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**Annual Report of the Executive Director on the Work of the Commission in 2024**

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**WCPFC21-2024-02**

**14 October 2024**

**Submitted by the Executive Director**

## **I. Executive Summary**

In 2024, the WCPFC reinforced its conservation and management efforts to tackle both emerging and long-standing challenges in the sustainable management of migratory fish stocks. With rising global demand for tuna and growing pressures on marine ecosystems, WCPFC's role has become increasingly vital. The 2024 agenda builds on prior achievements while integrating new scientific findings and adaptive strategies to safeguard fisheries for future generations.

The Commission's new conservation and management measures that took effect in 2024 are focused on **regulating fishing activities**, particularly through tighter controls on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) and spatial/temporal closures to safeguard juvenile fish populations. Notably, this year has seen further efforts to integrate ecosystem-based management principles into the framework, with a strong emphasis on minimizing bycatch and addressing broader environmental impacts such as climate change. The WCPFC continues to rely on rigorous scientific stock assessments, provided by its Scientific Services Provider (SSP<sup>1</sup>), to guide these decisions. The recent re-estimations of biomass depletion levels for species like South Pacific albacore reflect the Commission's commitment to data-driven, responsive management, as seen in ongoing discussions on adjusting the interim Target Reference Point (TRP) for this species.

**Enforcement and compliance** remain cornerstones of the WCPFC's 2024 work. The Commission has strengthened its monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) mechanisms, such as the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and the Regional Observer Programme (ROP), to ensure transparency and adherence to established regulations. In 2024, the Commission has placed additional focus on addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, particularly through coordinated regional efforts and partnerships. As the WCPFC adapts to the growing challenges posed by climate change and evolving fisheries dynamics, its framework remains critical for maintaining the sustainability and resilience of key fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO).

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<sup>1</sup> Secretariat of the Pacific Community - Oceanic Fisheries Programme (SPC-OFP).

The Commission and individual members continue to take note of **market-based sustainability programs** that emphasize data collection to show progress toward key milestones, including the development of comprehensive harvest strategies. In 2024, many industry stakeholders have emphasized the importance of progressing efforts to meet sustainability program objectives that provide access to key markets. As programs like the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch undertake updates to their environmental standards and the assessments of tuna fisheries under the jurisdiction of the WCPFC, continued emphasis on robust data collection, reporting and compliance will position the Commission for the future.

The development of a **crew labor standards measure** by the WCPFC represents a significant step toward protecting the welfare of those working on fishing vessels. This initiative, driven by intersessional work led by New Zealand and Indonesia, aims to establish clear guidelines for crew members' labor rights, safety, and working conditions. Given the often harsh and hazardous environments of commercial fishing, the new measure seeks to address issues such as fair treatment, safe working environments, and prevention of labor exploitation. By focusing on the development of comprehensive labor standards, the WCPFC demonstrates its commitment not only to sustainable fisheries but also to safeguarding human rights within the fishing industry. This measure will also support greater accountability and transparency, helping to ensure that fishing activities in the region align with international labor practices.

This report contains an overview of the Commission's 2024 activities and summarizes the work undertaken since the last annual session (WCPFC20) in December 2023.

### *Purpose*

- This Annual Report integrates key activities undertaken throughout 2024, organized under broad themes, to offer a comprehensive review of the Commission's performance against the objective outlined in Article 2<sup>2</sup> of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention. Additionally, this report serves as a reference for deliberations at WCPFC21, where the Commission will review reports from subsidiary body meetings and intersessional activities and adopt decisions to support achieving the objective of the Convention.

### *Key Achievements*

- The Commission's intersessional activities demonstrated members' commitment to better understanding on fish stock status and proper management, including refining data collection, minimizing fishing impacts on seabirds, improving high-seas transshipment management, and supporting vessel crew safety. The successful Second Science-Management Dialogue (SMD02) in September advanced the development of harvest strategies for tropical tunas and South Pacific albacore and strengthened cooperation with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) on shared stock management.

### *Challenges*

- One of the key challenges WCPFC faces is the growing international focus on ocean conservation, particularly following the adoption of the Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). This new framework places added expectations on regional fisheries bodies like WCPFC

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<sup>2</sup> The objective of this Convention is to ensure, through effective management, the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks in the western and central Pacific Ocean in accordance with the 1982 Convention and the Agreement.

to contribute to global ocean health through stronger conservation measures, resulting in concerns about potential impacts on the management of, and benefits from, existing fisheries management framework. The key, therefore, will be to ensure that implementing the BBNJ Agreement complements and strengthens the existing successful fisheries management framework in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, rather than undermining it.

### *Looking Forward*

- WCPFC has always been a symbol of opportunity. Its origins are rooted in great vision and aspiration, borne out of the foresight and resolve of small island developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific region to ensure that the fisheries resources shared between areas of national jurisdiction and the high seas would be sustained for future generations. The strong foundation on which WCPFC was established has been a hallmark of its success and will be a key ingredient in its ability to stay relevant into the future. Advancing progress on the development of harvest strategies, and strengthening monitoring capabilities by addressing data gaps, are at the forefront of the Commission's work in the short to medium term. The evolving international framework for ocean management underscores WCPFC's crucial role in sustainable development of marine resources.

## II. Fisheries Conservation and Management Measures

*Overview of the key WCPFC conservation and management measures adopted for tuna and other highly migratory species (e.g., catch limits, effort controls, seasonal closures)*

The effectiveness of WCPFC’s conservation and management measures was reviewed at the 20<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC20) with the annual presentation by the SSP and the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)<sup>3</sup> of the [Overview of tuna fisheries in the western and central Pacific Ocean](#). The overview covered the most recent fishing year (2023) for which provisional data is available and will be updated to serve as the basis for the Commission’s science-based management decision-making at WCPFC21.

### *Catch summaries of WCPO tuna stocks*

- Catches of four tuna species (skipjack, yellowfin, bigeye, and albacore) are summarized in Figures 2-4, below, from the SC20 paper “[Estimates of Annual Catches in the WCPFC Statistical Area](#)”, prepared by the SSP. The Figures provide a useful depiction of the scale of tuna catch in the WCPFC Convention Area by species and gear type, and in relation to total global tuna catches and tuna catches in other oceans.

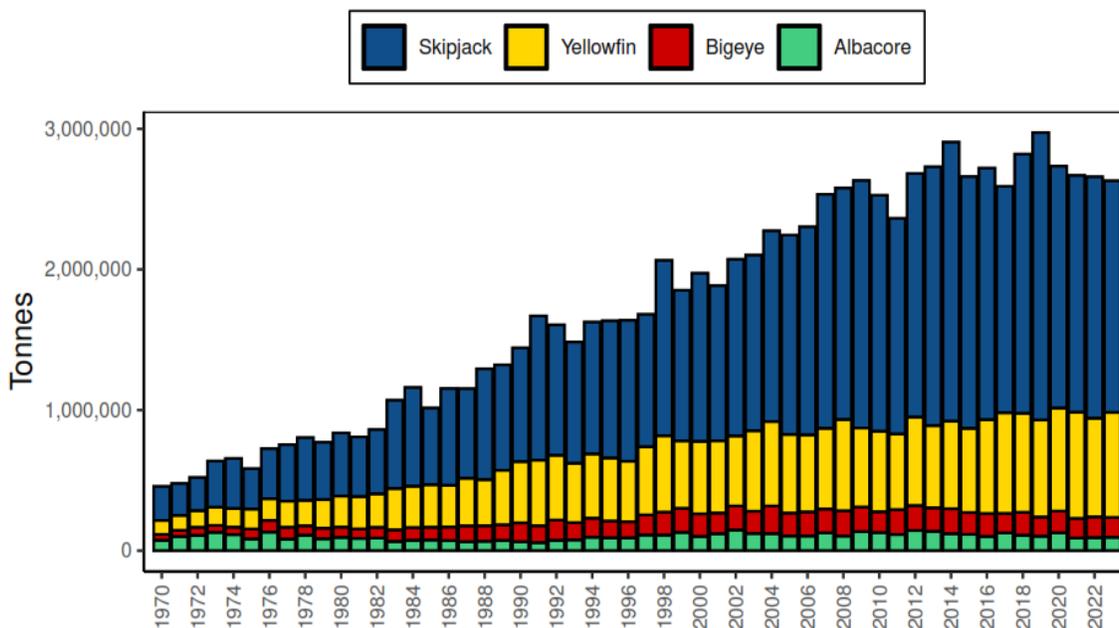


Figure 2: Catches of tuna in the WCPFC Statistical Area, by species

<sup>3</sup> FFA provides an overview of economic conditions to complement the scientific overview provided by the SSP.

