



**SPRFMO**  
South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

## FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Report

*25, 26, 27 & 30 January 2024*



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# 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

*Manta, Ecuador, 25, 26, 27 & 30 January 2024*

## FAC 11 – Report

### 1. Opening of the Meeting

#### *a. Meeting arrangements*

1. The Chairperson of the Finance and Administration Committee, Mr Jimmy Villavicencio (Ecuador), opened the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) and welcomed participants.
2. The list of participants is available as Annex 1 to this report.

#### *b. Adoption of the Agenda*

3. **The FAC adopted** the revised Meeting Agenda (FAC11-Doc01\_rev1) available as Annex 2 of this report.

#### *c. Meeting Documents*

4. **The FAC approved** the list of meeting documents (FAC11-Doc03) received in accordance with Rules of Procedure (RoP) 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6.
5. The Executive Secretary noted that all documents were available via the *Microsoft Teams* platform and additional revisions or working papers would be uploaded as they became available.
6. The FAC expressed gratitude to Ecuador for hosting the FAC meeting.
7. The rapporteur (Mr Jacques Chaumont) was appointed, and the United States provided support for minute taking. Interpretation was also provided for the meeting and the FAC was thankful to Ecuador for arranging for these services.

### 2. SPRFMO Report of Income

#### *a. Member contributions*

#### *b. Voluntary contributions*

8. In accordance with Financial Regulation 4.11, reporting on annual contributions from Members, the Secretariat presented FAC11-Doc05 detailing contributions received, and any investments and other income received including several voluntary contributions.
9. The Executive Secretary noted that voluntary contributions had been received from the European Union, China, and the United States, and the FAC thanked those Members for their voluntary contributions.
10. The Executive Secretary confirmed that although some Member contributions were paid late, no Members were in arrears by more than two years thus all Members were eligible to take part in the taking of decisions.
11. The Executive Secretary noted that there had been developments since the paper had been prepared. These included the receipt of the contribution payment from Chile. Chile noted that the timing for contributions did not align with their financial year and that this was the reason for the delay in payment. The Executive Secretary also noted that a payment from the Russian Federation was en-route, but, at the time of this meeting, the payment had not been received into the SPRFMO bank account. The Secretariat provided an update to the Report on Income during the meeting.
12. **The FAC noted** the SPRFMO Report of Income (FAC11-Doc05\_rev1).



### 3. SPRFMO Financial Reporting

#### *a. Financial Statements*

13. The Secretariat presented an overview of the 2022-23 Annual Financial Statements of the Commission (FAC11-Doc06).
14. The Executive Secretary noted that the Organisation's total income (at \$1,488,671) was slightly above the amount foreseen in the budget. He also noted that the budgeted expenses (at \$1,448,420) were less than foreseen in the budget; however, due to unbudgeted expenses (including the objection to the jack mackerel CMM), the Organisation recorded a deficit for the period of \$99,175 (FAC11-Doc06).
15. **The FAC recommended** the Commission accept these Annual Financial Statements.

#### *b. Auditor Report*

16. The Secretariat presented the Auditor's Report in accordance with Financial Regulations 9.7, 9.8 and 9.9. In the auditor's opinion, "*the accompanying special purpose financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Organisation as at 30 June 2023, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies as disclosed in Note 1 of the special purpose financial statements.*"
17. **The FAC recommended** that the Commission accept the Auditor's Report (FAC11-Doc06).

#### *c. Statement of Transfers of Appropriations and Write Offs*

18. **The FAC noted** that the SPRFMO Chairperson authorised the Executive Secretary to make two transfers, and under his own authority, the Executive Secretary made one further transfer (FAC11-Doc06.1). No other losses, stores, or other assets were written off for the Financial Year 2022-23.

#### *d. Accumulated Surplus Account*

19. In accordance with Financial Regulation 4.3, the FAC reviewed the amount available in the Accumulated Surplus Account (refer to Page 11, FAC11-Doc06). **The FAC noted** that the net amount available in the Accumulated Surplus Account, in excess of the three-month operating cost of the Organisation, was NZ\$ 216,632 as of 30 June 2023.
20. **The FAC noted** that according to Financial Regulation 4.5 the amount available in the Accumulated Surplus Account that is in excess of three-month operating costs should be returned to Members, unless otherwise decided by the Commission. In this context the FAC recalled the Commission's 2023 previous decision to draw \$251,908 from the account and noted that, as the budget was not able to be finalised during the FAC, any further use of the Accumulated Surplus Account should be considered by the Commission in that context.

