



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
TWENTY-SECOND REGULAR SESSION**

11-19 August 2026
Apia, Samoa (Hybrid)

OUTCOMES OF THE FIRST SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE JOINT WORKING GROUP

WCPFC-SC22-2026-GN-IP03

21 July 2026

Submitted by WCPFC Secretariat and SPC-OFP



**Joint IATTC-WCPFC Working Group on South Pacific Albacore Tuna
First Meeting (SPAJWG01)**

(9 am-12:30 pm) 18-19 March 2026 (Pohnpei) | (3 pm-6:30 pm) 17-18 March 2026 (La Jolla)
Virtual Meeting

CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY REPORT

SPAJWG01-2026-00 (WCPFC)

SPAJWG-01-00 (IATTC)

9 April 2026

AGENDA ITEM 1. Opening of the meeting

1. The first meeting of the Joint IATTC-WCPFC Working Group on South Pacific Albacore Tuna (the Joint Working Group) was held virtually on 18 and 19 March 2026, and was convened by the WCPFC Co-Chair, Mr. Mat Kertez (Australia), and the IATTC Co-Chair, Mr. Guillermo Morán (Ecuador).
2. The Executive Director of the WCPFC, Rhea Moss-Christan, provided introductory remarks and referenced the years of work by members of both organizations to reach this point of holding its first joint working group on South Pacific Albacore. The Director of IATTC, Dr. Arnulfo Franco, echoed the WCPFC Executive Director's remarks and added his congratulatory message to members for their efforts that culminated in the establishment of a joint working group for an important shared stock across the Pacific.
3. In opening the meeting, the Co-Chairs recalled that the establishment of the Joint Working Group responded to the increasing importance attached by both Commissions to closer cooperation on the management of South Pacific albacore across its full geographic range. The Co-Chairs also emphasized this represented an opportunity for the two Commissions, and the beginning of a sustained process intended to support more effective long-term management, stronger science coordination, and clearer institutional cooperation between the two Commissions.

AGENDA ITEM 2. Adoption of the Agenda

4. The WCPFC Co-Chair invited comments on the [Provisional Agenda](#) and, noting no objections, confirmed its adoption.
5. Under this Agenda Item, FFA Members took the opportunity to provide an introduction for IATTC members, noting that the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) comprises 17 members¹, all coastal States, of which 15 are small island developing States whose economies, livelihoods, and food security rely on fisheries resources. In this context, FFA members emphasised that they will be engaging in the work of the Joint Working Group with a focus on achieving tangible outcomes to improve South Pacific albacore management.
6. FFA members welcomed the commitment by both WCPFC and IATTC to establish the Joint Working Group and highlighted the shared need to ensure effective management of South Pacific albacore, including achieving both sustainability and socioeconomic objectives. They noted that the Joint Working Group provides an important opportunity to share information, resources, and experience across both Commissions, expressed their expectation that the Group will deliver material results, and conveyed their full support to the Co-Chairs.

AGENDA ITEM 3. Review of SPAJWG Terms of Reference, functions, and working processes

7. The Co-Chair introduced the agenda item, noting that a key objective of the inaugural meeting was to establish how the Joint Working Group would operate in practice. The Joint Working Group was invited to comment on the [Terms of Reference](#) and proposed working arrangements, including the [WCPFC and IATTC Rules of Procedure: Side-by-side Review](#).
8. There were no comments on the Terms of Reference, which had recently been reviewed and endorsed by both Commissions. In considering the relevant Rules of Procedure for both commissions and how the Joint Working Group would function, the Joint Working Group focused on practical arrangements, noting that while there are some differences in procedures between WCPFC and IATTC, these are limited and can be managed pragmatically. There was general support for proceeding on the basis of existing procedures of both Commissions, without seeking to develop new or harmonised procedural rules at this stage.
9. The Joint Working Group supported inclusive participation arrangements, including the involvement of observers accredited to either Commission. It was also noted that effective coordination between the Secretariats would be important to support meeting organisation, timely document translation and circulation, and overall functioning of the Joint Working Group.

