



COMMISSION
Twenty-First Regular Session
28 November to 3 December 2024
Suva, Fiji (Hybrid)

Updates on Cooperation with other Organizations

WCPFC21-2024-24
24 October 2024

Submitted by the Secretariat

Purpose

1. Article 22 of the Convention mandates the Commission to collaborate with other intergovernmental organizations that can contribute to achieving the Convention's objectives. The WCPFC has established formal relations with eleven intergovernmental institutions and agencies, including other regional fisheries management organizations, which are listed under "Relations with Other Organisations" on the [WCPFC Key Documents webpage](#).
2. The purpose of this paper is to provide updated information on the Commission's 2024 activities relating to its cooperation with other organizations through the conclusion of the Memoranda of Understanding and through activities undertaken by the Secretariat on behalf of the organization.
3. This information is provided for the information and consideration of the Commission at WCPFC21.

United Nations

4. The Seventeenth Round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (ICSP-17), held from May 15-17, 2024, focused on "Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change." The conference gathered delegates from States Parties, non-parties, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations to discuss global efforts for the conservation of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, with a special emphasis on the impacts of climate change on fisheries. The meeting aimed to foster dialogue among stakeholders and share experiences to improve sustainable fisheries management while addressing the significant challenges posed by a rapidly changing climate.
5. Key discussions revolved around the impacts of climate change on fisheries, including shifts in fish stocks' distribution, productivity, and abundance, with some species moving to higher latitudes and deeper waters. Several case studies highlighted the need for adaptive management approaches, incorporation of scientific research, and the use of marine protected areas and predictive models to enhance climate-resilient fisheries management. The conference also underlined the necessity of international cooperation, capacity-building, and the integration of small-scale fisheries and vulnerable communities into sustainable management strategies. The

meeting concluded with a call for continued dialogue and strengthened global frameworks to tackle these pressing issues.

6. The WCPFC Secretariat participated in the Informal Consultations as a panelist for a session on “Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change: case studies, best practices and challenges at the regional and national levels”.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network

7. The [Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network \(RSN\)](#) was established to facilitate information exchange among RFB Secretariats. Meetings have occurred informally since at least 1999, usually in the margins of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting. The 10th RSN (RSN10) meeting took place in July 2024, again on the margins of COFI, and the Executive Director was in attendance.
8. The RSN10 provided an opportunity for the Executive Director to engage with other tuna RFMO Secretariat executives, as well as with representatives of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Secretariat and the Pacific Community’s Oceanic Fisheries Programme (SPC-OF). Importantly, it was an opportunity for the WCPFC Secretariat to participate in early discussions relating to plans for the 3rd United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC3) taking place in June 2025, and to take part in discussions relating to the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and their implications for international fisheries bodies.
9. RSN produces and distributes a magazine published by FAO, featuring contributions from RFBs and other relevant RSN partners. The WCPFC Secretariat provided an update to the 22nd edition of the [RSN Magazine](#) (February 2024), which focused on climate change, complemented by a submission from the SSP.
10. RSN10 outcomes relevant to WCPFC include plans for closer coordination among tuna RFMO secretariat executives on matters related to UNOC3 and BBNJ, ongoing discussions with other tuna RFMO secretariats on meeting scheduling (in response to challenges faced by the SSP as discussed at SC19 with the SC meeting schedule), and increased visibility and awareness of WCPFC’s work among regional fisheries bodies.

Common Oceans Tuna Project

11. In 2024, the FAO's Common Oceans Tuna Project continued its efforts to improve the sustainability and management of tuna fisheries in the areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). The project, which brings together regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), governments, and stakeholders, focuses on strengthening the conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory tuna stocks. This year, key activities included advancing electronic monitoring and reporting systems to enhance data collection, improving compliance with conservation measures, and fostering cooperation among RFMOs to address challenges like illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. A comprehensive update on the work undertaken through the Project was submitted by the FAO to WCPFC20 and found at [WCPFC20-2023-OP03](#).

