



**COMMISSION  
FIFTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
10 – 14 December 2018

---

**2018 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

---

**WCPFC15-2018-04  
29 October 2018**

**Paper by the WCPFC Secretariat**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1. This report is provided pursuant to Rule 13 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure. It highlights the main work programmes and activities of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and its Secretariat in 2018.

2. The absence of a Strategic Plan for the Commission makes reporting on accomplishment of strategic priorities of the Commission difficult. This annual report, therefore, takes the form of a historical account of the key developments, achievements and challenges of the Commission and its Secretariat as they pertain to the implementation of decisions and agreements of the Commission. The last annual WCPFC14 meeting in Manila, Philippines determined the key priorities and work programmes for the Commission and its Secretariat in 2018 and onward years.

3. The WCPFC14 was a remarkable meeting not by the fact that it ended on its last day of meeting at around 3am in the morning the following day but by the extent of its key deliverables. The adoption of the new multiyear management measure for the tropical tuna (CMM 2017-01) to replace the previous measure that lapsed on 31 December 2017 was a notable achievement in light of the path it took to negotiate and secure consensus on it, two annual sessions and two intersessional sessions of the Commission. The measure is a three-year agreement, with some 12-months provisions that reflected the need to await further scientific stock assessments in 2018. It is also framed as providing a bridge towards implementation of harvest strategies and sought to ensure stocks are maintained at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield pending agreement on target reference points, and that small islands developing states do not unnecessarily carry a disproportionate burden of conservation and management efforts. The other key achievements of WCPFC14 include the adoption of a measure to implement a harvest strategy for Pacific bluefin tuna and agreement on catch limits on different sizes of the same species; the extension of the harvest strategy work plan to 2021 to allow for ongoing work towards adoption of harvest strategies for the four key tuna stocks; the adoption of a port state measure to reduce illegal fishing; the adoption of standards for electronic reporting of observer data; progressing efforts for the development of a comprehensive measure for shark and rays management; a measure to reduce the detrimental impact of marine pollution; and an agreement to adopt a target reference point for SP albacore in 2018.

4. With the achievements and outcomes of WCPFC14 flow key work-streams for the Commission and its Secretariat in 2018. There were also specific tasks sanctioned by WCPFC14 to be progressed intersessionally through the standing working groups on electronic reporting and electronic monitoring and the fish aggregating devices management options. Other intersessional works were agreed to be progressed through virtual working groups to consider a comprehensive approach to sharks and rays management; South Pacific albacore management; the continuing review of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme and development of a new measure; the development of a strategic investment plan for the special requirement fund; and on access to observer reports and conduct of observers. These were on top of the routine work in support of the annual meetings of the four subsidiary bodies of the Commission.

5. So, the work programme for the Commission and its Secretariat in 2018 continued to be extensive despite the achievements of WCPFC14. The work undertaken in the reporting period was generally satisfactory and delivered on time with intended objectives and outcomes accomplished. Some of the key highlights of achievements for 2018 include:

- i) timely submission of the report of the Independent Review Panel that reviewed the Compliance Monitoring Scheme;
- ii) successful convening of the meetings of the Scientific Committee; Northern Committee; and Technical and Compliance Committee;
- iii) timely completion and delivery of the draft full Compliance Monitoring Report;
- iv) updated stock assessment completed for the bigeye tuna stock;
- v) several other stock assessments undertaken including for SP albacore, Pacific bluefin tuna, NP swordfish, NP shortfin mako shark, silky shark and whale shark;
- vi) successful convening of the third meetings of the intersessional working groups on electronic reporting and electronic monitoring and fish aggregating devices management options;
- vii) good progress on the work of the Shark Intersessional Working Group to develop a comprehensive measure for sharks and rays management;
- viii) good progress on the work of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMS) Intersessional Working Group to develop a new measure for the CMS; and
- ix) good progress achieved on the implementation of the ABNJ and the WPEA Projects.

## **2. WORK OF THE COMMISSION SUBSIDIARY BODIES**

6. The Commission has four subsidiary bodies through which the bulk of the work of the Commission is transacted. The subsidiary bodies include the Scientific Committee, Northern Committee, Technical and Compliance Committee, and the Finance and Administration Committee. Their annual meetings in 2018, as usual, were scheduled in advance of the annual session of the Commission to take place in December 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA. The outcomes and recommendations of the meetings of the subsidiary bodies will be considered for decision by the Commission at its Honolulu meeting.

### **2.1 *The Scientific Committee***

7. The Scientific Committee was established to ensure the Commission obtains for its consideration the best scientific information available. The Fourteenth Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC14) was held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> August 2018. The meeting was chaired by Mr Ueta Faasili (Samoa) and was attended by over 220 participants. The meeting agenda continued to be structured around the four key themes with each thematic discussion facilitated by Theme Conveners, namely for the Data and Statistic theme by Dr Valerie Post (USA) supported by Mr Peter Williams (SPC); Stock Assessment theme by Dr Jon Brodziak (USA) and Dr Hiroshi Minami (Japan); Management Issues theme by Dr Robert Campbell

(Australia); and the Ecosystem and Bycatch Mitigation theme by Dr John Annala (New Zealand) and Dr Yonat Swimmer (USA). Pursuant to the direction of WCPFC14 additional sessions were added to the Management Theme to provide additional time for the consideration of elements of the Work Plan to adopt Harvest Strategies under CMM 2014-06.

8. SC14 considered an update assessment for bigeye tuna and a stock assessment for South Pacific albacore, both of which were undertaken by Commission's scientific services provider the Oceanic Fisheries Programme of the Pacific Community (SPC-OFP) in 2018.

9. The update of the 2017 bigeye tuna stock assessment was informed by additional work in 2018 improving understanding of the growth and maturity of bigeye tuna by incorporating additional samples from large bigeye tuna. This resulted in an "updated new growth" model, which replaced the "new growth" models within the updated stock assessment grid. SC14 agreed that the models using only the "updated new growth" model represented the best available science to describe the stock status of bigeye tuna. By removing results using the "old growth" model, the stock status becomes considerably more optimistic. Based on the results of the updated assessments and projections from selected scenarios, however, SC14 recommended that, as a precautionary approach, the fishing mortality on bigeye tuna stock should not be increased from the recent average (2011-2014) level to maintain spawning biomass at or above the 2012-2015 average.

