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Cooperation with Other Organizations and International Governance Issues

WCPFC22-2025-35
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Submitted by the Secretariat

Purpose

1. This paper responds to the tasking at WCPFC21 to report back to the Commission on a regular basis on international developments which may impact on WCPFC and its activities. It outlines key international ocean-related activities over the past year¹, particularly those occurring under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral international organisations. Information on the WCPFC Secretariat's engagement in related activities is included.

Background

2. At WCPFC21 in 2024, the Secretariat submitted [WCPFC21-2024-25](#) to inform CCMs on international developments relating to ocean conservation and the implications for WCPFC. The Commission tasked the Secretariat with maintaining engagement with international ocean conservation initiatives, including the Preparatory Commissions for the [Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction](#) (the BBNJ Agreement), and to report back to the Commission on a regular basis on international developments which may impact on WCPFC and its activities (*see para. 795 of WCPFC21 Summary Report*).
3. The international attention on ocean conservation has significant implications for WCPFC and its role in managing highly migratory fish stocks, as well as non-target, associated, and dependent species in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). The WCPFC Secretariat continued to engage with the UN, including by participating in the two 2025 Preparatory Commissions (PrepCom) of the BBNJ Agreement; participating in the Third United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC3); and providing a pre-recorded presentation to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) 18th Informal Consultation of States Parties (ICSP-18).
4. WCPFC may also need to consider other issues beyond traditional fisheries management and the relevant discussions taking place at the international level, including addressing the effects of climate change on marine resources, efforts to eliminate fisheries subsidies which support illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and deep sea mining exploration currently underway in the Pacific Ocean region.

¹ On 25 July 2025, an update on the Secretariat's engagement in international ocean-related activities during the first half of 2025 was provided through Circular 2025/47.

Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement)

5. The most significant recent international development in ocean conservation is the upcoming entry into force in January 2026 of the BBNJ Agreement, following the deposit of the sixtieth instrument of ratification in September 2025. This landmark Agreement seeks to conserve and sustainably use marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) through (1) the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from marine genetic resources (MGRs), (2) the establishment of area-based management tools (ABMTs), including marine protected areas (MPAs), (3) a process for undertaking environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and (4) obligations for capacity building and the transfer of marine technology (CBTMT). It establishes institutional arrangements, including a Conference of Parties (COP), a Scientific and Technical body, an Implementation and Compliance Committee, a Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) to share data and information and match capacity-building needs, and a Secretariat.
6. The WCPFC Secretariat attended meetings of the Preparatory Commission in April and August 2025. On [22 April 2025](#) the Secretariat made a statement which emphasised constructive and collaborative cooperation between BBNJ and other relevant legal instruments, frameworks, and bodies (IFBs), each within its respective mandate and with respect for the roles and competencies established under international law.
7. Prepcom II considered a [PrepCom Secretariat paper](#) on 'Arrangements to Enhance Cooperation with IFBs' with discussion based on input from IFBs. The contribution from the [WCPFC Secretariat](#) explained the WCPFC's mandate and its cooperative arrangements with other IFBs. In the discussion at Prepcom II, the Secretariat coordinated with other tuna RFMO (t-RFMOs) Secretariats and made a [joint statement](#), which emphasised that t-RFMOs are an essential component of the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement and should therefore be given priority when considering cooperation arrangements with IFB. The statement underscored that the t-RFMOs have developed long-standing deep scientific capacity, which includes comprehensive datasets on high seas ecosystems. The t-RFMOs advocated the position that IFBs with binding mandates for high seas management, including the five t-RFMOs, should be considered the first tier of cooperation partners for the BBNJ Conference of the Parties (COP). It also advocated for a three-pronged approach to cooperation: fostering dialogue at the decision-making level; at the operational (or Secretariat) level; and at the scientific/technical levels. The WCPFC Executive Director also participated in a [side event](#) hosted by the FAO on 'Fisheries and the BBNJ Agreement'.
8. All four areas of focus of the BBNJ Agreement are of relevance to WCPFC. The following are examples of the potential for interaction between the BBNJ Agreement and the COP and WCPFC across these four areas.
 - i. **Area-based management tools, including MPAs:** International efforts to establish MPAs on high seas of the Pacific Ocean through the new BBNJ Agreement will likely overlap with WCPFC's mandate. The agreed outcome is set out in Article 5.2 of the Agreement which provides that the "agreement shall be interpreted and applied in a manner that does not undermine relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies and that promotes coherence and coordination with those instruments, frameworks and bodies".
 - ii. With respect to the establishment of ABMTs, including MPAs, the process is as follows:
 - a. Parties to the BBNJ Agreement, individually or collectively, submit a proposal regarding the establishment of an MPA or other ABMTs, to the BBNJ Secretariat.