12. The WCPFC Secretariat Compliance Manager completed her 12-month tenure as Chair of the Global Tuna Project Steering Committee in July 2024. WCPFC continues to provide in-kind co-financing to the project, comprising a contribution in staff time and other operating expenses devoted to activities supporting the project objectives.

Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System

13. Established in 2004, the [Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System \(FIRMS\)](#) seeks to meet the need for reliable fisheries information. FIRMS is supported by the FAO and comprised of a network of Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) called the “FIRMS Partnership,” which collects, collates, and disseminates up-to-date fisheries data and statistics on the state of the world’s fisheries and aquatic resources. The FAO submitted a detailed information paper on FIRMS to SC5 (2009), available as [WCPFC-SC5-2009/GN-WP-18](#).
14. WCPFC first considered joining the FIRMS Partnership at SC2, where there was a general discussion about whether formal involvement in FIRMS may be too resource-intensive, noting that the WCPFC was still in its infancy at that time.¹ At the request of SC2, the Executive Director attended the 4th FIRMS Steering Committee in 2007 and reported back to SC3, where the Secretariat and CCMs were requested to monitor FIRMS developments.² No further discussions relating to FIRMS took place until the FAO paper was submitted to SC5 in 2009, and no discussions by the Commission or the Scientific Committee have taken place since 2009.
15. The Secretariat and the SSP maintain regular contact with FIRMS representatives at FAO, and the SSP provides the published public domain aggregated catch and effort data from WCPFC directly to the FIRMS Global Tuna Atlas, reflecting the WCPFC’s observer status to the FIRMS Partnership. The Commission may wish to consider tasking SC21 to revisit the value of WCPFC joining the FIRMS Partnership, and report back to WCPFC22 in 2025.

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)

16. Background information on WCPFC’s cooperation with IATTC was provided in [WCPFC20-2023-31](#) during WCPFC20. At the meeting, the Commission tasked the Secretariat to provide an annual update on collaboration.³
17. The WCPFC and IATTC secretariats convened a virtual meeting on 25 July 2024 to discuss a variety of issues of mutual interest, reaffirming their shared commitment to collaboration as outlined in the [MOU between WCPFC and IATTC](#). The table below provides the list of topics discussed during the meeting, along with outcomes and next steps where applicable.

Topic	Outcomes and/or Next Steps
a. South Pacific albacore	IATTC Secretariat participated in WCPFC SMD02; emphasis on cooperation in CKMR analysis, genetic sampling, and otolith collection; further joint consideration needed to align harvest strategy development; and support for a joint working group between Commissions to coordinate management
b. North Pacific albacore	Acknowledgement of effective cooperation via the Northern Committee

¹ See paragraph 232 of [SC2 Summary Report](#).
² See paragraph 297 of [SC3 Summary Report](#).
³ See paragraph 858 of the [WCPFC20 Summary Report Rev01](#).

c. Pacific Bluefin tuna	Ongoing Secretariat coordination of e-PBF CDS development; acknowledgement of successful ongoing engagement via JWG
d. Climate change	Interest in joint research and information sharing; confirm support for the development of the SEAPODYM model by SPC and Mercator
e. Overlap area	Secretariats will undertake a joint review in 2025
f. Observer cross endorsement	Ongoing collaboration to address training needs, and potential scope for expansion to cover high seas transshipment
g. Transshipment monitoring	Commitment to exchange information according to respective data rules
h. Electronic monitoring	Commitment to share information on respective RFMO developments; consider approaches to compatibility and harmonization
i. Deep sea mining	Commitment to share information; consider shared monitoring of ISA activities.
j. Stock assessments, tuna tagging, and ecosystem research	Consider regular updates between IATTC and SPC scientists, and exchange program activities; explore data sharing to support greater efficiencies in research activities; explore ways to enhance collaboration in tuna tagging activities
k. FADs	Joint analysis to identify data sharing gaps, including stranding events; consideration of a synopsis paper on Pacific-wide FAD management measures and monitoring to inform 2025 discussions
l. Bycatch mitigation	Commitment to share information to support greater harmonization of mitigation measures; share results of bycatch mitigation projects
m. Joint research (Achatines laboratory)	Explore the potential for research collaboration that can be facilitated through IATTC's Achatines Lab

18. The secretariats agreed to meet again at the end of 2024, following the conclusion of WCPFC21, to revisit relevant discussions and outline plans to continue collaborative activities in 2025.