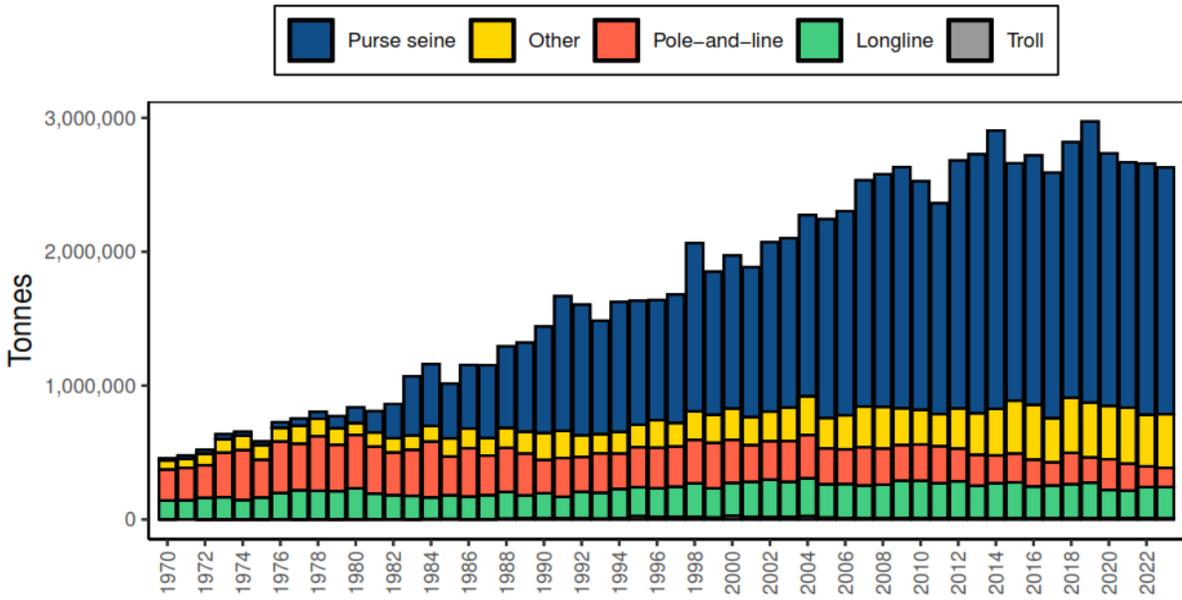


Figure 3: Catches of tuna in the WCPFC Statistical Area, by gear

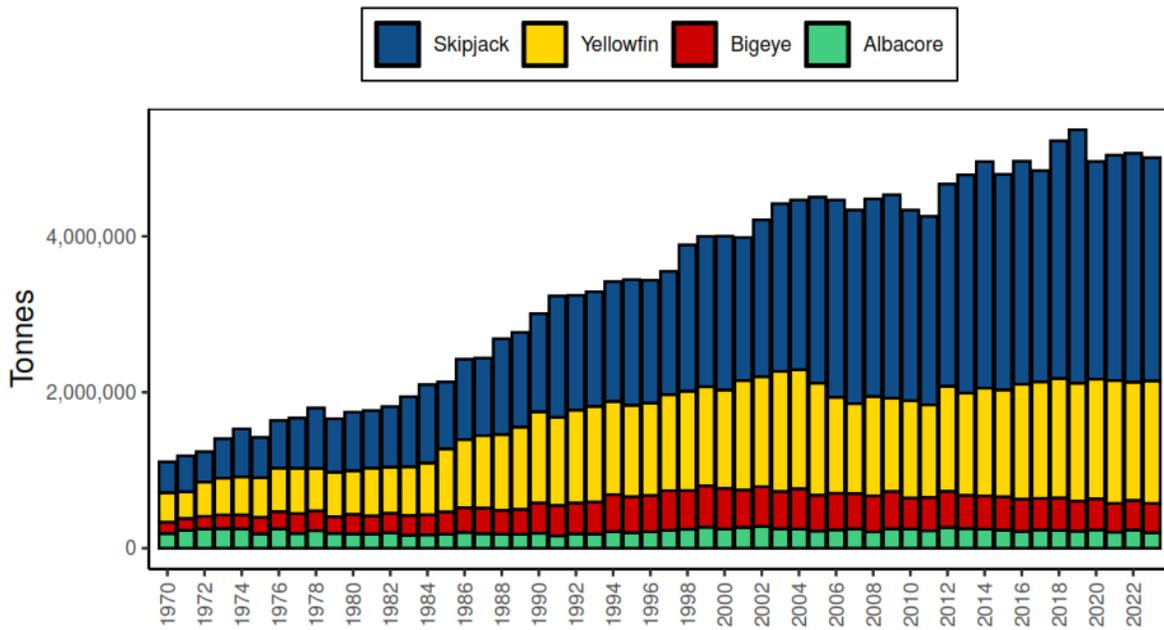


Figure 4: Global tuna catches, by species

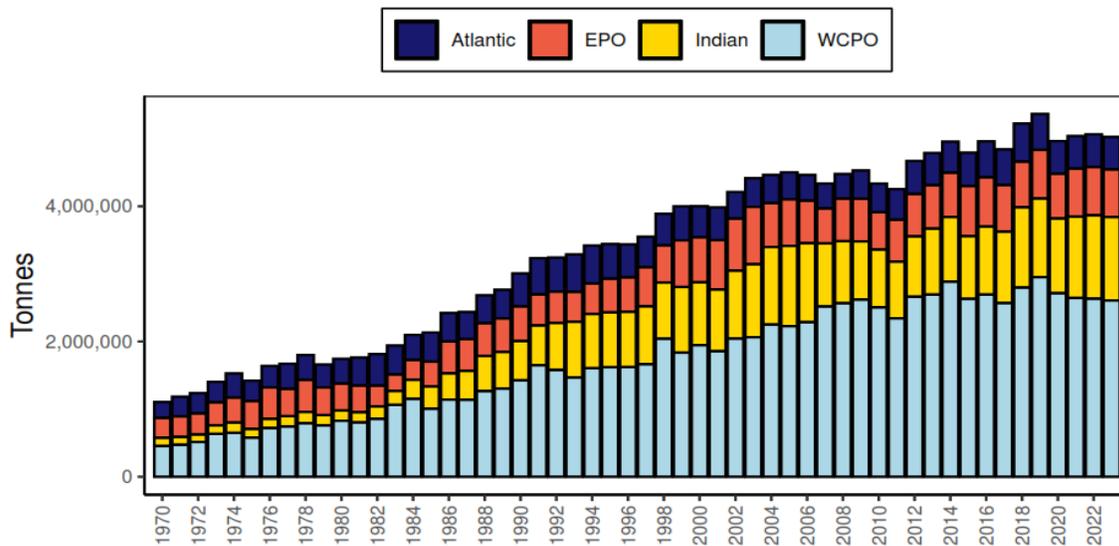


Figure 5: Global tuna catches, by ocean area

### *Conservation and management of skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tunas*

The **WCPFC's tropical tuna measure** (CMM 2023-01) is a cornerstone of the Commission's efforts to sustainably manage three key tuna species—**skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye**—in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. As one of the most comprehensive and long-standing measures since 2005, it plays a vital role in ensuring the world's largest tuna fishery remains productive while minimizing overfishing and protecting juvenile tuna populations. The Commission's adoption of CMM 2023-01 at WCPFC20 marked the 13<sup>th</sup> iteration<sup>4</sup> of the WCPFC's conservation and management of three key tuna species.

### *New tropical tuna measures for 2024*

- The key changes to the tropical tuna measure that took effect at the beginning of 2024 promote **enhanced monitoring requirements commensurate with any increases in bigeye tuna catch limits** by longline vessels, as well as the reduced periods for in zone and high seas FAD closures to be applied by purse seine vessels. The combination of **catch limits, effort controls, and seasonal closures** to manage the world's largest tuna fishery continues to serve as the basis for ensuring sustainable management of skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tunas in the WCPO, and balance the need for long-term stock sustainability with economic interests. The Commission will conduct its annual review of the performance of the tropical tuna measure (CMM 2023-01) at WCPFC21, and in 2025 (at WCPFC22), will review the performance of CMM 2023-01, after having the benefit of a full year of implementation in 2024.

### *Management of South Pacific albacore tuna*

- The inaugural South Pacific albacore CMM was adopted at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regular Session of the Commission (CMM 2005-02) and was among the first set of substantive conservation and

<sup>4</sup> The first three iterations of the tropical tuna measure covered bigeye and yellowfin tuna from 2005-2011. Skipjack tuna was added in CMM 2012-01.

management measures adopted by the Commission. This was replaced by CMM 2010-05 in 2010 and again in 2015 with the current iteration of CMM 2015-02.

- The Commission continued its efforts in 2024 to strengthen the conservation and management of South Pacific albacore through its intersessional working group (IWG) on the **development of a roadmap for effective conservation and management of South Pacific albacore** (SPA-RM IWG). Led by Fiji, the discussions underway through the SPA-RM IWG are expected to supplement the Commission’s consideration of a SP-ALB management procedure at WCPFC21.

### *Harvest strategies*

#### *Skipjack management procedure*

- The Commission’s implementation of an **interim management procedure** (MP) for skipjack tuna was reviewed at SC20 and SMD02 in 2024. The MP is a critical component of harvest strategies and marks a step forward in the WCPFC’s implementation of a harvest strategy approach. Further work is expected by the SSP ahead of SC21 in 2025 to inform discussions on whether the interim MP may need to be revised.

#### *Bigeye and yellowfin tunas target reference point*

- The Harvest Strategy Workplan schedules a **yellowfin and bigeye TRP for adoption in 2024**. The outcomes of discussions at SC20 and SMD02 reflect the need for updated analysis and more accurate projections to guide future management decisions for these critical tuna stocks. For example, analysis in 2024 by the SSP concluded that the objectives in CMM 2023-01 for yellowfin and bigeye tuna cannot be met simultaneously, where an objective met for one stock will mean that the other stock will be above or below its corresponding level. The Commission will consider the information at WCPFC21 on the re-evaluation of the candidate yellowfin and bigeye tuna TRPs that take into account the fisheries of Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam.

#### *South Pacific albacore target reference point*

- Following the Commission’s **adoption of an interim target reference point** (iTRP) for South Pacific albacore at WCPFC20,<sup>5</sup> the SC20 reviewed a recalibrated TRP based on an updated stock assessment for South Pacific albacore and an evaluation of the implications of a range of depletion levels requested by WCPFC20. The SMD02 reviewed the SC20 outcomes regarding the recalibrated TRP for South Pacific albacore and the Commission will continue discussions at WCPFC21.

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<sup>5</sup> Specified as four percent below the estimated average spawning potential depletion of the stock over the period 2017-2019 ( $0.96 \text{ SB}_{2017-2019} / \text{SB}_{F=0}$ ). Technical definitions: Spawning potential depletion refers to the estimated South Pacific albacore spawning potential as a percentage of the estimated spawning potential in the absence of fishing (i.e., the unfished spawning potential). The metric is dynamic and is estimated for each model time step. The method to be used in calculating spawning potential in the absence of fishing ( $\text{SB}_{F=0}$ ) shall be: a.  $\text{SB}_{F=0}$ ,  $t_1$ - $t_2$  is the average of the estimated spawning potential in the absence of fishing for a time window of ten years based on the most recent South Pacific albacore stock assessment, where  $t_1=y-10$  to  $t_2=y-1$  where  $y$  is the year under consideration; and b. The estimation shall be based on the relevant estimates of recruitment that have been adjusted to reflect conditions without fishing according to the stock recruitment relationship.

### Harvest Strategy Workplan

- The Commission’s **Harvest Strategy Workplan** was again updated in 2023 at WCPFC20 to reflect progress to date and to confirm the Commission’s focus in 2024 on preparations for adoption of an MP for South Pacific albacore. **Attachment A** to this report provides a summary of work undertaken by the Commission since 2015 up to SC20 in 2024 toward the establishment of harvest strategies for four WCPO tuna stocks. **Table 1**, below, shows the progress toward adoption of harvest strategy elements for four WCPFC tuna stocks and fisheries, based on the Harvest Strategy Workplan.

**Table 1.** Source: SPC-OFP.

|                        | SKJ                    | SP-ALB                     | BET                | YFT |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-----|
|                        | Tropical Purse Seine   | Southern Long Line         | Tropical Long Line |     |
| Management Objectives  | Noted                  | Noted                      | Noted              |     |
| Performance Indicators | Identified             | Identified                 | Identified         |     |
| Reference Points       | LRP<br>Interim TRP     | LRP<br>Interim TRP         | LRP                | LRP |
| Management Procedure   | Adopted<br>CMM 2022-01 | Candidate MPs<br>evaluated |                    |     |
| Monitoring Strategy    | Developing             | Developing                 |                    |     |

### Management of Pacific bluefin tuna

The **recovery of Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF)** is a significant achievement in global fisheries management, marking a major success in restoring a species that was once critically overfished. After years of coordinated conservation efforts, including strict catch limits and rebuilding plans by the WCPFC Northern Committee, working closely with the IATTC, the stock has now reached its **second rebuilding target ahead of schedule**. This recovery highlights the effectiveness of international cooperation and science-based management measures, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the species while supporting the livelihoods of fishing communities. It also serves as a model for future conservation efforts for other vulnerable fish stocks.

- At WCPFC20, the Commission adopted revisions to its Conservation and Management Measure for Pacific Bluefin Tuna (**CMM 2023-02**). The 20<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Northern Committee (NC20) again reviewed the CMM for PBF and, together with its discussions undertaken through the joint IATTC and WCPFC-NC Working Group meeting (JWG)<sup>6</sup>, made significant progress in stock recovery and management efforts. Discussions in the JWG highlighted the rapid increase in PBF biomass since 2011, prompting discussions on increases in catch limits as a reflection of the improved state of PBF, while emphasizing the need to manage the catch of juvenile PBF to prevent future stock declines.
- The 2024 stock assessment confirmed that the **Pacific bluefin tuna stock has continued to recover**, reaching and exceeding the second rebuilding target (20%SSB<sub>F=0</sub>) in 2021. Although no

<sup>6</sup> Joint IATTC-NC Working Group Meeting on PBF Management

biomass-based limit or target reference points have been adopted for PBF, SC20 noted the conclusions of the ISC that the PBF stock is not overfished (relative to 20%SSB<sub>F=0</sub>). Based on the current level of fishing mortality relative to the PBF stock's reproduction potential (recent (2020-2022) the ISC determined that the PBF stock is **not subject to overfishing**<sup>7</sup>.

- At WCPFC21, the Commission will again be invited to adopt the Northern Committee's recommendation on a revised Conservation and Management Measure for Pacific Bluefin Tuna to **ensure continued stock recovery** and to increase catch limits while maintaining sustainability. The key provisions focus on monitoring and controlling the harvest, especially of juvenile fish, and preventing overfishing. To support the continued robustness of the scientific data underpinning the management of PBF, NC members expressed interest in a peer review of the 2024 PBF stock assessment. The Northern Committee, through the JWG, has also been progressing work towards the development of an NC/IATTC catch documentation scheme for Pacific bluefin tuna and has recommended the adoption by the Commission of a CMM for the Monitoring, Controlling, and Surveillance of Pacific Bluefin Tuna to support the compliance monitoring and review of the implementation of the CMM for PBF within the JWG. These outcomes reflect the collaborative efforts between the Northern Committee, the International Scientific Committee (ISC), and IATTC to safeguard the long-term sustainability of Pacific bluefin tuna while balancing the interests of fishing nations.

#### *North Pacific albacore*

The Commission adopted a revised [Harvest Strategy for North Pacific Albacore Fishery \(HS 2023-01\)](#) at WCPFC20 and NC20 reviewed its interpretation and implementation with the support of evaluations that were conducted by the Albacore Working Group of the ISC. Together with Resolution C-23-02 adopted by the IATTC in 2023, the WCPFC's 2023 adoption of the revised harvest strategy for North Pacific Albacore Fishery represented the first trans-Pacific harvest strategy. It is worth noting the success of both organizations in maintaining robust management of this fishery through 2024.

#### *Billfish (Swordfish and Striped marlin)*

The WCPFC conservation and management framework for key billfish species consists of conservation and management measures for South Pacific swordfish ([CMM 2009-03](#)), North Pacific swordfish ([CMM 2023-03](#)), Southwest Pacific striped marlin ([CMM 2006-04](#)), and North Pacific striped marlin ([CMM 2010-01](#)).

#### *Southwest Pacific striped marlin*

- SC20 reviewed the 2024 stock assessment of Southwest Pacific striped marlin and reiterated the most recent stock status advice from SC15 that "the stock is likely overfished, and close to undergoing overfishing according to MSY-based reference points." Against this determination, a revised assessment will be presented to SC21 in 2025, addressing four projection scenarios to inform potential management actions.