- b. The proposal is made publicly available and undergoes a preliminary review by the BBNJ Scientific and Technical Body.
 - c. Consultations on the proposal take place, including with IFBs. Article 21.2 describes explicitly the type of input that would be sought from IFBs on ABMTs, including views on the merits and geographic scope of the proposal, relevant scientific input, or information regarding any existing measures for the relevant area or for adjacent areas.
 - d. The proponent considers the contributions received during the consultation period, revises the proposal, as appropriate, and submits it to the Scientific and Technical Body for assessment and recommendation to the COP.
 - e. The COP takes a decision on the establishment of the MPA or other ABMTs and related measures. It may decide on measures 'compatible' with those adopted by relevant IFBs, and may make recommendations where proposed measures are within the competence of other IFBs. More specifically, Article 22.2 requires the BBNJ COP to "respect the competences of, and not undermine" IFBs in establishing ABMTs.
- iii. Success of this process and the interaction between BBNJ and IFBs will depend on effective collaboration and cooperation. The PrepCom is discussing the arrangements that the COP will make for regular consultations among relevant IFBs. Such cooperation is two-way and should occur at several steps in the process:
- a. Recommendations from IFBs are to be considered and, as appropriate, taken into account in the assessment of proposals (Article 21.5).
 - b. The COP is able to provide recommendations to existing IFBs in instances where proposed management measures fall under the competence of those IFBs (Article 22.1(c)), but it is up to the IFB to adopt any measures. It is likely that this will require prior dialogue on feasibility of the recommendation.
 - c. The BBNJ COP may take decisions on measures 'compatible' with those adopted by the relevant legal instruments and frameworks, in cooperation and coordination with those instruments, frameworks and bodies (Article 22.1(b)).
 - d. Parties to the BBNJ Agreement must promote, as appropriate, the adoption of measures within relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant bodies of which they are members, to support the implementation of the decisions and recommendations made by the Conference of the Parties under Part III (Article 25 (4).)
- iv. **EIAs:** The BBNJ Agreement sets out provisions for the operationalisation of the provisions of UNCLOS on EIAs for areas beyond national jurisdiction by establishing processes, thresholds, and other requirements for conducting and reporting assessments by Parties to the Agreement. WCPFC undertakes assessments of the impact and status of stocks, using stock assessments and risk-based assessment frameworks. The BBNJ Agreement requires the COP to develop a mechanism for the Scientific and Technical Body to collaborate with relevant IFBs. Information from RFMOs will play an important part in assessing environmental impacts. It is not necessary to conduct a screening or an EIA under the Agreement if the planned activity has been assessed in accordance with the requirements of a relevant IFB (or IFBs) and if that assessment is equivalent to the one required under the BBNJ Agreement; or the regulations or standards of the relevant IFBs

were designed to prevent, mitigate, or manage potential impacts below the threshold for EIAs under the Agreement and they have been complied with. Whether the standards of IFBs, including WCPFC, meet the threshold for the requirement to conduct screening under the BBNJ Agreement will be an important consideration as the BBNJ standards and guidelines for conducting EIAs are developed and implemented.