¹ The FFA members are, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

10. Several CCMs/CPCs emphasised that the Joint Working Group should complement, and not duplicate, work already underway within WCPFC and IATTC. It was also noted that clear pathways for transmitting advice to the respective decision-making bodies would be important, particularly given differences in the timing of meetings across the two Commissions.
11. Participants highlighted the importance of timely translation of documents and interpretation to support effective participation of CPCs operating in both working languages of the IATTC.
12. The Joint Working Group discussed reporting arrangements and agreed that the Secretariats, in collaboration with the Co-Chairs, would prepare the meeting report and recommendations. It was further agreed that the draft report would be circulated within 14 days for comment, with a further 14-day period provided for participants to submit comments prior to submission to both Commissions.

Recommendations/taskings:

- a. The Joint Working Group agreed that differences between the Rules of Procedure of the two Commissions can be addressed pragmatically through practical arrangements, and that no additional procedural alignment is required at this stage;
- b. The Joint Working Group tasked the Secretariats, in collaboration with the Co-Chairs, to prepare the draft meeting report and recommendations, with the draft to be circulated within 14 days and a further 14-day period provided for comments prior to submission to both Commissions.

AGENDA ITEM 4. Overview of South Pacific albacore stock status and management

13. Under this Agenda Item, the Joint Working Group considered presentations and discussions under four related components: stock status, management approaches, the WCPFC harvest strategy, including the overlap area, and the development of compatible management measures.

4.1 Summary of recent stock status (WCPO-only, Pan-Pacific, EPO-only)

14. SPC presented an overview of the most [recent South Pacific albacore stock assessment](#), which was conducted at a South Pacific-wide scale using a two-region modelling framework covering the WCPFC Convention Area and the IATTC Convention Area. The stock was assessed as not overfished and not subject to overfishing, with depletion estimated at approximately 0.5 of unfished spawning biomass and broadly consistent with the WCPFC interim target reference point.
15. Recent catch levels were also presented, with total South Pacific catches of approximately 95,000 metric tonnes in 2024. This included about 72,000 metric tonnes in the WCPFC Convention Area (of which roughly 12,000 metric tonnes were from the overlap area) and 23,000 metric tonnes in the IATTC Convention Area (excluding the overlap area).
16. It was noted that the stock assessment integrates multiple sources of uncertainty through an ensemble modelling approach, including sensitivities related to recruitment, natural mortality, selectivity, and movement assumptions. Movement between regions cannot be estimated directly

from available data and is instead informed by external modelling, representing an important source of uncertainty in the stock assessment.

17. It was noted that while CPUE trends appear relatively stable, these may mask underlying variability depending on recruitment assumptions and model structure. Data limitations, particularly in the EPO, including gaps in catch composition and operational data, were identified as constraining both stock assessment and understanding of stock structure.

4.2 Overview of current SPA management approaches adopted by both Commissions

18. The Joint Working Group received presentations from the WCPFC and the IATTC Secretariats on current management arrangements for South Pacific albacore.
19. The WCPFC Secretariat outlined that the current management framework is established under Conservation and Management Measure [\(CMM\) 2015-02](#), which provides the basis for managing South Pacific albacore. The measure includes limits on the number of fishing vessels operating south of 20°S, based on historical levels from 2000–2004 or 2005. It was noted that the measure also recognises the rights of small island developing States and participating territories within their national jurisdictions and includes provisions for cooperation among members on research and management. The measure further requires annual reporting of catch, effort, and vessel activity, as well as ongoing scientific review.
20. The WCPFC Secretariat further noted that the Commission adopted a Management Procedure for South Pacific albacore at its 22nd annual meeting in Manila in 2025. Looking ahead, WCPFC is progressing work in 2026 to develop an implementing measure through the SPA-IWG process, taking into account a WCPFC22 proposal from FFA Members, and recognising the need for flexibility in developing implementing arrangements. It was also noted that an allocation workshop is scheduled to be held in New Zealand in June 2026 to support this work.
21. The IATTC Secretariat outlined its current framework, noting that while a resolution on South Pacific albacore was adopted in 2024, no limits on catch or effort are currently in place for the fishery. It was noted that the resolution includes a commitment for the Commission to consider, at its 2026 annual meeting, the development and possible adoption of reference points that are compatible with the work of WCPFC, consistent with recent scientific advice. This work is ongoing and is expected to be considered later in 2026. The IATTC Secretariat also highlighted that the resolution includes provisions to strengthen cooperation with WCPFC and SPC, including improving data collection and submission for the fishery.
22. The Joint Working Group acknowledged that the two Commissions are at different stages in the development of management arrangements for South Pacific albacore, with WCPFC having established measures and a Management Procedure, and IATTC progressing work toward the development of reference points and future management approaches.

