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REGIONAL OBSERVER PROVIDER – COMMISSION CCFS PROCESS FLOW

WCPFC-TCC21-2025-17B

8 September 2025

Submitted by ROP-IWG Chair

Purpose

1. This paper provides the discussion paper that aims to support ROP-IWG participants in further reviewing and considering potential amendments to the pre-notification process adopted during WCPFC12.
2. It also provides updated information on the key points from the discussion on this paper at the ROPIWG6 meeting along with additional comments provided by CCMs on the proposed CCFS process flow to support ROP-IWG participant discussions.

Updated information

3. The following key points on the proposed process flow to streamline the transfer of information from observer reporting to the WCPFC Secretariat for inclusion in the Compliance Case File System (CCFS) were noted from the ROPIWG6 discussions on 20 June 2025.

- Support for the overall direction of the proposed revisions, particularly the incorporation of debriefing and national compliance evaluation into the pre-notification process, to improve the evidentiary basis of potential infringement notifications.
- The need for careful consideration of the application of Article 25(2) of the Convention. Some participants questioned whether all observer-sourced cases should be treated the same as cases arising from high seas boarding and inspection or port State measures, particularly given that observers may not be able to collect equivalent levels of evidence (e.g., photographic or video documentation).
- The importance of timely notification to flag States to allow meaningful investigations, and concern that current delays in the transmission of observer-derived data limit the effectiveness of follow-up actions.
- Support for integrating observer debriefing, data verification, and compliance evaluation into a unified step prior to the submission of information to the CCFS, as a way to streamline the process and avoid duplication.

- A proposal that early notification should encompass not only well-known categories such as obstruction or pollution, but also other issues such as potential infringements identified from set details, observer safety concerns, or incidents involving Species of Special Interest.
- Clarification was sought on whether the full observer report would be transmitted through the revised data flow. Participants noted that the observer report remains a key reference document for initiating investigations and requested that its role be clearly reflected in the process diagram.
- A suggestion to improve the readability and utility of observer evidence within the CCFS, including clearer formatting of observer records and linking the same evidence to all related case entries.
- The value of introducing feedback mechanisms within the CCFS, enabling observer providers to view or comment on the outcomes of flag State investigations and receive timely notifications on case developments.

4. The Chair of the ROP-IWG invited participants to provide written feedback. The following comments/interventions were received from CCMs.

JAPAN:

- Japan generally supports the direction of the proposed amendments to the pre-notification process. Specifically, incorporating debriefing and compliance evaluation by debriefer CCMs into the pre-notification process will result in the better documented and evidenced notifications of potential infringements observed on board.
- However, Japan does not support making all potential infringements observed on board uniformly subject to investigation requests under the Article 25 (2) due to difficulties in providing timely notifications and sufficient evidence. To ensure effective investigations and actions by flag CCMs, it is practical to limit investigation requests under the Article 25 (2) to cases where timely notifications are possible and sufficient evidence is available.
- In addition, Japan supports the view expressed during ROP-IWG06 that the full observer report is a key reference document for initiating investigations and that its role should be clearly reflected in the pre-notification process.
- Japan is open to discussing minimum evidence standards for requesting an investigation request under the Article 25 (2) based on observer reports, as well as the standard timeframe for such requests.

PNA:

- PNA supports the approach as outlined in the paper to streamline the integration of ROP data in the CCFS and as detailed in Attachment 1.
- Stressed the need for a formal investigation request, supported by verified data, for all CCFS cases sourced from observers, in accordance with Article 25(2) and CMM 2018-05, paragraph 11.
- To enhance data integrity, we support a verification process conducted by debriefers and compliance officers to eliminate false positives, with a clear clearance point for ROP data prior to submission to the SPC, avoiding redundant cycles between SPC, CCFS, and members. Additionally,

we recommend providing appropriate training and funding for observer providers to strengthen the ROP data verification process.

