



Nuku'alofa, Tonga  
13 – 21 August 2025

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**Updates on the Future Operations of the SC**

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**WCPFC- SC21-GN-IP-04**

**SC Chair**

The Commission at WCPFC20 requested that the Secretariat, SC Chair, SC Vice-Chair, SC Convenors, TCC Chair, and TCC Vice-Chair further explore and consider options discussed at SC19 and TCC19 relating to addressing time challenges in the SC review of WCPFC stock assessment inputs and report the intersessional discussions to WCPFC21 for its consideration. SC19 recommended that the options outlined in the Table to Attachment H ([SC19 Summary Report](#)) be further explored by the Secretariat, SC Chair, Vice-Chair and Convenors in order to develop recommendations for improving the structure and functioning of the SC, to be presented to SC20.

SC20 discussed the options outlined during SC19 and agreed to number of recommendations for continued improvements to the operation of SC ([SC20 Summary Report, Attachment H](#)). The SC21 Chair provided the following updates in **Table 1** below, based on discussions and decisions at SC21.

**Table1.** Updates from SC21. List of challenges and options from SC19 including updates on additional work undertaken and additional SC20 suggestions – taken from SC20 Report from ISG-02: Future Operations of SC.

Challenge	Options from SC19	Work Undertaken or Ongoing since SC19	SC20 Suggestions	SC21 Updates
<b>1. Options to alleviate time constraint challenges for SSP</b>				
Period over which the assessment and related work done by the SSP is undertaken.	Bring forward the deadline of data submission.	Some CCMs have voluntarily submitted their scientific data earlier than the annual deadline of 30 April.	Encourage CCMs that are able to do so to submit their scientific data earlier than the annual deadline of 30 April.	
	More frequent data submissions (e.g., quarterly) and more streamline data submission (using better formats).		<p>More frequent data submissions - data provision within 30 days following the end of a trip &amp; after every transshipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some members were not in support of more frequent data submissions</li> </ul> <p><i>Related recommendation from ST Theme:</i> Recommendation for SPC to pursue options for standardization of data reporting and report back to SC20</p>	SC21 supported the development of a standardized data reporting mechanism by the SSP to enhance the efficiency of uploading data products required under the SciData guidelines. SC21 encouraged CCMs to work with the SSP as it prepares revised templates for consideration at TCC22 with the understanding that there may be several options that may offer flexibility to CCMs

	Swap dates of TCC and SC.	<p>No specific recommendation from SC19</p> <p>Discussions during SC19: May not be possible due to constraints imposed by existing schedule of other RFMO meetings as well as associated challenges in changing the current compliance monitoring schedules.</p>		
	Explore the option of moving the SC to a later date by identifying a window of time that is suitable for all CCMs.	Secretariat and the SSP are continuing to explore options for adjusting SC's meeting dates with other t-RFMOs.		
Level of work undertaken by SSP	Fewer assessments.	SC19 did not see this as a viable option as the review of assessments for the key target species, together with co-occurring species, is a principal remit of the Commission's work.		

	2-year assessment period.	<p>No specific recommendations from SC19</p> <p>Discussions during SC19: Without an increase in overall staffing levels, would increase the workload for SSP scientists.</p>		SC21 recommended moving data-moderate billfish assessments like Southwest Pacific swordfish and striped marlin to a two-year approach, similar to the shark assessments.
	Lengthen the stock assessment cycle (i.e., the number of years between when an assessment is undertaken for each stock).	<p>No specific recommendations from SC19</p> <p>Discussions during SC19: Might not be tenable for short-lived species (e.g. skipjack tuna). Delay in assessment may result in delay in taking appropriate management actions.</p>		Discussion in ISG-02 re: potential to revise the assessment schedule (e.g. BET/YFT on a 4-year assessment cycle) – as well as the potential development of a stock assessment peer review schedule. Further proposals on a revised stock assessment and associated review schedule will be presented for further discussion at SC22.
	Use of simpler ‘updated’ assessments only using new data.	<p>No recommendation from SC19, as no consensus could be reached:</p> <p>Several CCMs considered it was essential to simplify the assessments for any stocks for which there are management procedures, noting that with management procedures in place, the stock assessments will no longer be the basis for management</p>	Several members reiterated their views from SC19 that it will be essential to simplify the assessments for stocks for which there are management procedures in place.	

