



## **EIGHTH E-REPORTING AND E-MONITORING WORKING GROUP MEETING (ERandEMWG08)**

**Virtual Meeting**

**02 April 2026**

**10am to 2pm Pohnpei Time**

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**CHAIR'S SUMMARY REPORT**

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### **AGENDA ITEM 1. WELCOME AND OPENING**

1. The WCPFC Electronic Reporting and Electronic Monitoring Intersessional Working Group (ERandEM IWG) held its eighth meeting by video conference. The Chair, Lesley Hawn, called the meeting to order and welcomed participants.
2. The WG adopted the agenda without amendment (**Attachment 1**). The Chair stated that the overarching objective of the meeting was to advance agreement on the EM audit and assurance process, with a view to scheduling a follow-up meeting at which the Working Group could reach sufficient consensus to adopt a draft audit and assurance process for submission to the Scientific Committee (SC) and Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC) for decision. The meeting was structured in two principal parts: the first to address the draft audit and assurance questionnaire, and the second, following a short break, to allow for discussion of the consultative draft Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) for a WCPFC Electronic Monitoring Program.
3. The following members, cooperating non-members and participating territories (CCMs) attended ERandEMWG8: Australia, Canada, China, Federated States of Micronesia, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Chinese Taipei, Samoa, Tonga, United States of America, American Samoa, and El Salvador.
4. Representatives from the following regional organizations attended ERandEMWG8: the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

5. Observers representing International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), The Global Tuna Alliance (GTA), Charitable Trusts (Pew), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Sharks Pacific attended ERandEMWG8.
6. A full list of participants is provided in **Attachment 2**.
7. Draft Audit and Assurance Questionnaire  
The Chair recalled that the draft audit and assurance questionnaire had been revised in response to guidance received from CCMs since the previous meeting. The key revision reflected the shift from device-level checks to a program-level authorization and oversight framework, drawing on feedback communicated by the Secretariat to CCMs on 23 March 2026. In revising the document, consideration had been given to striking an appropriate balance between the level of detail required for the Secretariat's audit function and the appropriate degree of reliance on national and sub-regional EM programs. The Chair noted that the revised questionnaire drew on the structure of the existing Regional Observer Programme (ROP) questionnaire, adapted to the specificities of electronic monitoring, and placed greater emphasis on quality assurance processes while retaining a targeted set of questions on key technical elements contained in the EM system standards, specifications and procedures (SSPs).
8. The Chair introduced the discussion by proposing to begin with the data quality assurance model, and in particular the three proposed scenarios for secondary EM video review. The Chair introduced examples from other Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to illustrate how secondary review processes were handled elsewhere. Clarification was sought as to whether the RFMO frameworks were specifically directed at the secondary review of EM data or at the EM analysis process more broadly.
9. Questions were raised about the relationship between the primary review of raw EM footage, the annotation and analysis process, and the secondary or quality assurance review. In addition, concern was expressed regarding the transmission of sensitive EM records containing identifiable personal information to external entities, whether to the Secretariat or to a third party, in light of domestic privacy protection legislation. It was noted that, for at least some CCMs, such transmission would pose significant legal and practical challenges under national law and that, pending legal review, a preference was expressed for the CCM-led assurance scenario. Data confidentiality considerations, combined with cost implications, led several CCMs to express support for a CCM-directed assurance process rather than Secretariat or third-party models.
10. Although there was support expressed by several CCMs that the primary review—that is, the initial analysis and annotation of EM records—would be the responsibility of each CCM's national or sub-regional EM program, it was suggested that the independence of the entity conducting the analysis had not yet been clearly established, and that this question merited further consideration before proceeding to the quality assurance layer.

11. Members expressed uncertainty about the IWG's shared understanding of the compiled comments on the audit, EM assurance, and verification process, and requested adherence to the agenda—addressing the questionnaire first before proceeding to the secondary discussion.

✓ ***Action Item: Draft a table to track outstanding matters to encourage shared understanding***

## **AGENDA ITEM 2(a): DRAFT AUDIT AND ASSURANCE QUESTIONNAIRE — DISCUSSION OF MEMBER COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK**

### **12. Program-Level Governance and Oversight (Independence & Impartiality)**

A broader perspective was offered on the framing of the audit process, suggesting that before proceeding to vessel-level or data-level assurance processes, the audit framework should first address higher-level governance questions concerning the EM program as a whole. These were described as including: whether there exists clear legal authority and appropriate national legislation and regulations for the operation of the EM program; whether there is accountability and independence from industry and EM service providers; and whether there are robust controls over data access, ownership, and confidentiality as enshrined in applicable law.