10. The 2018 South Pacific albacore stock assessment used 72 individual models in the structural uncertainty grid of five axes (steepness, natural mortality, growth, size frequency weighting, and CPUE). Based on the uncertainty grid, the WCPO albacore spawning biomass is very likely to be above the biomass Limit Reference Point (LRP) and recent fishing mortality (F) is very likely below  $F_{MSY}$ , and therefore the stock is not experiencing overfishing and is not in an overfished condition. However, SC14 reemphasized that longline fishing mortality and longline catch be reduced to avoid decline in the vulnerable biomass so that economically viable catch rates can be maintained, especially for the longline catch of adult albacore.

11. Other stock assessments in 2018 considered at SC14 include the International Scientific Committee's (ISC) assessment on Pacific bluefin tuna, NP swordfish, and NP shortfin mako Shark, and ABNJ's assessments on silky shark and whale shark. Details on the results of these assessments and management advice are conveniently summarized in the SC14 Summary Report, including a revised Shark Research Plan.

12. As tasked by WCPFC14, the SC14 considered the issue of whether the NP striped marlin and NP blue shark can be designated as northern stocks. The SC14 highlighted two points for the Commission's consideration namely: i) for the Commission to clarify and quantify what is meant by 'mostly north of 20 degrees North; and ii) refer the Commission to the check-list of benchmark scientific information developed at SC14 to support the Commission's deliberations in determining the designation of a stock as a Northern stock.

13. SC14 when it considered Target Reference Points (TRP) acknowledged that that the choice of TRPs can be based on a combination of biological, ecological and socio-economic considerations. SC14 recommended that WCPFC15 take note of the stock assessment results for bigeye and yellowfin to help clarify the management objectives for these stocks (including the selection of LRP risk levels) so that additional work can be undertaken. SC14 also noted that FFA members of the Commission have communicated at various times their preferred management objectives for the South Pacific albacore stock as taken by the southern longline fishery and encouraged other members of the Commission to indicate their desired management objectives for the South Pacific albacore fishery.

14. For the development of harvest control rules and the Roadmap to improve South Pacific albacore management, SC14 specifically requested guidance from WCPFC15 on: i) which fisheries are to be included in the Management Strategy Evaluation for example South Pacific albacore longline and/or troll; and ii) what management control mechanism can be potentially used for the fisheries for example through management of overall catch or fishing effort.

15. SC14 also reviewed the development of the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process, performance indicators to evaluate the relative performance of candidate management procedures, and key decisions that regional fishery managers, stakeholders and scientists will need to consider. SC14 recommended that WCPFC15 note the progress on the development of the MSE and provide the necessary elements being requested from the Commission to further progress this work against the scheduled timelines in the Harvest Strategy Work Plan.

16. SC14 acknowledged the Commission's desire to institute a Science-Management Dialogue to expedite the development of harvest strategies under the Work Plan and considered a consultative draft terms of reference for such a dialogue. SC14 expressed strong support for such a Science-Management Dialogue to begin in 2019 and proposed terms of reference for the dialogue that consider a manageable size for the dialogue with the appropriate expertise present; need for informal and formal segments; flexibility in the structure and durations of the dialogue; and reliance on information derived from the SC.

17. SC14 considered the issue of management of fish aggregating devices (FADs) and made some recommendations to the Commission including importance of clear FAD marking; use of environmentally friendly FAD designs; need to set appropriate FAD limits and improved data collection on the use of FADs. Some of these issues were further discussed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the FAD Management Options – Intersessional Working Group that met on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 in Majuro, Marshall Islands. The working group worked through 2018 as an e-group and the Chair, Mr Naiten Bradley Phillip Jr. (Federated States of Micronesia) presented draft guidelines on biodegradable FADs and the use of non-entangling materials to SC14 and TCC14. Its recommendations, including those relating to biodegradable FAD and the number of FAD limits, are posted on the Commission website <https://www.wcpfc.int/meetings/fadmo-iwg3>.

18. The status and progress of the 2018 SC work programmes and science related projects in 2018 are set out in *Annex 1*. The finalized Summary Report of SC14 will be posted on the Commission website by the time of WCPFC15.

## **2.2 The Northern Committee**

19. The Northern Committee (NC) was established to consider and make recommendations by consensus on the formulation of conservation and management measures in respect of stocks which occur mostly in the area north of 20° north parallel (NP albacore, Pacific bluefin and NP swordfish) and on the implementation for the area north of 20° north parallel of such conservation and management measures as may be adopted by the Commission. The 14<sup>th</sup> regular session of the Northern Committee (NC14) took place in Fukuoka, Japan, from 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> September 2018, with a one-day Catch Documentation Scheme Technical Meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018. Mr Masanori Miyahara of Japan chaired the meeting.

20. In 2018, the scientific services provider for the Northern Committee, ISC, conducted an update assessment of the Pacific bluefin tuna stock. Noting that the Kobe plot shows that the point estimate of the  $SSB_{2016}$  was  $3.3\%SSB_{F=0}$  and the 2016 fishing mortality corresponds to  $F_{6.7\%SPR}$ ,

ISC provided advice on the stock status and conservation information for the Pacific bluefin tuna as set out in the succeeding two paragraphs.

21. In terms of the stock status there is no biomass-based limit or TRPs adopted to evaluate the overfished status for Pacific bluefin tuna. However, the Pacific bluefin tuna stock is overfished relative to the potential biomass-based reference points evaluated. There is also no fishing intensity-based limit or TRPs have been adopted to evaluate overfishing for Pacific bluefin tuna. However, the Pacific bluefin tuna stock is subject to overfishing relative to most of potential fishing intensity-based reference points evaluated.

22. The conservation advice on Pacific bluefin tuna provided was that the projection based on the base-case model mimicking the current management measures by the WCPFC (CMM 2017-08) and IATTC (C-16-08) under the low recruitment scenario resulted in an estimated 98% probability of achieving the initial biomass rebuilding target ( $6.7\%SSB_{F=0}$ ) by 2024. This estimated probability is above the threshold (75% or above in 2024) prescribed by the WCPFC Harvest Strategy. The low recruitment scenario is more precautionary than the recent 10 years recruitment scenario. The Harvest Strategy specifies that recruitment in projection switches from the low recruitment scenario to the average recruitment scenario beginning in the year after achieving the initial rebuilding target. The estimated probability of achieving the second biomass rebuilding target ( $20\%SSB_{F=0}$ ) 10 years after the achievement of the initial rebuilding target or by 2034, whichever is earlier, is 96%. This estimate is above the threshold (60% or above in 2034) prescribed by the WCPFC Harvest Strategy. However, it should be recognized that these projection results are strongly influenced by the inclusion of the relatively high, but uncertain recruitment estimate for 2016.