Additional Comments from PNAO:

- The idea that only OAI and POL [trip level] infringements from observers to undergo **Step 4** and early WCPFC CCFS at **Step 5** does not resolve the fact that delays in CCFS cases notified to flag CCMs will continue to persist noting that SPC will make ROP data after a year or so and it does help investigation where vessel is flag or crews have change and so forth.
- Suggested that all trips undergo Step 3-4, if compliance evaluation is done in Step 4 and validate that **NO** case needs flag state investigations, then that is the end of process where it then be submitted to SPC. But if **Step 4** confirms a possible violation of the lists of CMMs obligations [OAI, POL, FAI, SSIs/CWS, SHK etc.,) listed under Agenda 3.1, then a formal investigation report is produced with supported and relevant investigative information to the Secretariat to enter into the CCFS and or generated to the flag CCMs for investigations. This will make it easier when pulling cases from CCFS to assess in the CMR, as it has more weight of a concern from an Observer Provider-CCM to Flag CCMs for ensuring CMMs implementations rather than the current process.
- **Side note:** What the Commission needs to do is to develop **“Debriefers/Compliance Analysis Standard Guidelines”** align to CCFS list of CMMs obligation listed in supplementary paper 01, as a checklist to what will be done in **Steps 3-4**. This will form part of the ROP data to indicate that a ROP trip data has undergone debriefing and compliance validation [a process done within 100 days window period], before the ROP data is submitted to SPC. We are doing this at PNA, and it should be easier. In this way, ROP reported cases gets notified to flag CCM in a minimum of 1 week from disembarkation.

Background

5. The CCFS has three types of cases based on a WCPFC ROP observer's affirmative report of such events in Observer Trip Monitoring Summary Data:
 - a. **OAI:** Observer Obstruction Alleged Infringements (linked to [CMM 2018-05 15 \(g\)](#)).
 - b. **POL:** Marine Pollution Alleged Infringements (linked to [CMM 2017-04 02 or 03-07](#)).
 - c. **PAI:** (linked to the remaining ROP Pre-notification data elements (other than OAI and POL)).
6. For completeness, there are also three other types of cases which are currently created in CCFS based on specific observer data records:
 - a. **SHK:** Shark Catch Alleged Infringements. These are Cases for alleged infringements related to retention of oceanic white tip or silky sharks, or shark fining activity identified in ROP observer data (obligations in CMM 2022-04).
 - b. **CWS:** Cetacean and Whale Shark Interactions. Relevant WCPFC requirements prohibit purse seine vessels from setting if a whale shark or cetacean is sighted prior to the commencement of the set; required reporting of any incidents of unintentional encircling; and guidelines for safe release (obligations in CMM 2011-03 and CMM 2022-04).
 - c. **FAI:** FAD Alleged Infringements. Cases for alleged infringements related to setting on FADs during the FAD closure period under the applicable tropical tuna CMM.
7. The OAI, POL and PAI cases are notified through the CCFS because the Commission (WCPFC12 in December 2015¹) decided to adopt a pre-notification process from observer providers that:
 - a. Identified flag CCMs of possible alleged infringements by their vessels to a flag CCM; and
 - b. identified coastal State CCMs of possible alleged infringements in their waters ([WCPFC12 Summary Report](#) paragraph 569, Attachment U).
8. This decision tasks the SPC-OFP and the Secretariat to prioritise data entry for the observer trip monitoring data and to facilitate the notification of any affirmative answers on the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary to the responsible flag CCM with a view to providing flag CCMs earlier notification of potential alleged infringements by their vessels.
9. Current issues identified include, but are not limited to:
 - WCPFC12 pre-notification process assumed a smooth flow of data from observer providers to WCPFC, and then to the flag CCM however, this hasn't worked as expected.
 - a. The CCFS Pre-notification process was based on the understanding that observers were to complete the ROP minimum data elements on the WCPFC Observer Trip Monitoring Summary. If a "YES" is noted, the observer provider is expected where practicable, to promptly submit relevant data to the Commission Secretariat (either through data service provider (SPC-OFP) or provided directly to the Secretariat.
 - b. Presently, the remaining MSDF Observer Trip Monitoring Summary codes (PAI other than OAI and POL), do not have a clear link to an obligation in a WCPFC CMM or a specific requirement in the Convention.