13. It was suggested that these governance elements form the first tier of a structured audit framework, with the more operational aspects of the audit—including review of systems and procedures at the CCM level—situated beneath this overarching framework. The view was expressed that the existing questionnaire, as revised, addressed some of these governance elements through the program authorization section, which asks programs to describe their legal basis and operating model. It was suggested that the linkage between the program-level governance framework and the operational standards of individual CCM programs could be made more explicit, and that written comments summarizing this perspective would be submitted to the Chair and the Secretariat for consideration in the preparation of the next revised draft.

✓ ***Action Item: Draft options for the IWG to consider to ensure impendence and impartiality of EM data review. Request CCMs to provide written comments describing the connection between the overall governance framework and the operational standards used by individual CCM programs.***

14. The Chair proceeded to walk the Working Group through the revised draft audit and assurance questionnaire item by item. The principal deliverables proposed for submission by programs as part of the audit process included:
- i. EM analyst training units and curriculum;
  - ii. manuals used by EM analysts to annotate EM records;
  - iii. vessel monitoring plans (VMPs); and
  - iv. a comprehensive high-level description of the EM program including its scope, operating model, technology, coverage, and review rates.

#### 15. VMPs

Discussion arose on the appropriate format for the submission of vessel monitoring plans. The view was expressed that requiring submission of an individual VMP for every vessel in the fishery would be impractical and administratively burdensome. A preference was expressed for the submission of a representative template VMP for each vessel size class rather than actual VMPs for individual vessels. This approach was considered more proportionate to the purpose of the audit. There was no objection to this direction.

- ✓ **Action Item: Remove EM analyst training units and curriculum as a documentary deliverable.**

16. On the question of the framing of audit questions generally, a suggestion was made that questions throughout the questionnaire should be expressed in terms of whether systems and processes are in place to ensure compliance with relevant standards, rather than as simple binary yes/no factual questions or requests for one-time submissions. This would better reflect the nature of a program-level audit and ensure that the questionnaire captures the ongoing operational capacity of each program rather than a snapshot in time. The Chair acknowledged this as an important refinement to apply throughout the document.

- ✓ **Action Item: Frame audit questions that compel detailed, process-level responses**

#### 17. Onboard EM System Components

It was generally agreed that the section on onboard EM system components was important to retain in the questionnaire, in order to allow the audit to confirm that a program meets all relevant technical requirements. It was suggested that this section could usefully include a mechanism for verifying that EM systems installed on vessels have the capability to generate data meeting the minimum data standards, including through provision of sample image stills or equivalent evidence. Questions were raised about whether this verification would most appropriately occur during an initial in-person accreditation visit or as part of subsequent periodic audits.

- ✓ **Action Item: Add sample of image stills or screenshots of video footage being annotated under the list of deliverables**

#### 18. Data Review Centre (DRC)

The Working Group discussed the standards applicable to Data Review Centres, which are defined as entities with access to supporting EM analysis software used by EM analysts to analyze EM records and generate EM data. It was suggested that the questionnaire's coverage of DRC systems and processes should include explicit reference to the use of artificial intelligence in EM data analysis, recognizing that such technologies are increasingly likely to be employed by EM programs in the future and that the audit framework should be designed to accommodate this development.

- ✓ **Action Item: Discuss the inclusion of artificial intelligence within the interim minimum standards, and include in the audit questionnaire.**

#### 19. EM Analyst Training and Qualifications

Discussion arose on the standards applicable to EM analyst training and qualifications. The existing audit language proposed that CCMs would make available for Secretariat review documentation demonstrating that analysts possess experience in fisheries matters and have completed EM system training. Concern was expressed that certain elements of the proposed EM analyst qualification standards, including reference to specific qualifications for EM analyst trainers, went beyond what had been agreed in the interim EM technical standards, and a preference was expressed for audit questions to align as closely as possible with the existing agreed standards. The suggestion was made to delete or modify language in the questionnaire that introduced new obligations not grounded in the interim standards. Another view expressed was that, drawing on the ROP model, a simple question asking CCMs to outline the qualifications and procedures for training EM analysts—including how trainers are themselves qualified—would be sufficient without requiring excessive prescriptive detail. It was noted that at least one sub-regional body maintains a unit of competency specifically for EM analysis as part of its broader observer training framework. The Chair acknowledged these comments and indicated that the relevant sections would be revised to better reflect the ROP approach.