4.3 Introduction to the Harvest Strategy adopted by WCPFC, including arrangements for the overlap area

23. The Joint Working Group received a presentation from SPC on the recently adopted WCPFC Management Procedure (MP) for South Pacific albacore. The MP establishes an overall catch limit for longline and troll fisheries operating south of 10°S in the WCPFC Convention Area (including the overlap area, but excluding the EEZs of Tokelau and Tuvalu). It operates on a three-year management cycle and is designed to maintain the stock at the interim Target Reference Point, while ensuring the limit reference point is not breached and supporting the economic performance of dependent fisheries, with relative stability in fishing levels between periods. Allocation and implementation arrangements are not included and remain under development.
25. SPC outlined that the MP is based on a South Pacific-wide stock assessment, which integrates fishing activity across both the WCPFC Convention Area and the EPO. As part of this framework, the MP requires assumptions regarding future catch levels in both regions, including a baseline assumption for catch in the EPO (excluding the overlap area). The performance of the MP is influenced by fishing activity outside the scope of the MP (including in the IATTC Convention Area), and changes in catch levels in these areas could affect its performance and may require it to be revisited.
26. Several CCMs/CPCs highlighted that this creates a direct linkage between management actions in the two Commissions, noting that the performance of the MP is influenced by fishing activity beyond the WCPFC Convention Area. In this context, the importance of monitoring catch and effort in the EPO as a whole and maintaining awareness of developments within IATTC was emphasised, in order to ensure that the assumptions underpinning the MP remain valid over time.
27. The overlap area was identified as a key operational issue in this context. It was noted that the current arrangements for the overlap area are based on a provisional framework established in 2012, under which vessels apply the conservation and management measures of a single Commission, with flag States determining and notifying which Commission's measures apply in the case of vessels listed with both organisations. These arrangements were originally intended as an interim solution, pending further development of more integrated approaches.
28. Some CCMs/CPCs discussed a number of challenges arising from the current arrangements. These included issues related to the attribution of catch between Commissions, the potential for inconsistencies in reporting, and the need to avoid double counting of catch in stock assessment processes. It was also noted that notification requirements, which are central to the operation of the current system, are not always applied consistently in practice, resulting in gaps in understanding of how fishing activity in the overlap area is accounted for.
29. It was further noted that the overlap area involves multiple layers of complexity, including scientific, operational, and institutional dimensions. From a scientific perspective, the overlap area is incorporated within the broader stock assessment framework, meaning that uncertainties in the

treatment of catch and effort in this area can affect the overall assessment. From a management perspective, vessels operating in the same area may be subject to different measures depending on their registration and notification status, creating challenges for ensuring consistency of management outcomes.

30. In light of these issues, the Joint Working Group emphasised the importance of improving the clarity, transparency, and consistency of reporting and attribution of catch in the overlap area. It was noted that this would support both Commissions' management frameworks, including the effective operation of the WCPFC Management Procedure and implementation of IATTC conservation and management measures, and would be an important element in the development of compatible management approaches.
31. Later in the meeting, under Agenda item 8- Other Business, the discussion returned to the overlap area, with the Joint Working Group noting the need for greater clarity in relation to notifications of the application of Conservation and Management Measures/Resolutions for vessels operating in the overlap area. It was emphasised that these notifications as regulated in the interim 2012 arrangement do not affect the applicable obligations of members, as established by each commission regarding other matters such as provision of information and data and financial contributions. The Joint Working Group also recognised that some aspects of this issue fall within the mandate of the respective Commissions, and that further consideration at Commission level may be required.
32. The Joint Working Group noted that overlap area issues should be captured in its future work and that consideration should be given to what advice, if any, could usefully be provided to the relevant Commission meetings.