		Other CCMs did not see this as a viable option as the stock assessments form a critical component of the monitoring strategy for the Commission and the assessment models are not yet mature enough. There is a need for scientific rigor by using the best assessment models so that SC can provide the best scientific advice to the Commission.		
	Smaller set of axes in the grid of uncertainty used in stock assessments.	SC19 did not see this as a viable option as it is important that the full grid of uncertainties is explored by the assessment models. This is required for management, such as monitoring the probability of breaching a limit reference point.		
Resources available to SSP for undertaking its workM	More SSP staffing resources (e.g., 5 full-time assessment scientists, with one assessment scientist dedicated to each key species, and data analysis support).	Additional budget approved at WCPFC20 for additional stock assessment services in 2024. Will likely alleviate some capacity challenges in the 2025 assessment cycle.		WCPFC20 agreed to increase the SSP's budget to support four full-time assessment scientists. SPC has hired one additional assessment scientist.

	More computing power.	<p>No specific recommendations from SC19</p> <p>SC19 Discussions: Would require increase in WCPFC budget for SPC-OFP</p>		
	Better use of SPC alumni.	<p>No specific recommendations from SC19</p> <p>SC19 Discussions: Would require in-kind commitment from CCMs and may increase project management load for SSP</p>		
	Better resources and processes to allow for more input by CCM scientists into development of assessment models and other inputs.	<p>No specific recommendations from SC19</p> <p>SC19 Discussions: Would require in-kind commitment from CCMs and may increase project management load for SSP</p>		<p>Two assessments presented to SC21 included collaboration with CCM stock assessment scientists</p> <p>Additional collaboration on skipjack CPUE for effort creep, recalculation of management procedures and tagging efforts through the PTPP.</p>
<b>2. Options to further streamline the functions of SC</b>				

Challenge	Options from SC19	Work Undertaken or Ongoing since SC19	SC20 Suggestions	SC21 Updates
Rationalize SC Functions	SC19 recommended that the Commission consider reducing the length of SC to 7 days in 2024. The length of future SC meetings should be further considered following the 7-day SC20, particularly considering the workload for subsequent SC meetings.	<p>SC20 was reduced to 7 meeting days.</p> <p>Secretariat &amp; SC Chair developed guidelines to assist SC Theme Convenors in developing clear and concise SC recommendations (<a href="#">SC20-GN-IP-04</a>), to ensure that SC recommendations are effectively taken up by TCC and the Commission.</p>	<p>Update guidelines for SC Chair and Theme Convenors (<a href="#">SC13-GN-IP-03</a>) to clarify criteria for theme convenors to consider papers that have been submitted.</p> <p>Request Secretariat to develop a process to submit all papers through the WCPFC website - to further streamline paper submission process and allow for greater organization and tracking of submissions by the theme convenors and Secretariat.</p> <p>Clarify who can submit WPs (e.g. including Observers? Or limited only to CCMs, Secretariat and IGOs?).</p>	<p>All relevant SC guidelines and operation-related documents, including: 1) Guidance on Paper Submission, including eligibility to submit papers; 2) Template for Project Proposals; and 3) Guidelines for the SC Chair and Theme Convenors – have been compiled in SC21-2025/GN-WP-03, which will be posted on the “Key Documents” portion of the website when adopted by SC21.</p> <p>The Secretariat has developed a process to submit papers through WCPFC website, which was trialed as SC21. This website will continue to be refined and modified for continued use for document submission during SC22 and beyond.</p> <p>SC21 adopted a stock assessment template to ensure consistent reporting of stock status and management advice.</p>

<p>Time constraints for Theme Convenors &amp; CCMs to review papers for SC discussion</p>		<p>Secretariat improvements to WCPFC Meeting webpage designed to support CCMs' participation in SC discussions.</p>	<p>Update paper submission deadline (e.g. all non-SPC papers or all apers other than new stock assessments or MSE analyses) due 30 days in advance of the meeting to provide additional time for theme convenors and members to review</p> <p>Modify SC Agenda to allow for rotating schedule of agenda items for EB theme (e.g. to focus on priority work of the commission)</p> <p>Recommend the Commission consider for future adoption of CMMs the need to limit unnecessary SC consideration of CMMs/provisions in CMMs.</p>	<p>Paper submission has been updated to reflect the following deadlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper title, a preliminary abstract, and a justification 1–50 days before the start of the SC</li> <li>• Full papers –30 days before the start of the SC</li> <li>• Specific SSP papers (papers for SA and MSE)–18 days before the start of the SC</li> <li>• Annual Report –Part 1–No later than 7 July each year</li> </ul> <p>SC21 agenda was modified to reflect review of cetacean and elasmobranch CMMs in 2025 – seabirds and sea turtle CMMs will be reviewed in 2026 during SC22 (seabirds was added to SC21 agenda at the request of the Commission)</p>
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## **Attachment 1**