23. During the NC14, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint IATTC-WCPFC/NC Working Group Meeting was held to discuss the joint management of the Pacific bluefin tuna stock. The Working Group Meeting was presided over by the co-chairs Mr Masanori Miyahara and Dr Dorothy Lowman. Under the Joint Working Group, the first CDS Technical Meeting was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September prior to NC14, and the Chairman's Summary of the meeting is appended to the NC14 Summary Report. The Joint Working Group recommendations on future actions in the management of Pacific bluefin tuna did not receive consensus support by NC14, so the NC Chair is seeking an opportunity to hold a short NC meeting in the margins of WCPFC15 to consider a decision on that issue.

24. NC14 reviewed a proposal on harvest strategy for NP swordfish (NC14-NP-DP-14) and agreed to adopt the following management objectives for NP swordfish: "The management objective is to support thriving swordfish fisheries in the North Pacific while maintaining the stock size at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield. The Northern Committee will develop more refined management objectives."

25. Concerning the status of NP striped marlin, NC14 urged the Commission to develop a rebuilding plan for the stock as a matter of priority. NC14 also requested ISC to conduct projections examining rebuilding scenarios for NP striped marlin that cover a range of rebuilding targets and probabilities of each scenario to reach each target within different timelines. ISC should produce additional scenarios of catch reduction if the probability of reaching the rebuilding target in 10, 15, and 20 years is not at least 60%.

### ***2.3 The Technical and Compliance Committee***

26. The Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC) was established to advise the Commission on the technical aspects of implementation of conservation and management measures and compliance with such measures. The Fourteenth Regular Session of the Technical and

Compliance Committee (TCC14) was held at Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands from 26<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018. The meeting was chaired by Ms Alexa Cole (USA) and over 210 participants attended the meeting. TCC14 established small working groups to progress discussions on the margins of the meeting on the matters of cooperating non-member applications; TCC Workplan; seabird interactions; observers and sharks.

27. TCC14 committed at least two and a half days to the review of the full draft Compliance Monitoring Report covering 2017 activities prepared by the Secretariat in accordance with CMM 2017-07. The review continued to be held in closed session to the exclusion of observer delegations. In addition, recommendations were made regarding the 2015 and 2016 assessments of Capacity Assistance Needed and Flag State Investigations. TCC14 agreed to recommend a provisional Compliance Monitoring Report to the Commission for consideration at WCPFC15. During 2018, the review of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme continued to be facilitated through an intersessional working group chaired by Mr Glen Joseph (Republic of Marshall Islands). Face-to-face meetings of the CMS-IWG were also held in Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands on the 25<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October, to progress work towards the development of a new CMM for the Compliance Monitoring Scheme. TCC14 noted the progress made in the CMS-IWG and encouraged further progress to be made in the intersessional period leading up to WCPFC15 as a matter of priority.

28. The annual reports of the WCPFC MCS Programmes administered by the Secretariat were also presented and reviewed by TCC14, and they covered the Vessel Monitoring System, Regional Observer Programme (ROP), High Seas Transshipment Monitoring, High Seas Boarding and Inspection, Record of Fishing Vessels, Eastern High Seas Pocket Special Management Area, Port State Minimum Standards, Secretariat Integrated-MCS Information Management Systems and online reporting IT tools, Report on the performance of the E-reporting standards and their application, Administration of Data Requests and gaps in Scientific data submissions.

29. TCC14 recommended that the Commission endorse the outcomes of the third meeting of the Electronic Reporting and Electronic Monitoring (ERandEM) Working Group which was held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 6 – 7 August chaired by Ms Kerry Smith (Australia). The outcomes from the ERandEM Working Group include recommendations that the Commission adopt draft E-reporting standards for high seas transshipment notices and declarations at WCPFC15. TCC was advised by the Secretariat that Phase 1 of the E-reporting of High Seas Transshipment Declarations and Transshipment Notices Project was 75% implemented at the time of TCC, and work to date is supported by supplemental funds from New Zealand and recently the USA. This project is an initiative that is closely linked to draft E-reporting standards recommended by the ERandEM Working Group. The design of the high seas transshipment E-reporting system will provide the WCPFC with a base infrastructure that could be easily modified to collect other types of E-reported data in the future.

30. TCC14 also recommended that the three vessels currently on the WCPFC IUU vessel list are maintained. Six cases related to alleged illegal activities undertaken by six vessels during 2017 were reviewed by TCC14, however after receiving updates from the notifying CCM and responsible flag CCM involved, TCC14 agreed that none of the vessels were to be included on the Provisional IUU vessel list.

31. A full record of the TCC14 meeting is posted on the website and the outcomes and recommendations will be discussed at WCPFC15. The Provisional CMR documentation is available to CCMs and their authorized users through the WCPFC intranet and a copy has

also been posted on the secure side of the WCPFC website. The key TCC related activities in 2018 are set out in *Annex 2* to this report.

#### **2.4 *The Finance and Administration Committee***

32. The Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) is responsible for reviewing and advising the Commission on its budget and other financial and administrative requirements. Its twelfth session (FAC12) will be held immediately prior to and as necessary throughout WCPFC15 and will be chaired by Co-Chairs Mr Magele Etuati Ropeti (Samoa) and Mr Wataru Tanoue (Japan). As expected, FAC12 will consider the routine matters relating to the work programme and budget of the Commission for 2019, personnel issues, administrative matters relating to the work of the Commission including issues associated with the maintenance of the headquarters office. The FAC is expected to receive the report by the Chair of the Special Requirements Funds (SRF) intersessional working group, Dr Liz Brierley (Australia) on a proposed Strategic Investment Plan that seek to match capacity and capability requirements of developing States and Territories with appropriate investment strategies so they can be progressed in an initial three year trial period. The report and outcomes of FAC12 will be presented for discussion and decision at WCPFC15.

### **3. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

#### **3.1 *Strategic Planning***

33. The Commission continues to operate without a high level and longer-term Strategic Plan that sets out key strategic priorities for the Commission and a pathway to their achievements. The Secretariat sought guidance on the further development of a Strategic Plan and was directed by WCPFC14 instead to develop a medium-term Corporate Plan for submission to WCPFC15. There was no specific guidance as to the process for developing the Corporate Plan nor any guidance as to its preferred structure or content. In the absence of such guidance and in light of the extensive intersessional workload of the members in 2018, the Secretariat will table at WCPFC15 a draft Corporate Plan that did not benefit from direct consultations and inputs from members and other stakeholders.