Recommendations / Taskings

- c. The Joint Working Group recommended that issues related to the overlap area be prioritised for further work, including in the context of the development and implementation of compatible management measures;
- d. The Joint Working Group tasked the Co-Chairs and Secretariats to further develop intersessional work on the overlap area and related notification issues, including consideration of how these issues may be reflected in future advice to the Commissions.

4.4 Consideration of the implementation of compatible measures

33. The Joint Working Group considered the development of compatible management measures for South Pacific albacore, consistent with its Terms of Reference.
34. The Joint Working Group discussed approaches to achieving compatibility across the two Commissions, noting that compatibility does not require identical measures, but rather approaches that achieve equivalent outcomes across the stock. It was recognised that differences in fisheries, management frameworks, and data availability between the two Convention Areas would need to be taken into account, including differences in fleet composition, data availability, and existing management arrangements.
35. Two broad approaches were identified by the WCPFC Co-Chair: (i) the development of a unified regulatory approach across both Commissions, and (ii) the development of a framework based on shared objectives, key implementation standards, and minimum requirements. The Joint Working Group considered a [draft paper prepared by the WCPFC Co-Chair](#), which was introduced as a discussion prompt to capture the key elements of earlier discussions and to provide a basis for structuring future work. The WCPFC Co-Chair noted that the paper was illustrative and not intended to reflect agreed positions, and invited feedback on both the overall approach and specific elements.
36. Several CCMs/CPCs emphasised that a stepwise approach would be appropriate, whereby work would first focus on establishing a common framework and core elements, with the potential to consider further alignment at a later stage, including elements of a more unified approach if appropriate. The importance of clearly identifying shared high-level objectives was emphasised, noting that further work would be required to consolidate existing objectives across both Commissions. It was suggested that this work could be supported through collaboration between Secretariats and their scientific staff or scientific service providers. This collaboration was particularly highlighted in the context of upcoming stock assessments.
37. In relation to specific elements of the paper, the importance of standardisation and harmonisation of data and reporting frameworks, particularly in relation to the overlap area was highlighted. At the same time, some CCMs/CPCs cautioned against specifying particular management tools or monitoring approaches at this stage, noting that references to specific measures should be avoided and that the framework should remain sufficiently general and flexible. It was also noted that the section of the paper dealing with issues for consideration would require further development to more effectively guide the work of the Joint Working Group. It was further suggested that opportunities exist to strengthen scientific collaboration and data frameworks, including through improved coordination between Secretariats and the sharing of existing work and lessons learned.

38. In concluding the discussion, the Co-Chair indicated that the paper would be further developed, in consultation with the co-Chairs and Secretariats, taking into account the views expressed, and used as a guiding document to support intersessional work and future discussions of the Joint Working Group. The Joint Working Group noted that this work would complement the development of the workplan and help structure the sequencing of future tasks.
39. The Joint Working Group recognised that the development of compatible measures will require substantial further work, including both technical and policy considerations, and that this work should be progressed intersessionally.

Recommendations / Taskings

- e. The Joint Working Group tasked the Co-Chairs, with support from the Secretariats, to further develop the compatible measures discussion paper as a guiding document to support intersessional work and future consideration by the Joint Working Group and both Commissions.

AGENDA ITEM 5. Preparing WCPFC's 2027 SPA stock assessment

40. The Joint Working Group received presentations from SPC and supporting scientific inputs on the proposed scope and technical considerations for the 2027 South Pacific albacore (SPA) stock assessment. The discussion focused on the scope of the assessment, scientific coordination between SPC and IATTC, data requirements and exchange, and progress on close-kin mark-recapture (CKMR) work.