North Pacific Fisheries Commission

19. The Commission at WCPFC20 approved a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC). Consistent with other MOUs that the WCPFC currently has in place, the Objective in the MOU with NPFC is to facilitate cooperation between NPFC and WCPFC with respect to stocks or species of mutual interest to both Organizations.
20. On 5 September 2024, the WCPFC Chair and the NPFC Chair convened virtually to sign the MOU, with both the WCPFC and NPFC secretariats also participating in the call.
21. The Secretariats communicate periodically to exchange information on matters of mutual interest relating to general secretariat operations. The MOU will serve as the foundation for data exchange, where requested by each Commission, and within the parameters of each organization's rules for sharing data.

South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization

22. The Commission at WCPFC20 approved a renewal of the [MOU with the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization \(SPRFMO\)](#), with an amendment to remove the expiry period to align with other MOUs that the WCPFC currently has in place.
23. On 22 May 2024, the WCPFC Chair and the SPRFMO Chair convened virtually to sign the MOU, with both the WCPFC and SPRFMO secretariats also participating in the call. The MOU will continue to serve as the foundation for ongoing data exchange, when requested by either Commission, within the parameters of each organization's rules for sharing data.

Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna

24. Noting the shared interests between WCPFC and the [Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna \(CCSBT\)](#), particularly in relation to WCPFC fisheries that overlap with CCSBT's management of the Southern bluefin tuna stock, the WCPFC Secretariat took the opportunity to participate as an Observer to the CCSBT's 31st Annual Meeting that took place on 7-10 October 2024. The Secretariat's participation reflects efforts to strengthen collaboration among the five global tuna RFMOs on matters of shared interests, such as climate change and interactions with the BBNJ Treaty.
25. This marked WCPFC's first attendance at a CCSBT meeting, which was appreciated by both the CCSBT Secretariat and its Members. It was noted that WCPFC had been involved in parts of the BBNJ process, and the two secretariats agreed to collaborate to ensure information is shared as the BBNJ framework develops.

RFMO and RFB Compliance Manager Informal Networks

26. Informal collaboration between tuna RFMO Secretariat compliance counterparts (CCSBT, IATTC, ICCAT, IOTC, and WCPFC) has been continuing under the umbrella of the Tuna Compliance Network (TCN) since 2017 with the support of the International MCS Network and with limited funding from the current and previous GEF-funded FAO Common Oceans Tuna Project. In late 2020, similar informal collaboration commenced under the umbrella of the Pan-Pacific Fisheries Compliance Network (PPFCN), also supported by the International MCS Network, amongst Fisheries Secretariat Compliance counterparts with areas of responsibility in the Pan Pacific region (CCAMLR, CCSBT, IATTC, NPAFC, NPFC, SPRFMO, and WCPFC).
27. In June 2024, the WCPFC Secretariat participated in the [Tuna Compliance Network](#) with tuna RFMO colleagues from ICCAT, IOTC, and IATTC. Reflecting WCPFC20 outcomes including to establish data exchange arrangements for certain data, discussions included consideration of the need to:
 - a. identify specific data and information to be shared and any difference in the standards applied to that data and information;
 - b. identify the mechanism for sharing (including potential interim mechanisms) with appropriate security and recording exchanged data; and
 - c. ensure or propose amendments if necessary to ensure MOU's and respective data sharing requirements enable the types of data exchanges to occur as directed by WCPFC20.
28. Technical discussions with individual RFMOs under the auspices of existing MOUs, and through TCN and PPFCN, will be shaped by the above principles in the context of the objectives for the reciprocal data exchanges.