gaps in international obligations related to fisheries management.	<p>Development of fisheries management self-assessment tools for RFMOs and their member states based on the step-wise guide<sup>2</sup> and unpublished assessments undertaken during GEF-5 based on the DeepFlip Questionnaire<sup>3</sup>.</p> <p>This includes uptake of obligations identified under 1.1.1.</p> <p>Workshop and report developed under participatory process.</p> <p>E-learning tool developed by FAO<sup>4</sup>.</p> <p>Run by project consultant</p>	<p>Assist in the development of self-assessment tools for RFMOs and member states based on requirements in binding and voluntary international instruments.</p> <p>Attendance at one workshop (online or in person) to develop self-assessment tools.</p> <p>Act as advisor, if relevant, to the development of the e-learning tool.</p> <p>In-kind support from Secretariat staff (Executive Secretary, Compliance manager, fisheries coordinator) to support project consultant</p>
1.1.3 - Gaps in existing capacity to strengthen compliance and enforcement identified and filled.	<p>Focus on GEF-eligible countries following on from GEF-5 project</p> <p>Observer training (compliance and scientific)</p> <p>Port inspection training</p> <p>Deepwater shark catch monitoring and bycatch reduction (support to output 2.3.1)</p> <p>VMS and mapping of DSF by gear type (support to output 2.3.2)</p> <p>Run by project consultant</p>	<p>Provide support to selected and GEF-eligible member states to DSF Project to work with capacity building to implement corrective measures where necessary. Follow-up work from GEF-5 with “Deep flip” survey.</p> <p>No anticipated contribution from RFMOs.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Harrison, J., Lobach, T., Morgera, E. and P. Manoa. 2017. Review and analysis of international legal and policy instruments related to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation in areas beyond national jurisdiction. FAO, Rome. 94 pp. [Produced by GEF-5 Deep-Sea project]

<sup>2</sup> Harrison, J., Lobach, T., Morgera, E., Diz, D., Kuemlanguan, B., Manoa, P. and Hamley, G. 2019. Step-wise guide for the implementation of international legal and policy instruments related to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the areas beyond national jurisdiction. Rome, FAO. [Produced by GEF-5 Deep-Sea project]

<sup>3</sup> Deep sea fisheries legislation reviews based on questionnaires of nine participating states. [Produced by GEF-5 Deep-Sea project]

<sup>4</sup> [FAO elearning Academy](#)

**Component 2: Strengthening effective management of DSF**

*Outcome 2.1 – Effective decision making strengthened to increase sustainability and reduce impacts*

Project Outputs	Project Activity	SPRFMO Partner Activity (in kind)
2.1.1 - Frameworks to improve science-management interface and exchange strengthened following an ecosystem and precautionary approach	<p>Desk top study on how dsRFMO (deep sea RFMOs) committees communicate internally (e.g. by requests for advice, joint groups, etc.) and to trail new ways if appropriate.</p> <p>Further development of the Precautionary Approach and the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) frameworks by dsRFMOs.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant</p>	<p>Topics of interest include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References points (target and limit) for stocks.</li> <li>• Impacts on ETP spp. under EAF.</li> <li>• Sharing VMS information with Scientific Committee (SC).</li> <li>• Collaboration between the Compliance and Technical Committee (CTC) and SC (see CTC report and CTC7-Doc 15)</li> </ul> <p>Improved communication between committees. Take part in project workshop on PA and EAF frameworks (including the social and economic pillars of EAF, data-poor stocks, deepwater sharks and VMEs).</p>
2.1.2 - Frameworks to improve industry contributions to sustainable DSF	<p>Desk top study on how industry works with dsRFMOs and to trail new ways if appropriate applicable to the management, compliance, and scientific committees. Including better identification of communication and data sharing strategies. Conclusions discussed at workshop and frameworks developed as appropriate.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant</p>	<p>Scoping study and workshop to examine options for a more cooperative partnership between RFMOs and industry.</p> <p>Sharing of information frameworks among industry and dsRFMOs (including via delegations) and discussions with Secretariats and industry.</p> <p>Take part in project workshop on industry – dsRFMO cooperation.</p> <p>Follow-up as required.</p>
2.1.3 – Uptake of new and innovative approaches and technologies for improved monitoring, reporting and information sharing piloted and introduced	<p>Development of web-area (under Common Oceans Programme?) for sharing information from researchers and developers with a wider audience (such as dsRFMOs) of new and innovation technologies that support sustainable fisheries.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant</p>	<p>Topics of interest include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piloting new technologies.</li> <li>• On-line implementation of the Port State Measures agreement</li> <li>• Technologies to support or replace observers.</li> </ul> <p>RFMO Secretariats to help identify “needs and constraints” that could be solved through the application of technology.</p> <p>Support and promotion of SPRFMO Observer programme</p> <p>Support population of dedicated FAO developers/users forum site advertising new technologies for uptake</p>

