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## 10<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE COMPLIANCE AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (CTC)

*Manta, Ecuador, 7 to 17 February 2023*

### CTC 10 – Doc 08 SPRFMO Observer Programme Implementation Report *Secretariat*

#### 1. Background

Paragraph 45 of [CMM 16-2022 \(Observer Programme\)](#) requires that the Secretariat shall prepare a report on the implementation of the SPRFMO Observer Programme (OP) for presentation at each annual meeting of the Compliance and Technical Committee (CTC), using information from annual reports, observer data, and all other suitably documented and relevant information in its possession. This document represents the fourth iteration of this implementation report and summarises developments in the SPRFMO Observer Programme Implementation since the conclusion of the Commission's 2022 Annual Meeting.

#### The CTC is invited to:

- **Note** the contents of this paper (particularly section 2.7) and make any comments it deems appropriate;
- **Assess** the Final Evaluation Reports provided by MRAG for China and CapMarine; and
- **Make** recommendations to the Commission regarding whether these observer programmes have met the requirements of this CMM 16-2022 (Observer programme) and, where relevant, whether a recommendation based on paragraphs 35 to 38 is appropriate.

#### 2. CMM reporting requirements

##### *2.1 Information on problems that have been encountered*

At least one Member's observer programme continued to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting realized observer coverage below the minimum coverage levels outlined in the CMM. The pandemic has continued to affect recruitment, training, and deployment of observers. There were indications that the situation may be improving as of mid-year 2022.

##### *2.2 Recommendations for improving current standards and practices*

The [10th Scientific Committee Meeting](#) made three specific recommendations relating to Observer Programmes and Observer data, and outlined several tasks in the Multi-annual Workplan:

- [T]he SC **recommended** that the updated "Classification guide for potentially vulnerable invertebrate taxa" is used by observers and fishers to identify VME indicator taxa landed as bycatch during bottom fishing operations (SC10-DW06). It is intended that the ID guides will enable the information provided to observers to be standardised, accurate and clear, paying particular attention to the identification, weighing, subsampling and collection of benthic bycatch samples.
- Following Peru's presentation of an alternative to the Observer Programme for Peruvian artisanal vessels (SC10-SQ06), **the SC recommended** that the programme was suitable and did meet the requirements detailed in paragraph 4 of CMM 16-2021 (Observer programme).



- With respect to the jumbo flying squid fishery, *Many Members supported an increase in observer coverage (human and electronic) of the jumbo flying squid fishery in the Convention Area because these levels were below acceptable scientific standards for data collection purposes. And some Members supported that the current observer coverage level is appropriate based on available studies.*
- The SC included a multi-annual workplan task (Annex 6 of the 10<sup>th</sup> SC Report) to *advise on the appropriate levels of observer coverage for each of the major fisheries to:*
  - *Identify bycatch issues related to seabird and other species of concern (short and medium term);*
  - *Provide statistically robust quantitative estimates for all species of seabird combined and some of the more common bycatch species (medium term); and*
  - *Periodically review the appropriate levels of observer coverage for SPRFMO fisheries in support of stock assessment needs.*

### *2.3 Developments in observer programmes and observational methods*

At the 10<sup>th</sup> Scientific Committee meeting of SPRFMO in 2022, Chile presented on the electronic monitoring (EM) programme (SC10-Doc29). Industrial fleet coverage is currently 100% (with 10% review), while 30% of the artisanal fleet is covered by EM. China is also developing EM to be widely deployed throughout their squid fishing fleet. Chile and Australia shared the common challenge of dealing with managing the data associated with EM, e.g., deployment and collection of physical hard drives, data storage, and the logistics and costs of each.

The SC noted that: *the experience of Chile suggests that the gradual implementation of these systems, under transparent framework policies should consider the different stakeholders' situations. Technical, demands on human resources, economic, and cultural conditions vary and should be considered so that EM can be a successful tool to complements the pre-existing monitoring systems.*

### *2.4 Accreditation process in 2022*

The Secretariat held an inception meeting with MRAG on 23 March 2022 which focused on changes to the process necessary to implement [CMM 16-2022](#) and improvements in the process to meet the objectives of the CMM in a fair, transparent, and efficient manner. In letter G40-2022 (29 March 2022) the Secretariat requested those Members and CNCPs looking for accreditation, particularly this year, to submit their points of contact which were then provided to MRAG so that the accreditation process could begin. Points of contact were received from China, Ecuador, the European Union, and CapMarine (an observer service provider).

MRAG initiated the formal part of the accreditation process with applicants between 1 and 6 July 2022, by establishing an assessment timetable and guidelines. This process is intended to begin 6 months prior to the Commission meeting (i.e., 7 August 2022). Given an amendment to CMM 16, the accreditation process is permitted to extend beyond a single year, allowing Members to complete the process over multiple years, as necessary. In 2022, CapMarine, China, the European Union, and Ecuador began or continued the accreditation process. CapMarine and China committed to complete the accreditation process in 2022. The European Union set out on a two-year time frame for the accreditation process and although Ecuador expressed initial interest in completing the accreditation process this year, the outstanding materials were not made available for evaluation during this accreditation cycle.

CapMarine and China both provided the required documentation to the assessor. Both applicants were sent draft preliminary evaluation reports on 8 November 2022 and were given preliminary feedback with opportunities for engagement to ensure that MRAG had all necessary information to make their assessment. Final Evaluation Reports were provided to the Secretariat between 26 November and 7 December and 2022 (included as Annexes 1 and 2 to this report). MRAG has also deposited copies of the assessment materials (all the relevant information and documentation to fulfil the standards provided for in Annex 3, including manuals,



guides and training materials as specified in Paragraph 23 of CMM 16-2022) with the Secretariat where they have been archived. No issues have arisen in the relationship between MRAG and the Secretariat, and MRAG has offered valuable insights beyond the current accreditation processes in anticipation of future needs and challenges, some of which are discussed in more detail below.