- ✓ ***Action Item: Crosswalk proposed audit items with interim standards; if appropriate include audit item in the discussion regarding updating interim standards, or if not warranted, delete audit question. Edit this audit question to request CCMs outline the qualifications and procedures for training EM analysts.***

#### 20. EM Record Annotation and Data Fields

Discussion was held on the scope of the EM record annotation standard. A question was raised as to whether the term "annotation" in the questionnaire was intended to encompass the full range of an EM analyst's activities—including review of sensor data and other data streams—or whether it referred only to the narrower process of marking specific events on video frames. It was noted that annotation in the stricter sense represents only a subset of the broader EM record analysis process. It was clarified that the data submitted to the Secretariat and the scientific services provider would consist of the analyzed data fields derived from the EM review rather than the raw footage, and that this was what was understood by "annotated data" for reporting purposes. The view was also expressed that the data flowing to the scientific services provider for stock assessment purposes, and that flowing to the Secretariat for compliance purposes, may serve different functions and that the appropriate data streams for each body would need to be addressed through the CMM development process.

21. On the question of reporting timelines, discussion arose regarding the practicality of the 120-day reporting standard carried over from the ROP. Concern was expressed that this timeline may be difficult to meet for high-seas longline trips of long duration, where vessel offloading may itself occur after an extended period. It was noted that the 120-day standard is expressed as an objective rather than as a binding requirement, but views were expressed that it may nonetheless be insufficiently flexible for certain programs.

- ✓ **Action Item: It was agreed that the question of reporting timelines was more properly addressed through CMM development and that the specific reference to a 120-day period should be removed from the audit questionnaire.**

22. The annotation of "critical incidents" as a separate reporting obligation was raised in the context of a provision carried over from the ROP questionnaire. Following discussion, it was observed that this provision did not have a clear equivalent in the EM context and that the interim EM technical standards contained no corresponding requirement.

- ✓ **Action Item: Remove the critical incidents bullet and the reporting timeline from the questionnaire**

### 23. Data Retention

The Working Group discussed the question of EM record retention. Reference was made to the practices of other RFMOs: the IATTC has not mandated specific retention periods but has preserved the possibility for future requirements to be set; ICCAT retains footage for three years following review, unless national data retention guidelines require a shorter period; and the IOTC leaves determination of retention period to flag-state programs. It was noted that there is a distinction between the retention of raw EM footage and the retention of analyzed data outputs, and that data outputs submitted to the Secretariat and scientific services provider are retained indefinitely by those bodies.

24. A suggestion was made that retention requirements could usefully distinguish between EM records that have been analyzed and whose data has been submitted to the Secretariat, which would be subject to a defined minimum retention period, and EM records that have not been analyzed, for which the retention obligation might appropriately be less stringent.

- ✓ **Action Item: Discuss the inclusion EM record retention within the interim minimum standards, and include in the audit questionnaire.**

### 25. Audit Modality and Secretariat Capacity

Discussion was held on the modality and practicality of the audit process. The view was expressed that the audit should be conducted by the WCPFC Secretariat as the body with the responsibility to accredit national EM programs for participation in the WCPFC EMP. Several CCMs considered that an initial audit could appropriately be conducted virtually, with an in-person follow-up required only in cases where significant issues are identified during remote review. The view was also expressed, however, that there may be value in requiring the initial program accreditation audit to be conducted in person, to allow the auditor to inspect the data review centre, verify the EM analysis process, review sample EM data, and assess camera image quality directly. It was acknowledged that this question merited further consideration.

### 26. WCPFC Resources

Questions were raised about the Secretariat's capacity and resource requirements to undertake audits of CCM EM programs, particularly if an in-person component were to be required. The Secretariat noted that further clarity was needed on the precise scope of functions envisaged for any EM coordination role before it could comment specifically on

resource requirements, and indicated its willingness to engage in more detailed discussions on this matter once the roles had been more precisely defined.