#### *e. SPRFMO Contingency Fund*

21. In accordance with Annex 2 of the Financial Regulations, the Secretariat reported on the status of the Contingency Fund (FAC11-Doc06.2).
22. The FAC discussed the Secretariat's suggestion that the Contingency Fund is used to support expenses associated with restructuring the Secretariat. Some Members were concerned that this may not be an appropriate use of the Fund, noting that the purposes for which the Contingency Fund can be used are listed exhaustively in paragraph 1 of Annex 2 of the Financial Regulations.
23. **The FAC noted** that the level of the Contingency Fund was NZ\$ 189,327 (41% of the level determined in Annex 2 of the Financial Regulations). As the budget was not able to be finalised during the FAC, the annual amount used to rebuild the Contingency Fund should be considered by the Commission in that context.



#### *f. Status of Developing States Fund*

24. In accordance with Annex 1 of the Financial Regulations, the Secretariat presented the status of the Developing States Fund (FAC11-Doc06.3). The Secretariat explained the outcomes related to the various applications from Members to use the Developing States Fund in Financial Year 2023-24 to support participation in SPRFMO meetings. The Executive Secretary confirmed that, for the applications received on-time, one person per Member was able to be supported and that this had fully exhausted the available funds. The Secretariat also noted that there were some late applications for which travel support was unable to be provided, due to the funds being previously allocated.
25. The FAC was invited to make recommendations to the Commission regarding the proposed budget allocation of NZ\$ 35,000 for this Fund.
26. One Member (United States) commented that to date the Developing States Fund had only been utilised for travel expenses and recalled that Developing States are also able to apply for funds to support technical assistance and capacity building. The United States encouraged relevant Members to consider making applications to these funds if such assistance is needed.
27. **The FAC recommended** that the budget allocation for Category 9 – Developing States for the Financial Year 2024-25 be finalised through the adoption of the budget in the Commission.

#### *g. Status of Scientific Support Fund*

28. In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.4, the Secretariat presented the status of the Scientific Support Fund (FAC11-Doc06.4).
29. **The FAC noted** that in the Draft Budget for Financial Year 2024-25 (FAC11-Doc07), the proposed allocation for Scientific Support is NZ\$ 186,000.
30. Many Members expressed concern about the substantial amount of funding being requested for jack mackerel connectivity research as per the SC multi-annual workplan. The FAC agreed to seek additional explanation from the SC Chairperson during the Commission meeting as to why this research was considered necessary.
31. **The FAC recommended** that the Commission take a final decision on the proposed allocation for Scientific Support after having had the opportunity to receive additional information from the SC Chairperson.

## 4. Future Budgets and Contributions

#### *a. Draft Budget for financial year 2024-25 and forecast budget for financial year 2025-26*

32. In accordance with Convention Article 15.4 and Financial Regulation 2, the draft budget for the Financial Year 2024-25 and the forecast budget for the Financial Year 2025-26 were examined by the FAC (FAC11-Doc07). The draft budget was supported by two supplementary papers (FAC11-Doc07.1, FAC11-Doc07.2) respectively relating to the Secretariat's proposed travel plan and database development.
33. For the Financial Year 2024-25, the net total budget amount proposed by the Secretariat was NZ\$ 1,915,600, with a forecast budget for Financial Year 2025-26 providing for a net amount of NZ\$ 1,955,600.
34. Some Members brought up the possibility of adding costs associated with holding hybrid meetings into the draft budget. Many Members shared their views on this matter and generally considered the costs associated with holding hybrid meetings as high. To this point, some Members proposed the option of live streaming of meetings without online participation as a more cost-effective way to increase transparency and accessibility of meetings.
35. One Member expressed that learning from other RFMOs, in the case that the Chairperson came from a developing Member, their travel costs should be covered in the Commission budget, and if they came from a developed Member, that Member should cover their travel costs.
36. With regard to Spanish interpretation, some Members expressed that they would be unwilling to support this being included within the Commission budget.



37. One Member requested clarification on the inclusion of legal advice, and the Secretariat explained that there have been legal advice expenses in previous years, but it was included within Other Expenses, and is being separated out this year for transparency.
38. The Executive Secretary presented the supplementary papers relating to the Secretariat's proposed travel plan and provided a rationale for each travel item. Some Members brought up questions involving the travel costs document, and the Executive Secretary offered clarifications on how the estimated costs were calculated. A revised version was prepared and circulated (FAC11-Doc07.1\_rev1) that reduced the proposed amount (NZ\$ 157,500).
39. The Data Manager presented the supplementary paper on database development (FAC11-Doc07.2). He noted that the Secretariat had successfully transitioned to a new provider and that plans were being prepared for the next stage of improvements relating to supporting Member upload of information and the automation of regular reports/outputs further supporting informed decision making and research within the organisation. The new database provider and the Secretariat are keen to work with the newly formed Data and Information Working Group to ensure continuous enhancement and collaboration with Members.
40. The Executive Secretary prepared a Working Paper (COMM12-WP01) to support further discussions on the budget. This WP showed all the additional items coming from FAC-type proposals as well as other initiatives that might have a budgetary impact. WP01 also auto calculated the Contributions so that Members could conduct their own investigations into variations they consider could help with budgetary discussions.
41. Noting the outstanding issues associated with the possible staff restructure costs, Executive Secretary recruitment, staff regulations, and Spanish language support, **the FAC recommended** that the Commission continue working on the budget.