The final recommendations from the Final Evaluation Reports are as follows:

- **CapMarine – Recommendation for accreditation**
  - Documents were provided to support all accreditation requirement criteria.
  - CapMarine has developed a SPRFMO Training Manual and briefing notes specific to SPRFMO lobster pot sampling, in addition to their generic training materials.
  - No issues were identified, and the evaluator has recommended accreditation.
- **China – Recommendation for accreditation**
  - All documents and requirements were effectively communicated. Although many documents were in Mandarin, key sections were translated, and additional questions answered through emails and virtual meetings.
  - The Commission has supported translation services for observer accreditation processes; these services have been valuable in facilitating the process.
  - The section relating to impartiality and integrity was deemed sufficient for accreditation recommendation; however, the evaluator made a few comments noting some ambiguity and that the materials presented were focused on the issue of bribery. Supporting documentation for this section was included in the *'Problems, experience and lessons learnt'* section, and although the evaluator felt that details were lacking, they ultimately considered the materials adequate.

### *2.5 Constraints to accreditation*

As noted in paragraph 111 of the [COMM 7 Meeting report](#), *“relevant expenses for accreditation will be covered by the EU contribution of 150,000 Euros for the first year, and Members’ contributions will be requested after that period”*. The European Union, in response to a request from the Secretariat, has graciously agreed to extend the project to support costs associated with the accreditation process for most Members, through until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2024. This support includes costs related to translation of relevant information and material and all applicants have been advised of this opportunity. The generosity of this contribution continues to be acknowledged and appreciated, and it has significantly facilitated the implementation of the SPRFMO Observer Programme.

### *2.6 Any identifiable problem or obstacle in fulfilling the objectives and purpose of this CMM*

Paragraph 32 of CMM 16-2022 requires the Accreditation Evaluator to submit the Final Evaluation Report to the Secretariat (only) no later than 60 days in advance of the next Commission meeting. Paragraph 33 of CMM 16-2022 states that the CTC shall evaluate the Final Assessment Report and subsequently make recommendations to the Commission. The final reports for this year’s assessments are included in this document which becomes available 30 days before the meeting. Members are invited to provide guidance on any adjustments to this process that they wish to make.

As noted in paragraph 55 of CMM 16-2022 Members and CNCPs may continue using their own non-accredited national observer programme to meet observer coverage requirements until 31 December 2024.



### *2.7 Potential challenges and considerations for the future of the SPRFMO Observer Programme*

Two Members/CNCPs have expressed interest in accrediting observers for deployment on carrier vessels. To date, observing of carrier vessels has not been part of the accreditation process in SPRFMO. However, expanding observer coverage to carrier vessels in addition to catcher vessels would represent an important step forward for SPRFMO. The accreditation evaluator has been notified of this interest; there has been no indication that expanding the accreditation process to cover carrier vessels will pose any extraordinary challenges.

At this point in time, the accreditation process evaluates the current activity of a Member/CNCP with respect to the accreditation criteria. This approach to accreditation may need to be reconsidered if Members/CNCPs or observer service providers expand observer coverage into fisheries that were not covered as part of the accreditation process. For example, if a Member has been engaged exclusively in trawling within the SPRFMO Area, and has achieved accreditation with respect to their trawl fisheries, should that imply that observers could be deployed on squid jigging vessels without any additional evaluation? One potential consideration could be to explore the idea of fishery or gear-specific accreditations.

Accreditations are currently valid for a 5-year time period. For some Members, this time period will be expiring in January 2026. It would be prudent to begin thinking about what the renewal process for an accredited observer programme might entail. For example, an assessment of data quality and implementation of CMM 16 could be developed as part of the re-accreditation process.

Similarly, the Commission may want develop data quality criteria that could be used to continually assess whether observer collected data are meeting the objectives of the Commission and the needs of the Scientific Committee. Accreditation is an important first step, but continual development to ensure harmonization of the independent observer programmes, with respect to data collection, data quality, and coverage characteristics (e.g., representativeness) will be a continual challenge. Other RFMOs have made efforts to provide centralized training and refresher workshops for observers from different programmes. Such trainings could prove valuable for capacity building, information sharing, collaborative development of data standards and protocols, and to monitor and mitigate and potential institutional creep or divergence that can occur naturally when programmes evolve in isolation.

### **3. National programmes accredited under the SPRFMO Observer Programme**

The Secretariat through the Implementation Reports submitted under the Convention and CMM 10-2020 (CMS) requested Members and CNCPs to identify in which year they were intending to begin the accreditation process of their National Observer Programmes. The results are summarised in the table below.



Table 1: Currently Accredited SPRFMO Observer programmes and expected timelines for other programmes

Timeline for Accreditation	Member/CNCP
Currently accredited	Australia, Chile, New Zealand, Korea, Chinese Taipei
Accreditation in progress	CapMarine, China, Ecuador*, European Union*
Within the forthcoming year	Belize, Panama
Within the 2 forthcoming years	Cook Islands, Russian Federation
Within the 2-5 forthcoming years	
No plans to pursue accreditation	Cuba, Curaçao, Faroe Islands, Liberia, Peru, United States of America, Vanuatu

\*Accreditation process is extended across multiple years and will continue into 2023

Note that 2 additional Members/CNCPs have expressed an interest in seeking accreditation in 2023.

#### 4. List of Annexes

Annex 1 – CapMarine Accreditation Report

Annex 2 – China Accreditation Report