#### **3.2 *Staffing matters***

34. The number of established positions for the Secretariat remains relatively stable at twenty four (24) comprising of 9 positions for professional staff including the Executive Director, and fifteen (15) positions for support staff. There are currently two vacant positions for support staff, one of which has been advertised and the other is under review because of the decrease in the work load for the data entry team at the Secretariat. The Technical Coordinator, Dr Shelley Clarke for the Shark and Bycatch component of the Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions (Common Oceans) Tuna Project previously hosted at the Secretariat headquarters has relocated to Rome at the FAO Headquarters at the start of 2018. The relocation was recommended by the mid-term review of the Project to enable other tuna RFMOs greater access to the services rendered by Dr Shelley Clarke. She continued to support the project from Rome and as agreed with the ABNJ Project she continued to provide support to other non-ABNJ project related work of the Commission like the work of the shark intersessional working group. The position of the Regional Observer Programme Coordinator was advertised in late 2017 and Mr. Karl Staisch was reappointed in early 2018. The position of the Finance and Administration Manager was advertised in 2018 and an appointment is expected before the end of 2018.

### **3.3 Annual accounts and contribution**

35. The 2017 financial statements were completed, audited and circulated to Members, together with the External Auditor's Report. The Auditor reported that the statements and accounts compiled were compliant with the required accounting standards as well as the Commission's Financial Regulations and presented a fair view of the financial position of the Commission. The Auditor's report will be presented for the collective review and final consideration of WCPFC15.

36. Article 18 (3) of the Convention provides that if a member's contributions are in arrears for the preceding two full years the member concerned shall not participate in the taking of decisions by the Commission, subject to the Commission permitting such a member to vote. It is gladly reported that currently there are no members who are affected by that conventional provision.

### **3.4 Financial and administrative arrangements**

37. The financial and administrative arrangements of the organization have operated satisfactorily during the year with the continued use of QuickBooks Enterprise as the Commission's financial management system. Maintenance of the headquarters building services and grounds continued to be a challenge, however, by implementing a regular maintenance schedule of the buildings and grounds as supported by regular annual budgetary allocations ensured that those properties and assets continue to be in good order. The Secretariat continued to benefit from its solar panel installation accruing saving to the tune of \$60,000 a year from electricity bills.

38. The Secretariat continues to expand its green policy with the aim of eliminating the use of plastic bottles, Styrofoam containers and plates and a greater emphasis on purchasing recycled or sustainably resourced materials when making procurements. The Secretariat will submit a proposal to FAC to support its efforts to become a leader in environmental responsibility among the regional bodies by having the Commission's headquarters become a zero net energy (ZNE) building by expanding its use of solar power, drastically reducing the purchases of non-recyclable supplies, finding ways to recycle waste generated by the office and through the purchases of carbon offsets for all flights funded by the Commission to reduce the Commission's carbon footprint.

### **3.5 Trust Funds**

39. The Commission continued in 2018 to receive voluntary contributions from member states and multilateral organisations to support the work of the Commission. These are on top of the assessed contributions of member states that supported the core budget for 2018. The following voluntary contributions were gratefully received by the Commission:

- a. \$70,000 from Canada to the Special Requirements Fund (SRF);
- b. \$175,479 from Korea for the Tuna Tagging Project;
- c. \$823,004 from the European Union received in late 2017 for mitigating bycatch of bigeye tuna project;
- d. \$61,068 and \$8,500 from New Zealand for electronic reporting and monitoring, and the host of the one-day face to face meeting of the CMS intersessional working group respectively;
- e. \$151,000 from the United States of America for the SRF (\$30,000), solar energy at headquarter office (\$38,000), electronic reporting standards (\$25,000) and hosting of meetings (\$58,000);
- f. \$139,297 from the Japan Trust to support capacity building projects in fisheries statistic, regulations and enforcement in small island developing states;



- g. \$400,000 from the Chinese Taipei Trust Fund to support capacity building in the fisheries sector in small islands developing states;
- h. \$190,184 from the United Nations Development Fund for the West Pacific East Asia Sustainable Tuna Management Project; and
- i. \$52,000 from the Food and Agriculture Organisation to support the Seabird Mortality Study.

### **3.6 Information Technology Systems**

40. As in previous years, the Secretariat network maintained internal operations and support to member states at more than 99% systems availability. The information and technology systems at the Secretariat are serviced by two full time staff one professional and one support staff who are supported by external contractors sourced through four Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The major technological developments in 2018 include the installation of the direct fiber optic cable link between FSM Telecom exchange to WCPFC Secretariat office with an existing 25 Mbps symmetric connection; one full year of operations of the VEEAM offsite backup/recovery with disaster recovery capacity for all Secretariat servers and data holdings; further alignment of the IT resources to support the priority work of the Secretariat, particularly the compliance case file management system, compliance monitoring reports and online IT tools; and the submission of draft information technology and information security policies and procedures for review by senior management, as highlighted in the 2016 Deloitte security review. Throughout the year the IT team was able to secure the office networks and data holdings while maintaining an acceptable level of access and internet connectivity to support the work of the Secretariat and member states.

41. The IT team continued to support the VMS team and members with their collective effort to include all vessels tracking agreement form (VTAF) or mobile transceiver units (MTU) synchronized automatically for reporting on the VMS; support the implementation of the electronic-reporting system for high seas transshipment reporting by a team of three external contractor companies; and deliver on routine annual online compliance monitoring reporting systems and website applications. The results of such collaborations are best demonstrated through the work of the compliance and science teams and the resulting annual reports of the WCPFC MCS Programmes administered by the Secretariat that were presented to TCC14.

## **4. SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR THE COMMISSION**

42. When the Commission was established in 2004, the Convention that established it acknowledged that some of the functions expected of the Commission were already undertaken by then existing regional organizations and arrangements. So, the Commission was encouraged to take advantage of those exiting capacities and avoid duplicating them. The Commission continued in 2018 to maintain contractual arrangements with other regional organisations and arrangements for the provision of certain services.