#### *North Pacific striped marlin*

- The ISC conducted an in-person peer review of the North Pacific striped marlin assessment that was presented to SC20 for review. The ISC maintained the conservation advice of North Pacific

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<sup>7</sup> Relative to some of F-based reference points proposed for tuna species including F20%SPR. Refer [SC20 Outcomes Document](#), paragraphs 44-47, including Tables and Figures from ISC.

striped marlin from 2023, which is the latest available scientific information, and states that the Western and Central North Pacific Ocean (WCNPO) striped marlin stock is very likely to be overfished (>99% probability) and is likely to be subject to overfishing (>66% probability). A future stock assessment is scheduled for 2027. The Commission may consider revisions to CMM 2010-01 in light of the latest scientific information, including adoption of a rebuilding strategy, at WCPFC21.

#### *North Pacific swordfish*

- NC20 reviewed CMM 2023-02 on North Pacific swordfish and did not recommend any revisions for consideration by the Commission at WCPFC21.

#### *South Pacific swordfish*

- A stock assessment for South Pacific swordfish is planned for 2025, as well as a planned project to develop candidate management procedures for southwest Pacific swordfish through management strategy evaluation.

### **III. Stock Assessments and Scientific Research**

#### *Summary of the latest stock assessments and scientific advice provided by the Scientific Committee.*

By continuously updating its knowledge base through scientific research, WCPFC ensures that its management decisions remain effective and grounded in the most current scientific understanding, thereby promoting the sustainable use of marine resources in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

The use of **best available science** and ongoing scientific research is critical to achieving sustainable fisheries management. It ensures that management decisions are based on reliable data and a clear understanding of stock health, ecosystem dynamics, and the impact of fishing activities. By relying on up-to-date, peer-reviewed research and stock assessments, WCPFC members can set appropriate catch limits, protect vulnerable species, and implement conservation measures that help prevent overfishing and promote long-term sustainability.

Through its partnership with the SSP and ISC, the WCPFC receives key stock assessments on key species like tuna and billfish, evaluation of fishing mortality rates, and the impact of environmental factors like climate change. The WCPFC also supports ongoing scientific research through programs like the **Pacific Tuna Tagging Program** (PTTP) and data collection initiatives such as the **Regional Observer Programme** (ROP). This data-driven approach allows WCPFC to manage fisheries adaptively, ensuring that the measures they adopt are responsive to changing stock conditions and ecosystem health.

The scientific advice from SC20 to WCPFC21 will be covered in the presentation of the SC20 Summary Report and Outcomes under Agenda Item 6.

#### *2024 stock assessment for South Pacific albacore*

- The SSP presented the results of the **2024 stock assessment of South Pacific albacore** at SC20, which indicated that consistent with the previous 2021 stock assessment, the albacore stock across the South Pacific is **not overfished nor undergoing overfishing**. Importantly, SC20 accepted the assessment as the basis for management advice to the Commission, and this is expected to support the range of South Pacific albacore discussions on the WCPFC21 Agenda, including the ongoing development of harvest strategies.

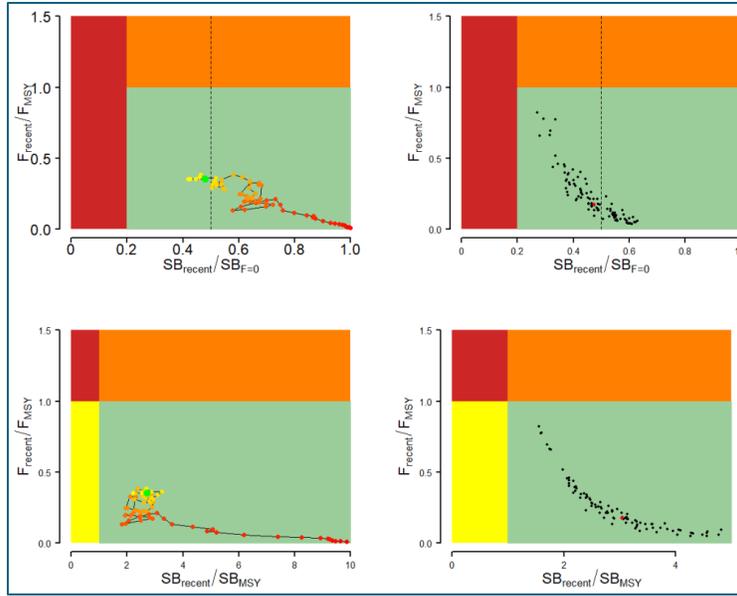


Figure SPA-10 Majuro plots (top) and Kobe plots (bottom) summarising the results for the dynamic MSY and depletion analysis for the diagnostic case model (left) and each of the models in the model ensemble for the recent period (2019–2022; right). Majuro plots include a dashed line at the iTRP estimate (0.5), calculated from the current assessment (Pilling et al., 2024). Colors for dynamic MSY go from red to green over time. The red point in the model ensemble represents the median.

### 2024 benchmark assessment of Pacific bluefin tuna

- SC20 also reviewed the benchmark assessment of Pacific bluefin tuna, conducted by the ISC and also reviewed at NC20. It noted that the 2024 assessment model reliably represents the population dynamics and provides the best available scientific information for the PBF stock. The NC’s partnership with the ISC is an important component of the WCPFC for collecting scientific information for tuna and tuna-like species in the North Pacific Ocean, including the three northern stocks.

### Skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye stock assessments

- Stock status information for skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tuna remains the same as for 2023 and is provided in Table 2, below, together with the 2024 stock status of South Pacific albacore.

**Table 2.** Provision of scientific information on stock status and management advice after review of the Scientific Committee on the results of stock assessments for four key tuna stocks.

| Stock status and trends  | Management advice and implications  |
|--|---|
| <b><i>SP albacore tuna (SC20 stock assessment in 2024)</i></b>   |   |
| <p>Stock status, as indicated by the spawning biomass depletion (<math>SB/SB_{F=0}</math>), shows a gradual long-term decline from the beginning of the model period. However, there are recent indications that the overall stock status has improved. The median value of relative recent (2019–2022) spawning biomass depletion for South Pacific</p> | <p>The South Pacific-wide albacore tuna stock spawning biomass depletion is above the LRP, and <math>F_{recent}</math> is below <math>F_{MSY}</math> for all models in the uncertainty ensemble. The stock is not overfished (0% probability <math>SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0} &lt;</math></p> |

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| <p>albacore (<math>SB_{2019-2022}/SB_{F=0}</math>), incorporating estimation uncertainty was 0.48 (10<sup>th</sup> to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile interval of 0.36 to 0.62), which is close to, but just below, the 0.5 re-estimated interim Target Reference Point (iTRP) for South Pacific albacore based on the 2024 assessment. There was 0% probability that the recent (2019-2022) spawning biomass had breached the adopted LRP.</p> <p>Fishing mortality on adults continues to increase, while fishing mortality on juveniles remains low. Fishing mortality has increased sharply in the EPO since 2010 as the longline catches have increased but has remained stable in the WCPFC-CA over a similar period. The median of relative recent fishing mortality (<math>F_{2018-2021}/F_{MSY}</math>) was 0.18 with a 10<sup>th</sup> to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile interval of 0.06 to 0.44, with 0% probability that the recent (2018-2021) fishing mortality was above <math>F_{MSY}</math>.</p> | <p>LRP) and is not experiencing overfishing (100% probability <math>F_{recent} &lt; F_{MSY}</math>).</p> |
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***Skipjack tuna (SC18 stock assessment in 2022)***

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| <p>The assessment grid of models estimated that the overall median recent spawning depletion (<math>SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0}</math>) is 0.51 (80<sup>th</sup> percentile 0.43-0.64), which is close to the interim target reference point (TRP) of 0.50 (CMM 2021-01).</p> <p>No grid models were below the limit reference point (LRP) of 0.20 <math>SB_{F=0}</math>.</p> <p>The median of <math>F_{recent}/F_{MSY}</math> was 0.32 (80<sup>th</sup> percentile 0.18-0.45).</p> <p>The 2022 stock assessment of skipjack tuna for the WCPO indicated that according to WCPFC reference points the stock is not overfished, nor undergoing overfishing.</p> <p>Fishing mortality continues to increase over time for the adult and juvenile components of the stock, with fishing mortality being consistently higher for adults.</p> <p>Fishery impact analyses show that the purse seine fisheries continue to dominate the impact in the equatorial regions 6, 7, and 8, with similar impacts by the 'associated' and 'unassociated' components, except for region 8 where 'associated' fishing appears to have more impact.</p> <p>Fishery impacts in region 5 are dominated by purse seine and other gears, and in regions 1-4, by pole-and-line, but with increasing impact of purse seine over time.</p> | <p>In 2022, SC18 did not achieve a consensus on the management advice for skipjack tuna in the WCPO.</p> |
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| <p>The skipjack assessment continues to show that the stock is currently moderately exploited and the level of fishing mortality is sustainable.</p> <p>The skipjack stock is not overfished, nor subject to overfishing.</p> <p>At the same time, it was also noted that fishing mortality is continuously increasing for both adult and juvenile stages while the estimated spawning potential has shown a declining trend since the mid to late 2000s, and spawning potential depletion reached a historically low level in recent years.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Bigeye tuna (SC19 stock assessment in 2023)</b></p>  |  |
| <p>The 2023 WCPO bigeye tuna stock assessment median depletion from the model grid for the recent period (2018-2021; <math>SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0}</math>) was 0.35 (10<sup>th</sup> to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile interval of 0.30 to 0.40, including estimation and structural uncertainty).</p> <p>For all models in the grid <math>SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0}</math> was above the biomass limit reference point.</p> <p>The recent median fishing mortality (2017-2020; <math>F_{recent}/F_{MSY}</math>) was 0.59 (10<sup>th</sup> to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile interval of 0.46 to 0.74, including estimation and structural uncertainty).</p> <p>For all models in the grid, <math>F_{recent}/F_{MSY}</math> was less than one.</p> | <p>The objective for bigeye tuna in CMM 2021-01 (the Tropical Tuna Measure) – to maintain the spawning biomass depletion ratio at or above the average <math>SB/SB_{F=0}</math> for 2012-2015 – is being achieved.</p> <p><math>SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0}</math> (35%) is very close to the average <math>SB/SB_{F=0}</math> for 2012-2015 (34%) calculated across the unweighted grid.</p> <p>The stock is very likely not experiencing overfishing (100% probability <math>F_{recent} &lt; F_{MSY}</math>) and is not in an overfished condition (0% probability <math>SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0} &lt; LRP</math>).</p> <p>Fishery impact was higher in the tropical regions (Regions 3, 4, 7 and 8 in the stock assessment model), with particularly high fishing mortality on juvenile bigeye tuna in these regions.</p> <p>There is also evidence that the overall stock status is buffered with biomass and low exploitation in the temperate region (1, 2, 6 and 9) and most of the predicted movement is within the equatorial region. Exchange rates between temperate and tropical regions are estimated to be low.</p> <p>The reduction of fishing mortality on fisheries that take juveniles could increase bigeye fishery yields and reduce any further impacts on spawning biomass of this stock.</p> |
| <p><b>Yellowfin tuna (SC19 stock assessment in 2023)</b></p>   |  |
| <p>The 2023 WCPO yellowfin tuna stock assessment median depletion from the model grid for the recent</p>   | <p>The objective for yellowfin tuna in CMM 2021-01 (the Tropical Tuna Measure) to maintain the spawning</p>  |

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| <p>period (2018–2021; <math>SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0}</math>) was estimated at 0.47 (10<sup>th</sup> to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile interval of 0.42 to 0.52, including estimation and structural uncertainty).</p> <p>For all models in the grid <math>SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0}</math> was above the biomass limit reference point.</p> <p>The recent median fishing mortality (2017–2020; <math>F_{\text{recent}}/F_{\text{MSY}}</math>) was 0.50 (10<sup>th</sup> to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile interval of 0.41 to 0.62, including estimation and structural uncertainty).</p> <p>For all models in the grid, <math>F_{\text{recent}}/F_{\text{MSY}}</math> was less than one.</p> | <p>biomass depletion ratio at or above the average <math>SB/SB_{F=0}</math> for 2012-2015 is being achieved.</p> <p><math>SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0}</math> (47%) exceeds the average <math>SB/SB_{F=0}</math> for 2012-2015 (44% calculated across the unweighted grid).</p> <p>The stock is not experiencing overfishing (100% probability <math>F_{\text{recent}} &lt; F_{\text{MSY}}</math>) and is not in an overfished condition (0% probability <math>SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0} &lt; \text{LRP}</math>).</p> <p>SC19 also noted a continuous downward trend in spawning potential ratio over the recent decade in Region 2 in the westernmost equatorial region, mainly due to the miscellaneous gear fisheries within this region, whereas other regions have been relatively stable over this period. This is the impact of artisanal (small-scale) fisheries other than longline and purse seine within this region, and the Commission note the need for clear limits for these.</p> <p>There is evidence that the overall stock status is buffered with spawning biomass kept at a more elevated level overall by low exploitation in the temperate regions (1 and 5).</p> <p>The assessment model estimates spawning biomass to be divided between the tropical (59%) and temperate (41%) regions, but the vast majority of catch occurred in the tropical (94%) region.</p> |
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### Scientific Research

