

2019 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION

Secretariat

Paragraph 1 of Article 29 of the **Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean** provides that *“The Commission shall publish an annual report, which shall include details of decisions taken by the Commission to achieve the objective of this Convention. The report shall also provide information on actions taken by the Commission in response to any recommendations from the General Assembly of the United Nations or the FAO.”*

1. Membership

In March 2019, the SPRFMO Commission had fifteen Members: Australia, Republic of Chile, People's Republic of China, Cook Islands, Republic of Cuba, Republic of Ecuador, European Union, Kingdom of Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Republic of Peru, Russian Federation, Chinese Taipei, United States of America, and the Republic of Vanuatu.

In addition, four countries held the status of Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CNCs): Republic of Colombia, Curaçao, Republic of Liberia and the Republic of Panama.

2. Outcomes from the 2019 Commission Meeting

The 7th Meeting of the Commission (COMM7) of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation took place from 23 to 27 January 2019, in The Hague, Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Over 150 participants (from the 15 SPRFMO Members, 4 CNCs, 2 IGOs, 5 NGOs along with invited experts) reviewed and made recommendations concerning the preceding meetings of the subsidiary bodies, including the 6th Scientific Committee (SC6, held in September 2018), the 6th Compliance and Technical Committee (CTC6, held in January 2019) and the con-current 6th Finance and Administration Committee (FAC6), as well as 20 proposals put forward and, finally, considered and developed plans for addressing the recommendations contained in the 1st SPRFMO Performance Review Report.

2.1. Subsidiary Bodies

The report¹ of the 6th Scientific Committee was presented, and the SC Chairperson reviewed progress made on assessments and requirements for future data collection for Jack mackerel, deepwater, and squid fisheries, ecosystem approaches on marine management and exploratory fishing, as well as progress on reviewing the Observer Programme. The ecosystem approach has been reinforced with the creation of the Habitat Definition, Description and Monitoring Working Group providing environmental indicators associated to the habitat of the main commercial resources exploited in the SPRFMO area to complement decision making of fisheries management. The SC Chairperson summarised the various SC recommendations for the Commission, noting that management strategies should be re-evaluated annually to account for new challenges and data, and introduced a proposed SC multi-annual workplan. Many Members commended the SC for the quality of its work and advice, as well as its comprehensive report, and supported the proposed workplan.

¹ <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/2018-SC6/SPRFMO-SC6-Report.pdf>



The report² of the 6th Compliance and Technical Committee was presented by the CTC Chairperson, noting an overall improvement among Members in compliance issues, as well as a decrease in priority non-compliance; the provisional compliance report was also presented. The CTC Chairperson reported on the discussions held concerning the SPRFMO IUU Vessel list and presented the provisional IUU Vessel List along with the recommendation that all vessels on the 2018 IUU Vessel List remain on the list. The CTC also recommended that all four applications for CNCP status be accepted.

The Chairperson of the 6th Finance and Administration Committee presented the FAC6 report³ including recommendations to accept the Annual Financial Statements and the associated Auditors Report. FAC6 noted that budgetary constraints were a continuing challenge and recommended the amendments proposed to the Staff Regulations (incorporating a code of ethics and conflict resolution procedure) along with new administrative policies (Disaster Recovery Plan and Mobile Device Acceptable Use). FAC6 also recommended amendments to the Financial Regulations regarding the Contingency Fund, the Developing States Fund and Travel Support Policy. The 2019/20 budget of NZ\$ 1,172,000 (≈ USD\$ 790,000) was adopted along with the associated Member contributions with individual Member contribution increases being capped at 15%. China also provided as a voluntary contribution USD\$ 20,000 towards the Jumbo Flying Squid sampling for genetic studies, while the European Union reported a commitment of \$150,000 EUR (≈ USD\$ 168,000) for the implementation of the accreditation process of the Observer Programme. Finally, the FAC was grateful for bids from Members to host future meetings and accepted Vanuatu offer to host the 2020 Annual meeting, with Peru hosting the 2021 meeting. The meeting also welcomed Cuba's offer to host the 2019 Scientific Committee meeting, with New Zealand hosting the 2020 SC meeting.