***Proposed Scenarios for Secondary EM Video Review***

27. The Chair revisited the discussion on proposed scenarios for secondary review. Members noted that the question of whether secondary review should be mandatory or recommended remains unresolved. Concern was expressed that requiring mandatory secondary review of raw EM footage as part of the audit process may exceed what was agreed under the interim EM technical standards, which do not explicitly include such provisions.
28. Several members emphasized that the purpose and scope of secondary review should be more clearly defined before determining whether it should be mandatory or voluntary. It was noted that at least one CCM currently implements a secondary review process within its domestic EM program, involving a blind re-analysis of a randomly selected portion of previously reviewed footage (approximately 10% of fishing effort) by a senior reviewer. Greater scrutiny is applied to newer analysts, with the level of secondary review decreasing as analysts gain experience.
29. Members also observed that the scale of secondary review would increase significantly under full EM implementation across the WCPFC region, compared to current domestic pilot programs, and that the associated resource implications at higher coverage levels would require careful consideration.

✓ ***Action Item: Discuss the inclusion of secondary review within the interim minimum standards, and include in the audit questionnaire.***

**AGENDA ITEM 2(b): U.S. CONSULTATIVE DRAFT CMM FOR A WCPFC ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAMME**

**30. Introduction and Overview**

The floor was given to the United States to introduce the consultative draft Conservation and Management Measure for the future WCPFC Electronic Monitoring Programme (EMP), which had been submitted to WCPFC22 in Manila with the aim of adopting a final measure at WCPFC23. The draft CMM was described as drawing on feedback received in response to delegation papers submitted to SC21 and TCC21, and as modelled largely on the existing CMM for the Regional Observer Programme (CMM 2018-05) and the CMM for a Commission Vessel Monitoring System. The alignment with the ROP CMM structure was explained as serving the dual purpose of ensuring consistency in monitoring capabilities and easing any future process of integration between the ROP and EMP into a single overarching monitoring programme.

31. The United States explained that the draft CMM was intended to provide the overarching legal and regulatory framework for EM implementation within the Commission, into which all adopted EM technical standards, minimum data fields, and the audit and assurance process, once adopted, would be incorporated as annexes. The draft CMM also proposes that the WCPFC Secretariat would be supported by a dedicated EM Coordinator position to manage and coordinate the programme.
32. A central provision of the draft CMM, set out in its Annex 2, would establish a requirement for 100% installation of EM systems on all high-seas longline vessels fishing for highly migratory fish stocks in the WCPFC Convention area, together with a minimum EM coverage—that is, analysis—rate of 20% of fishing effort. The presenting delegation explained that the 20% analysis rate was derived from scientific analyses reviewed through the Scientific Committee, which had suggested that at least 10% monitoring coverage of trips would yield reasonably good bycatch estimates for frequently caught species, while domestic analyses had indicated that coverage of 15 to 20% was required for less frequently caught species. A recent proposal concerning monitoring requirements for South Pacific albacore management had referenced a 30% requirement, and the figure of 20% was considered a reasonable and defensible starting point. The draft also includes a provision whereby CCMs that achieve the 100% installation and 20% coverage requirements would be considered compliant with the existing 5% ROP coverage requirement for high-seas longline vessels under CMM 2018-05, Annex C, thereby creating an incentive for adoption of EM.
33. CCM Feedback and Discussion  
Support was expressed for the development of a regulatory framework for EM within the Commission, and the draft CMM was welcomed as a useful foundation document. It was broadly agreed that increasing monitoring levels in the high-seas longline sector, where current independent monitoring coverage is among the lowest within the WCPFC area, should be a priority objective of any EM measure.
34. Concern was expressed regarding the scope and applicability of the draft CMM. Questions were raised as to whether the measure was intended to apply to all fishing gears, all vessel categories, and all fisheries within the Convention area, or whether it was primarily directed at the high-seas longline fleet. The view was expressed that while prioritizing high-seas longline coverage, the framework should not preclude future application to other fleets, and that most elements of the CMM other than specific coverage requirements would likely be applicable across multiple fleet types.
35. Several CCMs raised concerns about the prescription of a 100% EM installation rate for the high-seas longline fleet, noting that for very large fleets this requirement could represent a significant practical and financial challenge. It was suggested that a phased approach, potentially involving a lower initial installation rate combined with a higher review rate to achieve the equivalent overall coverage target, might be more achievable and could facilitate broader uptake of EM. The presenting delegation expressed openness to discussing phased



implementation approaches and acknowledged that the draft CMM would need to evolve to reflect such considerations.

