



**TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE
TWENTY-SECOND REGULAR SESSION**

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Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (Hybrid)

WCPFC ROP observer provider application – Panama Observers Program S.A. (POPSA)

WCPFC-TCC22-2026-35

2 September 2026

Submitted by the Secretariat

1. The Panama Observers Program S.A. (POPSA) wrote to the WCPFC Executive Director on 31 August 2026 requesting to become an accredited observer provider under the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (see Attachment 1).
2. TCC22 is invited to consider the application of POPSA to become an observer provider under the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme and provide advice to the Commission for consideration at WCPFC23.



PANAMA OBSERVERS PROGRAM, S.A. (POPSA)

PROPOSAL FOR WCPFC ROP AUTHORISATION

Business case and statement of intent | High-seas transshipment monitoring

Submitted to	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Secretariat
With support from	Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (ARAP)
For consideration	TCC22, with a recommendation to WCPFC23

Purpose

POPSA seeks authorisation as an observer provider under the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme, in accordance with CMM 2018-05 and the Agreed Minimum Standards and Guidelines of the WCPFC ROP. POPSA's proposed initial operational scope is the independent monitoring of high-seas transshipments by carrier vessels pursuant to paragraph 13 of CMM 2009-06.

The proposed service is regional. POPSA would make trained observers available to WCPFC members, participating territories and Cooperating Non-Members, subject to Commission rules and the agreement of the relevant authorities.

Relevant Credentials and Operational Capacity

- POPSA is accredited by SPRFMO to provide observers for transshipment activities
- POPSA holds ARAP authorisations covering onboard observer services, observer training and electronic-monitoring review, providing an integrated framework for the complete observation cycle.
- POPSA operates as an independent regional provider across multiple flag States, with safeguards that protect observer assignment, data collection, findings and reporting from vessel or operator influence.

Corporate Identity and Organisational Structure

Legal identity	Panama Observers Program, S.A.; registered under Mercantile Folio No. 801907 (S) on 6 May 2013.
Legal representative	Raúl Alberto Delgado Quezada, President, Director and General Director
Head office	Plaza Aventura, Ave. Ricardo J. Alfaro, Panama City, Republic of Panama
Phone Number	Office Phone Number: +507 2363736 Mobile Phone Number: +507 68224714
Email:	info@popsa.com.pa assistant@popsa.com.pa
Programme model	Independent regional provider available to WCPFC Members, participating territories and Cooperating Non-Members.
Programme leadership	Observer Programme Coordinator: Francisco Barahona, Compliance and Independence Officer: Alexander Cheng
Specialist functions	Data Management: Rogelio Jované, Anyuri González and Ian Delgado Electronic Monitoring: Isbeth Laurin Accounting and Human Resources: Graciela Torres
Training and welfare	Academic Director: Francisco Barahona Academic Assistant: Anyuri González Instructor: Francisco Barahona Safety, Welfare and Emergency Committee in place; Coordinator: Ian Delgado

Authorisations and Regional Track Record

Credential	Scope
SPRFMO	Accreditation granted by the SPRFMO Commission following completion of an independent technical evaluation
ARAP L012	Onboard observer programme for monitoring fishing and transshipment activities involving international fleets
ARAP L033	Electronic monitoring review centre for fishing and transshipment records
ARAP 007-2025	Authorised fisheries-observer training centre

Current Observer Operations

POPSA currently deploys observers on international transshipment operations involving carrier vessels. Each assignment follows a controlled operational cycle that includes observer selection and briefing, vessel-safety and equipment verification, independent communications, deployment oversight, post-trip debriefing, data validation and secure records management.

Where required under the applicable RFMO or programme mandate, observers also collect information beyond catch composition and transferred quantities. This includes interactions with species of concern, biological and length-frequency data, observer safety and welfare incidents, and relevant environmental, operational or compliance-related observations.

Proposed WCPFC Service

POPSA proposes an initial scope limited to the independent monitoring of high-seas transshipments pursuant to paragraph 13 of CMM 2009-06. Observer services would be available for authorised carrier vessels operating in the WCPFC Convention Area and could be provided across multiple flag States and CCMs.