2.2. Decisions taken by the Commission to achieve the objective of the SPRFMO Convention

COMM7 amended 10 Conservation and Management Measures including:

- CMM 01-2019: *Trachurus murphyi*; where catches of *Trachurus murphyi* in 2019 throughout the range of the stock should not exceed 591,000 tonnes as per advice of the SPRFMO Scientific Committee.
- CMM 03-2019: Bottom Fishing in the SPRFMO Convention Area; where a comprehensive set of rules based on a spatial management approach ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable use of deepsea fishery resources have been adopted.
- CMM 04-2019: Establishing a List of Vessels Presumed to have Carried Out IUU Fishing Activities in the SPRFMO Convention Area; where provisions on action to be taken against nationals involved in IUU, without prejudice to the primacy of the responsibility of the Flag State have been included.
- CMM 05-2019: Establishment of the Commission Record of Vessels Authorised to Fish in the SPRFMO Convention Area; where the authorisation entry on the SPRFMO Record of Vessels shall cease to be valid when there are changes in any of the relevant vessel details.
- CMM 07-2019: Minimum Standards of Inspection in Port; improving its consistency with the FAO PSMA, reinforcing the fight against IUU fishing, and providing further mechanisms of cooperation amongst port States.
- CMM 08-2019: Gillnets in the SPRFMO Convention Area; where, in cases of gillnets being accidentally lost and/or abandoned overboard from the vessel, Members and CNCPs report the date, time, position and length of gillnets lost as soon as possible and within 48 hours of the gear being lost.
- CMM 10-2019: Establishment of a Compliance and Monitoring Scheme in the SPRFMO Convention Area; where the evaluation assessing Members' and CNCPs' compliance shall cover the period from 1 October till 30 September of the year preceding the annual meeting.
- CMM 13-2019: Management of New and Exploratory Fisheries in the SPRFMO Convention Area; The amendments adopted are consequential amendments to the bottom fishing CMM 03-2019. The amendments better define "exploratory fishery", and update paragraph cross referencing.

² <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/0-2019-Annual-Meeting/CTC-6/final-report/SPRFMO-CTC6Report.pdf>

³ <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/0-2019-Annual-Meeting/FAC-6/FAC6-Meeting-Report-rev2-edited-ADOPTED-FORMATED.pdf>



- CMM 14b-2019: Exploratory Potting Fishery in the SPRFMO Convention Area; where a more conservative lobster and crab (combined) total allowable catch (TAC) for the first fishing year has been set based on the advice of the Scientific Committee at its annual meeting. and,
- CMM 16-2019: Establishing the SPRFMO Observer Programme, fulfilling the provisions of Article 28 of the SPRFMO Convention, including accreditation of observer programmes, rights and duties of observers, captains and crew, and provisions for observer deployment and exchange.

Regarding the Observer Programme, the Commission adopted a “Call for Proposals for a SPRFMO Observer Programme Accreditation Evaluator” and a “Process for Tender Evaluation of the SPRFMO Observer Programme Accreditation Evaluator”.

In addition, COMM7 adopted 4 new CMMs being:

- CMM 03a-2019: Deepwater Species in the SPRFMO Convention Area; which together with CMM 03-2019 (Bottom fishing) sets precautionary catch limits for orange roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*) based on advice from Scientific Committee consistent with Article 22(1) of the Convention.
- CMM 14a-2019: Exploratory Fishing for Toothfish by New Zealand-Flagged vessels in the SPRFMO Convention Area; obtaining scientific data to support the bathymetry mapping of the fishable area, documenting the spatial distribution, catch rates, and relative abundance of Antarctic and Patagonian toothfish, characterise the biology, life history and spawning dynamics of toothfish in the area, implementing a tagging programme, collecting information on distribution, relative abundance, and life history of bycatch and other associated or dependent species among the main actions in support of a robust Fisheries Operation and Data Collection Plan.
- CMM 14c-2019: Exploratory Fishing for Toothfish by EU vessels in the SPRFMO Convention Area on a precautionary and gradual basis according to the best available science to further explore, inter alia, the presence and distribution of toothfish in the SPRFMO Convention Area, collecting and providing information and data towards the sustainable management of potential toothfish stocks in specific, data-poor zones of the Convention Area, providing occurrence information on marine mammals, seabirds, turtles, sharks, skates and rays and other species of concern assessing the long term potential for a toothfish fishery in specific zones of the Convention Area for the purpose of providing regular fishery data to the Scientific Committee; and,
- CMM 17-2019: Fishing Gear and Marine Plastic in the SPRFMO Convention Area which takes into account international best practices on the retrieval of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, marine plastic pollution and other marine pollution to protect the marine ecosystems in the south Pacific.

The report⁴ of the 1st SPRFMO Performance Review was presented by the Chairperson of the SPRFMO Review Panel. The report commended the:

- management of the jack mackerel fishery;
- ongoing regular review and amendment of the Commission’s data standards;
- Commission’s respect for and willingness to act upon the advice of its SC;
- number of substantive CMMs adopted and the efforts to ensure CMM development follows best-practice;
- work undertaken thus far to minimise bycatch of seabirds;
- framework for new and exploratory fisheries;
- recognition that compliance issues are integral to the effective functioning of the Commission;
- for adoption of a Port Inspection regime in 2014 and its further refinement in 2017;
- impressive suite of MCS measures adopted by the Commission in its first six years of operation;