¹ [WCPFC12 Summary Report](#) paragraph 569, Attachment U

- c. The Commission has acknowledged the PAI cases (other than OAI and POL) are an issue and at WCPFC14 accepted the TCC13 recommendation that TCC not consider the information contained in the ROP Pre-notification List for the purpose of assessing any obligations for which it was relevant, except for those cases related to observer interference or obstruction in future years.
10. Noting the scale of PAI cases in the CCFS (other than OAI and POL), resolving the issue of PAI cases is a priority task for the ROP-IWG in it's 2023-2025 workplan as it relates to the capture of information by observers.
- a. In practice, the current MSDF Observer Trip Monitoring Summary codes do not provide sufficient information to support data management procedures that define if the observed trip should be classified as ROP or non-ROP data. Consequently, the earlier notification to flag CCMs that was envisaged has not been practical to implement.
 - b. In 2024, ways to utilise debriefing information in supporting reviews of PAI cases were suggested as part of ROP-IWG discussions.
 - c. The Commission has also acknowledged that the CWS cases in CCFS are an issue and TCC17 (2021) agreed this data would be excluded from consideration of the current trial process of reviewing the Aggregated Tables in the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMS).
 - d. The CCFS CWS instances currently reflect a recording by the observer of interactions between the vessel and marine mammals or with whale sharks (an observer on a purse seine vessel has reported a cetacean or whale sharks, as identified by a specific species code (SP_code) in combination with an observed fate code (FATE_code)). Currently the ROP data fields do not permit the observer to categorise the data fields that are inputs to the CCFS to distinguish between interactions where there is no alleged infringement and that are of scientific interest, with those interactions or actions by the crew that could indicate a potential infringement has occurred.
11. There are a number of other SSI obligations in CMMs (seabirds ([CMM 2018-03](#)), sea turtles ([CMM 2018-04](#)), mobulids ([CMM 2019-05](#))) and potentially refinements for sharks ([CMM 2024-05](#)) and cetaceans ([CMM 2024-07](#)), which would facilitate the creation of additional types of observer-initiated cases in the CCFS, but the ROP data fields need to be reviewed to support more clear identification of potential violations of SSI related obligations. [ROP-IWG06 Working Paper 2 supplement 1](#) presents further detail on the obligations that could be considered for observed data collection to support monitoring implementation of CMM obligations.
12. During TCC20, discussions led to taskings to the ROP-IWG related to the use of ROP data in the online Compliance Case File System (CCFS):

TCC20	TCC20 expressed concern over the delay in including cases arising from ROP data in the CCFS and recommends to the Commission that the question of streamlining the inclusion of ROP data in the CCFS be a task for the ROP-IWG. (ref: <i>TCC20 Outcomes, paragraph 16</i>)
	TCC20 agreed in principle that many of the ROP Minimum Standard data fields were redundant, particularly those related to vessel details, and are better collected through existing processes, such as vessel registration or the RFV. (ref: <i>TCC20 Outcomes, paragraph 48</i>)
	TCC20 recommended that the Commission at WCPFC21 task the ROP-IWG to prioritize in 2025 the review of the ROP Minimum Standard data fields, the review of the pre-

	notification process adopted during WCPFC12, and to develop a standardized process for the use of ROP data in the CCFS. (ref: TCC20 Outcomes, paragraph 50)
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13. During the ROP-IWG05 meeting, points raised in the discussions included:
 - a. The pre-notification process had the good intention of providing early advice to flag CCMs of potential alleged violations by their vessels however, what was intended has not been possible.
 - b. Noting that the WCPFC CCFS aims to assist flag CCMs with tracking alleged violations by their flagged vessels, and the observer programs are intended to support monitoring the implementation of conservation and management measures (CMMs).
 - c. Considering whether processes and standards can be agreed with a view to ensuring that the ROP data recorded by observers is of a standard that is sufficient for supporting flag CCM investigations of WCPFC CCFS cases. Perhaps there needs to be guidance on the package of information that should accompany each CCFS case.
 - d. Should debriefers or coordinators undertake a verification of the Observer Trip data before it is used to develop WCPFC CCFS cases, and if so, how should the information from debriefers flow to WCPFC so it can support the WCPFC CCFS case process and flag CCM investigations.
 - e. The lack of clear linkage to most CMMs in the current data fields in the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary section is an issue. For example, much of the observer trip monitoring summary data is not useful for the purpose of the CCFS. Only RS-a to RS-d, WC-c, PN-a, and perhaps LC-a to LC-f is sufficiently useful for the CCFS.
 - f. When reviewing the MSDF Observer Trip Monitoring Summary codes, it will be necessary to distinguish what is needed for national purposes *vis-a-vis* the data and information that is specifically needed for CCFS/CMS -purposes.

