



**The Commission for the Conservation and Management of
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

**Fifteenth Regular Session of the Commission
Honolulu, Hawaii, USA
10- 14 December 2018**

DRAFT SUMMARY REPORT

**DRAFT SUMMARY REPORT_as at 31 January 2019 –
CIRCULATED FOR PARTICIPANTS COMMENTS
(COMMENTS ARE DUE TO SECRETARIAT
By Friday 15 March 2019)**

Could you please review the text and provide your comments to the Secretariat as soon as possible and no later than **Friday 15 March 2019** for incorporation in the final record. CCM and Observers are reminded that the text for the recommendations placed in the decision boxes are based on the provisional outcomes document **WCPFC15-2018-outcomes-final** dated 19 December 2018). In keeping with past practice we ask participants to comment on their own text and not that of others.

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DRAFT SUMMARY REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 1 — OPENING OF MEETING

1. The Fifteenth Regular Session of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC15) took place from 10–14 December 2018 in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.
2. The following Members and Participating Territories attended WCPFC15: American Samoa, Australia, Canada, the China, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Cook Islands, the European Union (EU), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Philippines, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Chinese Taipei, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, the United States of America (USA) Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna.
3. The following non-party countries attended WCPFC15 as Cooperating Non-Members (CNMs): Ecuador, El Salvador, Liberia, Panama, Thailand and Vietnam.
4. Nicaragua attended WCPFC15 as a State observer.
5. Observers from the following intergovernmental organizations attended WCPFC15: Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC), North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), the Pacific Community (SPC), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), University of the South Pacific, and The World Bank.
6. Observers from the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended WCPFC15: American Tunaboat Association (ATA), Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security

(ANCORS), Birdlife International, Blue Ocean Institute, Conservation International, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), International Environmental Law Project (IELP), International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF), International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), Marine Stewardship Council, Ocean Friends Against Driftnets, Organisation for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries, Organization for Regional and Inter-regional Studies, Pacific Islands Tuna Industry Association (PITIA), Pew Charitable Trust, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Foundation, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), World Tuna Purse Seine Organisation (WTPO), and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

7. A full list of all participants is provided in **Attachment A**.
8. The 15th regular session of the WCPFC was preceded with a Hawaiian Oli at 9:15am on Monday, 10 December 2018.
9. Following the traditional Hawaiian presentation, Reverend Kaleo Patterson offered a Pule (prayer and ceremony of cleansing).
10. The WCPFC Executive Director, Feleti P Teo, OBE welcomed delegates to Honolulu. He observed that technically there was no official host government for WCPFC15 after the decision to relocate the meeting from Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), but thanked the United States for their financial contribution and logistical support, and the West Pacific Fisheries Management Council (WPRFMC) for their help in securing the meeting venue at short notice, and for help with organizational arrangements. He expressed appreciation to the United States' tuna industry for hosting the welcoming ceremony. The Executive Director noted that the meeting facility has a special place in the history of the Commission, as it is where the WCPFC Convention was adopted and opened for signature in September 2000. He highlighted the following three issues: the importance of the science–management dialogue in expediting the implementation of the harvest strategy workplan; review of the compliance monitoring scheme (CMS) and the need to agree on a measure that will allow the CMS to continue beyond 2018; and the need to adopt a corporate planning document for the Commission. He closed by wishing delegates success in their deliberations. The full statement of the Executive Director is in **Attachment B**.
11. The Commission Chair offered opening remarks in which she referenced the negotiations to establish the Commission. She noted that a number of individuals who were present when the Commission was established were again present at WCPFC15. The WCPFC was the first agreement established following adoption in 1995 of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement (FSA), and incorporates a number of key provisions of that Agreement, including the principle of compatibility, the need to take into consideration the special requirements of developing States, participation by territories, and adoption of the precautionary approach. She reviewed how the Commission has grown, as evidenced by its budget and the size of its reports. She noted that conservation and management measures (CMMs) are in place for the key tuna species, and for a number of non-target, dependent and associated species, and that elements of a harvest strategy management approach are being developed and adopted. She noted that scientific knowledge forms the basis for the cornerstone of WCPFC management decisions, and that while national aspirations drive individual countries positions, a greater responsibility should be borne in mind, in light of the shared ancestry of the members of the Commission. She referenced two recent bold fisheries challenges put forth by Pacific Island leaders: the President of Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) challenged the region to eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by 2023, and the President of Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) issued a challenge to achieve full transparency in tuna fisheries by 2023. She observed that it was not a coincidence that these two bold challenges came from two of the most vulnerable island nations, whose economies and futures are directly tied to the health of the tuna resources. She stated that WCPFC has the lead responsibility in meeting these