⁴ <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Basic-Documents/Convention-and-Final-Act/2018-SPRFMO-Performance-Review/2018-12-01-REPORT-SPRFMO-PERFORMANCE-REVIEW-FINAL.pdf>



- Secretariat for the work that it has done thus far to implement the MCS measures and for its work to develop a new SPRFMO website;
- use of the Permanent Court of Arbitration as the venue and provider for the Article 17 review panel process;

The report also acknowledged:

- the scientific work being undertaken to develop assessments for deepwater stocks particularly (Orange roughy) and Squid;
- the efforts being undertaken to systematically build information enough to undertake assessments for all deepwater stocks;
- the effectiveness of the consensus-first/vote-later approach used in the SPRFMO Convention;
- that the Article 17 review panel process is a point of difference between SPRFMO and most other RFMOs and the effectiveness of the Article 17 review panel process in resolving disagreement between Members and in progressing the long-term resolution of disputes;
- the open and transparent processes adopted by the Commission and its subsidiary bodies;
- that SPRFMO decisions, scientific advice, and other relevant materials are made publicly available in a timely fashion; and that the SPRFMO website contains up to date information which is accessible and user friendly;
- that cooperation with other international organisations can be advantageous for SPRFMO and that increasing the cooperation with neighbouring and overlapping RFMOs can bring direct benefits to the organisation;
- that the Commission could do more to address some of the capacity needs of Members and CNCPs;
- that Members and CNCPs pay their contributions on time and that this is of great assistance in ensuring the smooth operation of the organisation's finances;
- that the 2020 review of the budget formula needs to take into account the durability of the formula so that the necessary work of the organisation drives the level of budget, rather than the level of individual contributions; and,
- the importance of the Secretariat providing support to the Chair of the Commission and subsidiary bodies not only at meetings, but also during the intersessional period.

The Commission and its subsidiary bodies also provided responses to the key findings and recommendations made by the review panel who conducted the 1st SPRFMO Performance Review.

2.3. International Cooperation

The Commission agreed to extend the arrangement between CCAMLR and SPRFMO reinforcing the cooperation on toothfish tagging research and the Catch Documentation Scheme, providing reciprocal links to each other's IUU vessel list and developing a scientific observer programme knowledge exchange. Furthermore, the Commission adopted new MoUs with the Permanent Commission of the South Pacific (CPPS) and the Network against IUU fishing of Latin American Countries establishing cooperation on exchanging data and scientific information and promoting actions to strength regional capacities to fight against IUU fishing.

The Commission instructed the Secretariat to enter into a partnership agreement with FIRMS to disseminate fisheries available data and to continue engagement with the ABNJ Process.

The Commission also decided to prioritise enhancing cooperation with the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).

2.4. Office Holders

The Commission expressed appreciation for the commendable and efficient leadership of the current Commission Chairperson and re-elected, by acclaim, Mr. Osvaldo Urrutia, from Chile, for a further two-year period.



The Commission also elected Ms. Kate Sanderson, Faroe Islands, as the Vice Chairperson of the Commission. Mr. Andrew Wright, New Zealand, will continue to serve as the CTC Chairperson, with Ms. Kerrie Robertson, Australia, chairing the FAC. The SC Chairperson Dr. James Ianelli, United States of America, will also continue to serve in his position. The Commission further commended and applauded the excellent work by the Secretariat and Executive Secretary Dr. Sebastian Rodriguez Alfaro in his first Commission Meeting.

The full report of the Commission and all related documents are available on the SPRFMO website at www.sprfmo.int.

3. Actions taken by the Commission in response to any recommendations from the General Assembly of the United Nations or the FAO

In 2019, the Commission adopted additional references to recommendations of the UNGA and FAO, such as the ones addressing the needs to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds affirmed at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, through the adoption of paragraph 13(g) of the “Our ocean, our future: call for action” declaration. Furthermore, the 2019 Commission meeting addressed the following areas in response to UN or FAO recommendations. These areas build upon current initiatives such as the CMMs developments, where amendments to align or better implement such UN or FAO recommendations are adopted or through the participation of SPRFMO representatives in projects and/or international meetings to provide feedback both to the Commission on the UN and FAO developments and at the same time reassuring the international community that decisions taken by the Commission addressed the objectives of the SPRFMO Convention.

3.1. FAO themes:

- Code of conduct for responsible fishing;
- SDGs esp. SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”;
- PSMA, Global Record, Transshipment activities & IUU estimation;
- Cooperation with RFMOs, RFBs and RSN;
- Climate change;
- Fishing gear;
- Bycatch (including marine mammal);
- Evidence-based decision-making.

3.2. UNGA themes:

- Marine debris, plastics and microplastics;
- Impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems;
- Long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks.

3.3. UNEP themes

- Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ project);
- Regional Seas Programme and Action Plans;
- Sustainable Ocean Initiative.

3.4. UNFCCC themes

- Climate change.