- v. **Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from marine genetic resources:** The BBNJ Agreement specifically excludes fishing and fishing related activities, and fish or other marine living resources taken in fishing and fishing-related activities from areas beyond national jurisdiction from the ambit of obligations relating to fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from marine genetic resources (Article 10(2)). However, RFMOs may have a role in advancing scientific standards, data transparency, tools and methodologies relating to the use of digital sequencing information. RFMOs, particularly t-RFMOs with mandates covering areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), collect, analyse, share and hold considerable quantities of data on marine science and activities in ABNJ. They will therefore be important contributors to the Clearing House Mechanism (CHM).
 - vi. **Capacity building and transfer of marine technology (CBTMT):** CHM facilitates assessments of needs and priorities of developing States Parties in relation to CBTMT (Article 42(4)). It also facilitates the matching of capacity-building needs with the support available and with providers of the transfer of marine technology (Article 51(3)(b)). WCPFC undertakes a range of capacity building and transfer of marine technology activities. Without cooperation between WCPFC and BBNJ, there is a potential for duplication or conflicting capacity building initiatives.
 - vii. **Clearing House Mechanism (CHM):** The CHM is a mechanism for both receiving and disseminating data and information. The CHM should increase the availability of data and information on the high seas in the Pacific, which may be of benefit to WCPFC, particularly in considering ecosystem-based fisheries management. The BBNJ regime should strengthen interactions between IFBs to address issues of relevance, such as the impacts of climate change and deep seabed mining and enable regional issues to be discussed in a global forum.
9. WCPFC CCMs will ultimately define the manner in which cooperation with BBNJ will be structured. In this context, it will be important to maintain good communication both between WCPFC and BBNJ and particularly at national level within CCMs between the relevant department that leads on BBNJ and the department that leads WCPFC engagement.
 10. The dates for PrepCom III will be 23 March – 2 April 2026. The Secretariat contributed to a joint submission with other RFMO Secretariats that attended PrepCom II, responding to a request from the BBNJ PrepCom co-Chairs for input relating to cooperative mechanisms between BBNJ and IFBs, for consideration in the intersessional period between the second and third PrepComs.

International Seabed Authority and Draft Mining Code

11. WCPFC21 approved the WCPFC seeking observer status with the [International Seabed Authority \(ISA\)](#) ([WCPFC21 Summary Report](#), para. 792). In early 2025, the Secretariat consulted informally with the ISA Secretariat to prepare WCPFC's request for observer status. On 5 March 2025, the Secretariat submitted a formal request for observer status to the ISA, outlining WCPFC's objectives and their relevance to ISA activities, particularly in light of potential interactions between tuna fisheries and deep-sea mining in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The ISA Assembly considered

WCPFC's request in July 2025 and confirmed in an email to the WCPFC Secretariat on 11 October 2025 that this was approved.

12. The agenda for the 21st Scientific Committee (SC21) meeting in August 2025 included 'Deep-Sea Mining' (DSM) and considered an information paper prepared by the Secretariat: [SC21-EB-IP-15: Update on Secretariat Taskings Relating to Deep Sea Mining](#). This paper summarised the status of deep seabed exploration in the Clarion Clipperton Zone (CCZ) in the Northeast Pacific Ocean, and in the Northwest Pacific, both in areas that overlap with the WCPFC Convention Area. It also identified select references to studies that collectively explore potential interactions between deep sea mining activities and marine ecosystems including high seas pelagic fisheries, including midwater and deepwater fisheries such as tuna.
13. SC21 adopted the following recommendations following a discussion of the Secretariat paper (*SC21 Summary Outcomes Document*, ([WCPFC22-2025-SC21-01](#)), paras. 203-205):

SC21 supported the Secretariat's continued engagement with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and requested that the Secretariat provide an update at WCPFC22 following the ISA Assembly's decision on WCPFC observer status.

SC21 encouraged the Secretariat to collaborate with other RFMOs to ensure consistent messaging, maintain awareness, and coordination on deep-sea mining issues related to fisheries in the Pacific Ocean.

SC21 further encouraged the Secretariat to link WCPFC scientific advice to ISA processes such as the development of Regional Environmental Management Plans, and recommended strong WCPFC participation in future workshops to ensure tuna fisheries are considered in defining Areas of Particular Environmental Interest.