- WCPFC members continued to support at least 20 scientific research projects in 2024, with the continuation of activities in support of the **Pacific Marine Specimen Bank** and **Pacific Tuna Tagging Program**, as well as continued work on purse seine species composition to improve understanding of catches and bycatch. Projects in support of data collection to support scientific analyses and stock assessments and the improvement of coverage of cannery receipt data to enhance traceability and stock assessments were also reviewed at SC20. These projects represent a significant component of the WCPFC’s scientific knowledge base, supplementing the work of the SSP and offering additional, specialized focus on key initiatives that contribute to the WCPFC’s mandate.
- **Stock assessment software** is an indispensable tool for the WCPFC, providing the scientific foundation for managing tuna and other species sustainably. It supports data-driven decisions, allowing the Commission to balance conservation with the needs of the fishing industry. These tools are used to evaluate the health of fish stocks, guide sustainable management decisions, and monitor the impacts of fishing activities. SC20 continued to explore the next generation of stock assessment software that will succeed the MultiFAN-CL software, which has been used by the SSP

for tuna assessments for many years and is a core software for developing a harvest strategy framework.

#### *Collaboration with regional and international scientific bodies to improve data collection and stock monitoring*

- The **MOU between WCPFC and IATTC** continues to support necessary cooperation in data collection and stock assessment for shared Pacific Ocean tuna stocks. Coordination ensures that stock assessments are based on the best available science, covering the entire distribution range of the species. Collaboration on various research initiatives, including tagging programs, stock assessments, and ecosystem-based management projects ensures consistency in the methodologies used by both organizations to improve the quality of scientific analyses. For example, both commissions participate in the Pacific Tuna Tagging Program, which tracks tuna movements and helps estimate stock size and fishing mortality rates. This program provides essential data for both organizations, aiding in assessing shared tuna stocks.

## **IV. Compliance and Enforcement**

### *Summary of WCPFC's compliance-related activities in 2024 and advice from the Technical and Compliance Committee*

**Compliance and enforcement** are essential to achieving the WCPFC's conservation and management objectives by ensuring that all members adhere to agreed-upon measures designed to sustain fish stocks and protect marine ecosystems. Effective compliance guarantees that fishing activities are conducted within the established limits, such as catch quotas, seasonal closures, and gear restrictions. Without strong enforcement mechanisms, such as the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), Regional Observer Programme (ROP), and high-seas inspections, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing could undermine conservation efforts.

Through the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC), members are continuing to ensure that all parties are meeting their obligations, which helps maintain the balance between economic interests and sustainability, preserves marine biodiversity, and secures the long-term viability of fisheries for future generations. WCPFC's compliance framework, supported by technology and regional cooperation, plays a critical role in protecting valuable fisheries resources in the WCPO.

#### *WCPFC Compliance Monitoring Scheme*

- The Commission implemented its 14<sup>th</sup> year of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMS) in 2024 and carried out its review of the draft Compliance Monitoring Report (dCMR) at the 20<sup>th</sup> Regular Annual Session of the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC20) meeting. The final CMR (fCMR) will be adopted by the Commission at WCPFC21, when it will be available in the public domain.
- The experience of implementing the CMS over the last 14 years has provided members with regular opportunities to refine and streamline the compliance review process to make it a robust foundation for conservation and management measures. An integral component of the CMS is its emphasis on supporting members toward meeting their obligations, which can be achieved through support for capacity building as well as opportunities to review and confirm the availability and accuracy of data and information reported through a variety of mechanisms.

- Consistent and effective monitoring of implementation is crucial for the Commission to evaluate the performance of its conservation and management measures in the WCPO fisheries and ecosystems. During TCC20's review of the draft Compliance Monitoring Report (dCMR), significant progress was noted in members' efforts to improve reporting, bolster monitoring activities, and utilize technology to develop databases and systems within the Secretariat. These advancements are essential in supporting the diverse compliance activities that members engage in on an annual basis, enhancing transparency and accountability across the region.

#### *WCPFC's monitoring framework, including data reporting*

- The [Executive Director's Annual Report on Technical and Compliance Matters](#) to TCC20 contained an updated Snapshot of Commission Monitoring Tools, with notes on activities undertaken since TCC19 in 2023 to further improve and enhance the WCPFC's suite of data collection and monitoring tools. TCC20 reviewed the annual reports of the Commission's Regional Observer Programme, Vessel Monitoring System, High Seas Boarding and Inspection Scheme, and Transshipment Regulation Scheme, all of which showed ongoing efforts to improve transparency and enforcement. These reviews identified areas for improvement, particularly in the integration of electronic monitoring systems, observer data accuracy, and the need for stronger port state measures to combat IUU fishing.
- Additionally, TCC20 highlighted the importance of capacity building support for SIDS to ensure effective participation in compliance and enforcement initiatives. These efforts collectively aim to bolster the WCPFC's ability to monitor fishing activities, ensure compliance with obligations, and promote the sustainable management of WCPO fisheries.
- Key discussions at TCC20 covered the available data for verifying compliance, reflecting several data gaps that are preventing independent verification of compliance. TCC20 also reviewed an approach to addressing the imbalance of ROP data used in the CMS to identify potential violations, noting the differences in observer coverage levels between the longline and purse seine fisheries. Further enhancements were considered to the WCPFC's Pacific VMS standard operating procedures, resulting from a mature monitoring programme that responds to changes in technology and operational realities on a regular basis. Together, these initiatives aim to streamline reporting, enhance transparency, and improve compliance processes within the WCPFC framework.

#### *Strengthening monitoring of fishing activities in ports*

- The commitment at TCC20, under the leadership of Fiji, to use the intersessional period leading up to WCPFC21 to commence a process for strengthening port state measures reflects the priority that WCPFC members place on combatting illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities that may be addressed through enhanced monitoring of vessels in ports. As the volume of port-related fishing activities has increased across the region, the importance of the development and establishment of tools to support port monitoring has grown. In 2024, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Papua New Guinea ratified the FAO Port States Measures Agreement, marking a key milestone for these small island developing States in their efforts to develop and manage their fisheries and related activities and contribute to combatting IUU fishing.

### *Technological Innovations and Data Collection*

- New and emerging technologies are transforming fisheries management by improving data collection, monitoring, and compliance. The Commission's 2024 work on the development of minimum standards for electronic monitoring (EM) seeks to fill gaps in information required to verify compliance with certain obligations. National development of electronic monitoring by some WCPFC members is contributing to the Commission's efforts to establish a program that is suitable for WCPFC and discussions at WCPFC21 are expected to result in the adoption of interim EM standards.
- The Secretariat continued its efforts in 2024 to streamline online systems to support members with reporting, and vessel monitoring and management. Improvements to the Record of Fishing Vessels (RFV) database that began in 2023, enhancements to the Compliance Case File System, and the release of a new Annual Report Part 2 online reporting facility in 2024 have been undertaken with a view toward supporting members' ability to manage their flagged vessels, including ensuring compliance with obligations, and meet their reporting requirements.

## **V. Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM)**

*Activities in 2024 on the integration of broader ecosystem considerations into fisheries management, including the protection of marine habitats and bycatch species (e.g., seabirds, turtles, sharks)*

By accounting for the impacts of fishing on non-target species, habitats, and ecological processes, EBFM aims to maintain ecosystem health and resilience while ensuring the sustainable use of fisheries resources. The WCPFC applies EBFM principles by incorporating **measures to minimize bycatch, protect vulnerable species, and adapt to environmental changes, such as those driven by climate change**, in its conservation and management efforts. This approach ensures that fisheries management supports both ecological sustainability and the long-term viability of marine resources.

The Commission's bycatch, or non-target and associated or dependent species (NTADS) CMMs cover seabirds, sea turtles, several shark species<sup>8</sup>, mobulid and manta rays, and cetaceans. Collectively, these CMMs focus on minimizing the impact of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem.

### *Sharks*

- At SC20, members reviewed the 2024 stock assessment for **silky sharks** in the WCPO. The results indicated that, relative to MSY-based reference points, overfishing is very unlikely (< 10%) to occur, and the stock was about as likely as not (40-60 %) to be overfished. However, while fishing mortality had reduced since 2010 and the stock status showed a positive trend, there was still considerable uncertainty, and caution was needed when interpreting the results of the assessment. Some members noted the need for continued mitigation measures, such as improved management of fishing gear to reduce bycatch.
- SC20 also assessed the impact of longline fisheries on **oceanic whitetip sharks** and advised on mitigation strategies, such as gear modifications and bycatch reduction techniques. This work is part of a multi-year project aiming to improve understanding of the fisheries' impact and to prepare for a full stock assessment in 2025. SC20 recommended that the approach of undertaking

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<sup>8</sup> Silky, oceanic whitetip, whale shark

different assessment modelling approaches, comparable to that taken for silky sharks this year, be used for that 2025 assessment.

- SC20 also received updated stock assessments for **North Pacific shortfin mako sharks**, providing management advice based on the species' population trends. Results indicated that, relative to MSY-based reference points, the stock is likely (66% probability) not in an overfished condition, and overfishing of the stock is likely not occurring (95% probability). Members advised caution in fisheries management to prevent further population declines, consistent with the precautionary approach.
- TCC20 continued the discussion with a review of **alternative measures to the prohibition of shark finning**, supported by information from some members on the experience of monitoring the effectiveness of alternative measures to the practice of finning.

### *Seabirds*

- In 2024, the WCPFC continued its focus on **seabird conservation** through two informal intersessional meetings led by New Zealand on CMM 2018-03, which aims to mitigate the impact of fishing on seabirds. Key efforts included improving bycatch mitigation tools such as tori lines and branch line weighting in longline fisheries. These tools are essential in reducing seabird interactions with fishing gear, especially for species like albatrosses and petrels, which are highly vulnerable to bycatch.
- Additionally, the WCPFC is working on enhancing **compliance with seabird bycatch mitigation measures** by ensuring that vessels, especially those operating in high-risk areas (south of 30°S and north of 23°N), are properly equipped and follow the mitigation protocols. Intersessional discussions took place through several informal working group sessions held virtually and during TCC20. These actions reflect WCPFC's ongoing commitment to protecting seabirds while balancing the operational needs of the fishing industry.

### *Sea Turtles*

- The Commission's CMM 2018-04 on sea turtles contains **measures designed to mitigate the impact of fishing on sea turtles**, particularly through bycatch mitigation tools and handling practices. SC20 and TCC20 reviewed the reporting obligations contained in CMM 2018-04 and agreed that greater clarity and guidance are required from the Commission at WCPFC21. Additional research and review of the CMM is also envisioned for 2025.
- The Commission's ongoing research on non-entangling and biodegradable FADs is essential in preventing sea turtle entanglement during fishing operations.

### *Cetaceans*

- The United States and Korea presented a joint proposal at SC20 and TCC20 to amend the Commission's cetaceans CMM 2011-03, citing the absence of any **measures to manage interactions between cetaceans and longline fisheries**. The proposal seeks to expand information collection for cetacean interactions and to prohibit the retention, transshipment or landing of any cetacean on longline vessels.

- Efforts to **improve reporting in both longline and purse seine fisheries of sea turtle and cetacean interactions** will ensure better monitoring and compliance with conservation measures, and the data collected informs future strategies for reducing bycatch. The use of observers and EM will also help ensure that vessels comply with sea turtle mitigation measures and properly report any interactions.

#### *Mobulid rays and whale sharks*

- A project to **evaluate fishery characterization** of manta and mobulid rays and whale sharks is planned for 2025.

#### *Marine pollution*

- TCC20 again reviewed members' compliance with implementation of key provisions of the WCPFC marine pollution CMM 2017-04, reflecting **the importance of protecting the marine environment** from harmful impacts of fishing activities. The ongoing work on development of biodegradable FADs will contribute greatly to the Commission's efforts to reduce marine pollution as part of its fisheries conservation and management activities.

