

3rd Meeting of the Scientific Committee

Port Vila, Vanuatu
28 September - 3 October 2015

SC-03-29

Proposal for the establishment of an Observer Programme Working Group *Chile*

Summary for the Report:

A proposal for the establishment of the an Observer Programme Working Group (OPWG) was presented by the Chilean Delegation and discussed during the Scientific Committee, in order to recommend its development in the upcoming Commission Meeting. The aim of the OPWG is to develop a draft of the SPRFMO Observer Programme intersessionally, in accordance with the requirements founded by the Article 28 of the Convention and by the provisions of CMM 3.02 “Standards for the Collection, Reporting, Verification and exchange of Data”.

1. Background

The SPRFMO Convention acknowledges the importance of the best scientific evidence available to support the conservation and management decisions for fisheries. In this context, a high priority should be assigned to undertake research and data collection in order to improve scientific and technical knowledge of fisheries, including their interaction with the ecosystem.

Consequently, the SPRFMO has recognized the importance of high quality standards by adopting guidelines to collect and report relevant fisheries data, even on a voluntary basis when the Convention was under development. After the Convention came into force in 2012, these guidelines became binding through the Conservation and Management Measure on Standards for the Collection, Reporting, Verification and Exchange of Data (current CMM 3.02).

In this context, the role that properly implemented observer programmes have played to obtain the required information has been globally recognized. The use of these programmes has supported the management and conservation of fisheries resources and marine ecosystems around the world.

Scientific observers can provide high quality data and, additionally through their work, observers can promote good communications between scientists, managers, RFMOs and fisheries users.

Taking into account the provisions of the Convention, particularly its Article 28, the Scientific Committee should, in coordination with the Compliance and Technical Committee, propose to the Commission the adoption of an Observer Programme, to collect verified catch and effort data, other scientific data and additional information related to the fishing activity in the Convention Area, and its impacts on the marine environment.

To undertake this task, the provision of CMM 3.02 should be taken into consideration, including the information and data to be collected (see Annex 7), data provision, annual reporting, and maintenance of confidentiality.

2. Development of an Observer Programme

According to the target date established in Article 28 of the Convention, the Commission shall establish an observer programme in 2015 (or other agreed period), to collect data and information related to fishing activity in the Convention Area, and its impacts on the marine environment. The information collected by this programme shall be used to support the functions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, including the Scientific Committee and the Compliance and Technical Committee, and the programme shall be coordinated by the Secretariat of the Commission.

When developing the programme, the Commission shall take into account advice from the Scientific Committee and Compliance and Technical Committees, and when operating, the programme shall perform in accordance with standards, rules and procedures developed by the Commission.

Consistent with the above, it is deemed appropriate the establishment of an Observer Programme Working Group, involving the participation of the Scientific Committee and Compliance and Technical Committees, to develop an observer programme according to the needs of this organization.

3. Proposal for the establishment and functions of an Observer Programme Working Group (OPWG)

In order to develop the SPRFMO Observer Programme, the Scientific Committee should give its advice to the Commission, to fulfill the provisions of Article 28 of the Convention, taking also into account CMM 3.02.

To achieve this, the Scientific Committee could recommend the Commission the establishment of the OPWG and the designation of its chair. The Scientific Committee could discuss the topics to be addressed intersessionally by the OPWG, including the following:

- a. Definition of the SPRFMO Observer Programme;
- b. Objectives of the SPRFMO Observer Programme;
- c. Information and data to be collected;
- d. Level of coverage for different fishery resources;
- e. Management of the SPRFMO Observer Programme;
- f. Funding of the SPRFMO Observer Programme;
- g. Alternatives and accreditation of observer providers;
- h. Observer's qualification, training, certification, and debriefing;
- i. Standards of observer behavior;
- j. Data transmission from sea;
- k. Cross observation in the SPRFMO Area;
- l. Coordination with other Regional, Sub-regional and National Observer Programmes;
- m. Fisheries research support between State Members;
- n. Equipment that should be provided to the SPRFMO Observers;
- o. Development of Observer Manuals and Species Identification Guides;
- p. Requirements concerning observers on board for vessels operating in the SPRFMO Area, including accommodation, safe conditions, and full access to and use of relevant facilities and equipment;
- q. Annual reporting of Member and Cooperating Non Contracting Parties on the implementation of the Observer Programme;
- r. Confidentiality of the data.