14. In response to the tasking at WCPFC21, 'to engage with a broad range of stakeholders to gain awareness and understanding of deep seabed mining activities and their potential direct or indirect impact on tuna fisheries in the WCPFC Convention Area' ([WCPFC21 Summary Report](#), para. 794), the Secretariat organized a two-day virtual seminar for Secretariat staff with a range of representatives from NGOs, academia, and advisory groups to share updates and relevant information on the status of deep sea mining exploration, ISA processes, and scientific studies showing interactions between deep sea mining activities and living marine resources. Secretariat staff have also enrolled in an online, self-directed course to learn more about ISA and deep sea mining.
15. The Secretariat also engaged informally with the IATTC Secretariat on the request for observer status of the ISA, including providing IATTC with contact details and the paper submitted by WCPFC to the ISA. However, it is not clear whether IATTC was granted observer status.
16. The Secretariat will continue to engage with the ISA, relevant RFMOs, the SPC, and other stakeholders to gain further information on the interaction between deep sea mining and fisheries in the WCPFC Convention Area.

Climate Change Developments in Regional Fisheries Bodies

17. WCPFC21 adopted the [Climate Change Workplan 2024-2027](#) to inform the Commission's efforts to address climate change impacts on WCPFC fisheries in the Convention Area. The Workplan tasks the Secretariat to provide the Commission with regular updates on other international and regional fisheries bodies activities and relevant news and information regarding climate change that is valuable for WCPFC to engage with. In response to this tasking, the following provides an overview of the activities of selected these bodies.

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO)

<https://www.fao.org/climate-change/fao-at-cop30/en>

18. In 2025, the FAO is advancing a broad climate change agenda centred on strengthening agrifood systems' resilience and integrating them into global climate discussions. Key priorities include preparing for the COP30 UN Climate Change Conference in Brazil, where agriculture and food systems will feature prominently in adaptation and mitigation efforts. The FAO is also promoting climate finance through its Food and Agriculture Sustainability Transformation (FAST) Partnership, supporting countries in accessing funding for climate action, and showcasing innovative solutions at global events such as the Rome Water Dialogue 2025, which focuses on water security and resilient agriculture. Regional initiatives like the Great Green Wall and targeted actions to address desertification and plastic pollution also form part of the FAO's ongoing climate efforts.
19. Complementing these initiatives, the FAO's technical and policy work in 2025 emphasizes planning, financing, and implementing climate action across agrifood systems. Under its 2022–2025 Action Plan, the FAO continues to assist countries in developing climate action strategies and partnerships that balance environmental goals with food security and development needs.

United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

<https://www.ipcc.ch/>

20. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN body for assessing climate science, is now in its Seventh Assessment Cycle, which began with the election of a new Bureau in July 2023. Its most recent work, the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), was completed between 2021 and 2023, with the Synthesis Report finalized in March 2023 to inform the 2023 Global Stocktake under the UNFCCC (Decision 1/CP.21). The Synthesis Report integrates findings from the three Working Groups and three Special Reports on Global Warming of 1.5°C, Climate Change and Land, and the Ocean and Cryosphere, which provide policymakers with a comprehensive overview of the latest climate science, key risks, and response options. It is published as a stand-alone document, including a Summary for Policymakers and a Longer Report, both developed under the IPCC's established review and approval procedures.

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)

21. IATTC adopted a climate change workplan at its 2024 Annual Meeting. The plan focuses on promoting climate-resilient fisheries in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, in response to the growing impacts of climate change on marine ecosystems. The resolution ([Resolution C-24-10](#)) passed at the meeting mandates that climate change be a standing agenda item at future annual meetings considering climate-related Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (EBWG) recommendations in its deliberations. IATTC also conducted its 1st virtual climate change workshop on 24 – 26 February 2025 which focused on discussing and defining, the proposed climate change workplan's main goal, scoping, and framework.
22. In 2024, the IATTC and WCPFC Secretariats met online which indicated that both Secretariats share a mutual interest in conducting joint activities related to climate change, particularly in research, with ongoing efforts by the SPC-OFP and IATTC. Both organizations have developed work plans and terms of reference (TORs) addressing climate change, which are publicly available on their respective websites. Climate change will remain a priority in future discussions between the two RFMOs. Additionally, both IATTC and WCPFC have committed to supporting the development of

the SEAPODYM model, which is being developed by SPC-OFP and Mercator, through co-financing provided by the FAO ABNJ Tuna II Project.