## **VI. Climate Change and its Impact on Fisheries**

### *Update on the Commission's 2024 intersessional work to develop a climate change workplan*

Climate change poses potentially significant challenges to tuna fisheries in the WCPFC region, as it alters ocean conditions that are critical to the health and distribution of tuna species. Rising ocean temperatures, changes in sea currents, and ocean acidification are expected to shift the habitats and migration patterns of key tuna species such as skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye, potentially moving these stocks away from traditional fishing grounds. These changes can affect the availability of tuna for both coastal and distant water fishing nations, impacting food security, livelihoods, and economic stability in the Pacific. Additionally, climate change may disrupt the ecosystems that support tuna, including prey availability and breeding conditions. In recognition of these challenges, the Commission responded by adopting [Resolution 2019-01](#) in 2019 on the need to incorporate climate change into its fisheries conservation and management discussion, and followed up in 2022 by agreeing to make climate change a standing agenda item.

The Commission's decisions at WCPFC21 on future work to incorporate climate change considerations into its conservation and management framework will be crucial for its leadership among RFMOs in advancing climate change discussions. The Commission's climate change workplan, set to take effect for 2025, has the potential to serve as a model for other RFMOs to apply in their own efforts to sustainably manage fisheries resources amidst a rapidly changing climate.

### *Commission climate change workplan*

- In response to the tasking from the Commission at WCPFC20, intersessional work in 2024 on the development of a workplan was co-led by the USA and Marshall Islands. The workplan is expected to be adopted at WCPFC21 and will guide the Commission's efforts from 2025 to **incorporate climate change considerations into its fisheries management activities**. The co-leads presented the draft workplan to NC20, SC20, and TCC20, with input from each of those meetings on the respective tasks for the respective subsidiary bodies. The draft workplan was also considered at SMD02, including whether a dedicated SMD on climate change might be necessary in the future.

### *Development of ecosystem and climate indicators for the WCPO*

- The SSP presented updates to SC20 on the development of ecosystem and climate indicators for the WCPO, illustrating significant improvements made in addressing biases in Earth System Models (ESMs), which previously skewed projections of future climate conditions in the region. These corrections enhance the reliability of the models, making them more relevant for tuna fisheries management by **providing more accurate environmental drivers for future climate change projections**. Additionally, the bias-corrected ESMs were de-trended to better assess the current impacts of greenhouse gas emissions on the ecosystem.
- SC20 also received information on SSP's plans to hold a Climate Indicators Expert Workshop in November 2024, which will include experts in physical and fisheries oceanography, climate and ecosystem science, ocean climate service providers, as well as WCPFC members with a background in climate and ecosystem science.

## **VII. Capacity Building and Regional Cooperation**

### *Efforts in 2024 to enhance the technical and scientific capacity of member states, particularly small island developing states (SIDS) and territories*

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Participating Territory (PT) members of the WCPFC play a crucial role in the Commission due to their geographic location, economic dependency on fisheries, and contribution to regional and global food security. As custodians of vast Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), **SIDS control significant portions of the waters where tuna stocks are caught**, giving them a major stake in the management and conservation of these valuable resources.

For many SIDS and PTs, tuna fisheries are a primary source of revenue, employment, and food security. Sustainable management of these fisheries is vital to their **economic stability and development**. Additionally, SIDS often face unique challenges, such as vulnerability to climate change and limited capacity to monitor and enforce fishing regulations. Their active participation in WCPFC decision-making ensures that the interests of smaller, developing nations are considered alongside those of larger fishing nations, helping to **balance resource access and promote equitable benefits**.

Moreover, SIDS and territories are key players in advancing conservation goals, such as reducing bycatch and protecting marine ecosystems, due to their close ties to local marine environments. Their involvement helps ensure that the management of highly migratory species like tuna is not only sustainable but also aligned with the **long-term well-being of the region's people and environment**. Coastal communities, with their generations of traditional knowledge gained from daily interactions with the marine environment, can play a crucial role in helping the Commission understand the potential impacts of climate change on fisheries resources. Their insights, drawn from long-standing practices and observations, offer valuable contributions to the scientific efforts aimed at assessing and adapting to environmental changes.

### *Implementation of Article 30 of the WCPF Convention*

- Article 30 of the WCPF Convention continues to safeguard the interests of SIDS and territories in the WCPFC by promoting equitable resource access, sustainable development, and building their capacity to manage fisheries within the WCPFC framework. The annual review by the Commission of its implementation of the **Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)** provides an opportunity for members

to assess the Commission's implementation of key assistance and support provisions of Article 30. The application of **Capacity Assistance Needs (CAN) plans** through the CMS also provides an additional avenue for the Commission to deliver on its commitment to the implementation of Article 30.

- Two CMMs adopted by the Commission are aimed at operationalizing Article 30 of the Convention: **CMM 2013-06** and **CMM 2013-07**. Reporting by members against their efforts to implement these CMMs has been underway for several years, and TCC20 held discussions around developing an approach to assess compliance with obligations set out in CMM 2013-06.
- Additional support to SIDS and territories is provided by the governments of Japan and Chinese Taipei through their respective Trust Funds that provide **financial resources to SIDS** in the areas of monitoring, data collection, and overall capacity building. The Commission's **Special Requirements Fund (SRF)** also remains a key source of capacity-building support for SIDS and territories, and a review of its voluntary funding framework was undertaken in 2024 and is expected to be considered at FAC18.

#### *West Pacific East Asia Project*

- The West Pacific East Asia (WPEA) Project transitioned in 2024 from a focus on improving monitoring capacity and data collection in the three project countries (Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam), to a new project phase that began in July 2024 and is focused on maintaining monitoring and data collection activities into the future. The Government of New Zealand announced its intention in 2023 to continue funding the WPEA project in its new phase with a generous contribution of USD\$2,809,134.

#### *SIDS Capacity Building Activities*

- The Secretariat continued delivering training to members in 2024, both online and in person, to support members' understanding and use of online tools. Requests for assistance at workshops or one-on-one sessions come from individual members or organisations such as the Office of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNAO). The Secretariat will offer training if day-to-day engagement suggests members are less familiar with WCPFC processes and supporting systems or to support the release of a new system. In 2023 and 2024, the Secretariat provided training for individual members on many processes and systems, including the Compliance Case File System (CCFS), Record of Fishing Vessels (RFV) including the integrated Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Fish/Did not fish functions, the Vessel Reporting and Tracking System (VRST), and the CMM webpage. Through the generous support of funding from Canada for 2024/2025, the Secretariat has commenced work on developing more accessible training resources to sustain training support to members into the future.

#### *Regional partnerships and activities to improve data collection, fisheries management, and enforcement*

- The Commission Chair signed **two MOUs in 2024** following adoption at WCPFC20 to renew its MOU with the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO), and to establish an MOU with the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC). These MOUs join others that the WCPFC has in place with regional fisheries bodies and reflect its implementation of obligations to cooperate with other organizations in support of shared goals and objectives.

- **Regional surveillance activities** were carried out in 2024 by several WCPFC Members, including through joint activities led by the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and in cooperation with other WCPFC members such as Australia, France, New Zealand, and USA. These joint surveillance activities are examples of the strong collaboration throughout the WCPFC membership aimed at combatting illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing activities in the WCPO. These regional surveillance operations are supported by critical datasets managed by the Secretariat and accessed through the WCPFC’s [Data Rules](#).
- An important component of the proposed review of WCPFC **port measures** will be considering complementary regional processes to support and assist CCMs, particularly SIDS, in the development and implementation of port regimes. These efforts are also expected to complement and facilitate participation of WCPFC members within the framework of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement.
- TCC20 noted the efforts made by several CCMs conducting **high seas boarding and inspection** in the WCPO and noted that DNA testing as well as the certain weight estimation method(s) were used by relevant inspection team(s). Australia will bring a paper to WCPFC21 setting out an intersessional process to develop voluntary regional guidelines and best practices for the use of tools in conducting high seas boarding and inspections. An update to the Standardized Multi-language Questionnaire is also planned.
- The Commission’s focus on ongoing enhancements to its management and monitoring of WCPO stocks recognises the need to strengthen relationships with other RFMOs to ensure an effective collaborative approach to management based on robust data and information. The WCPFC Secretariat continues working with officers responsible for compliance in tuna RFMOs through the **Tuna Compliance Network (TCN)** and in Pacific-based RFBs through the **Pan-Pacific Fisheries Compliance Network (PPFCN)**. In 2024, a particular focus for the WCPFC Secretariat’s engagement in TCN and PPFCN has been supporting work towards establishing data exchange arrangements and protocols, with progress to be reported to TCC21 and WCPFC22.

## VIII. Governance and Institutional Developments

*Review of governance issues, including decision-making processes, institutional reforms, and efforts to enhance transparency and accountability.*

**Governance and institutional structures** are essential to the effectiveness of the **WCPFC** as they provide the framework within which decisions are made, implemented, and enforced. These structures ensure that the Commission operates transparently and fairly, balancing the interests of various member states and other stakeholders.

### *Scheduling of annual Scientific Committee meetings*

- SC20 again considered its **meeting timing and duration** amidst the growing workloads for members and the SSP, and the need to balance the obligation to provide the best scientific advice to the Commission with the challenges of limited resources to sustain long meetings. SC20 discussed several options for structuring its annual meetings, including not carrying out annual reviews of all bycatch CMMs, and ensuring that its meeting agenda closely follows the requests and taskings from the Commission. The potential for convening a third Science Management

Dialogue in 2025 was also considered to be a factor in determining the meeting duration of SC21 in 2025. Issues around the timing of the annual SC meeting are more complicated, and subject to ongoing discussion by the Commission, noting the equally busy meeting calendars of other RFMOs in which WCPFC members are participating.

### *Operations of the Technical and Compliance Committee*

- The TCC20 also experienced a **shift in its operations** by completing its review of the draft CMR in one day instead of three days, as was previously the case. But the TCC is still being challenged to hold its compliance monitoring report (CMR) review in open session, which to date is because there has not been consensus to release non-public domain data. Ongoing efforts to address gaps in data coverage, processes to respond to potential violations, and strengthen capacity-building support are expected to contribute to greater comfort among some members to share their non-public domain data.

### *Streamlining Secretariat operations*

- In 2024, the Secretariat continued to **progress work to improve the value of routine and ad-hoc analysis and reports** derived from data and information held by the Secretariat or its contracted scientific service provider, SPC-OFP. More specifically, these improvements aim to enhance and simplify the delivery of analysis and reports which will better support the annual compliance review process, the production of required annual reports for the TCC, intersessional working groups, and the **delivery of more useful and transparent information** on the WCPFC website for the public and/or members. In the most recent two and half years, the Secretariat has worked through external consultancies to leverage open-source software tools that support the generation and reproduction of reports and information to support the work of the Commission.
- At the 17th Finance and Administration Committee (FAC17) meeting in 2023, the Secretariat provided information on its **review of the Secretariat's Compliance staff structure**. CCMs were notified of changes that would take place beginning in 2024 to realign the Secretariat's human resources to reflect the maturity of many of the Commission's data collection and monitoring programs. The restructure has been progressing in 2024 and aims to better support the Commission's needs and expectations with respect to managing and utilizing their data to strengthen conservation and management objectives. The [Executive Director's Annual Report on Technical and Compliance Matters](#) to TCC20 and [Attachment C](#) to this paper include updates on the progress of the restructure.

### *Managing the Commission's Annual Meeting Agenda*

- In consultation with the Commission Chair, the Secretariat reviewed the approach to the Commission's annual meeting agenda and relied heavily on Rule 2 of the [WCPFC Rules of Procedure](#) for guidance in setting the agenda for WCPFC21. This approach is designed to serve multiple objectives, the foremost being the **Commission's adoption of key decisions** on South Pacific albacore harvest strategies, electronic monitoring minimum standards, and a new CMM on labour standards for vessel crew. A secondary and equally important purpose is to **support more manageable workloads for members and the Secretariat**. The WCPFC21 Agenda draws on the extensive work undertaken by the Commission throughout the intersessional period since its last meeting in 2023 and creates opportunities in its 2024 annual meeting to make substantive

progress toward meeting key objectives. The Summary Reports of NC20, SC20, SMD02, and TCC20 will be presented to the Commission at WCPFC21 and will focus on the recommendations that require Commission action or decision.

- Updates from the Commission’s Intersessional Working Groups and other intersessional activities will also be presented at WCPFC21, under Agenda Item 7. [Attachment B](#) contains an update of 2024 activities for each of the IWGs and intersessional discussions.