challenges issued by the leaders of two of its members, and that putting a timeframe to these tasks ensures that members stay focused and continue making ongoing progress. She acknowledged the hard work of the Executive Director and the Secretariat staff, and expressed gratitude to the United States and WPRFMC for their arrangements and hospitality. She also noted that the Hawaiian Oli and the blessings received in the Pule served as significant reminders of the Commission's origins. The Chair then officially opened the 15th regular session of the WCPFC. The full statement of the Commission Chair is in **Attachment C**.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda

12. The Agenda was adopted (Attachment D).

1.2 Statements from Members and Participating Territories

13. The United States welcomed delegates to Hawaii on behalf of the government of the United States and their Participating Territories, noting that representatives present included the Governor of CNMI. On behalf of all members, cooperating non-members and participating territories (CCMs) they thanked the Secretariat staff, local staff of United States agencies, and WPRFMC, as well as industry stakeholders (Hawaii Longline Association, American Tunaboat Association, TriMarine, South Pacific Tuna Corp, and United Fishing Agency) who hosted the welcoming function.
14. The Hon. Dennis Momotaro, Minister of Natural Resources and Commerce, and Chairman of the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority Board (RMI), noted that he was attending his first annual meeting of the WCPFC, and was eager to see why essential issues at WCPFC meetings are not being resolved. He stated that SIDS are most affected by the issues under discussion and his delegation was ready to engage constructively. He hoped CCMs could come to agreement on a number of critical issues: the need to review transshipments, the CMS process, and participation by small islands developing states (SIDS) and territories. He noted the challenge made by RMI for an IUU-free Pacific by 2023, and the challenge from FSM to institute all electronic monitoring (EM) of fisheries by 2023. He looked forward to meaningful outcomes from WCPFC15.
15. The Hon. Ralph D Torres, Governor of CNMI, stated that in October CNMI was hit by a Category 5 super typhon that devastated Saipan and Tinian, but emphasized their resolve to rebuild. He thanked the State of Hawaii, federal agencies and the governments from neighbouring islands who provided aid. He stated that such devastation highlights the importance of food security and access to fisheries, and stated that CNMI shares many issues with other small islands, but lacks the capability to institute large-scale fisheries. He expressed interest in exploring how the Commission can help CNMI access benefits from fisheries. He noted the commitment to combatting IUU fishing in Micronesia, which will require assistance from governments and NGOs. He also noted the need for assistance in monitoring fisheries resources and acknowledged the importance of the issues before the Commission.
16. France stated that, regarding the WCPFC-IATTC overlap area, France had drafted a letter of intent to WCPFC and IATTC to indicate its choice to favour WCPFC regulations during the next three years. This choice was motivated by a strong concern for clarification of the conservation and management regime applicable to French Polynesia's vessels in the waters of this shared management zone. He stated that this legal clarification is not intended to call into question France's participation in respect of their commitments to the IATTC. France continued to strongly support the harmonization of control and management rules between the two organizations, stating that they intended to maintain their high standards of control at sea and dockside monitoring. He also called for harmonization of high seas boarding and inspection measures between WCPFC and IATTC to enable more effective action against

IUU fishing operations in the area, which faces permanent fishing pressure. France also expressed concern about management of the Eastern High Seas Pocket (EHSP), ambiguities about its geographical configuration, and the lack of joint data available to neighbouring states and territories. France noted the need for better monitoring of fishing activity in the EHSP, such as through direct transmission of VMS data to Cook Islands, Kiribati and French Polynesia. He also addressed the need for management of drifting fish aggregation devices (FADs) and stated that there were many incursions in New Caledonia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in violation of their laws. He noted most of these situations could be easily resolved by a single VHF contact in accordance with IMO resolution A 703, but that many vessels appeared not to monitor VHF channel 16.