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

23. The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) adopted [Resolution 22-13](#) at its 2022 annual meeting, focusing on addressing the impacts of climate change on both target and non-target species within its convention area. The Resolution aims to evaluate the effects of climate change on fish stocks and associated ecosystems and understand the socioeconomic repercussions for fishing communities and Contracting Parties. ICCAT also adopted [Resolution 23-19](#) in 2023, which set out next steps for the work of its Joint Experts Group on Climate Change. In accordance with these resolutions, ICCAT convened the Second Meeting of the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change in July 2024 to discuss the results of a “stock-take” review of ICCAT’s ongoing work related to climate change and to prepare a revised ICCAT Plan of Action on Climate Change, finalized in October 2024.
24. The 2024 joint experts meeting aimed to review the outcomes of the stock-take exercise, identify data gaps and research needs, and refine the draft Plan of Action to guide ICCAT’s future work on climate change. The revised Plan of Action serves as a living document outlining priority actions for both the Commission and the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS), including integrating climate change considerations into stock assessments, management strategy evaluations, and ecosystem-based fisheries management. The Plan also establishes climate change as a standing agenda item for the SCRS and the Commission starting in 2025, ensuring continued coordination, research, and dialogue with other RFMOs and relevant organizations on climate-adaptive fisheries management. The ICCAT Commission’s annual meeting takes place in November 2025, so outcomes are not available at the time of writing.

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

25. The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) adopted [Resolution 25/01](#) on Climate Change as it relates to the IOTC at its 2025 annual session. The Resolution acknowledges global and regional climate change initiatives and directs the Commission to integrate climate considerations into its conservation and management decisions. It supports further scientific research on the relationship between climate change, tuna stocks, bycatch, and ecosystems; calls for the IOTC Scientific Committee and Working Parties to regularly assess climate-related impacts; and establishes climate change as a standing agenda item across IOTC subsidiary bodies. The Resolution also emphasizes the importance of capacity-building for developing coastal States, including Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, and tasks the IOTC Secretariat with maintaining a dedicated webpage on climate change, seeking funding for scientific and capacity-building activities, and reducing the environmental footprint of IOTC operations through measures such as virtual meetings.
26. Complementing its climate change initiatives, the IOTC continues to implement a comprehensive framework for the management of drifting fish aggregating devices (dFADs). This includes restrictions on the number of FADs per vessel, the mandatory use of biodegradable and non-entangling materials, and enhanced monitoring and reporting measures. These actions aim to reduce marine pollution and habitat degradation associated with FAD use, thereby supporting ecosystem resilience and the long-term sustainability of tuna and associated species in the Indian Ocean.

Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)

27. The Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) adopts an ecosystem-based management approach that recognizes its potential impacts of climate changes on tuna populations. CCSBT emphasizes enhanced data collection (e.g., catch documentation schemes, electronic reporting) and research to understand the effects of climate change on Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) and its ecosystems.
28. During the 29th Meeting of the Extended Scientific Committee (ESC 29), members expressed concern that climate change could affect SBT recruitment or distribution and recommended that future ESC meetings discuss and analyse available data to identify potential climate-related impacts. Subsequently, at CCSBT 31, the Commission endorsed this recommendation and agreed to include “Potential impacts of climate change” as a standing agenda item for future ESC meetings, beginning with ESC 30 in August 2025. These developments reflect CCSBT’s growing commitment to integrating climate considerations into scientific analyses and management strategies, in collaboration with other regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), to ensure the long-term sustainability of SBT and its ecosystems.