36. Concern was expressed regarding the relationship between the proposed draft CMM and existing requirements for 100% observer coverage on purse seine vessels under the tropical tuna measure. It was clarified that the draft CMM was not intended to negate or supersede those existing requirements and that the 100% purse seine observer coverage obligation remained intact under the tropical tuna measure.
37. The term “responsible CCM” as used in the draft CMM attracted comment. It was suggested that this terminology could create ambiguity in cases involving charter arrangements and bilateral fishing agreements, where questions arise as to which CCM bears responsibility for EM implementation and reporting. The view was expressed that the concept was adequately addressed through the existing notion of “responsible CCM” and that use of standardized terminology consistent with established Commission practice would be preferable. In response, the presenting delegation indicated willingness to adopt the terminology “responsible CCM” and to work with CCMs in the margins to address related concerns about charter arrangements.
38. The relationship between the proposed EM Coordinator position within the Secretariat and existing Secretariat staffing arrangements—specifically the ROP Observer Manager role—was raised as a concern. It was noted that the Secretariat had reduced that role, and questions were raised about how a standalone EM Coordinator would operate in the absence of a broader programme management structure. In response, it was clarified that the envisaged functions of the EM Coordinator would include conducting program audits and working with national EM programs, and that resource requirements for such a position would need to be assessed in consultation with the Secretariat once the specific functions had been more clearly defined. The Secretariat indicated its willingness to engage in further discussions on this matter.
39. Concern was expressed, particularly by Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Pacific Island CCMs, about the resource and capacity implications of EM implementation for developing nations. It was highlighted that many developing programs were still at an early stage, and that care was needed to ensure that the requirements established in any CMM were realistic, achievable, and supportive of building national capacity. The view was expressed that implementation support, capacity building, and appropriate phasing would be essential elements of any measure affecting SIDS.
40. It was observed that the interests of Pacific Island countries in relation to EM implementation in their exclusive economic zones and through charter arrangements needed to be carefully protected in the development of any overarching EM framework. Questions were raised about how EM data generated in those contexts would be managed, who would have access to it, and how data ownership and confidentiality would be addressed in the measure. The view was expressed that the definitions in the draft CMM relating to responsibility for EM

data and compliance notifications under Articles 23 and 25 of the Convention would require careful scrutiny.

41. It was noted that several CCMs had already submitted written comments on the draft CMM to the Chair, and the presenting delegation confirmed receipt of those comments and indicated that it would work with relevant CCMs intersessionally to address the concerns raised, with a view to producing a revised draft for submission to SC, TCC, and the Commission meetings later in the year.
42. The IWG took note of the consultative draft CMM for a WCPFC Electronic Monitoring Programme and the discussion held thereon. No decisions were taken on the substance of the draft at this meeting, consistent with its consultative character.
43. CCMs were invited to submit written comments on the draft CMM to the presenting delegation and to the Chair to facilitate further intersessional development of the text. The aim of producing a revised draft CMM for submission to SC22 and TCC22 was noted, with adoption at WCPFC23 as the target.
44. The IWG recognised that the audit and assurance framework under development by the Working Group would be incorporated into the CMM once adopted, and noted the importance of ensuring coherence between the two processes.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3. PLANNING AHEAD**

#### **45. Next Virtual Meeting and Intersessional Work**

The Chair expressed determination to maintain momentum and to progress the EM audit and assurance document toward adoption in the near term. The next virtual meeting of the IWG was anticipated for June 2026, however the chair suggested meeting earlier than the timeline outlined in the established in the workplan.

46. The Chair noted that in advance of that meeting, the revised audit and assurance questionnaire would be circulated for CCM review, and that bilateral consultations would be conducted with interested CCMs to facilitate progress toward developing the options for the IWG to consider to ensure independence and impartiality of EM data review.
47. CCMs were encouraged to engage actively with the intersessional process and to submit written comments on both documents as soon as practicable.
48. The Chair closed the meeting, thanking CCMs and the Secretariat for their engagement and contributions, and acknowledging that while the discussion was challenging at times and a number of questions remained open, significant ground had been covered and a clearer picture had emerged of the issues requiring further resolution.
49. The meeting closed at 2:53pm.



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## EMandER-IWG Annotated Agenda

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### 1. Opening of the Meeting

- a. Welcome address by Chair
- b. Introduction
- c. Adoption of agenda
- d. Review of EM workplan

### 2. Objectives of the EM&ER-IWG Virtual Meeting

- a. Discuss the draft audit and assurance questionnaire and document. Discuss member comments and feedback.
- b. Discuss feedback on the U.S. Consultative Draft CMM for a WCPFC EMP

### 3. Planning Ahead

- a. Next Virtual Meeting?
  1. In-line with the Gantt chart, our next virtual meeting would be in either June/July.
    - What is everyone's availability?
    - What will we focus discussions on?




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