### **4.1 The Oceanic Fisheries Programme of the Pacific Community**

43. The Oceanic Fisheries Programme of the Pacific Community (SPC-OFP) continued in the role of conducting data management, statistical analysis, stock assessments and related analytical services, management analyses and member performance monitoring, and other advisory and technical services for the Commission. In 2018, SPC-OFP authored and co-authored 42 papers and reports for SC14, with additional papers to TCC14 and WCPFC15, and provided *ad hoc* advice and support throughout the year. In addition, SPC-OFP provided the necessary technical and scientific advisory support for the following activities:

- a) Meetings of EMandER-WG03, SC14, TCC14, and FADMgmtOptions-IWG03 to support discussions and decision makings;
- b) WPEA Project workshops for tuna data review and annual tuna catch estimates, ongoing support for enhancing data collection systems, and the ongoing support for tuna fishery databases systems covering logsheet, port sampling, unloading and observer data;
- c) The Pacific Tuna Tagging Project and coordinated the project steering committee meeting;
- d) The Pre-Assessment Workshop, to obtain advice and other inputs from CCMs on the stock assessments conducted in 2018;
- e) Advice on the completeness of scientific data provision by CCMs, ROP data submission and available information on purse-seine and longline observer coverage, and catch and effort table summaries for tropical tuna CMMs and South Pacific albacore; and
- f) In 2017/18, SPC-OFP colleagues have continued to provide considerable assistance to the Secretariat so that ROP-data could be used as a source in the online Compliance Case File system.

44. In addition, SPC-OFP curated and facilitated access by researchers to samples contained in the WCPFC Tissue Bank and actioned various requests for access to WCPFC data, as approved by the Executive Director.

#### ***4.2 The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency***

45. The Commission continued its association with the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) through its service level agreement for VMS services, and since 30 June 2016, the service provider used by FFA has been TrackWell ([www.trackwell.com](http://www.trackwell.com)). The Pacific VMS system continues to operate as two separate and distinct entities to protect the integrity of the Commission VMS data and the FFA VMS data. Currently there are almost 3,800 vessels reporting to the Commission VMS, and nearly 33% report through the FFA VMS system with position transfer to the WCPFC (the Commission separately maintains VMS contracts for airtime services for positions from the WCPFC-VMS direct reporting vessels). The Commission VMS system under the services level agreement provided continued and ongoing support to routine VMS services, “flick the switch” implementation and members’ high seas MCS operations. The Secretariat presently has no matters of note to raise with the Commission in respect to the Service Level Agreement with the FFA.

#### ***4.3 The International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean***

46. The International Scientific Committee (ISC) continued to be the scientific services provider for the Northern Committee and provided scientific information and advice as requested by the Northern Committee regarding northern stocks, other billfish and shark stocks in the North Pacific Ocean. In 2018, the 18<sup>th</sup> ISC Plenary was held in Yesou, Republic of Korea, 11-16 July 2018, and was attended by members from Canada, Chinese Taipei, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, and the United States, as well as the Secretariat.

47. In 2018 the ISC conducted an updated assessment for pacific bluefin tuna, and stock assessment for NP swordfish and NP shortfin mako shark. The ISC provided the following stock status assessment for North Pacific tuna and tuna-like species:

- a) NP albacore tuna stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing;
- b) Pacific bluefin tuna stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing; but showing some signs of recovery;
- c) Western and Central North Pacific Ocean swordfish stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing and the East Pacific Ocean swordfish stock is not overfished but

- likely experiencing overfishing;
- d) Pacific blue marlin stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing;
  - e) NP striped marlin stock is experiencing overfishing and is overfished; and
  - f) NP blue shark is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing.

48. The ISC hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> Pacific Bluefin Tuna Management Strategy Evaluation Workshop in Yokohama, Japan from 30-31 May 2018 in preparation for undertaking an MSE process beginning in 2019. The workshop reviewed the need for an MSE application to Pacific bluefin tuna but no decisions were made. The next workshop is tentatively scheduled for May 2019. Future activities of ISC include: completion of a benchmark for the NP striped marlin assessment; meeting of the Pacific bluefin tuna working group on tagging in Honolulu, USA, 9-14 December 2018; and the 4<sup>th</sup> MSE Workshop for NP Albacore from 5-7 March 2019, Yokohama Japan.

## **5. RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

49. As required by the WCPFC Convention, it is imperative that the Commission cooperate and collaborate with the FAO and other specialized UN agencies and other relevant organizations, in particular the other four tuna regional fisheries management bodies, namely, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), to share information and exchange views on areas of common interest and best practices.

### **5.1 UNFAO**

50. The 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was held in Rome from 9 to 13 July 2018 and WCPFC was represented by the Executive Director. COFI is the governing body of the FAO Fisheries Programme and it is tasked with the responsibility to consider and approve the FAO fisheries work programme and budget for the next two years 2019 to 2020. The occasion of the COFI meeting brought together senior fisheries officials of the FAO member states and representatives of numerous national, regional and international fisheries organizations and present excellent opportunity for networking and establishing useful contacts. Several members of WCPFC participated at the deliberations of COFI and the numerous associated side events. Issues of particular interests to the WCPFC were those associated with fisheries and ocean governance and the role of regional fisheries management organisations (RFMO) in global efforts to combat illegal, unregulated and unregulated (IUU) fishing. There were also discussions on the ongoing relevant global and regional processes like the series of ocean conferences and negotiations for an international regime to govern biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions (BBNJ) and RFMOs were encouraged to engaged actively in those global processes. COFI 33 was the first session after the FAO Port States Measures Agreement (PSMA) was launched at the last COFI and FAO members that have ratified it shared their early experiences on implementing the agreement whilst those that have not explained their efforts and preparations towards ratification. The Executive Director highly valued the opportunity of the COFI meeting to interact and secure valuable contacts with senior fisheries officials from FAO members and national, regional and international agencies.

51. The FAO had the rare opportunity to convene its biennial FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in the Pacific. The meeting was held in Fiji from 9 to 13 April 2018 and the Executive Director represented the WCPFC at the meeting. The meeting had a broad agenda, but it was useful to be exposed to the role of effective fisheries management in

regional and global efforts to address resources sustainability, food security and elimination of poverty and hunger.

