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FFA PAPER ON RATIONALISATION OF WCPFC-RELATED MEETINGS

WCPFC-TCC8-2012/IP11

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FFA Rationalisation of WCPFC related meetings

**WCPFC8- 2011/DP-48
28 March 2012**

AGENDA ITEM 14 – OTHER MATTERS - Rationalisation of WCPFC related meetings

1. FFA members have raised concerns since the inception of the WCPFC that its meeting and associated work load must be sustainable and must not disadvantage FFA members. However, to date, the number of WCPFC related sessions per year (the Commission and the subsidiary bodies meetings) have ranged from 4 to 6.
2. This has placed significant burden on all Commission Members, but that is felt most keenly in small administrations.
3. This is particularly the case in 2012 with 6 proposed sessions (WCPFC8, SC8, Management Objectives Workshop, NC8, TCC8 and WCPFC9).
4. The current number of sessions also requires an elevated Commission budget, as we have noted in the FAC meeting discussions.
5. The question that has been raised by Vanuatu at the Heads of Delegation meeting and in plenary, on behalf of FFA Members, is whether there is a way to reduce the number of WCPFC related meetings. The paper considers this question and presents options as possible ways forward.

Legal framework for meetings

6. The legal framework for the frequency of meetings is framed in the Convention and the Rules of Procedure to require **annual** meetings as follows:
7. Article 9(3) of the Convention provides that “[t]he Commission shall hold an **annual meeting**. The Commission shall hold such other meetings as may be necessary to carry out its functions under this Convention.”
8. Further, Article 11(3) provides that “[e]ach committee shall meet as often as is required for the efficient exercise of its functions, provide that each Committee shall, in any event, **prior to the annual meeting of the Commission** and shall report to the annual meeting the results of its deliberations”.
9. Rule 1 of the WCPFC Rules of Procedure provide that “[t]he Commission shall hold an annual regular session...**[a]ll meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies shall be held within no more than two sessions per year, unless the Commission decides otherwise**”.
10. Although the legal framework requires an annual meeting of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, given the Rules of Procedure, there is still flexibility to at least reduce the number of sessions by combining these meetings. This concept is explored further below.

Options

Option 1 – Annual Commission meetings (with the second annual meeting and subsidiary bodies’ meetings having a more focussed, limited agenda)

11. Members could consider a system of annual Commission meetings, but with every second annual meeting being subject to a very restricted agenda and participation. That is, every second meeting could be focussed solely on administrative matters (budget, annual report etc) and a clear and limited set of substantive matters that will also require annual consideration, for example CNM applications and IUU listing. This would mean a far shorter meeting, less preparation time and decreased attendance, less travel time and less cost.

12. This approach would require a careful consideration of all the CMMs to determine what ‘annual obligations’ will need to be achieved every year, and whether there are any that can be considered biennially at the more substantive Commission meeting.

13. Members will also need to consider what to do with the meetings of the subsidiary bodies. One option would be to allow the full complement of meetings to take place in the first year, as in the status quo, and in the second year of meetings, these subsidiary bodies meet for a few days just before the annual session to give direction on the clear and limited set of substantive matters that require annual consideration and decision by the Commission.

Option 2 – Annual meetings (with reduced/combined subsidiary bodies)

14. WCPFC is the only RFMO that has a committee of the magnitude and nature of the TCC. FFA Members have noted in the past that the current set up causes a high degree of duplication – especially on issues such as IUU lists and CNM applications. Most other RFMOs do have a “compliance committee” but it generally meets immediately in advance of the Commission proper.

15. The TCC has played a valuable role in the initial years of the Commission and has progressed numerous issues faster than the Commission could have alone. However, now that many measures are in place, the rate of change could be slowed down by holding TCC with the Commission.

16. Similarly, the SC and NC could be held in conjunction with each other. As well as reducing costs and meeting time, this could bring benefits such as greater cooperation on northern stock assessments. If the date of the SC were pushed back it would also assist SPC to produce stock assessments after the 30 April deadline for submission of data.

Analysis

17. There are other options to those above that could also be examined. There are also other permutations, such as combining TCC and SC, rather than TCC and the Commission, or combination of above two options.

18. Either option in its own right would save approximately the same amount of meeting time (option 1 saving approximately 3-4 weeks every second year and option 2 saving approximately 2 weeks each year).¹ Of the two options that are presented above, the second is more likely to be achieved in the short term as it is likely that many Commission Members, including FFA members, will require a degree of operational and strategic oversight on an annual basis.

19. Annual substantive meetings of the Commission make WCPFC more responsive to changes and issues (although this has been noted as a negative issue as well in that measures are rarely given sufficient time to run before being updated or replaced).

20. Either option is likely to make a significant difference to the workload of many Commission members, particularly once travel time and preparation is taken into account.

21. Any option that reduces the current meeting time will require commitment and discipline from all Commission Members. The pace of development that has been occurring is barely sustainable at present and would be completely unachievable under either option. As a result, the Commission would have to become far more effective at prioritising issues and structuring meeting agendas. Where appropriate, the Commission could also make use of the process as envisaged in the Rules of Procedures for adopting decisions inter-sessionally.

Recommendation

22. Commission Members are invited to consider the information provided and which option (2 above or others) to pursue in terms of a rationalisation of the WCPFC meetings.

¹ Noting, however, that this is assumption does not take into account any small working groups, such as the Management Options Working Group.