### *Communications and media*

- The Secretariat’s media and communication efforts throughout 2024 were aimed at making information about the WCPFC widely available to and more accessible to members and stakeholders. The Secretariat published three newsletters<sup>9</sup> between January and August 2024, and a fourth newsletter is planned for December 2024. In addition, the Secretariat uses social media platforms [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#) to share information on a regular basis with a wide range of audiences about the Commission’s work.

## **IX. Challenges and Future Priorities**

### *Key challenges faced in 2024*

The WCPFC faced several key challenges throughout 2024, primarily related to compliance, stakeholder balance, and evolving fisheries management needs.

- **Compliance Issues:** Maximizing compliance across the vast and diverse WCPFC membership remains a significant challenge. The CMS, while in its 14th year, still grapples with inconsistencies in data reporting, particularly in high seas and longline fisheries. Data and monitoring gaps from some members and for some fisheries, including observer coverage discrepancies between longline and purse seine fisheries, have hindered accurate assessments of and proper awareness and understanding of trends and patterns in fishing activities, and in some cases identification of potential violations. Strengthening compliance through better reporting and enhanced monitoring systems continues to be a top priority.
- **Balancing Stakeholder Needs:** The WCPFC must continually balance the needs of various stakeholders, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), other coastal CCMs, distant-water fishing nations, port and market CCMs and environmental organizations. Competing interests between conservation measures and economic dependency on tuna fisheries create tensions, particularly when new management measures, such as catch limits or seasonal closures, are introduced, and as harvest strategy approaches continue to be developed. Striking a balance between resource sustainability, economic development and economic viability also remains a complex and ongoing challenge.
- **Evolving Fisheries Management Demands:** The demands of modern fisheries management are rapidly evolving, driven by climate change, technological advancements, and international conservation agreements. In 2024, the adoption of the Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) placed additional pressure on WCPFC to incorporate broader ocean conservation efforts into its mandate. This requires expanding WCPFC’s role beyond traditional

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<sup>9</sup> Accessible from the [homepage of the WCPFC website](#).

fisheries management, to include ecosystem-based approaches and addressing the impacts of climate change on marine resources.

### *Future strategic priorities*

Looking ahead, the WCPFC's strategic priorities focus on enhancing sustainability, improving research, and fostering equitable access to resources.

- **Advancing Research and Science:** Future research will prioritize understanding the impacts of climate change on tuna stocks and marine ecosystems. In particular, the development of ecosystem and climate indicators by the SSP will be key to guiding future management decisions. The WCPFC will also focus on improving stock assessments and exploring the next generation of stock assessment software, building on the long-standing use of MultiFAN-CL for tuna evaluations. Upcoming research will include a deep dive into the effects of greenhouse gas emissions on tuna populations, alongside a commitment to further develop harvest strategies for key stocks like South Pacific albacore.
- **Sustainability and Equitable Access:** Ensuring long-term sustainability is at the heart of WCPFC's mission. In 2025, the WCPFC will continue implementing harvest strategies and improving electronic monitoring (EM) standards to enhance the transparency and accountability of fishing activities. A key priority will be ensuring that SIDS and territories, which rely heavily on fisheries for economic stability, have equitable access to fisheries resources. This includes further developing capacity-building initiatives to enable these members to effectively participate in WCPFC and enhance the management and development of their fisheries.
- **Enhancing Compliance and Monitoring:** Strengthening compliance mechanisms is crucial to ensure the successful implementation of conservation and management measures. The ability to continuously enhance existing MCS tools and capabilities and keep pace with evolving technologies are operational realities. WCPFC is focusing on introducing electronic monitoring, and on improving port state measures to combat IUU fishing, and ensuring robust monitoring at all levels of the supply chain. The Secretariat's work to leverage existing and emerging data sources and the tools that support their use to monitor and verify fishing activities should continue to be supported.
- **Climate Change Integration:** Integrating climate change considerations into fisheries management will remain a top priority. With the Climate Change Workplan set to take effect in 2025, WCPFC aims to lead the way among RFMOs in addressing the impacts of climate change on marine resources. This includes adaptive management strategies, ecosystem-based approaches, and fostering greater collaboration with other regional fishery bodies.

Through these future priorities, WCPFC is positioned to not only address immediate challenges but to lead the way in ensuring the long-term sustainability of fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

## **X. Financial Overview**

The WCPFC's annual budget covers a broad range of operational and programmatic activities essential for the Commission's mandate to manage and conserve highly migratory fish stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Key components of the budget include funding for scientific research and stock assessments, which guide management decisions, as well as compliance monitoring systems like the VMS

and the ROP. Additionally, the budget supports capacity-building initiatives, particularly for SIDS and PTs, and covers the administrative costs of the Secretariat, including hosting annual meetings, facilitating intersessional work, and maintaining critical databases and reporting systems. A significant number of voluntary contributions from members and non-governmental organizations that target specific projects or initiatives help supplement the Commission’s work. Overall, the budget ensures that the Commission can effectively carry out its conservation and management responsibilities across the region.

### 2024 Budget (all figures in USD)

- At its 2023 annual session, the Commission agreed to a **2024 budget of \$9,308,383** for the General Account Fund. Member contributions comprised \$8,338,589, of which \$2,857,506 had been collected at the time of writing, including outstanding balances from previous fiscal years. The total expenditure for 2024 is estimated to be \$8,759,192 from the General Account Fund. There have been no advances from the Working Capital Fund for 2024, to date. Further details on the 2024 budget are found in the working paper for the 18<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC18), *Proposed Budget for the Commission’s Work Programme for 2025 and Indicative Budgets for 2026 and 2027* (FAC18-2024-06).

### Voluntary contributions

Voluntary contributions play an important role in supplementing the WCPFC’s annual budget, providing additional financial support beyond member contributions. These contributions help advance key areas of the Commission’s work, including scientific research, capacity building, and technical assistance, including support to SIDS. In 2024, a **total of \$3,908,119** was received from members and accredited observer organizations toward Commission activities, including contributions to the Special Requirements Fund. **Table 3**, below, provides further details on the 2024 voluntary contributions.

**Table 3:** Voluntary contributions received from members and non-governmental organizations.

| Member or NGO  | Contribution Amount (USD) | Purpose   |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|
| Canada         | \$65,000                  | Special Requirements Fund   |
|                | \$59,152                  | Support the WCPFC Secretariat in the development of online application tool/s (i.e. dashboards) to facilitate members’ awareness of reporting gaps.   |
|                | \$72,974                  | Support for continuing the development and testing of online application tool/s (i.e. dashboards) to facilitate and support members awareness of reporting gaps and to commence the development of targeted guidance and learning aids. |
| China          | \$21,000                  | Special Requirements Fund   |
| European Union | \$416,737                 | To support research into reproductive biology of tropical tunas for WCPFC stock assessment and enhancement of the western and central Pacific biodegradable FADs project.   |
| Japan          | \$168,474                 | Japanese Trust Fund   |

|                    |             |  |
|--------------------|-------------|--|
| <b>Korea</b>       | \$148,648   | Support the Pacific Tuna Tagging Project   |
| <b>New Zealand</b> | \$2,809,134 | WPEA project   |
| <b>USA</b>         | \$60,000    | Special Requirements Fund  |
|                    | \$25,000    | To support assessing the susceptibility of CMMs to the impacts of climate change.  |
|                    | \$40,000    | To conduct an external peer review of the Pacific bluefin tuna stock assessment.   |
| <b>ISSF</b>        | \$20,000    | To support the EU project on Biodegradable FADs  |
|                    | \$2,000     | To support consultancy arrangements for the Electronic Monitoring and Electronic Reporting Intersessional Working Group Chair. |
| <b>\$3,908,119</b> |             | <b>TOTAL IN 2024 VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS</b>   |

## Summary of progress on development of the WCPFC harvest strategy framework from 2015-2024.

| Year | Progress Summary ( <i>Reference</i> )   |
|------|---|
| 2015 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Agreed to harvest strategy workplan for the adoption of harvest strategies under CMM 2014-06 (<i>WCPFC12 Summary Report, Att. Y</i>)</li> <li>ii. The Commission adopted CMM 2015-06 establishing a TRP for skipjack tuna. (<i>WCPFC12 Summary Report, Att. G</i>)</li> </ul>   |
| 2016 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Agreed to determine the acceptability of potential HCRs where the estimated risk of breaching the LRP is between 0 and 20%. (<i>WCPFC13 Summary Report, Para 296</i>)</li> <li>ii. Accepted the initial list of performance indicators for tropical purse seine fisheries for the purpose of the evaluation of harvest control rules (<i>WCPFC13 Summary Report, Att. M</i>)</li> <li>iii. Agreed to a refined workplan for the adoption of harvest strategies under CMM 2014-06 (<i>WCPFC13 Summary Report, Att. N.</i>)</li> <li>iv. Agreed to an interim timeframe of up to ten years for rebuilding the bigeye tuna stock to the agreed Limit Reference Point of 0.2SBF=0 (<i>WCPFC13 Summary Report, para 305</i>)</li> </ul>  |
| 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Noted candidate performance indicators for the Southern Longline Fishery and the Tropical Longline fishery to evaluate harvest control rules. (<i>WCPFC14 Summary Report, Attachment K, Table 1 and 2</i>)</li> <li>ii. Agreed on actions to prioritise the development and adoption of a Target Reference Point for south Pacific albacore at WCPFC15. (<i>WCPFC14 Summary Report, para 188</i>)</li> <li>iii. Tasked the Secretariat to develop a dedicated space on the WCPFC website for publishing harvest strategies, including interim harvest strategies, agreed to by the Commission. (<i>WCPFC14 Summary Report, para 208</i>)</li> <li>iv. Agreed to reprioritise as needed the annual agenda of the Commission and Scientific Committee to allow sufficient additional time for consideration of harvest strategy issues. In addition, WCPFC recognised that there may also be a need for a dedicated science/management dialogue. (<i>WCPFC14 Summary Report, para 215</i>)</li> </ul>   |
| 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Agreed to hold a 6-day annual meeting in 2019 with additional time devoted for the Commission to discuss harvest strategies. (<i>WCPFC15 Summary Report, para 328</i>)</li> <li>ii. adopted the Updated Workplan for the Adoption of Harvest Strategies under CMM 2014-06. (<i>WCPFC15 Summary Report, Att. I</i>)</li> <li>iii. Agreed on an interim TRP for South Pacific albacore at 0.56SB<sub>F=0</sub> with the objective of achieving an 8% increase in CPUE for the southern longline fishery as compared to 2013 levels. The TRP shall be reviewed every 3 years, consistent with the SP albacore assessment schedule, and the timeline for achieving the interim TRP shall be no later than 20 years. (<i>WCPFC15 Summary Report, paras 207-212</i>)</li> </ul>   |
| 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. No need to review the Management Objectives on an annual basis. (<i>WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 170</i>)</li> <li>ii. Important to consider economic indicators based on economic and other data. (<i>WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 181</i>)</li> <li>iii. Agreed to progress work on a multispecies approach and to report back to the Commission. (<i>WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 195</i>)</li> <li>iv. Continue to build CCM's capacity on harvest strategies. (<i>WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 207</i>)</li> <li>v. Adopted the Updated Indicative Workplan for the Adoption of Harvest Strategies. (<i>WCPFC16 Summary Report, Att. H</i>)</li> <li>vi. SC to provide advice on the formulation of TRPs for skipjack tuna and effort creep estimated in relation to the TRPs. (<i>WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 258</i>).</li> <li>vii. Revise WCPFC16-2019-15 (<i>Minimum TRPs for WCPO yellowfin and bigeye tuna consistent with alternative LRP risk levels, and multispecies implications</i>) using candidate revised interim skipjack TRPs of 42%, 44%, 46%, 48% and 50% of SB/SBF=0. (<i>WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 259</i>).</li> <li>viii. Requested SC to provide advice on the formulation of TRPs for bigeye and yellowfin tuna for other candidate TRP indicators other than depletion ratio, such as longline CPUE. (<i>WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 273</i>)</li> </ul> |