## **5.2 Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network**

52. At the margins of the COFI meeting, members of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN) had their meeting on 7 and 13 July 2018. The network includes secretariats of fishery bodies of different shape, sizes and mandates and served as a platform for sharing lessons learnt, experiences and good practices. The Executive Director participated at the RSN meeting which was chaired by the outgoing Executive Director of ICCAT Mr Driss Meski. The issues of interest to WCPFC include discussions on roles of regional fisheries bodies in combatting IUU fishing and assisting their members in the implementation of the PSMA in terms of training and capacity building. The regional fisheries bodies with geographical jurisdictions extending beyond areas of national jurisdiction shared similar concerns on the ongoing global discourse on developing an international regime for biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. There was unanimity that the BBNJ process should not undermine existing conservation and management regimes in those areas beyond national jurisdiction but to complement existing regimes. A message that concerned regional fisheries bodies in particular the tuna RFMOs should strongly present directly to the BBNJ negotiations. The key positions of the RSN as relevant to the COFI agenda were communicated through a joint statement from the RSN to COFI 33.

## **5.3 Tuna RFMOs**

53. As is now customary, all Heads of the five tuna RFMOs were in Rome for the biennial COFI meeting and they took advantage of the occasion to convene their joint consultative meeting. The meeting welcomed the new Executive Directors for ICCAT (Mr Camille Manel) and IOTC (Mr Chris O'Brien). The meeting reviewed and considered joint initiatives between the tuna RFMOs including the consolidated list of authorized vessels (CLAV), joint working groups on Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), Fish Aggregating Devices (FAD), and By-Catch; and the advisory group on MCS best practices. These joint initiatives were either promoted and supported by the ABNJ Project or the Kobe Process. The Executive Director explained to his counterparts the concerns that some members of the WCPFC had with the Kobe Process which resulted in the WCPFC's inability to sanction participation at the joint FAD working group. The Chief Executive Officers of the tuna RFMOs shared views on the need for the Kobe Process to restate clearly its objectives and purposes in light of the misconceptions and concerns as to its continued relevance. They were also particularly impressed with progress on collaborations amongst their compliance staff and programmes through mechanisms like the IMCS tuna sub-network.

54. The Steering Committee of the Kobe Process also took advantage of the COFI meeting to meet on 11 July 2018 chaired by Mr Stefaan Depypere. The key agenda was how to organize future work of the Kobe Process in light of reservations as to the continued relevance of the Process. The Executive Director explained WCPFC non-engagement in the joint FAD working group and the general concerns of some of its members as to the continued future role of the Kobe Process. He further explained the perception that the Kobe Process was perceived to have moved away from its original purpose of being an informal platform for coordination and collaboration amongst tuna RFMOs to something more formal and binding. The Steering Committee agreed for the Chair to develop a Concept Note that articulate clearly the origins and purpose of the Kobe Process and set out clearly how the Kobe Process proposes to undertake its future work. The representatives of the tuna RFMOs

undertook to provide space in the agenda of their annual meetings to consider and deliberate on the said Concept Note. WCPFC15 will have the opportunity to consider the Concept Note and decide on the future engagement of WCPFC in the work of the Kobe Process.

55. Relationship with IATTC remains one of the key relationships for WCPFC because of our shared boundaries, joint management area over overlapped convention areas and potentially shared tuna stocks. In this regard, the Secretariats of the WCPFC and IATTC maintained close liaisons and cooperated in various areas. As mentioned in the section of the report for the Northern Committee, the Northern Committee continued in 2018 to collaborate with IATTC through what has become an annual joint meeting to consider management issues of the Pacific bluefin tuna stock. There was also a workshop on a possible catch documentation scheme for Pacific bluefin tuna held prior to NC14. Training for cross accreditation of observers continued in 2018 and so as ongoing collaboration under the by-catch component of the ABNJ project. The Executive Director attended the annual meeting of the IATTC in August 2018 and met with his IATTC counterpart Dr Guillermo Compean.

56. During 2018, the Secretariat Compliance staff continued to work closely with counterparts in other tuna RFMOs, including through participation in the Tuna Compliance Network (TCN) activities. The TCN was launched in March 2017 and its aim is to facilitate communication and cooperation between officers responsible for compliance in the tuna RFMOs. While it is focused on tuna fisheries, the Network also promotes the involvement of other relevant experts in fisheries compliance and monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), in order to share best practice compliance processes, and ultimately, to contribute to reducing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

57. In February, the Compliance Manager, IT Manager and Assistant Compliance Manager participated at the 2nd Workshop of the TCN held at the headquarters of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Honiara, Solomon Islands. The meeting was a valuable opportunity to network with counterparts from other tuna RFMOs in other oceans, as well as other regional fishery bodies who we have a close association in information and data management systems, including the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the FFA, the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), and Pacific Community (SPC). At the workshop, participants exchanged information on each organization's current information systems and discussed opportunities for their enhancement. Participants recognized that tuna RFMOs and other similar regional organizations have a high number of reporting requirements, and that these translate into large quantities of information that need to be collected, compiled, analyzed and reported on as efficiently as possible. Participants acknowledged that it is important to streamline the management of this information to assist each Secretariat to better support the monitoring of compliance with RFMO obligations as is envisaged under respective compliance monitoring schemes and procedures.

58. The Secretariat continued liaising with the CCSBT Secretariat in 2018 to explore ways in which it might establish the systems and processes necessary to operationalise the Memorandum of Cooperation signed in 2017, towards enabling ROP observers to potentially assist CCSBT with monitoring high seas transshipments involving Southern bluefin tuna in the WCPFC Convention Area. An update on this joint work was reported to TCC14.

59. In March 2018, the Compliance Manager and SPC-OFP Database Manager joined other tuna RFMO Secretariat representatives at the FAO-hosted Coordinated Working Party/FAO Technical Workshop on global harmonization of tuna fisheries statistics for tuna RFMO

Secretariats. The meeting provided an opportunity for the Secretariat to be kept up to date on the various fisheries data electronic-reporting and global data exchange standard developments, that might assist in future electronic reporting and catch documentation scheme initiatives in the WCPFC context.

#### **5.4 Pacific Regional Organisations**

60. The Secretariat continued in 2018 to maintain close links with the relevant Pacific regional organization. In March the Executive Director had the rare privilege to observe at the 2<sup>nd</sup> PNA Leaders Summit which was held in Majuro, Marshall Islands. The Summit adopted the Delap Commitment which reiterated the PNA political leadership's commitment to sustainable fisheries management and maximizing economic returns from their fisheries. They also reaffirmed their commitment to the WCPFC and its role in sustainable fisheries management. The Executive Director also attended the annual meeting of FFC – Officials and the Compliance Manager the FFA Workshop on the WCPFC Compliance Monitoring Scheme in Auckland, New Zealand, and the annual FFC Ministerial meeting in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. At both FFC meetings, delegates were provided updates on key developments at WCPFC. The FFC Ministerial meeting formalized the appointment of the incoming FFA Director General Dr Manu Tupou-Roosen.