5.1 Scope of assessment (WCPO or pan-Pacific)

41. The Joint Working Group considered the appropriate spatial scope for the 2027 stock assessment. It was noted that the next assessment is scheduled for 2027 and will incorporate data up to 2025. SPC presented a proposed approach to maintain a South Pacific-wide (pan-Pacific) assessment, consistent with the 2024 assessment, while also exploring alternative model structures, including separate WCPO and EPO assessments, with and without inclusion of the overlap area.
42. The Joint Working Group generally supported maintaining a South Pacific-wide assessment for 2027, noting the importance of continuity with previous assessments and the current limitations in data availability. At the same time, it was emphasised that there is a need to better understand whether this approach remains appropriate in light of emerging evidence on stock structure and uncertainties related to movement between regions.
43. SPC highlighted that recent analyses suggest SPA may not constitute a single homogeneous stock, with evidence of multiple genetic groupings within the WCPO and that there is limited understanding of connectivity with the EPO. It was noted that the absence of comprehensive genetic and biological data from the EPO remains a key constraint, and that additional sampling—particularly further east—will be required to test hypotheses regarding connectivity between the EPO, overlap area, and eastern WCPO.

44. The Joint Working Group recognised that, while a pan-Pacific assessment remains appropriate for 2027, the question of spatial structure will require further consideration in future assessments, including those planned for 2030 and beyond.

5.2 Framework for coordination between SPC and IATTC scientists

45. The Joint Working Group emphasised that close coordination between SPC and IATTC scientists will be essential for the successful preparation of the 2027 assessment.
46. The Joint Working Group noted that coordination should include alignment on assessment inputs, CPUE standardisation approaches, modelling assumptions, and timelines for technical work. It was recognised that collaboration between SPC and IATTC scientists is already underway, and that this should be further strengthened through intersessional engagement.
47. The importance of ensuring that both Commissions are adequately informed of joint scientific work, including reporting to the relevant scientific bodies, was highlighted. It was also noted that differences in the timing of the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee and the WCPFC Scientific Committee may affect coordination, and that careful planning will be required to ensure that outputs can be considered in both systems where possible.
48. The Joint Working Group supported continued intersessional collaboration between SPC and IATTC, including, where appropriate, engagement of broader scientific expertise to support assessment development and related analytical work.

5.3 Data requirements and exchange

49. Data requirements and data exchange were identified as a central issue for the preparation of the 2027 assessment.
50. The Joint Working Group noted that effective assessment of SPA requires comprehensive and consistent data across both Convention Areas, including catch, effort, size composition, and biological data. While it was acknowledged that IATTC has made data available through its existing mechanisms, several CCMs/CPCs highlighted ongoing limitations in operational-level data from the EPO, which constrain CPUE standardisation and broader analytical work.
51. The need to improve the transparency, availability, and harmonisation of data across both Convention Areas was emphasised, including through better alignment of data standards, reporting formats, and timelines. Particular attention was drawn to improving the quality and resolution of information on catch composition and fishing activity across the WCPO, EPO, and overlap area, including enhanced spatial and temporal resolution to support stock assessment and related analyses.

52. There was support for SPC and IATTC scientists to collaborate on the preparation of additional information or coordinated papers to present catch composition and related data across regions for future Joint Working Group meetings, subject to practical constraints. It was also recognised that data exchange and analysis relating to the overlap area will need to be handled carefully, taking into account relevant legal and institutional considerations.

5.4 Review of Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) results and future application

53. The Joint Working Group received a [detailed update on the Close-Kin Mark-Recapture \(CKMR\)](#) programme by SPC, which aims to provide an initial estimate of absolute adult abundance for SPA by 2027, with a target coefficient of variation of approximately 15 per cent.
54. It was noted that the sampling design, revised in 2024, targets 40,000–85,000 samples over the period 2024–2026, and that sampling progress has been strong, with over 63,000 samples collected to date. Initial genetic sequencing results indicate that the number of identified kin pairs is broadly consistent with expectations, although sampling coverage remains uneven across regions, which may introduce bias if key areas are underrepresented.
55. Progress on the CKMR programme was welcomed, while several technical challenges were highlighted, including potential bias arising from uneven spatial sampling, uncertainties related to population structure and its implications for CKMR models, and limitations in age estimation methods, which introduce additional uncertainty into population estimates. It was emphasised that additional sampling in 2026 will be critical to improving spatial coverage and supporting robust estimation.
56. The Joint Working Group discussed the role of CKMR in relation to the 2027 assessment. It was noted that CKMR models are being developed independently of the stock assessment, and that full integration into the 2027 assessment is unlikely due to timing constraints. However, it was recognised that CKMR outputs could provide an important external benchmark for biomass estimates and inform future model development.
57. Looking ahead, it was noted that CKMR is expected to play a more central role in future assessments, including potential integration into the next generation of stock assessments beyond 2027.