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
|             | <p>ix. Requested the SSP to conduct an analysis for bigeye and yellowfin tuna similar to that undertaken in WCPFC16-2019-14 (Current and projected stock status of WCPO skipjack tuna to inform consideration of an updated target reference point). (<a href="#">WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 274</a>)</p> <p>x. Agreed that the interim paragraphs 12 and 14 of CMM 2018-01 be retained and tasked SC and SSP to explore potential candidate TRPs for the two stocks. (<a href="#">WCPFC16 Summary Report, para 275</a>)</p>  |
| <b>2020</b> | <p>i. Requested SPC to update the skipjack TRP work by including additional candidates, including 36%, 38% and 40% in the median depletion table. (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 159</a>)</p> <p>ii. Noted the results of analyses on candidate TRPs for bigeye and yellowfin (WCPFC17-2020-12). (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 165</a>; <a href="#">WCPFC17-2020-12 (SC16-requested analyses to inform WCPFC17 discussions on candidate target reference points for WCPO bigeye and yellowfin tuna)</a>)</p> <p>* The SSP has made substantial technical progress during 2020, notably on MSE for South Pacific albacore and skipjack.</p>   |
| <b>2021</b> | <p>i. Noted advice on possible formulations of a TRP for skipjack tuna. (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 100</a>)</p> <p>ii. Noted the results of analyses on candidate TRPs for bigeye and yellowfin. (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 107</a>)</p> <p>iii. Noted the importance of agreeing on TRP for bigeye and yellowfin and agreed to progress this work in 2022. (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 108</a>)</p> <p>iv. Agreed to defer consideration of MPs for skipjack until 2022. (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 111</a>)</p> <p>v. Noted the advice related to a recalibration of the interim TRP for the SP albacore. (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 171</a>)</p> <p>vi. Adopted the updated <i>Indicative Workplan for the Adoption of Harvest Strategies under CMM 2014-06</i>. (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 256</a>; <a href="#">Att. I</a>)</p> <p>vii. The Commission agreed to have the first Science-Management Dialogue, on a trial basis, back-to-back with SC18 in 2022, with a list of proposed areas of focus. (<a href="#">WCPFC18 Summary Report, para 271-272</a>)</p>  |
| <b>2022</b> | <p>i. Noted the presentation on the TRP for skipjack tuna. (<a href="#">WCPFC19 Summary Report, para 145</a>)</p> <p>ii. Adopted CMM 2022-01 <i>Conservation and Management Measure on a Management Procedure for WCPO Skipjack Tuna</i> (<a href="#">WCPFC19 Summary Report, para 152, Att. G</a>)</p> <p>iii. Noted TRPs for bigeye and yellowfin tuna, and agreed on the need for further work prior to considering TRPs for bigeye and yellowfin tuna. (<a href="#">WCPFC19 Summary Report, para 156</a>; <a href="#">WCPFC19-2022-12 (WCPO bigeye and yellowfin TRP evaluations (with updated 2022 skipjack assessment results))</a>)</p> <p>iv. Noted on South Pacific albacore objectives and the TRP. (<a href="#">WCPFC19 Summary Report, para 212</a>; <a href="#">WCPFC19-2022-15 (Further analyses to inform discussions on South Pacific albacore objectives and the TRP)</a>)</p> <p>v. Noted the additional work tasked by SMD01 to support decision-making on MPs for South Pacific albacore (WCPFC19-2022-16). (<a href="#">WCPFC19 Summary Report, para 222</a>; <a href="#">WCPFC19-2022-16 (Updates on MP evaluations for south Pacific albacore since SMD01)</a>)</p> <p>vi. Adopted CMM 2022-03 <i>CMM on Establishing a Harvest Strategy for key fisheries and stocks in the WCPO</i>. (<a href="#">WCPFC19 Summary Report, para 270</a>)</p> <p>vii. Adopted the updated <i>Indicative Workplan for the Adoption of Harvest Strategies under CMM 2014-06</i>. (<a href="#">WCPFC19 Summary Report, para 277</a>; <a href="#">Att. L</a>)</p> <p>viii. Given the heavy workload in 2023, agreed not to hold an SMD in 2023 and agreed to assess the need to hold an SMD in 2024. (<a href="#">WCPFC19 Summary Report, para 291</a>)</p> <p>* First Science Management Dialogue held in August 2022. (<a href="#">SMD01 Outcomes Document: WCPFC19-2022-SMD01-01</a>)</p> |
| <b>2023</b> | <p><b>SPALB TRP</b></p> <p>i. Agreed on an interim target reference point (iTRP) for south Pacific albacore specified as <math>(0.96 SB_{2017-2019}/SB_{F=0})^{10}</math>. (<a href="#">WCPFC20 Summary Report (Rev1), Para. 238</a>)</p>   |

<sup>10</sup> Technical definitions:

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|------|--|
|      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. The iTRP for SPALB this iTRP shall be subject for review following the 2024 stock assessment and further development of candidate MPs. (<a href="#">WCPFC20 Summary Report (Rev1), Para. 241</a>)</li> <li>iii. Tasked the SSP to undertake additional evaluations on selected candidate MPs and alternative candidate TRPs for SPALB. (<a href="#">WCPFC20 Summary Report (Rev1), Para. 242</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>SPALB Management Procedure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iv. Agreed to hold a Science-Management Dialogue in 2024 (SMD-02) focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. South Pacific albacore MPs (including review of the iTRP);</li> <li>b. Development of BET and YFT TRPs;</li> <li>c. Issues pertaining to the application of the SKJ management procedure, and</li> <li>d. Harvest strategy capacity-building for CCMs (SPC-facilitated). (<a href="#">WCPFC20 Summary Report (Rev1), Para. 264</a>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>v. Noted the importance of applying compatible measures between WCPFC and IATTC, the Commission tasked the Secretariat to strengthen its relations with the IATTC in the development of the MSE and MPs for South Pacific albacore. (<a href="#">WCPFC20 Summary Report (Rev1), Para. 268-270</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>SKJ Management Procedure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vi. Noted the successful running of the skipjack MP and the need to re-evaluate the skipjack estimation method prior to the next implementation of the MP. (<a href="#">WCPFC20 Summary Report (Rev1), Para. 301-302</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>SKJ Monitoring Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vii. Noted a need for intercessional work, led by the SC and TCC Chairs, to facilitate the development by SSP of a monitoring strategy for adoption at WCPFC21. (<a href="#">WCPFC20 Summary Report (Rev1), Para. 301-313</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mixed Fishery MSE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>viii. Noted the progress to date on the development of the mixed fishery MSE framework. (<a href="#">WCPFC20 Summary Report (Rev1), para 337</a>)</li> </ul> |
| 2024 | <p><b>SKJ Management Procedure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. SC20 recommended that the SSP evaluate the following potential approaches to modify the estimation method for the WCPO skipjack interim MP, using the current OM grid and HCR, to evaluate whether the performance of the MP would change if the EM were revised, and report back to SC21 on outcomes and recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Modification of tropical CPUE abundance indices in the existing estimation method along the lines of the approach taken using unassociated set purse seine CPUE data by the 2022 stock assessment.</li> <li>b. Further investigation of alternative stock assessment platforms and modelling approaches. (<a href="#">SC20 Outcomes Document, Para. 98</a>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>ii. SC20 further recommended that SC21 review the outputs from the re-evaluation and provide recommendations to WCPFC22 regarding the potential need to revise the current interim skipjack MP (CMM 2022-01). (<a href="#">SC20 Outcomes Document, Para. 100</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>SKJ Monitoring Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. SC20 requested that the SSP conduct the following analyses related to the monitoring strategy for skipjack:</li> </ul>   |

“Spawning potential depletion” refers to the estimated South Pacific albacore spawning potential as a percentage of the estimated spawning potential in the absence of fishing (i.e., the unfished spawning potential). The metric is dynamic and is estimated for each model time step.

The method to be used in calculating spawning potential in the absence of fishing ( $SB_{F=0}$ ) shall be:

- a.  $SB_{F=0, t1-t2}$  is the average of the estimated spawning potential in the absence of fishing for a time window of ten years based on the most recent South Pacific albacore stock assessment, where  $t1=y-10$  to  $t2=y-1$  where  $y$  is the year under consideration; and
- b. The estimation shall be based on the relevant estimates of recruitment that have been adjusted to reflect conditions without fishing according to the stock recruitment relationship.

- a. Evaluate whether changes in the FAD closure duration (as adopted in CMM 2023-01) will affect the performance of the interim MP;
- b. Representativeness and appropriateness of candidate CPUEs for use in MP. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, Para. 101](#))
- iv. SC20 recommended that in years when an assessment is not conducted, the monitoring strategy could be reviewed by SC and feedback provided through the Online Discussion Forum. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, Para. 102](#))
- v. SC20 recommended the monitoring strategy be forwarded to the SMD, TCC and the Commission for their consideration. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 104](#))

**SPALB Target Reference Point**

- vi. SC20 recommended the Commission note that the biomass depletion associated with the adopted iTRP has been re-estimated to be 50% based on the 2024 assessment, which was 47% based on the 2021 assessment. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, Para. 105](#))
- vii. SC20 recommended that both catch numbers and weight be used for projections. SC20 further recommended that SSP present trends in vulnerable biomass among specific WCPFC-CA longline fleets, and for WCPFC-CA catch levels to be related to 2017-2019 levels. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 107](#))
- viii. SC20 recommended including more scenarios for projections by fixing EPO catch at 2017-2019 levels and using multiple catch levels in the WCPFC-CA related to 2017-2019 levels. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 108](#))

**SPALB Operating Model**

- ix. SC20 adopted the operating model (OM) reference set, together with the proposed robustness set (Table 2, [SC20-MI-WP-04](#)), for the evaluation of candidate SPALB MPs. ([SC20 Outcomes Document para 109](#))
- x. SC20 recommended that future work to elaborate the OM sets be conducted through the monitoring strategy and could include:
  - a. development of scenarios for the impacts of climate change
  - b. consideration of potential effects of effort creep and/or hyperstability in CPUE
  - c. development of models that address uncertainties around stock structure to the robustness set. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 110](#))
- xi. SC20 recommended that simulations be conducted to explore the implications of assuming a single stock OM when there could be multiple stocks. If ongoing genetics work confirms the presence of multiple-stocks and the simulations indicate that the single-stock assumption made in the OMs is problematic, then exceptional circumstances should be considered and the OM sets should be revised to account for multiple reproductive stocks in the South Pacific. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 111](#))

**SPALB Management Procedure**

- xii. SC20 recommended that SSP focus primarily on the following two ASPM-derived estimators with a view to having a robust estimator, without obvious future data vulnerabilities:
  - a. A direct biomass depletion approach using mean SB/SBF=0 of the last three years; and
  - b. A ratio approach that uses Mean SB/SBF=0 of the last three year (same as in 1.a) relative to 2017-2019. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 112](#))
- xiii. SC20 noted that there was bias in estimation model performance at low predicted stock sizes. SC20 recommended that this bias be addressed through the design of the HCR and its significance or otherwise will be evaluated through evaluation of candidate MPs. Should the estimation model bias become problematic in the MP design context, then steps will need to be taken to address that issue. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 113](#))
- xiv. SC20 recommended that SSP conduct a Management Strategy Evaluation of a range of candidate MPs, using updated estimators together with HCR and maximum change metarule specifications similar to those presented at SC19 (SC19-MI-WP-06). ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 114](#))
- xv. SC20 recommended that SSP, in addition to running projections assuming a single baseline for all fisheries within the Management Procedure evaluations, explore the potential implications of using different reference periods for different fisheries and gears within the MP. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 115](#))

- xvi. SC20 recommended that EPO catches be assumed to remain constant at recent levels but with an exploration of a case where the EPO is subject to MP controls (in a similar way to SC20-MI-WP-03). ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 116](#))
- xvii. SC20 noted that it was desirable to constrain the number of candidate MPs evaluated for consideration and recommended that steps be taken to manage this, including using one-off variations from a base-case scenario, rather than a full factorial grid of options. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, para 117-118](#))

**BET and YFT Target Reference Points**

- xviii. SC20 recommended that the SSP include the following updates to SC20-MI-WP-07 for presentation to the Commission:
  - a. Update tables 2-7 with the equivalent depletion levels for South Pacific albacore based on the 2024 South Pacific albacore stock assessment;
  - b. Include additional columns in the evaluation of candidate TRPs for YFT and BET which provide the impact on vulnerable biomass within the tropical longline fishery and the southern longline fishery. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, Para. 119](#))
- xix. SC20 recommended that the SMD and Commission take into account the analysis contained in xvSC20-MI-WP-07 including the following when considering TRPs for bigeye and yellowfin tuna:
  - a. Based on the 2023 stock assessment for yellowfin, the miscellaneous fisheries are estimated to account for approximately 37% of the impact on the spawning potential over the period 2016-2018 , but recent catch for yellowfin is higher.
  - b. Based on the analysis in SC20-MI-WP-07, the CMM 2023-01 objectives for yellowfin and bigeye tuna cannot both be met simultaneously. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, Para. 120](#))
- xx. SC20 recommended that an additional working paper be submitted to WCPFC21, which will include a re-evaluation of the candidate yellowfin and bigeye tuna TRPs using more recent fishing conditions for the domestic fisheries of Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam. The 2016-18 average catches are significantly lower than the recent fishing level, likely leading to a more optimistic projected stock status for yellowfin tuna. ([SC20 Outcomes Document, Para. 121](#))