2025 United Nations Oceans Conference

29. The [Third United Nations Ocean Conference \(UNOC3\)](#) was held in Nice, France, 9-13 June, 2025. The Ocean Conference is an initiative to support the implementation of the [UN Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development](#). Previous UN Ocean Conferences were held in 2017 (New York) and 2022 (Lisbon). The theme of the 2025 Conference was: “*Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean*”.
30. The UNOC3 Conference was co-hosted by France and Costa Rica, and brought together 15,000 participants from Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organisations, international financial institutions, other interested international bodies, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, the private sector, local communities and other stakeholders. This included more than 60 Heads of State and Government. The Executive Director participated in an [Ocean Action Panel](#) on ‘Promoting the role of sustainable food from the ocean for poverty eradication and food security.’
31. UNOC3’s outcome, known as the Nice Ocean Action Plan, is a two-part framework that comprises a political declaration and over 800 voluntary commitments by governments, scientists, UN agencies, and civil society since the previous conference. A number of financial pledges were made, including a pledge from the European Commission to support ocean conservation, science, and sustainable fishing. One of the main objectives of the Conference was to create positive momentum for the entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement and the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, both of which have occurred.

The Honiara Summit

32. The Honiara Summit took place in Honiara, Solomon Islands in February 2025 and focused on meaningful action and innovation towards achieving *SDG14: Life Below Water*, with a dedicated focus on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. The Summit was jointly hosted by the Government of Solomon Islands and the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in close collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization of the (FAO) and the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean, Ambassador Peter Thompson.

33. The WCPFC Executive Director was invited to speak on two panels at the Summit, on Pacific Leaders' response to SDG14, and on the importance of science to supporting sustainable fisheries. The Summit provided a valuable opportunity for a range of stakeholders, including several RFMO and RFB Secretariat representatives, to come together to collaborate on the development of actions to advance the sustainable development agenda. It also provided an opportunity to showcase the efforts of Pacific Islands small island developing States and partners to manage fisheries in the WCPO.

10th Our Oceans Conference

34. Hosted by the Republic of Korea in April 2025, the [10th Our Oceans Conference](#) (OOC10) convened under the theme, "Our Ocean, Our Action". The conference brought over 3,000 delegates together from 113 countries and spotlighted a special agenda on Digital Oceans (data- and tech-driven tools for governance). OOC10 participants announced roughly USD\$9.1 billion in new voluntary commitments to initiatives such as Sustainable Blue Economy, Sustainable Fisheries, Maritime Security, Marine Pollution and MPAs.
35. The Secretariat was unable to participate in OOC10 but notes that OOC10 outcomes were fed into discussions and side events at UNOC3, as a continuation of previous Our Ocean Conferences where additional ocean financing was mobilized.

WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies

36. The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, concluded in 2022 after more than two decades of negotiation, officially entered into force on September 15, 2025. This marks a significant step towards sustainable fishing practices globally. Impetus was brought to the negotiations and entry into force of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies by Target 14.6 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This target was by 2020 to prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries.
37. The purpose of the Agreement is to curb harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing and illegal fishing practices. The Agreement applies to subsidies for marine wild capture fishing and fishing related activities at sea. It prohibits subsidies to vessels or operators that contribute to illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, impact overfished stocks, or are associated with fishing in the high seas where the resources are not under the management of regional management organisations. In addition, the Agreement requires Parties to exercise due restraint when providing subsidies to vessels that do not fly their flag and for the fishing of stocks whose sustainability status has not been assessed. It includes notification and transparency requirements relating to subsidies and other fisheries-related information. The WTO 'Fish Fund' supports developing and least-developed WTO Members in implementing the Agreement.
38. The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies is relevant to the work of RFMOs. The prohibition of subsidies to those engaged in IUU fishing include where there has been a determination by an RFMO, such as inclusion in a Final IUU Vessel List, that vessels or operators have engaged in IUU fishing. Parties are prohibited from providing subsidies for fishing or fishing related activities on an overfished stock, i.e. a stock which is recognised as overfished by a relevant RFMO/A. Notwithstanding this, subsidies may be granted if measures are implemented to rebuild the stock to a biologically sustainable level. WTO Members that are party to the Agreement must notify the RFMO/As to which they are party, including details of the Convention text, conservation and

management measures, and IUU vessel list and listing procedures. Members may provide this individually or collectively.

39. The WTO Fisheries Subsidies negotiations concluded without finalising the full package of measures that were being negotiated prior to the Agreement's conclusion in 2022. WTO members are still negotiating additional rules on fisheries subsidies, in particular on subsidies that contribute to overfishing and fleet overcapacity.