17. The Hon. Tetabo Nakara, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources of Kiribati, stated that the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) connects all members and necessitates their cooperation. He encouraged CCMs to push for adoption of a precautionary approach to fisheries management, and noted the need for improved science-based decision making. He congratulated the WCPFC for adopting several critical CMMs and FAD-related measures that have contributed to improvements in the status of tuna stocks, while noting the need to establish harvest control rules, with target reference points (TRPs). He noted that all members can understand why this is difficult and encouraged continued dialogue in search of new and innovative solutions to ensure tuna resources are sustainably managed. He acknowledged that all CCMs have specific interests, while thanking all members for helping take into account the needs of SIDS. He referenced Article 10.3(i) of the Convention, and their experience with the CMS, stating that the new proposed measure by FFA members is based on principles of fairness and efficiency, and hoped it would be adopted by members.
18. The Hon. Marion Henry, Secretary of Resources and Development of FSM noted the many challenges in monitoring fishing in the region, and noted RMI's declaration on IUU, stating that all CCMs should be committed to 100% monitoring coverage to eliminate IUU. He stated that FSM has committed to 100% monitoring of fishing in FSM's EEZ by 2023 and was committed to full transparency through a combination of observer coverage and e-monitoring, which would provide much needed data on fisheries, and provide markets with assurance that catch is legal and sustainable with no slave labour involved. He expressed his hope that this will set the stage for global effort in this regard. He observed that the Commission can enhance sustainability, and reduce bycatch, and hoped that through this effort they can ensure the monitoring of over 50% of the tuna catch. He stated that FFA and PNA members are supportive of this effort. He stated that they had a \$2.3 million funding goal, and that The Nature Conservancy has contributed 10% of this goal. He asked for support from all stakeholders to find the technical and financial resources to put e-monitoring in place throughout the convention area. He also noted FSM's desire to host an annual meeting of WCPFC, stating the importance of making decisions in places where people are most affected.
19. The Hon. Lopao'o Natanielu Mu'a, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of Samoa acknowledged the work of the Commission and its decisions that greatly impact SIDS, including Samoa. He stated that on resource-constrained islands, living and non-living marine resources are essential resources, and tuna and other highly migratory species are critically important in providing food security, livelihoods and economic prosperity for Samoa. He noted key areas vital to Samoa and other SIDS. South Pacific Albacore tuna is the target species for Samoa's domestic longline fishery, and a primary source of foreign revenue, food security and livelihoods. Failure to set a TRP for South Pacific albacore would further delay implementation of desired management interventions and prolong economic hardship and reduction in catches in Samoa's fishery. He noted the subsidy support received by some foreign fleets and stated that an appropriate management strategy should be in place to ensure domestic and unsubsidized fleets remain economically viable. He asked CCMs, and particularly those interested in South Pacific albacore, to urgently develop an agreed, robust management arrangement for this species, including progressing with an agreement on various elements of a harvest strategy to reverse declining

biomass trends and restore profitability. He noted Samoa is disadvantaged because its EEZ is zone-locked by the EEZs of other Pacific Island states, which limits their ability to realise their fishing interests and development aspirations, especially opportunities for profitable domestic fleet operations, and also impacts their small artisanal fishery. He stated they are considering exploring development opportunities in the closest high seas areas and asked other members to consider supporting their efforts. He opposed any revision to the tropical tuna CMM that would limit the opportunity of SIDS to participate in high seas fishing until a high seas limit and a fair process for allocating that limit has been agreed to. He noted the combined challenges of collapsing fisheries resulting from increasing fishing effort (including IUU), environmental impacts, and climate change and stated that these challenges threaten the integrity of the oceans and marine ecosystems, and potentially the survival of Pacific Islanders. In that regard, he stated that members should be mindful that the burden of actions to protect the oceans and manage its fisheries resources should not disproportionately fall on SIDS.