Discussion

14. It is a flag CCM's responsibility to investigate activities of their vessels and potential alleged infringements. Observer providers are assisting flag CCM with meeting their obligations. In accordance with [CMM 2023-04 Conservation and Management Measure for the Compliance Monitoring Scheme](#) the CCFS already facilitates viewing by relevant CCMs to notified cases, including the flag CCM, and where applicable the ROP observer provider, the inspecting/notifying CCM, the coastal CCM, and the chartering CCM.
15. Observer providers could be requested to play a greater role in supporting the notification of potential infringements identified and described by observers in their reports. Care is needed to ensure that Observer Providers are sufficiently resourced to support this additional task, for example they have access to training and funding for debriefing to ensure a report of the event (rather than just an affirmation of one occurring) has been captured. A draft schematic of the Commission's CCFS process flow is provided in Attachment 1 (below).
16. The review that is currently underway to consider refinements to the MSDFs including those in the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary continues to be important in supporting any updated pre-notification/CCFS process and in addressing the definition of an interaction. The discussions of the [ROP-IWG06 Working Paper 2 supplement 1](#) which presents a list of the obligations in CMMs where observers could collect data that can be used to monitor implementation of CMMs, including potential

alleged infringements which could be supported by observer data collection will be a very important next step.

17. The review of the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary should consider that some of the data fields support national requirements, e.g. coastal State laws and requirements. Any changes to the data fields and pre-notification process should duly take this into account.
18. Based on the MSDF and the types of cases generated through observer reporting against those data fields, the following paragraphs consider different categories of potential infringements that are likely to require management through the different data flows in Attachment 1. These categories reflect the potential complexity and seriousness of observed potential infringements that could be described in an observer's report.
 - a. **Observer Obstruction/Safety Events:** The observer obstructions potential infringements are matters that would be usefully supported by Observer providers having a greater role in reviewing and considering if an alleged infringement needs investigation and notification to the Commission. Currently **CCFS OAI** cases are created based on these codes in the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary data, but some amendments to the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary could be considered if this would further support the CCFS process. A modified notification process for these OAI CCFS cases could be based on the Attachment 1 process flow through to an Article 25(2) approach reflecting the priority of such potential infringements.
 - b. **Other potential infringements of CMMs that could be supported by the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary data fields with some modifications.** Currently **CCFS POL** cases are created based on these codes in the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary data, and **CCFS SHK** cases are created based on specific observer data records, and in addition some amendments to the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary could be considered if this would further support the notification to CCFS process. There are some other potential infringements of CMMs, which are identified in [ROP-IWG06 Working Paper 2 supplement 1](#), where with appropriate amendments to the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary data fields and additional training support for debriefing, observer providers could support a notification process to the Commission. A modified notification process for these types of current and new CCFS cases could be based on the Attachment 1 process flow through to an Article 25 (2) approach for those of higher priority.
 - c. **A smaller subset of potential infringements of CMMs, where some closer review by the Secretariat, flag CCM of the ROP data fields would still be necessary.** This is because there is information that is notified by the Secretariat by CCMs, which is currently only published as part of annual reporting. This means that the specific information needed to support consideration of cases is not available routinely outside of the Secretariat. **Current CCFS FAI** cases are created by the Secretariat based on specified observer data records, and a review of individual CCMs notified information to the Secretariat. Questions remain about whether this information to support these reviews should be made available more routinely on the public side of the WCPFC website, and also whether it should be available and understood by Observers before they depart on their trip or at the time of debriefing. For these types of cases, there would continue to be a role for the Secretariat in developing CCFS cases. For example, and as is explained in [ROP-IWG06 Working Paper 2 supplement 1](#) additional 1-month high seas FAD closure choice for a flag CCM ([CMM 2023-01 14](#)), 3IA notifications for exemption from 1 ½ month FAD Closure in certain PNA EEZs ([CMM 2023-01 13 footnote 1](#)).

