

TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS,
PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES AND OBSERVERS

Circular No.: 2026/43

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No. pages: 3

Subject: Notice of 9th ERandEM IWG Virtual Meeting on 16 June 2026, and Progressing the Development of an Electronic Monitoring Audit and Assurance Framework

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to the ERandEM IWG for your continued engagement as we advance our work on EM and the audit process. We've made solid progress to date, and this next meeting is an important opportunity to refine the approach, address outstanding questions, and work toward consensus. Your continued engagement and feedback are key to moving this effort forward.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Advise of availability of a provisional agenda ([ERandEMIWG9-2026-01](#)), for consideration ahead of the **9th ERandEM IWG virtual meeting on 16 June 2026, 10am to 2pm**.
- Outline next steps based on feedback from the ERandEMIWG8 virtual meeting.
- Seek feedback on the Independent EM Data Review on the High Seas: Options for Consideration draft [ERandEMIWG9-2026-02](#). Please provide your feedback by **28 May 2026**.
- Share the redlined audit and assurance questionnaire in [ERandEMIWG9-2026-03](#) (in MSWord format), to be reviewed by the group for further feedback. Participants are encouraged to provide feedback by **28 May 2026**, so that key issues and suggestions can be consolidated and distributed prior to discussion during our upcoming virtual meeting. Please send all responses to me (lesley.hawn@noaa.gov) and to WCPFC Deputy Compliance Manager, Eidre Sharp (eidre.sharp@wcpfc.int).

Please note that all papers referred to in this Circular are available on the [WCPFC Meeting page for the ERandEM IWG9](#).

Next Steps

Following discussions at the [ERandEM IWG8](#) virtual meeting, members highlighted the need for a broader perspective in framing the audit process. Specifically, it was suggested that before advancing to data-level assurance and secondary review of EM data, the audit framework should first address higher-level governance considerations for the EM program as a whole.

Building on this, members proposed that these governance elements form the first tier of a structured audit framework, with more operational components—such as the review of systems and procedures at the CCM level—positioned beneath this overarching structure.

In light of this, I am recommending that the IWG temporarily refocus its efforts on formally defining the institutional architecture of the WCPFC EMP. This would include identifying and agreeing on mechanisms to ensure the independence, impartiality, and integrity of EM data handling and analysis.

Establishing clarity on these foundational elements will support more coherent and efficient progress in subsequent workstreams, including audit, assurance, and compliance verification. While consensus may not be reached at this meeting, this discussion will help establish the framing, while we can continue progressing toward agreement on the audit questionnaire and related elements.

1. Key Considerations for Establishing the WCPFC EMP Framework

As previously highlighted in the ERandEM IWG5 working paper, [*“Electronic Monitoring within the WCPFC Fisheries Management Framework – Chair’s Initial Consultative Discussion Paper”*](#), the Chair, Ms. Claire Van der Geest, noted that the development of the EMP for high seas operations should take into account the precedent established under the Regional Observer Program (ROP), which ensures that data collection is undertaken in an independent and impartial manner.

Under the ROP framework:

- Observers operate independently of vessel operators; and
- Observers collect data in an impartial and objective manner.

In this context, the EMP should be designed to ensure comparable standards of independence and impartiality, including:

- Ensuring that EM data collection and analysis are not subject to influence by vessel operators; and
- Establishing appropriate safeguards, including independent review mechanisms, clear procedural requirements, and effective oversight arrangements to ensure data integrity and credibility.

The Chair further identified potential approaches to operationalizing independence in the context of EM data review for high seas trips, including:

- A. Assigning responsibility to the Secretariat to establish and manage a dedicated EM data analysis function, subject to the availability of additional resources; or
- B. Establishing an independent third-party service provider arrangement (consistent with the Scientific Service Provider model) to undertake EM data analysis and review, with annotated EM data provided concurrently to both the flag State and the Secretariat, consistent with existing VMS data-sharing practices for high seas operations.

Expanding on these approaches, Independent EM Data Review on the High Seas: Options for Consideration draft [ERandEMIWG9-2026-02](#) presents a range of potential approaches for independent and impartial EM data collection on the high seas. Initial discussion is proposed to

focus on high seas operations, noting that arrangements for multi-zone fishing trips will involve additional complexity.

What I'm asking from you:

1. Provide feedback and questions on some (or all) of the options (brief bullet points are fine).
2. Rank your top 3 options in order (1 = strongest preference)

Please send your response by **May 28**. I'll compile the results and share a summary in early June with the group before the virtual meeting on June 16th.

2. *Audit and Assurance Draft Questionnaire Review*

Audit and Assurance Process: A structured process for reviewing EM systems, data, and procedures against agreed standards to assess compliance and performance. The audit component evaluates evidence for accuracy and conformity, while the assurance component provides confidence in the integrity and reliability of the EM system.

Comments and suggestions from the ERandEM IWG8 have been compiled and incorporated in this draft using tracked changes. While this document may require future updates after we revisit the interim standards, I recommend we work toward reaching agreement in order to move the process forward for adoption. Remaining audit questions not included in the document are captured in Table 2 at the bottom of the questionnaire.

During IWG9, we will actively redline this draft and work toward consensus on the audit and assurance process.

What I'm asking from you:

Kindly review the document again and submit any edits, feedback, and additional audit suggestions. Please provide feedback by **28 May 2026**, so that key issues and suggestions can be consolidated and recirculated to members for discussion during our upcoming virtual meeting. Please send all responses to me and Eidre Sharp at the email addresses above.

Registration for ERandEM IWG9 is now available on the [WCPFC meeting webpage](#) and I encourage interested participants to register soon to receive email alerts of when meeting documentation is available.

I would like to sincerely thank all members for their time, thoughtful feedback, and continued efforts in advancing the EM work. Your engagement is greatly appreciated and essential to maintaining steady progress.

Sincerely,



Lesley Hawn
ERandEM IWG Chair