*b. Contributions for Financial Year 2024-25 and estimate for Financial Year 2025-26*

42. As per Financial Regulation 4.7, Member contributions have been calculated based on the budget formula adopted in the 6<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting and this year also consider CNCP contributions as other income (FAC11-Doc08).
43. The Executive Secretary noted that the schedule of contributions would need to be updated based on any revisions to the budget. **The FAC recommended the** Commission continue working on the schedule of contributions.

## 5. Matters Concerning the Financial Regulations

44. No papers were submitted under this agenda item.

## 6. Matters Concerning the Secretariat and the Staff Regulations

*a. Secretariat report on 2023 intersessional period activities*

45. The Secretariat presented the report (FAC11-Doc09\_rev1) on the intersessional activities of the Secretariat.
46. **The FAC noted** the report.

*b. Secretariat staff performance review summary*

47. The Executive Secretary presented FAC11-Doc10\_rev1, which intended to summarise the staff performance reviews. In a closed session, concerns were expressed with the lack of information presented in the paper, particularly concerning assessing staff performance. The Executive Secretary agreed to provide a revised version for consideration by Commission.





### *c. Secretariat Staffing Strategy*

48. The Executive Secretary presented FAC11-Doc11\_rev1 containing a Secretariat staffing strategy. The paper summarised suggestions made by the Staffing Consultation group that operated throughout 2023 and contains the results of a short survey conducted amongst the consultation group intended to gather views on the staffing of the Secretariat. Staff time estimates for current tasks were collated so that the Members have a better understanding of the functional areas supported by current staff resources. Various structural options were presented with consideration for the associated operational and financial implications.
49. The FAC discussed the staffing strategy in a closed session in which Member views on the importance of the various functions and roles were discussed. The Executive Secretary produced another revision of the paper, containing additional structural options as well as an assessment of impact on the 2024-25 budget and an estimate of ongoing savings/costs for each of the possible options.
50. **The FAC recommended** that the Commission consider staffing strategy further during its meeting.

### *d. Proposal on staff regulations*

51. Many Members raised questions and concerns on the proposed changes on staff regulations (COMM12-Prop01), including on compulsory retirement ages, matters relating to the conditions of general services staff, aligning several regulations with UN standards, and sharing of medical information of staff.
52. After a line-by-line discussion, the Secretariat produced a revision of its paper to clearly show which items were still open either due to discussions on principle or with consideration for associated budgetary impacts.
53. **The FAC recommended** that the Commission consider the proposed changes on staff regulations further during its meeting.

### *e. Recruitment of Executive Secretary (EU)*

54. **The FAC noted** that, should the Commission need to enter into a recruitment process this year, then there will be associated costs to support the recruitment process as well as potential costs for the installation of a new Executive Secretary.

## 7. Meetings of the Commission & Subsidiary Bodies

### *a. Date and Venue for 2025*

### *b. Potential hosting 2026 & 2027*

55. There were two offers to host the 2025 Annual Meeting, made by Panama and Chile.
56. The FAC expressed gratitude to Panama and Chile for their generous offers, and the two Members offered to bilaterally discuss the ordering of their hosting.
57. **The FAC requested** that the Members report back to the Commission concerning the outcomes of their discussion.
58. There were no indications of intent to host the 2027 Annual Meeting.

### *c. Scientific Committee Meeting 2024 and potential hosting 2025 & 2026*

59. The FAC recalled the Peruvian offer to host the Scientific Committees meeting in Lima, Peru. Peru informed the meeting that they were still finalising dates and the venue and would provide further information during the Commission meeting.
60. The FAC recalled that the Russian Federation had offered to host the 2025 SC meeting in St Petersburg, Russia.
61. The Faroe Islands offered to host the 2026 SC meeting and noted they were flexible.
62. The FAC expressed its gratitude to those Members who had offered to host the SC meetings.