Recommendations / Taskings

- f. The Joint Working Group agreed that the 2027 stock assessment should be conducted on a South Pacific-wide basis, while exploring alternative spatial structures, including separate WCPO and EPO models and treatment of the overlap area, as sensitivity analyses;
- g. The Joint Working Group tasked SPC and IATTC scientists to continue coordination on assessment inputs, including data preparation, CPUE standardisation, model development, and timing of technical work;
- h. The Joint Working Group agreed to strengthen data exchange and harmonisation, and tasked SPC and IATTC, subject to practical constraints, to collaborate on the preparation of additional information on catch composition and data availability across the WCPO, EPO, and overlap area for consideration at the next meeting;
- i. The Joint Working Group agreed that improving biological and operational data, including genetic sampling in the EPO, should be treated as a priority area for scientific cooperation;
- j. The Joint Working Group agreed that uncertainties related to stock structure, data limitations, and methodological issues should be progressed intersessionally in preparation for the 2027 assessment and future assessments.

AGENDA ITEM 6. SPAJWG provisional workplan and meeting schedule

58. The Joint Working Group reviewed the [Provisional 2026 Workplan for the IATTC–WCPFC Joint Working Group on South Pacific Albacore Tuna](#) and agreed that it provides a useful basis for guiding future work. It was noted that the workplan had already informed the structure of the first meeting and that the immediate priority is to sequence and prioritise intersessional work arising from the discussions.
59. In introducing the workplan, the Co-Chair recalled that a number of cross-cutting considerations should continue to guide the work of the Joint Working Group, including support for small island developing States, developing members and participating territories, transparency, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and communication and outreach. It was also emphasised that timely preparation of documents would remain important, including to facilitate translation and effective participation, particularly for IATTC members.
60. The Joint Working Group then turned to the substantive intersessional work envisaged under the workplan. It was noted that a priority would be the development of a reference document bringing together key information presented to the meeting, including stock status, fishing activity, current management frameworks, overlap area issues, and other relevant background material. It was noted that such a document would support a common understanding of the fishery and provide a useful basis for future technical and policy discussions. In this context, the Co-Chairs also indicated that the compatible measures paper circulated during the meeting could be further

developed as an accompanying document to support this work and help structure intersessional discussion.

61. The Joint Working Group discussed the importance of progressing work on shared data standards, timelines, and analytical approaches, particularly in light of the discussion on the next stock assessment and the need for continued scientific collaboration between SPC and IATTC. It was recognised that improved coordination in this area would support not only future stock assessment work, but also broader discussions on compatible management measures and overlap area arrangements.
62. A further priority identified was the development of a joint scientific research plan, together with an indication of the resources that would be required to support it. Several CCMs/CPCs emphasised that this work should be treated as an early priority. FFA members noted that the development of a research plan would be important, and expressed the view that progress toward at least a draft should be made before the WCPFC Scientific Committee meeting in August, if feasible. At the same time, it was recognised that the timing of the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee, which meets substantially earlier in the year, would make it difficult to prepare a fully developed joint research plan for formal consideration in both systems in the immediate term. In response, the Co-Chairs indicated that they, together with the Secretariats and SPC, would confer on what would be realistic and feasible to progress in the available timeframe.
63. Several CCMs/CPCs also called for greater detail in the workplan, particularly in relation to budget and resourcing. It was suggested that a key output of the Joint Working Group should be the development of an indicative budget for its work programme, including clearer identification of resources that may be available from each Commission, contributions that could be provided in kind by CCMs and CPCs, and possible support from other partners. It was further noted that resource requirements are likely to extend beyond meeting costs and may include scientific and analytical work, data management and exchange, support for developing members and territories, and the servicing demands placed on the Secretariats.
64. The Joint Working Group also noted the value of a longer-term workplan that aligns WCPFC and IATTC efforts over a period of years. In this regard, FFA members observed that WCPFC already has a forward work programme extending through to at least 2031, and suggested that a longer-term framework aligning the work of the two Commissions would be a useful exercise.
65. The Joint Working Group then considered the timing and modality of its next meeting. The WCPFC Co-Chair invited views on whether a second meeting should be held later in 2026 or whether the next meeting should be planned for early 2027, noting that this would depend in part on the volume and maturity of intersessional work. The prevailing view among the Joint Working Group was that intersessional work should continue through the remainder of 2026 and that the next meeting should be held in early 2027.