20. The Hon. Semisi Tauelangi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture and Food, Forestry, and Fisheries, of the Kingdom of Tonga, encouraged all participants to emphasise the importance of ensuring the sustainable management of tuna resources in the WCPO. He noted Tonga's most important commercial fishery targets bigeye, yellowfin, albacore and other tuna-like species, with albacore tuna dominating the catch composition for many years. He stated their wish that it would remain sustainable, but noted a recent drop in catch rates in their national waters had hampered the fishing industry, affecting exports and the amount of fish available for local consumption. He stated that to maintain the long-term sustainability and economic viability of the tuna fisheries in the WCPO and secure livelihoods for local fishermen, it is important that stronger and more effective fisheries management arrangements for migratory tuna stocks and other species are agreed at WCPFC15. He highlighted the following priorities: (i) establishing a TRP for South Pacific albacore, and establishing management measures for the high seas fisheries; (ii) developing a new CMS that produces fair outcomes for CCMs and promotes and improved compliance, while recognizing the special requirements of SIDS, including by streamlining processes, strengthening capacity and requiring a widely consulted and well informed CMM 2013-06 SIDS impact assessment before a measure is adopted and used in the CMS; and (iii) renewal of the tropical tuna bridging measures, while retaining the additional high seas FAD closure, bigeye longline catch limits, and current purse seine effort limits on the high seas.
21. The Hon. Dr Puakena Boreham, Minister for Natural Resources of Tuvalu stated that Tuvalu believes science-based management is essential if the Commission is to secure the sustainability of WCPFC fisheries, and looked to WCPFC15 to implement the SC recommendations that there should be no increase in fishing mortality of bigeye tuna; and that the fishing pressure in the albacore longline fishery should be reduced to improve its economic viability. She stated that the review of the tropical tuna measure should not allow any relaxation of the controls agreed for this fishery by WCPFC14, and that deliberations on a TRP for albacore must reflect the need to ensure that this fishery can maintain profitability. She also stated that the surface fishery in Tuvalu's waters is very dependent on FADs. She stated that they are happy to support proposals to make FADs more environmentally friendly so as to prevent entanglement of marine creatures, and to move towards bio-degradable FADs that do not add to the plastic pollution of the ocean, but that Tuvalu did not want to see changes in the definition of what constitutes a FAD (noting that fish associate with floating objects whether or not they have been deployed by a fishing boat) and do not want to see the limit on the number of FADs deployed by each vessel reduced. She stated they were working with their partners in the PNA on other ways of improving FAD management. She also noted that Tuvaluan crew are working on a number of fishing vessels and Tuvalu has long aspired to see more of its people employed on vessels, but that Tuvalu is very concerned at the poor working conditions and low wages paid to crew in some fishing fleets. She stated that if continued this will bring the fishery of the region into disrepute and urged CCMs to support the FFA proposal on working conditions for crew, which despite being non-binding, was an important step.