2.2 - Improved advice supporting science-based fisheries management

Project Outputs	Project Activity	SPRFMO Partner Activity (in kind)
2.2.1 - Stock productivity models developed and advice generated and tested (including demersal and small pelagic species and climate change effects)	<p>Organise symposium on Application to fisheries management of ecosystem and stock productivity models under changing conditions – short, medium and long term implications”.</p> <p>Promote relevant work undertaken by dsRFMOs, including CC work.</p> <p>Draft publication on current work and its use in sustainable fisheries.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant</p>	<p>Ecosystem status overviews at seasonal to decadal scales (via SPRFMO Habitat Monitoring WG)</p> <p>Sharing of relevant work by RFMO management and science committees</p> <p>Support of the project symposium on ecosystem and stock productivity models</p>
2.2.2 - Support provided to RFMOs for improving catch recording (retained and discarded) and scientific advice on data-limited stocks	<p>(Focus fisheries are alfonsino and armourhead)</p> <p>Review and support appropriate and coordinated data-collection programmes.</p> <p>Identify and support current RFMO assessment methods.</p> <p>As appropriate, coordinate training workshops, possibly with ICES.</p> <p>Assist in evaluation of stock status for data limited stocks.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant</p>	<p>Alfonsino assessment work</p> <p>Alfonsino data collection</p> <p>Alfonsino (various areas), (for information purposes: orange roughy (Louisville ridge, NZ straddling stock, Westpac Bank))</p> <p>Sharing data-collection and assessment methodologies through RFMO reports and access to stock experts</p> <p>If appropriate, have stock assessments reviewed in an open forum with other RFMOs (focus fisheries are alfonsino and armourhead)</p>
2.2. 3 – Selected issues related to the social and economic dimensions of DSF assessed (including gender and decent work)	<p>Undertake value chain analysis of 1-4 fisheries that supports the sustainable management of deep-sea fisheries and EAF.</p> <p>Perform gender and decent employment analyses as part of the value chain work.</p> <p>Examine relevance of value chains to work of RFMOs.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant.</p>	<p>SPRFMO recognise the socio-economic and cultural importance of ABNJ. (see e.g. 2020 Commission report, paras 29 (CI), 144 (NZ), 147 (HSFG)).</p> <p>Decent work – e.g. security and welfare of observers according to international standards or guidelines (CMM 2020 Art 30.8.d)</p> <p>Inclusion of social and economic aspects in the EAF Framework (if appropriate).</p> <p>Selected value chain data collection.</p> <p>Gender work throughout entire fisheries chain (including management, science and MCS).</p>

2.3 - DSF impacts on biodiversity quantified, assessed and managed

Project Outputs	Project Activity	SPRFMO Partner Activity (in kind)
<p>2.3.1 - Impacts of DSF on deepwater sharks assessed and mitigated</p>	<p>Collate and assess data collection programmes and data collected among dsRFMOs. Providing support, training and testing of future data collection programs including new technologies to aid identification.</p> <p>Promotion of risk assessment methodologies involving shark distribution, fishing effort distribution (by gear), and catch susceptibility.</p> <p>Reviews of impact assessment methodologies and comparison of results from high seas regions through workshop or symposium as appropriate.</p> <p>Methods to review effectiveness of mitigation options.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant.</p>	<p>Risk assessments using PSA and SAFE methods.</p> <p>Collaboration with project to support this output, including sharing of work undertaken for RFMO meetings.</p> <p>Consistent with obligations and current work of RFMOs, undertaken deepwater shark stock and impact assessments with RFMOs.</p> <p>Working jointly with the project, review effectiveness of any mitigation measures to protect deepwater shark species.</p>
<p>2.3.2 – Knowledge of impacts of fishing activities on VMEs improved and mitigation measures developed and adopted</p>	<p>Review of current methods used to identify VMEs in ABNJ, including those used in exploratory fisheries, and produce publication entitled “VME identification methodology”.</p> <p>Review implementation of FAO DSF Guidelines (follow-up of Busan meeting in 2010)</p> <p>Methods to monitor the health of VMEs in closed areas to see if they are changing, either negatively through non-fisheries impacts or positively through recovery.</p> <p>Improved monitoring and analysis of fishing effort by gear type (essential fundamental requirement to monitoring of fisheries and impacts).</p> <p>Run by Project consultant.</p>	<p>RFMO collaboration, mainly through the provision of meeting reports and working documents, but sometimes by expert in-kind contributions, to advance work on VMEs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat modelling and cross-collaboration (SC8 para 203)</li> <li>• Pursue operational definitions of SAI (spatial scales), ideally with FAO as part of an across-RFMO initiative.</li> <li>• Innovative bottom fishing footprint and 3-tier VME protection/fishing</li> <li>• VME ID Guides and data collection</li> <li>• Better use of VMS and other supporting methods (COMM8, para 53)</li> <li>• Bottom Fishing Impact Assessment in exploratory fisheries – methods to determine (COMM8, para 190-194)</li> </ul> <p>Representation by RFMOs at various workshops to develop and conclude work of this output.</p> <p>Some joint work with Compliance Committees and Scientific Committees on how to improve the monitoring and mapping of fishing effort, whilst respecting confidentiality requirements and restricted access rules.</p>