61. The Executive Director represented WCPFC at the annual meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in Nauru from 3 to 6 October 2018. The meeting was attended by heads of states and governments of the Pacific and is the premier annual political gathering for the Pacific. WCPFC attended as one of the accredited intergovernmental observer organisations. The Executive Director circulated a written statement to the meeting updating leaders of the key developments, priorities and challenges of the WCPFC including the favourable report on the status of the four key commercial tuna stocks in the WCPO. As requested, the Executive Director presented on the impacts of climate change on the tropical tuna fisheries and cited the outcomes of ongoing studies in this area that pointed to a strong eastward shift in the distribution and abundance of those stocks. Fisheries, as agreed, is a standing item on the leaders annual meeting.

## **6. PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna Project Bycatch Component**

62. WCPFC is responsible for a portion of the bycatch component of the Global Environment Facility-funded and FAO-implemented ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna Project under an Execution Agreement signed on 25 October 2014 and extending for 52 months (i.e. early 2019). The objective of the work is to reduce bycatch and other adverse ecosystem impacts on biodiversity in tuna fisheries. Since the initiation of the project the WCPFC's work has been coordinated by Dr Shelley Clarke acting as the project's Technical Coordinator-Sharks and Bycatch (TCSB). In February 2018 Dr Clarke relocated from the WCPFC Secretariat to FAO headquarters where she continued in the coordination role under contract to FAO with duties specified under an amendment to the FAO-WCPFC Execution Agreement.

63. At the annual meeting of the Project Steering Committee, held in July 2018 in Rome and attended by the WCPFC Executive Director, it was confirmed that the GEF would grant FAO a no-cost extension to allow the project more time to complete its work within its original budget. In order for the WCPFC-based work to continue past the original termination date in early 2019 a further amendment to the FAO-WCPFC Execution Agreement, as well as a 2019 MOU between

WCPFC and SPC, will be required. FAO is calling for all partners' project work to be completed by August 2019, at the latest, so that the ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna Project's entire programme of work can be closed out by the end of 2019 and thus allow for a proposal for a second phase, i.e. ABNJ2, to be considered in 2020.

64. The key achievements of the project in 2018 include:

- a. Shark post-release mortality tagging studies for longline fisheries continued with funding from both the ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna Project and the European Union. As of October 2018, shark post-release mortality tagging has been completed in New Zealand; tagging remains underway in Fiji and has recently been initiated in New Caledonia and the Marshall Islands. A total of 75 shortfin mako and silky sharks have been tagged;
- b. A Pacific-wide silky shark assessment, undertaken in cooperation with IATTC, was submitted to and endorsed by SC14 in August 2018;
- c. A Pacific-wide risk assessment for whale shark was submitted to and endorsed by SC14 in August 2018;
- d. The TCSB is supporting the work of WCPFC's Inter-sessional Working Group-Sharks (chaired by Japan) which is attempting to draft a single, comprehensive shark management measure;
- e. Consultant funding (\$30,000) saved by the TCSB's work on the four shark assessments (Pacific-wide bigeye thresher, Southern Hemisphere porbeagle, Pacific-wide silky shark and Pacific-wide whale shark) was reprogrammed to supplement funding allocated by the WCPFC to support the development of shark limit reference points;
- f. Work has continued on the Bycatch Management Information System (BMIS) mainly in the form of updating new references and improving search capabilities (an information paper was presented to SC14);
- g. A workshop on bycatch problem-solving using BMIS was held in Nouméa on 28-30 May 2018 and attended by representatives of 11 WCPFC CCMs and 7 IGOs/NGOs; and
- h. The ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna Project contributed a total of seven working and information papers to SC14 in August 2018.

## **6.2 West Pacific East Asia Project**

65. The GEF-funded UNDP Project (*Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas*), which commenced in October 2014, will be end in April 2019. The participating governments are Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam. The total GEF funding support was around USD 2.2 million for three years but because of delayed commencement in Indonesia and Vietnam, the project was extended to another 18 months with no additional cost. The WPEA Project is linked with the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) and the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Project (YSLME) under the Project Framework Document (PFD). Under the Project Framework Document, PEMSEA, YSLME and WCPFC should cooperate in the implementation of the three projects for regional and sub-regional programmes and mechanisms for coast and ocean governance. The next and possibly final WPEA Project Board meeting is scheduled in early 2019 with the project terminal evaluation to commence early next year.

66. The three countries continued to collect tuna catch data at tuna landing sites throughout the year. The WPEA-SM project is supporting 65 enumerators in Indonesia and Vietnam to collect catch and effort data from port sampling, over 20 support staff to encode data into databases, and Data Review and Total Annual Catch Estimates workshops being convened, assisted by Mr Peter Williams (SPC-OFP) to produce national total tuna catch estimates by species and by gear. In

2018, total catch of oceanic tunas caught by the three countries are as follow: Indonesia - 466.268 mt; Philippines – 236,483 mt and Vietnam – 112,625 mt.

67. The WPEA-SM project undertook several workshops and consultancies to support its work in each participating country and jointly in a three countries setup covering a variety of areas and subject matters including development of harvest strategy framework; climate change adaptations, ecosystem approach to fisheries management; monitoring control and surveillance issues; supply and value chain analysis; fish aggregating devices management; fisheries legislative review and fishing manual for fishermen.

68. The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the WPEA Project, titled the *Western Pacific East Asia Improved Tuna Monitoring Activity* (WPEA-ITM), funded by the government of New Zealand for the next five years, is in progress for its commencement. Mr Dale Withington has been hired as the Project Manager of this phase. Key features of this phase include: expanding the capacity of enumerator programs to gather fisheries catch landings and port sampling data; build the capacities and sustainability of fisheries observer programs; support additional national policy and legal reviews to improve tuna fisheries catch monitoring and governance; and add to the capacities of national fisheries data management and analysis efforts. The practical implementation of the new phase awaits the completion of internal approval processes by the three participating countries which are progressing well at the time of this report. Despite these delays, the Secretariat has gone ahead and clarified in a memorandum of understandings (MOU) with SPC the role of the SPC-OFP in support of the new project activities. The first meeting of the Project Steering Committee for the third phase is scheduled for Honolulu on 7<sup>th</sup> December 201, where arrangements to fast track the implementation of the project will be clarified and decided.