- Deploy qualified ROP observers after confirming the relevant authorisation, vessel eligibility and suitability of the assignment.
- Record each transshipment event, including its position, participating vessels, species, quantities, product flow and other required Commission minimum data fields.
- Complete Forms FC-1 and FC-2 and submit the agreed ROP minimum standard data to the WCPFC Secretariat within 90 days of the observer's disembarkation from the carrier, using secure procedures for evidence handling and traceability.

How the Programme Would Operate

1. Assign and brief. The Programme Coordinator completes conflict screening, selects a qualified observer and confirms the mission, reporting and safety requirements.
2. Complete pre-boarding controls. POPSA verifies medical fitness, insurance, identification, equipment, independent communications and vessel-safety conditions.
3. Monitor at sea. The observer works independently, collects the required evidence and can report interference or safety concerns through POPSA's emergency channel.
4. Debrief, validate and report. Forms, notes and electronic evidence are reconciled, quality-controlled, securely stored and transmitted to the authorised recipient.

Independence and Accountability

- POPSA is a private third-party provider, not a national government observer programme and not a service restricted to Panamanian-flagged vessels.
- Vessel owners and operators do not select, direct, evaluate or dismiss assigned observers, and do not approve technical findings.
- Observers and relevant staff sign independence and conflict-of-interest declarations; assignments may be rotated across flags and operators.
- Data and incidents move through controlled programme and compliance channels, with documented replacement, misconduct, dispute and corrective-action procedures.

Safety and Continuity

Medical fitness, insurance and vessel-safety conditions are confirmed before deployment. Each observer will be issued an approved independent two-way satellite communication device and a waterproof personal lifesaving beacon. A Vessel Safety Checklist will be completed before every boarding, and the observer may refuse to board a vessel that does not meet the required safety conditions. A standing Safety, Welfare and Emergency Committee supports incident response, and the business continuity plan covers loss of staff, systems, premises or communications.

Readiness and Next Steps

A favourable recommendation from TCC22, followed by a decision of the Commission at WCPFC23 that POPSA's application may proceed, would enable the Secretariat to begin the formal technical review. Such a decision would not, by itself, constitute interim or full authorisation under the WCPFC ROP.

POPSA is ready to work with ARAP and the Secretariat through the established authorisation process. Before interim authorisation, POPSA and ARAP will confirm the sponsorship arrangements applicable to Panama's CNM status and any continuity conditions required by the Commission for the relevant authorisation period.

1. Submit the ROP self-assessment, supporting manuals and operational evidence in the format requested by the Secretariat.
2. Formalise, through ARAP as the sponsoring authority, the designation of the ROP Observer Coordinator and provide the validated observer roster, together with the qualifications and records of observers, trainers, briefers and debriefers.
3. Address documentary-review conditions and host an in-person, remote or hybrid audit in Panama.
4. Implement any corrective actions, reporting arrangements, cross-flag safeguards and periodic audit requirements set by the Commission.

Value to WCPFC and CCMs

- Additional independent capacity for a compliance-sensitive high seas activity.
- A regional provider available across flags, reducing dependence on same-flag placements.
- Integrated training, safety, data-validation and electronic-monitoring review capability.
- Readiness to operate under Commission oversight, audit and corrective action.

Statement of Intent

POPSA intends to operate as an independent regional observer provider within the WCPFC ROP, making its qualified observer services available to all WCPFC Members, participating territories and Cooperating Non-Members that require coverage for authorised high-seas transshipment operations. Services would be provided on a cross-flag basis, subject to Commission requirements and arrangements agreed with the relevant flag State or competent authority.

Any interim or full authorisation would remain subject to CMM 2018-05, the Agreed Minimum Standards and Guidelines of the WCPFC ROP, and all other applicable Commission measures, including CMM 2009-06 in relation to the proposed high-seas transshipment scope. Authorisation would also remain subject to Panama's applicable CNM status and sponsorship arrangements, satisfactory technical review and audit results, and any conditions established by the Commission.

POPSA commits to maintaining the independence, observer safety and welfare, data quality, reporting, confidentiality and oversight arrangements required by the Commission throughout the authorisation period.


Raúl Delgado
General Director | Panama Observers Program, S.A.



Official References: [CMM 2018-05](#) | [CMM 2009-06](#) | [ROP Standards](#) | [Authorised ROP Providers](#)