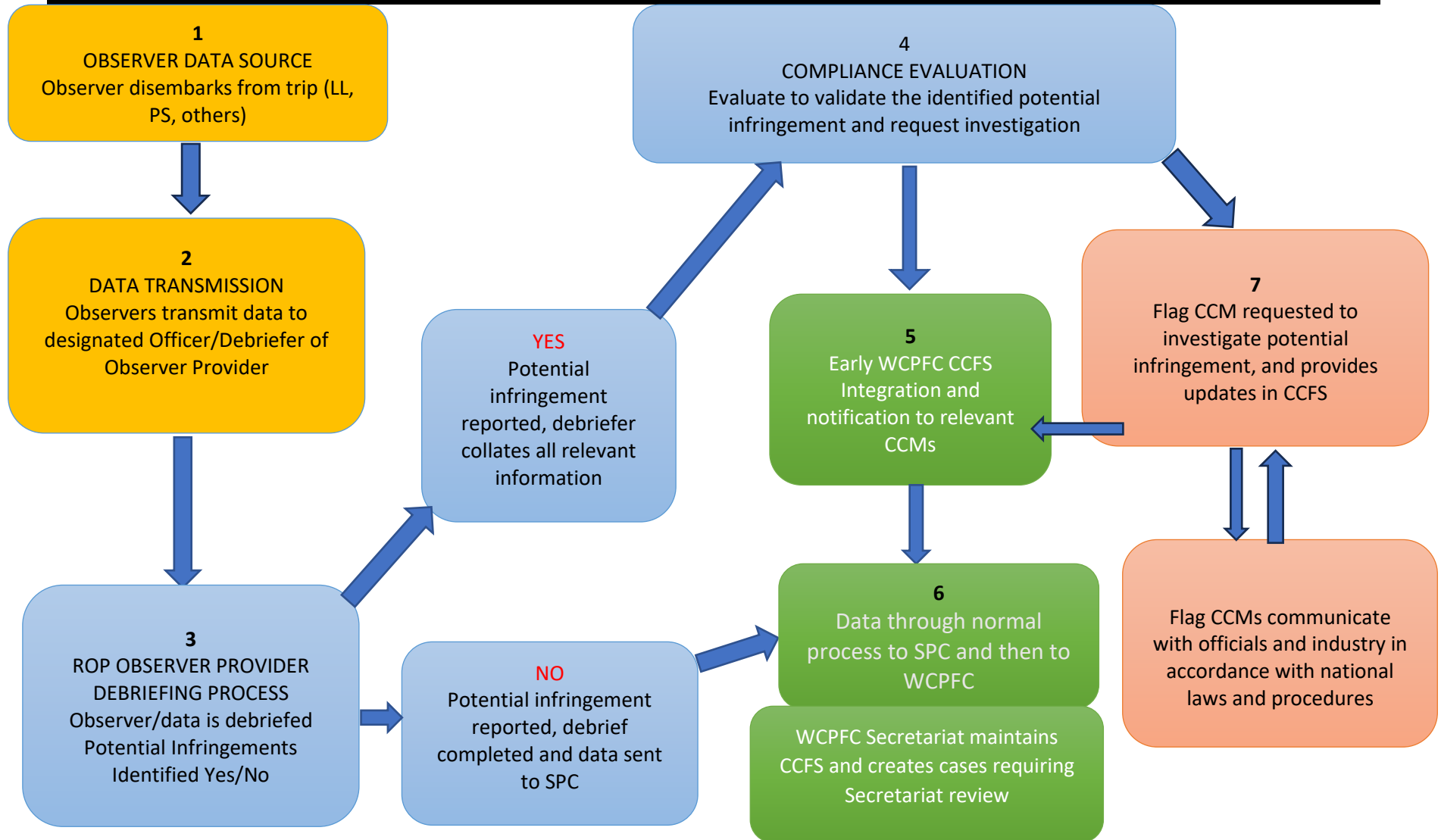
There are some CMMs where a CCM notifies a choice of mitigation measure that would be similar to FAI cases.

19. Potential changes to the observer data flows will require further implementation considerations including the need for adjustments to data collection, including E-reporting systems, will need time and resources, training and documentation would be needed to support enhanced data flow processes, some observer programmes will need additional resources and training for debriefers and compliance teams before they can meet the expected processes, the current data flows for potential infringements between SPC and the Secretariat, and changes to the Compliance Case File System.