**Component 3. Improving understanding and management of cross-sectoral impacts on DSF**

*Outcome 3.1 - Improved integration of cross-sector activities to maintain biodiversity and resource sustainability*

Project Outputs	Project Activity	SPRFMO Partner Activity (in kind)
3.1.1 - Interactions between fisheries and other sectors operating in the deep seas identified and information made available.	<p>Scoping study to identify possible interactions with DSF (including overlap with current spatial extent of fishing by stock and gear).</p> <p>Methodologies identified to identify significance of threats (including where identified in similar cases for EEZ fisheries).</p> <p>Guidance developed on consequences of threats (fisheries production, ecological, social, economic).</p> <p>Run by Project consultant.</p>	<p>General interest in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EBSAs, marine pollution and climate change (SC report 2019, 11.2-11.3).</li> <li>Impacts on DSF from other sectors</li> </ul> <p>Information in RFMO reports and working papers</p> <p>Consultations with RFMO Secretariat staff, scientific committees, and members as appropriate.</p> <p>In-kind contributions to workshops and project publications</p>
3.1.2 - Mechanisms to better mitigate and manage cross-sector impacts on DSF developed.	<p>Project consultant to draft report on current and planned multi-sectoral marine use (to include all spatial aspects of fisheries including distribution of fishing effort and biodiversity protection measures).</p> <p>To inform RFMOs on developments in international instruments affecting the use of the ABNJ.</p> <p>As appropriate, any follow-up work necessary to mitigate the negative effects of interactions with DSF.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant.</p>	<p>Assigning responsibilities for assessing impacts to fish and biodiversity (in part, contributing to the BBNJ process).</p> <p>Improved understanding of the spatial extent of the fished areas</p> <p>Oil and gas work SC 2020 p. 66, WGESA 2019, p. 120-128 (ATLAS project).</p> <p>Development of the VME Database, if desired, to include other spatial management measures and other sectors to facilitate integrated ecosystem assessments</p> <p>RFMO meeting reports and working papers</p>

**Component 4. Knowledge management, communication and M&E**

*Outcome 4.1 Knowledge generated and shared to raise awareness of project objectives, activities and achievements among stakeholders and target audiences*

Project Outputs	Project Activity	SPRFMO Partner Activity (in kind)
4.1.1: Key successes in achieving the project objective's focal areas identified and messaging disseminated.	<p>Review and support to RFMO websites with an emphasis on sharing information with a wider multi-sectoral audience to better display the remit of RFMOs and the work they undertake with fisheries and environmental monitoring.</p> <p>Run by Project consultant.</p>	<p>In-kind discussions between Secretariat and project's communications experts on current website design and possibilities for improvement in messaging.</p>
	<p>Programme level messaging via Global Coordination Project</p>	<p>No inputs</p>
4.1.2: An operational project M&E system implemented	<p>Project monitoring and evaluation undertaken by Project Management Unit</p>	<p>RFMO Secretariat to provide annual updates to DSF project on their contributions to the project as specified in the co-financing letter.</p>

### 3. Template for co-financing letter

Jeffrey Griffin

Senior Coordinator, GEF Unit

Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment (OCB)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, ITALY

Date:

**Subject:** Confirmation of co-financing for the GEF Project 'Deep-sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach' and Project Symbol GCP/GLO/1002/GFF

Dear Mr Griffin,

I have the pleasure to confirm that the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation accepts to co-finance the GEF project "Deep-sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach" through our global activities in 2022-2027.

The co-financing will amount to an **in-kind** contribution of **USD 1,500,000** comprising a contribution in staff time of the SPRFMO Secretariat and of SPRFMO's Contracting Parties and other operating expenses devoted to activities supporting the objectives of this project.

The total co-financing contribution to the GEF project will be **USD 1,500,000** and the split by component is as follows:

Component	USD Amount	Type of Co-financing
Component 1:		grant
Governance - strengthening and implementing regulatory frameworks	225,000	in-kind
Component 2:		grant
Strengthening effective management of deep sea fisheries	975,000	in-kind
Component 3:		grant
Improving understanding and management of cross-sectoral impacts on deep sea fisheries	225,000	in-kind
Component 4:		grant
Knowledge Management, Communication and Monitoring and Evaluation	75,000	in-kind
Project Management Costs (equal to 5% of the co-financing)		grant
	zero	in-kind

Yours Sincerely,