66. There was interest in the possibility of holding the next meeting in person, but it was emphasised that this should depend on whether sufficiently substantive work had been progressed to justify such a format. It was noted that the determination of the Joint Working Group's work programme should come first, and that the question of format should follow from that. It was further noted that the possibility of an in-person meeting would need to be considered by both Commissions, including in light of budget implications and any potential host arrangements.
67. The Joint Working Group also received preliminary information on the possible costs of an in-person meeting. The IATTC Secretariat advised that, absent a host, the cost of a three-day meeting for approximately 120 participants could be in the order of US\$54,000–55,000 if held in California, or approximately US\$43,000 if held in a location in Latin America. The WCPFC Secretariat advised that, from the WCPFC side, supporting participation of two representatives from each developing State and participating territory plus the cost of hosting a meeting in Pohnpei could be on the order of US\$200,000, with costs likely to be higher if held outside of Pohnpei. Comments were made by participants that any recommendation for an in-person meeting would need to be considered carefully in light of both substance and budget.
68. In concluding the item, the Joint Working Group recognised that the next phase of work would require continued close coordination between the Co-Chairs, the Secretariats, SPC, and CCMs and CPCs. It was also noted that the further development of the compatible measures paper and the reference document would help to structure intersessional work and clarify priorities ahead of the next meeting.

Recommendations / Taskings

- k. The Joint Working Group agreed that intersessional work should focus on the further development of a reference document capturing key information presented to the meeting, including stock status, fishing activity, current management frameworks, overlap area issues, and related material relevant to future work;
- l. The Joint Working Group agreed to progress work on shared data standards, timelines, and analytical approaches, including in support of future stock assessment work and broader scientific collaboration;
- m. The Joint Working Group agreed that development of a joint scientific research plan, together with an indicative budget, should be treated as a priority area of intersessional work;
- n. The Joint Working Group tasked the Co-Chairs, Secretariats, and SPC to confer on what work is feasible in advance of the relevant scientific and Commission meetings, including in relation to the research plan and associated outputs;
- o. The Joint Working Group tasked the Co-Chairs and Secretariats, in consultation with CCMs/CPCs as appropriate, to further develop the intersessional work programme, including identification of priority areas where budgetary or resource support will be required;
- p. The Joint Working Group agreed that its next meeting should be held in early 2027, and recommended that the possibility of an in-person meeting be referred to the two Commissions for consideration, subject to available resources, progress on intersessional work, and the existence of sufficiently substantive issues to warrant such a meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 7. Other business

- 69. Under this agenda item, the Joint Working Group considered additional matters arising from the discussions.
- 70. Further issues relating to the overlap area were raised under this agenda item, and are reflected in this report under Agenda Item 4.3.
- 71. No further items were raised under Other Business.

AGENDA ITEM 8. Adoption of recommendations

- 72. It was agreed that the Co-Chairs, would further develop and finalise the recommendations, taking into account the discussions held during the meeting, for submission to the two Commissions.
- 73. It was noted that the recommendations are advisory in nature and are intended to inform the consideration and decision-making processes of the WCPFC and IATTC, as well as their relevant subsidiary bodies.
- 74. For the purposes of the meeting report, the recommendations have been captured under relevant agenda items.

AGENDA ITEM 9. Close of meeting

75. In closing the meeting, the Co-Chairs thanked the Joint Working Group for their constructive engagement and contributions to the discussions.
76. The Co-Chairs noted that the meeting had provided a strong foundation for the work of the Joint Working Group, including the identification of key priorities for intersessional work and areas requiring further collaboration between the two Commissions.
77. The Joint Working Group acknowledged the support provided by the Secretariats of both Commissions and SPC in facilitating the meeting and supporting its work.