## 8. Other Matters

### *a. SPRFMO 2nd Performance review (SEC)*

63. The Secretariat presented COMM12-Prop02\_rev1 proposing to amend Decision 06 to enable a focused performance review of SPRFMO. The proposal was based on the process set in place in 2018 for the first SPRFMO performance review, the suggestions made during COMM11, and discussions with the Chairperson of the first Review Panel.
64. Many Members expressed strong support for regular performance reviews. The European Union offered to support the review by way of a voluntary contribution, and the FAC warmly welcomed this announcement.
65. In response to discussions held at varying times the Secretariat provided two revised versions of its proposal.
66. **The FAC recommended** that the Commission consider the COMM12-Prop02\_rev2 **for further consideration**.

### *b. Proposed Decision regarding Spanish support in SPRFMO (ECU)*

67. Ecuador put forward its proposal on Spanish language support in SPRFMO (COMM12-Prop03).
68. Many Members expressed support for this proposal, acknowledging the potential benefits of facilitating the Spanish speakers' contributions during meetings. Some Members were concerned as they felt that supporting other languages was just as important.
69. The FAC Chairperson suggested that future hosts of SC meetings could consider voluntarily providing Spanish support as is done for the Annual Meeting. He also floated the idea of a fund being created for Spanish language support in SPRFMO which would be sponsored by contributions from Spanish speaking participants.
70. **The FAC forwarded** this proposal to the Commission for its consideration.

### *c. Proposed Decision regarding participation of Observers (ECU)*

71. Ecuador put forward its proposal regarding the participation of Observers in SPRFMO meetings (COMM12-Prop04). The purpose of the proposal is to introduce Observer fees for participants attending SPRFMO meetings, drawing inspiration from successful practices employed by other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).
72. Some Members supported this proposal citing the costs associated with hosting a meeting. Other Members were concerned about imposing a possible barrier to participation and its effect on transparency. During the discussion, additional rationale was requested as well as the effect on the Secretariat. Some Members supported the idea of fee-free access for the first two or three members of an Observer delegation.
73. Ecuador offered to produce a revised version of its proposal that would respond to the discussions and include an actual fee structure.
74. **The FAC forwarded** this proposal to the Commission for its consideration.

### *d. Office holders*

75. The FAC Chairperson expressed his appreciation for the support provided by Mr Andres Couve (Chile) in his role as FAC vice-chairperson. Chile confirmed that Mr Couve was available to continue to serve for another two years.
76. **The FAC agreed to recommend** that the Commission appoint Mr Couve as FAC vice-chairperson for a second term.
77. In the context of the budget discussions, two Members informed the FAC that they would be putting forward candidates for the position of Chairperson of the SC. The FAC thanked those Members for this information and deferred further discussion on the nominations to the Commission meeting.

## 9. Adoption of the Report

78. **The FAC11 adopted its meeting report on 30 January 2024 at 14:23 hrs.**



## 10. Meeting Close

79. The FAC11 meeting was closed on 30 January 2024 at 14:24 hrs.



# 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

*Manta, Ecuador, 25, 26, 27 & 30 January 2024*

## ANNEX 1 – List of Participants

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# 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

*Manta, Ecuador, 25, 26, 27 & 30 January 2024*

## ANNEX 2 – FAC11 Meeting Agenda

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING
  - a. Meeting Arrangements
  - b. Adoption of the Agenda
  - c. Meeting Documents
2. SPRFMO REPORT OF INCOME
  - a. Member contributions
  - b. Voluntary contributions
3. SPRFMO FINANCIAL REPORTING
  - a. Financial Statements
  - b. Auditor Report
  - c. Statements transfers of appropriations and write offs
  - d. Accumulated Surplus Account
  - e. SPRFMO Contingency Fund
  - f. Status of the Developing States Fund
  - g. Status of the Scientific Support Fund
4. FUTURE BUDGETS AND CONTRIBUTIONS
  - a. Draft Budget for financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26
  - b. Contributions for financial years 2024-25 and estimate for 2025-26
5. MATTERS CONCERNING THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS
6. MATTERS CONCERNING THE SECRETARIAT & THE STAFF REGULATIONS
  - a. Secretariat report on intersessional activities
  - b. Staff performance review summary
  - c. Secretariat staff strategy
  - d. Proposal on staff regulations
  - e. Recruitment of Executive Secretary (EU)
7. MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION & SUBSIDIARY BODIES
  - a. Date and Venue for 2025
  - b. Potential hosting 2026 & 2027
  - c. Scientific Committee 2024 and potential hosting 2025 & 2026
8. OTHER MATTERS
  - a. SPRFMO 2nd Performance review (SEC)
  - b. Proposed Decision regarding Spanish support in SPRFMO (ECU)
  - c. Proposed Decision regarding participation of Observers (ECU)
  - d. Office holders
9. ADOPTION OF THE FAC REPORT
10. CLOSE OF MEETING