

14TH MEETING OF THE SPRFMO COMMISSION

Panama City, Panama, 2 to 6 March 2026

COMM 14 – Doc 10 SPRFMO Guidelines for Observers *Secretariat*

Background and Recommendations

These Guidelines were developed by the Secretariat with an aim to clarify the principles, expectations, and practical arrangements that support effective Observer participation in the work of the Organisation, in line with the SPRFMO Convention and Rules of Procedure. They are intended to promote transparency and constructive engagement across all SPRFMO meetings and intersessional processes.

Upon transmittal, Observers were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Guidelines ahead of SPRFMO annual meeting.

The Commission is invited to:

- **Note** *these guidelines for SPRFMO Observers, developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chairpersons*
- **Make any improvements to the Guidelines** *as deemed appropriate*
- **Endorse** *these Guidelines for SPRFMO Observers*

Guidelines for SPRFMO Observers

Secretariat

1. Purpose

These Guidelines set out the principles, expectations, and conduct standards applicable to Observers participating in the work of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO). They aim to support Members and Observers in facilitating effective Observer participation in the work of the Organisation.

2. Legal Basis

Observer participation in the SPRFMO is governed by:

- Article 18 of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean; and
- Regulation 9 of the Rules of Procedure, which defines the rights and modalities of participation of Observers in the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

Under Regulation 9 Observers:

- may participate as Observers in meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies unless otherwise decided by the Commission;
- may participate in deliberations but shall not take part in taking decisions;
- may submit relevant documents for circulation as information papers; and
- shall have timely access to documents subject to their confidentiality.

3. Principles of Participation

SPRFMO values the participation and contributions of Observers, who bring scientific, technical, and policy expertise that enhances transparency, legitimacy, and informs decision-making. Observer engagement is guided by the following principles:

- Transparency – sharing information in good faith and respecting established confidentiality provisions.
- Constructive engagement – contributing positively to discussions and the pursuit of consensus outcomes.
- Professionalism – maintaining decorum and respect for all participants and Chairpersons.
- Integrity – acting consistently with SPRFMO’s objectives and in a manner that supports the effective functioning of the Organisation.



4. Participation Rights and Responsibilities

Observers are entitled to:

- Attend open sessions of Commission and subsidiary body meetings. They are not entitled to attend sessions that are closed or otherwise limited in nature.
- Submit written information documents through the Secretariat.
- Access papers, subject to confidentiality restrictions.
- Make oral interventions during discussions at the discretion of the Chairperson.

Observers are responsible for:

- Respecting the Chairperson's authority to manage discussions and speaking order.
- Submitting relevant documents to the Secretariat for distribution to the Members of the Commission or its subsidiary bodies, and ensuring such materials are accurate, relevant, and aligned with SPRFMO's document standards, processes and timelines.
- Maintaining an up-to-date contact point with the Secretariat.
- Respecting confidentiality provisions governing non-public data, deliberations, and intersessional exchanges.
- Coordinating transparently with Members, CNCs, and the Secretariat.

5. Standards of Conduct

All Observers and their representatives shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the UN Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, and in particular:

- Act professionally and courteously at all times during meetings and intersessional communications.
- Refrain from making any remarks or behaviour that could be perceived as personal, offensive, or disruptive.
- Respect confidentiality of restricted or sensitive information.
- Comply with instructions of Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, and Coordinators.
- Engage collaboratively and respectfully.
- Ensure representation integrity – only duly authorised individuals participate and speak on behalf of the Observer entity.

6. Document Submissions

Information papers and presentations must be submitted to the Secretariat in advance of deadlines. The Secretariat may adjust format or style or request drafting changes to ensure compliance with SPRFMO protocols. Submissions should clearly state the submitting organisation's name, purpose, and relevance to the meeting agenda.



7. Meeting Etiquette

- Speak only when recognised by the Chairperson.
- Keep interventions concise, relevant, and solution oriented.
- Avoid interrupting or speaking over others.
- Use appropriate channels to raise procedural concerns.
- Respect time limits and Chair guidance during sessions.

8. Confidentiality and Use of Information

All non-public SPRFMO information—including documents marked restricted, draft, or confidential—shall not be distributed or cited externally without prior authorisation. Observers must not use SPRFMO data or discussions for commercial or lobbying purposes.

9. Coordination with the Secretariat

Observers are encouraged to maintain regular communication with the SPRFMO Secretariat regarding contact updates, document submissions, logistical arrangements, and any clarifications about these Guidelines.

10. Non-Compliance

Sustained or serious lack of respect for the rules of the Organisation, including the Rules of Procedure and these Guidelines, may lead to a formal warning, or review and revoking of Observer status by the Commission under Regulation 9(2).

11. Review and Updates

These Guidelines may be reviewed periodically to ensure continued alignment with the rules of the Organisation and best practices.

12. Contact

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