Updates on 2024 Intersessional Working Groups

The Commission’s use of intersessional working groups ensures that key work streams continue to make progress between annual sessions. In addition, the intersessional work allows the subsidiary bodies to receive and provide input to support development of relevant recommendations to the Commission.

| Intersessional Working Group                         | Description of 2024 Activities   |
|--|--|
| <p>1. <b>Regional Observer Program (IWG-ROP)</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Develop a workplan and prioritise activities</li> <li>ii. Develop draft recommended modifications to ROP data fields with the intention of allowing for more useful consideration of ROP data in the CCFS and in the Compliance Monitoring Scheme processes, and while taking into account their implications, including the impact on observer workloads and observer safety, as well as any related training needs</li> <li>iii. Prioritize work on issues such as a solution to identifying interactions with whale sharks and cetaceans, and on the inclusion of ROP data fields that were identified in the TCC Workplan 2022-2024 project specific task (j), and to identify any CMM that should also be prioritized in this work</li> </ul> |
| <p>2. <b>Transshipment (TS-IWG)</b></p>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Existing processes and systems for the collection and management of ROP data to the Commission and whether these could be used for observer transshipment data</li> <li>ii. The philosophy of the WCPFC SC Project 93</li> <li>iii. The progress made through recent field work aimed at enhancing the data collection during at sea longline transshipment</li> <li>iv. Considerations around cooperation between WCPFC and other Pacific-basin based RFMOs in respect of transshipment monitoring e.g. possible expansion of cross endorsement</li> </ul>  |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>v. Arrangement for purse seine and transshipment observers with IATTC and operationalizing the existing transshipment observer MOC with CCSBT</li> <li>vi. Consideration of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment, especially as they relate to the application of WCPFC ER reporting standards</li> <li>vii. Data preparation, data compilation and analysis, and qualitative study, literature review and policy analysis as set out in the three stage Scope of Work agreed by the TS-IWG to support their review of the CMM</li> <li>viii. Strengthening independent verification of key obligations (including through a review of transshipment related data gaps and data exchange across RFMOs)</li> </ul> |
| 3. <b>Crew Labour Standards IWG</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Intersessional work to improve crew labour standards</li> <li>ii. Progress drafting a CMM</li> </ul>   |
| 4. <b>FAD Management Options (FAD-MO IWG)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Consider requirements for the transmission of satellite buoy data from drifting FADs</li> <li>ii. Consider ways to implement FAD recovery programs/strategies</li> <li>iii. Develop the WCPFC FAD logbook for vessel operators</li> <li>iv. Consider ways for the implementation of the stepwise introduction of bio-degradable dFADs</li> <li>v. Review information related to the effectiveness of the limit on the number of dFADs deployed as set in paragraph [21] of the CMM 2023-01</li> </ul>  |
| 5. <b>ERandEM Working Group (EM/ER WG)</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Work to continue to enhance the WCPFC's monitoring programme</li> <li>ii. CCMs advising on next steps for the ERandEM WG work plan noting status of work completed in 2022 that highlighted three key pieces of work relating to an at-sea monitoring CMM, an 'Electronic Monitoring CMM and associated Standards, Specifications and Procedures</li> </ul>  |

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| <p>6. <b>Special Requirements Fund (FAC WG)</b></p>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Work is underway with the co-Chairs of FAC to finalize comments by members of the WG for review at FAC18</li> <li>ii. Paper to be presented to FAC18 on the various options for sustainable funding of the SRF</li> </ul>  |
| <p>7. <b>South Pacific Albacore Roadmap (SPA-RM IWG)</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Continue work to progress the agreed workplan to support the development of a SPA Management Procedure</li> <li>ii. Review scientific advice on the SPA stock status as the basis for the settings for the SPA Management Procedure including recommendations on a revised SPA interim Target Reference Point (iTRP) and SPA management objective</li> </ul> |

## Key Secretariat Activities in 2024

### Overview

The Secretariat continues to serve WCPFC members through the development and maintenance of critical databases and online reporting systems, the provision of information to support members in their implementation of obligations, and annual support to a wide range of virtual and in-person meetings. The Secretariat's work in 2024 was guided by outcomes from WCPFC20 which are closely linked to the Convention. The workplans that guide intersessional work, including those of the subsidiary bodies, also provide the necessary guidance and direction for Secretariat resources.

### *2024 Restructuring of Secretariat Resources*

Secretariat roles have been redesigned to provide greater support to member officials, enhance databases and online systems, and shift focus to data quality and accuracy in light of the large data holdings now in place.

#### *Compliance*

- At the beginning of 2024, the Secretariat's compliance team underwent a reorganization of its structure, following an internal review in 2023 by the Executive Director and senior management. The internal review concluded that a realignment of Secretariat staff roles and responsibilities was necessary to reflect on the maturity of some of the Commission's monitoring programmes, such as the ROP and VMS, and a need for greater integration of the Secretariat's operational activities in support of CCM's reporting and vessel management obligations.
- To reflect the growing responsibilities of the Secretariat in supporting members' reporting and vessel management needs, the Assistant Compliance Manager role was revised to become a Deputy Compliance Manager position and the incumbent Assistant Compliance Manager, Eidre Sharp, was selected to fill the new position. The range of support staff roles in the compliance team were also reorganized to reflect the increased capacity throughout the membership and the resulting increased expectation for stronger monitoring and management of fishing activities across the Convention Area.
- At the time of writing, a new position of Fisheries Management and Compliance Adviser has been filled and the selected candidate is expected to take up the role in early November. This position will provide support for the integration of the Secretariat's compliance-related functions, and have a particular focus on supporting the data and reporting requirements necessary to facilitate the Commission's transition to harvest strategies.
- The position of ROP Coordinator was shifted into a consultancy and the incumbent staff Karl Staisch was retained in the consultancy, working from his home in Brisbane, Australia, throughout 2024. The consultancy continues the Secretariat's ROP focus on audit and training of member national observer programs. At the end of 2024, the position of VMS Manager will be folded into the new restructure of support staff positions, focused on strengthening CCM's capacities to manage their vessel authorizations and meet vessel reporting requirements.

### *Finance and Administration*

- The Secretariat also implemented changes to the Secretariat's Finance and Administration staff structure in 2024, in response to increased needs relating to staffing requirements. A new position of Human Resources Officer was created and replaced the position of Executive Assistant. The reorganization has led to the shifting of responsibilities within the Finance and Administration team that recognizes increased capacity in existing staff, a need to balance skills and workloads more equitably, and a focus on working more efficiently.

### *Information, Communications, and Technology*

- Discussions are currently underway to review the Secretariat's Information Communications and Technology (ICT) structure that accounts for the high dependency of the organization on online databases and systems and the need to ensure information security as more data is collected, and data analysis activities grow. The Secretariat utilizes a wide range of contractors to provide IT-related services to support the main IT infrastructure. The role that IT plays in data analysis is also under review, including ensuring that the Secretariat has the appropriate resources and staffing requirements to meet Commission expectations in the future.
- Information and data security have become especially important with the volume of WCPFC data holdings and activities taking place in a digital environment. Updates will be provided to the 18<sup>th</sup> Finance and Administration Committee (FAC18) on the Secretariat's efforts to develop an information and cybersecurity governance framework that is suitable for the WCPFC.

### *Staff Training*

Secretariat staff are actively pursuing opportunities to learn new skills or upgrade existing skills, reflecting a 2024 focus on increasing capacity throughout the Secretariat and narrowing gaps in capabilities. This focus is expected to reduce heavy workloads, foster greater teamwork and collaboration, and result in enhanced support to members in the midst of growing responsibilities and demands on the organization.

- The Secretariat created a Learning Lab in early 2024 to provide a dedicated workspace for staff to participate in online training courses in a variety of formats as part of regular staff responsibilities.
- The Secretariat also participated in a 1 ½ day leadership workshop in May 2024 and engaged in a series of activities designed to explore and enhance individual leadership skills. This exercise offered a new training opportunity to staff and served as a complement to additional ongoing training throughout the year. These activities are taking place alongside ongoing IT and cybersecurity training among the staff, as part of the Secretariat's overall information security efforts.
- Several Compliance team training activities have been completed in 2024, aimed at enhancing staff skills in use of current tools and systems and to broaden their awareness and familiarity with new analytical tools and approaches that are being developed to support Compliance workflows. The training sessions and support from external business analytical and IT consultants, aims to provide planned, wider outreach to support CCMs vessel management and reporting obligations which will be supported by the re-organisation of the Compliance team.

- In late November, two support staff will participate in the World Maritime University Regional Pacific Islands Capacity Building Project to Progress the Implementation of International Instruments to Combat IUU Fishing (CAPFISH), from 11 – 22 November 2024, in Suva, Fiji.

#### *Host government relations and community engagement*

The Secretariat continues to benefit from strong support from the host nation of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and its host state of Pohnpei. The Executive Director made courtesy visits in 2024 to the FSM President and Vice President, the FSM Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and the Pohnpei State Governor, to confirm the WCPFC’s partnership with the FSM and State of Pohnpei, and the Secretariat’s commitment to being a positive contributor to the local community.

- Discussions are currently underway with the FSM national government on potential funding for renovations to the Secretariat facility.
- WCPFC continued to support local community activities in 2024 with donations to and participation in sports activities, fishing tournaments, and trade and tourism expos. The Secretariat’s partnership with the College of Micronesia-Pohnpei campus provides excellent support to the Commission’s annual meeting of the TCC.

#### *Secretariat activities with other regional fisheries bodies and national fisheries initiatives*

The Secretariat’s interactions with other fisheries organizations or national fisheries departments, as well as initiatives outside the WCPFC framework, are beneficial to building the organization’s network and to developing staff capacities.

- The Deputy Compliance Manager attended the UN FAO Regional Coordination Meeting for the Southwest and East Pacific in Auckland, New Zealand in February which was one of five regional meetings that aims to coordinate and monitor implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA). Key focuses were to update the status of each country’s implementation of the PSMA and to workshop implementation challenges and gaps and identify proposals to address them. The outcomes will inform the work of the PSMA Strategy and Monitoring Working Group which will make recommendations to the fifth Meeting of the Parties to the PSMA to be held in 2025. A strong contingent of Pacific based WCPFC CCMs attended.
- The Compliance Manager was an invited speaker to the Third Regional Workshop on Operationalizing Cooperative Mechanisms to Combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) in April in Da Nang, Viet Nam to provide an overview of the role of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in supporting sustainable tuna fisheries in the western and central Pacific Ocean. The workshop brought together international and regional experts in fisheries law enforcement from twelve countries: Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam and the discussions were focused on available tools, processes, and information to support WCPFC Members and Cooperating Non-Members in their fisheries enforcement activities to combat IUU fishing.
- The Executive Director attended the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of Regional Fisheries Body Secretariats Network (RSN) on the margins of the FAO Committee on Fisheries in July 2024. This provided an excellent opportunity for building important networks with Secretariat representatives of other RFBs and RFMOs, and to consider important global developments around ocean health and marine

resource management. The Director of SPC-OFP also attended the RSN meeting which allowed WCPFC representatives to meet with tuna RFMO counterparts to discuss a range of matters of mutual interest.

- In mid-2024, the Compliance Manager chaired the 2024 annual meeting of the FAO ABNJ Common Oceans Tuna project partner steering committee, held in July. The Steering Committee includes the five tuna RFMO Secretariats, executing partners and co-financing partners, who meet annually to review progress under the project, to share information, lessons learned, and knowledge generated from the project's activities and to formalize the work lying ahead for the global project. The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and led by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the project works in collaboration with five tuna RFMOs, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, and civil society.
- In early 2024, the Secretariat requested an introductory call with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to gather information about the ISA's activities in the North Pacific in an area that overlaps with the WCPFC Convention Area. The meeting offered an important opportunity for the Secretariat to learn about ISA processes, which have helped inform a paper for consideration at WCPFC21 on the potential for WCPFC to apply for observer status to the ISA.
- In June 2024, the Compliance Manager and Deputy Compliance Manager attended the in-person Tuna Compliance Network meeting hosted by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission at its headquarters in Seychelles. The meetings of the Tuna Compliance Network are focused on sharing experience on how to support and monitor member implementation most effectively as well as on ways Secretariat's were streamlining processes.
- Following the direction of the Commission at WCPFC20, the Secretariat organized a virtual meeting with the IATTC Secretariat at the end of July to consider a broad range of issues of shared interest. These included data collection and monitoring of activities in the WCPFC/IATTC Overlap Area, and management of South Pacific albacore. Follow-up meetings are taking place in October and again in December, after the conclusion of WCPFC21. Additional information will be provided to the Commission under Agenda Item 11 at WCPFC21.

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