UN Fish Stocks Agreement Processes

40. The 18th Informal Consultations of States Parties (ICSP-18) to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) was held on 14-16 May 2025. The ICSP-18 focussed its discussions on the topic, "The thirtieth anniversary of the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement: looking to the future". This was an occasion to reiterate the importance of the Agreement as the international legal framework for ensuring the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks; the importance of science-based decision-making to safeguard the health of marine ecosystems and the sustainability of fisheries resources; the reaffirmation of the precautionary approach and ecosystem-based approaches as essential guiding principles for sustainable management of fish stocks; and the increased importance of climate change and its impacts on fish stocks and marine ecosystem.
41. It was also recognised that the ICSP has a role as a preparatory meeting for the next resumed Review Conference on the UN Fish Stocks Agreement. This was initially held in 2006 and resumed in 2010, 2016, and 2023, at which it was decided to reconvene the Review Conference no earlier than 2028. One of the tasks of ICSP-19 will be to facilitate discussion of the modalities for the next resumption of the Review Conference.
42. The WCPFC Secretariat will continue to contribute to the ICSPs, with a view to sharing its experiences with implementation of the Agreement and to identifying best practices in implementing the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, noting that the WCPFC was the first RFMO Convention to incorporate principles from UNCLOS and UNFSA.
43. The Executive Director submitted a pre-recorded presentation to the ICSP-18 conference that highlighted how the WCPFC has implemented UNFSA. The presentation focused on the application of the precautionary approach, the importance of transparency and collaboration, and incorporation of the special needs of developing States into the work of WCPFC. In a related activity, the Executive Director made a virtual presentation to a national workshop in Tonga, organized by the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), on the role of RFMOs in implementing UNFSA. The Secretariat's engagement in these activities ensures that WCPFC's work is reflected in international discussions that are advancing implementation of UNFSA and its principles.

NGOs and Other Partners

Global Tuna Alliance

44. In September 2025, the Executive Director was invited to submit a pre-recorded presentation to the Global Tuna Alliance (GTA) partners meeting, with a focus on the role of RFMO's and the opportunities for participation from tuna retailers and other market-related stakeholders. Positive feedback reflected a greater awareness of how RFMO's develop and implement regulations that govern how tuna are caught and the efforts by RFMO members to conserve and sustainably manage tuna resources. WCPFC's participation in the GTA partners meeting was alongside the IOTC

Secretariat, which together provided participants with the regulatory viewpoint from two significant tuna fisheries.

Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources & Security

45. The Secretariat made virtual presentations to two separate training and briefing sessions hosted by the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources & Security (ANCORS). The first session was a workshop organized through the WPEA Sustainable Fisheries Partnership project and hosted by ANCORS, where the Secretariat was invited to make a presentation on WCPFC's contributions to healthy tuna stocks in the WCPO. The second session was a briefing organized by ANCORS for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the role of RFMOs (and IFBs) in the BBNJ Agreement.

Conclusion

46. At WCPFC21, the Secretariat shared the concerns expressed by some CCMs that the Secretariat's efforts to maintain awareness of international activities should not come at the expense of core business of the Commission. In 2025, the Secretariat has sought to balance its in-person and virtual participation in external activities, recognizing that the Secretariat's efforts to provide information to the Commission is supplementary to the information that CCMs gather themselves as members of the relevant international organizations and activities taking place. The Secretariat's participation throughout 2025 in international activities with relevance to WCPFC has provided an opportunity to develop synergies and work with other t-RFMOs and to increase awareness of the robust conservation and management that WCPFC brings to international fisheries.

Recommendations

47. The Commission is invited to consider the implications of the various international ocean conservation initiatives for WCPFC. It is recommended that the Commission:
 - a. note the value of ongoing Secretariat engagement in a range of international ocean governance activities and the Secretariat's efforts to balance its participation, ensuring that involvement does not detract from, and complements, the core business of the Commission.
 - b. task the Secretariat with maintaining engagement with relevant international ocean conservation initiatives and to report back to the Commission on a regular basis on international ocean-related developments which may impact on WCPFC and its activities.