

South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

Preparatory Conference for the Commission of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

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Functions and staffing of the Secretariat

Introduction

This paper provides background information for the Preparatory Conference to assist in forming views on the staffing requirements of the Secretariat. It reviews the provisions of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean Convention) that have implications for the Secretariat, and the relevant decisions made during the International Consultations that may be relevant to staffing decisions when the Secretariat is established.

The Preparatory Conference is likely to make other recommendations relating to the functioning of the Secretariat.

The Convention

Article 6 of the Convention provides that there shall be a Secretariat and Article 14 provides that the functions of the Secretariat will be delegated to it by the Commission. The Secretariat is required to be cost effective, and the setting up and the functioning of the Secretariat shall, where appropriate, take into account the capacity of existing regional institutions to perform certain technical secretariat functions and more specifically the availability of services under contractual arrangement.

The Convention provides the following specific functions for the Executive Secretary:

- Article 15. Submission of a draft of the annual budget for the two succeeding financial years to each member of the Commission together with a schedule of contributions and notification of members of the Commission of their contributions due as calculated under the formula adopted by the Commission.
- Article 17. Communication of matters concerning the implementation of decisions among members of the Commission.
- Article 35. Receipt of proposals for amendments to the Convention and communication of them among members of the Commission.

- Annex II. Maintenance of a list of experts in the field of fisheries similar to that maintained by the FAO pursuant to Annex VIII, Article 2 of the 1982 Convention and communication of matters relating to the review Panel.

Decisions affecting the Secretariat made during the International Consultations

Decisions made during the International Consultations that determined the work of the Interim Secretariat will not necessarily carry over into roles for the Secretariat, however those decisions are worth examining because the circumstances that led to them may remain in place. These decisions include the basic role of the Interim Secretariat determined at the time it was established; the data management role implied by the Data Standards, the maintenance of geospatial data implied in the Interim Benthic Assessment; and the data and information collation required by the 2007 Interim Management Measures, the 2009 Revised Interim Measures for Pelagic Fishing, and the 2009 Interim Measures for Deepwater Gillnets.

Establishment of the Interim Secretariat

The roles of the Interim Secretariat set out in the Report of the 3rd meeting of the International Consultations Reñaca Meeting are:

- (a) Data Management - The receipt, compilation, storage and dissemination (where appropriate) of data submitted by the Participants;
- (b) Document Management - The receipt, storage and dissemination of reports and documents submitted by the Participants;
- (c) Meetings - Providing assistance to the relevant host in organising meetings of the Consultations and of subsidiary bodies of the Consultations;
- (d) Website - The management of the contents of the SPRFMO website.

Implicit in meeting these roles is that the Interim Secretariat has access to normal administrative services including those for accommodation, financial and personnel management.

Data Standards and Interim measures adopted by the International Consultations

The Data Standards and Interim measures provide a detailed prescription for a wide range and large volume of data describing fishing vessels, fishing operations and geospatial features on the seabed that are to be managed by the Interim Secretariat. A significant part of the work of the Interim Secretariat over the past two years has been devoted to the development of specifications, supervision of developmental work, and testing of a SPRFMO fishery database to store and provide a useful retrieval system for these data.

The Interim Secretariat has been expected produce a range of reports for the Plenary and Working Groups mostly related to the Interim measures or data standards.

Roles provided by existing regional institutions or by contracting

The use of existing regional institutions providing services to fulfil the roles of the Secretariat is constrained by there being no other regional institutions based in New Zealand. When it began scoping SPRFMO's database requirements, the Interim Secretariat considered the possibility of integrating its requirements with those of another existing regional organisation (such as an organisation based in Australia or the wider South Pacific). However, it was concluded that this

would not be practical given that the existing systems were generally scaled to match their own needs, and because of significant differences in data standards and specifications between different organisations.

On the other hand, there is considerable scope for having some Secretariat services provided under contract by external service providers. For example, the Interim Secretariat currently purchases services from the New Zealand Ministry of Fisheries including financial management, legal advice and accommodation. Other external contractors provide services such as the maintenance of computer hardware, software and the local area network, web site hosting and enhancement, and development and hosting of the SPRFMO fisheries database. In the future, use of contracting arrangements such as these could allow the Secretariat to keep permanent staff numbers to a minimum. Of course, there is still a need for sufficient capacity within a Secretariat to administer its contracts effectively.

Staff to fulfil functions

In line with the Convention's provision that the Secretariat is required to be cost efficient, a minimum staffing is proposed here for the Secretariat. The Secretariat will take over the functions of the Interim Secretariat, which has operated since 2007 with a staff of two. However, there will inevitably be additional work requirements for the Secretariat than for the Interim Secretariat. First, the Interim Secretariat has operated on a shoestring basis. For example, it has minimal office management systems, does not yet have to process to any extent the voluminous fisheries data that are starting to arrive, and has had minimal reporting to do for plenary meetings and two working groups.

The permanent Secretariat should have good office systems, and will have more work to do in processing data and making reports available to participants, as well as servicing additional subsidiary bodies such as the Compliance and technical Committee, the Finance and Administration Committee, and at least the Eastern Sub-regional Management Committee.

The table below illustrates the diversity of approaches to staffing in some other RFMOs that publish staffing information on their websites.

Number of staff including Executive Secretary	
CCSBT	4
IATTC	62
ICCAT	28
NAFO	6
NEAFC	3
WCPFC	12

The large variation in staff numbers reflects differences in the approach to carrying out functions. The largest staff, that of the IATTC, carries out most of the data collection, an active biological research program, stock assessment research, manage an observer program and provide detailed reporting on compliance. Similarly, ICCAT has significant science and data processing roles. At the other extreme CCSBT, NAFO, and NEAFC focus much more on secretarial functions with science and data roles provided entirely by scientific committee, or in the case of NAFO and NEAFC, a separate scientific organisation.

Taking account of the considerations above, the proposed initial Secretariat staffing is:

Executive Secretary

- Overall responsibility for work of the Secretariat

Administration officer

- Routine correspondence, book keeping, filing, office equipment and supplies, web site updates, etc

Data Manager plus Data assistant

- Responsible for data management systems and data reporting
- Checking and input of data

Functions such as supervising work that is provided contractually, and supporting meetings of the Plenary and Committees would have to be distributed among staff members, all of whom would need to be able to carry out other functions competently. These proposed minimal staffing levels would be able to provide basic support for the Commission and if necessary, the Commission could augment the number of roles in the Secretariat if it requires additional support from its staff.