## **7. FUTURE WORK**

69. The WCPFC-15 scheduled for Honolulu, Hawaii from 10 to 14 December 2018 is expected to take decision on key issues that will constitute the main components of the work programme for 2018 and outer years. Without preempting the outcomes of those decisions, the following activities are anticipated to feature predominately in the work programmes of the Commission and its Secretariat:

- a) work on harvest strategy will continue to intensify hopefully facilitated and expedited by an effective and efficient Science-Management dialogue;
- b) work on refining and strengthening the stock assessment outcome for the bigeye stock will continue into 2019 especially on the growth rate models for bigeye;
- c) work will continue to strengthen and support the implementation of the tropical tuna measure;
- d) work on rebuilding the Pacific bluefin tuna will continue to attract global interest given the severe overfished state of the stock;
- e) work on revitalizing the economic sustainability of the South Pacific albacore fishery will continue hopefully aided by a decision on a TRP for the stock;
- f) subject to a decision on a new CMM on the CMS, work will continue to improve and enhance the efficiencies of the CMS and the online facilities supporting it;
- g) subject to a decision on a new comprehensive CMM on sharks and rays management, work on strengthening the measures on sharks and other bycatch will continue;
- h) work on fast tracking developments in electronic reporting and electronic monitoring will continue well into the future.

## **8. RECOMMENDATION**

70. WCPF15 is invited to consider and note the report.



### **Status of Key SC Work Programme Activities in 2018**

- ***Project 15: West Pacific East Asia Project***  
 The Secretariat continued to manage and implement the GEF-funded WPEA-SM Project (Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas). This project will be terminated in April 2019, but the fishery monitoring component of the WPEA project will continue under the name of *WPEA Improved Tuna Monitoring Activity* funded by the government of New Zealand.
- ***Project 35: Age, growth and maturity of bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean***  
 This work falls under *Project 81 Further work on bigeye tuna age and growth*. These additional analyses informed the SPC-OFP updated assessment presented as SC14-SA-WP-03, and the evaluation of CMM 2017-01 as papers SC14-MI-WP-08 and 08a.
- ***Project 35b: Management of the WCPFC Tuna Tissue Bank***  
 This project has an annual budget of USD 97,200, with an indicative rise in 2020 and 2021. Six external requests to access the tissue bank have been received to date. SC14 recognise the value of this project and recommends its continued support by the Commission. The Commission will be invited to discuss the implications of the Nagoya Protocol.
- ***Project 42: Pacific-wide tagging project (PTTP)***  
 A PTTP Steering Committee meeting was convened during SC14, and SPC-OFP presented a progress report on 2017-2018 tagging activities and the status of tag recovery. The SC has recommended an increased budget to support this critical work of the Commission of USD 645,000 in 2019.
- ***Project 57: Limit Reference Points - Develop proposed limit reference points for elasmobranchs***  
 A progress report SC14-MI-WP-07 was presented to SC14, with a view to the researchers receiving feedback on their approach to date. A final report will be presented at SC15. The Commission supports this work to the value of USD 25,000, and ABNJ contributed a further USD 30,000. The consultant(s) will attend SC15 at their own expense.
- ***Project 60: Purse Seine Species Composition***  
 SPC-OFP reported on work conducted to date in SC14-ST-WP-02. No Commission funding was provided in 2018, and none is required for 2019, but USD 40,000 is requested for 2020 and 2021. The focus is on consolidation of the analytical work, though additional observer when available.
- ***Project 82: Yellowfin tuna age and growth***  
 This project commenced in 2018 and will inform the 2019 yellowfin tuna assessment. The Commission provided USD 100,000 of funding to support to the work in 2018 and a further USD 85,000 will be provided in 2019.

### **Key TCC Related Activities in 2018**

The activities of the WCPFC Technical and Compliance programme are covered in detail in the Executive Directors Report to TCC14 on Operational Issues with the WCPFC MCS Programmes (*TCC14 working paper WCPFC-TCC14-2018-05*). Some highlights in 2018 include:

- The Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMS) has and is expected to continue to be at the core of the Commission's Technical and Compliance programme. It presently provides the platform for the TCC to undertake its key task of assessing the level of compliance of CCMs of their obligations under the WCPFC Convention and CMMs. But it is a platform that rests on top of a network of integrated MCS tools that furnished the relevant data and information that inform TCC's assessment.
- Through 2018, the Review of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme has been continuing facilitated by the CMS-IWG and this remains timely. The Secretariat stands ready to support the Review with the expectation that the CMS-IWG deliberations will suggest improvements to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the CMS.
- The WCPFC online Compliance Case file system has increased the Compliance Monitoring Scheme workload for the Secretariat and CCMs, but potentially provides an additional source of information that is relevant to TCCs priority task of reviewing implementation by CCMs of obligations. To this end the Secretariat has worked to prepare trial summary tables of flag CCM responses to alleged infringements notified in the online Compliance Case file system and has drawn on these efforts in preparation of this year's MCS program Annual Reports. While the paper and these efforts are based on CMM 2017-07 and the Secretariat has considered some participants' suggestions made to the CMS-IWG, it is without prejudice to any decisions following the Review of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme.
- The delivery of new online technical solutions to assist MCS personnel in efficiently discharging their responsibilities that included:
  - Authorized flag CCM MCS entities have periodically received through their respective CCM portals each of their vessel's daily VMS-reporting status (how many position reports are transmitted by each vessel on each date) and determine and display a generic vessel status ("in port" or "at sea", for example) – this covers 2017 calendar year and 2018 year to date;
  - A trial approach within the online compliance case file system of categories to summarise flag CCM responses on the outcome of their investigations of alleged infringements as notified in the Compliance Case file system; and
  - The export feature requested by TCC13 has been added to the online technical solution that is available to authorized CCM MCS personnel, through secure login, a list of vessels that have been previously inspected under the HSBI scheme.

- Through the efficient use of a limited budget and with supplemental financial assistance from New Zealand and USA, a positive report of progress is provided on the high seas transshipment e-reporting system development by the Secretariat. It is anticipated that phase 1 of the system, which will accept data in JSON format, will become operational in early 2019. Phase 2, which will accept data in XML and FLUX formats, would be scheduled subject to availability of budgetary funds, and would become operational in late 2019 at the earliest. The design of the high seas transshipment E-reporting system will provide the WCPFC with a base infrastructure that could easily be modified to collect other types of data.