Next steps

20. The ROP-IWG Chair requests further feedback and views on this discussion paper.

Observer Provider – Commission CCFS process flow



Investigation outcome reported to Commission by Observer Provider and Flag state. Responses from other interested parties were relevant. Records of outcomes of investigations related to alleged infringements to be maintained Flag CCM and any other parties to the Case. Case progress review process administered by the WCPFC Secretariat

Notes:

1. Observer Data Source

- Observer disembarks
- Once the observer disembarks in port (home or foreign) the trip report is expected to be 90% complete
- Observer will notify observer provider to arrange for debrief and repatriation
CMM (agreed minimum standards and guides of ROPs) Standard requirement - IWGROP2/TCC4/WCPFC5

Note that the requirements set out in [CMM 2017-03 Conservation and Management Measure for the protection of WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Observers](#) would also apply to matters related to the health, safety and welfare of observers.

2. Data transmission

- Observer provides trip data either through hard copy in port or by ER processes (observer – ER database)
- It is recognized that within the Pacific Islands region, there are often existing arrangements that facilitate an observer being debriefed by another observer provider. For example, SBOB on POA trip is debriefed by PGOB debriefer.

3. ROP Observer Provider Debriefing Process

Pre-debrief is the preliminary data quality check on data provided by the observer when completing the Trip Monitoring Summary.

- Observer disembarks from a ROP trip; the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary is submitted to Observer provider debriefers to validate and evaluate any YES on the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary, that identifies a potential infringement that requires further review.
- The observer provider responsible is to ensure that the observer is safely disembarked from the vessel and, if operating under a subregional observer placement, that the observer has necessary transport arrangements to get them safely back to his/her home port.

Debrief: Debriefing is undertaken in accordance with national processes and standards. The debriefer validates and evaluates any YES on the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary, that identifies a potential infringement that requires further review and summarises findings for further review.

4. Compliance Evaluation

- Collated findings go through an additional validation review by the Observer Provider CCM (taking into account categories described in paragraph 12 above which would inform a 'standard check' for the evaluation.)
- Observer Provider CCM validates the Observer trip monitoring summary data affirming a potential infringement has sufficient supporting evidence, such as observer journal pages or photos.

- If the potential infringement is a false positive or not genuine violation and/or is not supported by evidence, the Observer Provider would complete summary notation to accompany the Observers Trip data that explains that the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary data has been fully validated and that there are no potential infringements. The process stops here.
- If following validation, it is established that there are potential infringements in the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary data and/or ROP data the Observer Provider (CCM) would complete a “CCFS notification report” accompanied with relevant data and supporting evidence.
- The observer provider as CCM submits a formal request to the flag CCM to investigate the potential infringement, as required by Article 25(2) of the Convention and [paragraph 11 of CMM 2018-05](#). The formal request is transmitted via email, and a copy goes to the WCPFC Secretariat. The process continues to **Step 5 and Step 7**.

5. Early CCFS Integration

- Once a formal request is made and the investigation begins, the case is entered into the CCFS by the Secretariat for tracking and centralized record-keeping of the flag CCMs investigation of the case from its inception through to its conclusion.
- The Secretariat shall maintain the WCPFC online CCFS as a secure, searchable system to store, manage and make available information to assist CCMs with tracking alleged violations by their flagged vessels. The information in the CCFS will be used in the CMS in accordance with [CMM 2023-04 Conservation and Management Measure for the Compliance Monitoring Scheme](#), or its replacement CMM.

6. Data sent through to normal process to Commission (WCPFC)

- Observer providers submit data to WCPFC Scientific Data Manager (SPC)
- WCPFC Scientific Data Manager (SPC) makes ROP observer data available to the Commission (WCPFC)
- Secretariat reviews ROP data for the types of potential infringements of CMMs where a closer review by the Secretariat of the ROP data fields and Secretariat held information as necessary.

7. Flag CCM and other parties act on notification of a potential infringement in accordance with national laws

- The flag CCM initiates a full investigation and provides progress reports within two months, per Article 25(2) through the CCFS.