22. PNG emphasised the importance of fisheries for SIDS, and stated that the Commission must encourage adoption of measures that are fair and consistent, and do not place disproportionate burdens on SIDS. He noted the need to take precautionary measures to avoid a decline in stocks, and the need to promote sustainable fisheries that avoid any one member being worse off. He reaffirmed PNG's sovereignty over its domestic waters, stating they wish to ensure measures apply to the high seas and EEZs, and not to waters landward of the EEZ. He noted that PNG was looking forward to hosting WCPFC16 in 2019.
23. The Philippines observed they face many challenges, and stated their compliance with CMMs is a work in progress, but that with an enhanced policy framework in place, ongoing structural reforms, and significant investments in infrastructure for enhanced fisheries management, they are confident that with the support of the Commission and the continuing cooperation with other CCMs their compliance will continue to improve. He noted that the Philippines's access in high seas pocket No. 1 is limited to 36 traditional catcher vessels. Catches in this area have a significant contribution to the Philippine economy and the food security of more than 102 million Filipinos. He stated that the Philippines intend to sustain the same CMM for the fleet in high seas pocket No. 1 and observed that the same FAD management as is currently in place. Philippine fishing operations in this area have 100% regional observer program (ROP) coverage as well as vessel monitoring system (VMS) coverage, including catch documentation and reporting to the Commission. They looked forward to collaborating with other CCMs to achieve the priority goals and objectives of the Commission at WCPFC15.
24. French Polynesia stated that, as indicated by France, it has made the choice to apply the rules of the WCPFC in its EEZ and the WCPFC-IATTC overlap area for its fleet, as recommended by the "WCPFC9 decision on the WCPFC-IATTC overlap area", paragraph (a) (iii). French Polynesia has a long history of cooperation in the WCPO as member of the Pacific Community, permanent observer of FFA, and Participating Territory of the WCPFC. French Polynesia expressed their gratitude to France for its support through this process. In choosing to apply the WCPFC CMMs to its activities, they hoped the Commission will make the best decisions to manage the tuna resources and consider the needs of the SIDS and Territories as set out in article 30 of the convention. He noted that French Polynesia has adopted a roadmap for the development of its fishing industry in compliance with the capacity building of the country and the potential of the tuna resources in its EEZ. To strengthen the development of the fishing industry, French Polynesia was certified by the Marine Stewardship Council for its albacore and yellowfin longline fisheries. To maintain this certification status, the tuna resources must be managed effectively on a long-term basis. To this end, French Polynesia expressed confidence that all the parties would reach consensus on the harvest strategies and the relevant harvest control rules and reference points for albacore, yellowfin and bigeye. French Polynesia also expressed concern about conservation of bycatch species, noting that the whole EEZ of French Polynesia is a sanctuary for marine mammals, turtles and sharks; some species of birds, including seabirds, are also protected. French Polynesia stated they are eager to adopt measures to protect those species provided the rules do not constitute a disproportionate burden for fishery development. French Polynesia also welcomed proposals to effectively regulate the use of FADs.
25. Fiji stated that its priorities included South Pacific albacore TRPs, a harvest strategy for tropical tuna, and the CMS. They looked forward to the discussions and said they would provide additional statements outlining their specific interests during the course of the meeting.
26. Australia stated it was a strong supporter of the WCPFC and that the Commission's success is built on the hard work, cooperation and continued goodwill of its members. Australia stated their commitment to making progress on the tropical tuna measure, which is a foundation of WCPFC's success and noted the responsibility to ensure that there are strong controls in place to manage these stocks that are critical to all members, and in particular SIDS. Australia anticipated an energetic discussion on the CMS, noting the need to focus on the commitment to improving compliance and implementation, and continuing to

demonstrate the effectiveness of this Commission. Australia also expressed confidence that the Commission is on the right path towards harvest strategies but that a better pathway was needed for scientists and manager to talk, and voiced strong support for the SC advice to establish a science-management dialogue.

27. The Cook Islands (speaking also as Chair of the Forum Fisheries Committee, and on behalf of FFA members) recognised the Chair's leadership in advancing the Commission's work and looked forward to her continued leadership. She highlighted the following priorities of FFA members in WCPFC15: maintaining the strength of the well-balanced tropical tuna measure; adoption of a meaningful TRP for South Pacific albacore; adoption of a new CMS CMM; ensuring effective participation of SIDS in the decision-making and work of the Commission, which is a key requirement to ensure that the Commission can fulfil its objectives; preventing cruel and unfair treatment of crew on board fishing vessels through passage of a resolution to encourage all CCMs to establish basic minimum labour standards, as a stepping stone to a future CMM; review of the transshipment measure in 2019 to effectively regulate transshipment activities; and enactment of flexible arrangements to enable a periodic reduction in delegation sizes and thereby facilitate the hosting of Commission meetings by SIDS.
28. The Hon. Dalton Tagelagi, Minister for Natural Resources of Niue stated Niue's commitment to ensuring their sovereign rights and aspirations are protected. He stated that although Niue may be the smallest member, they are well aware of their responsibility to ensure resource use is sustainable. Niue looked forward to decisions on three key issues: (i) a TRP for South Pacific albacore; (ii) effective participation by SIDS at Commission meetings; and (iii) establishment of a high seas allocation for the purse seine fishery by 2019, and for the longline fishery by 2020. He noted the need for cooperation to ensure WCPO tuna resources are managed sustainably and reaffirmed Niue's commitment to participating in and contributing to the work of the WCPFC. He noted that by working cooperatively the region could strengthen its fisheries management and contribute to the sustainability of resources for future generations.

1.3 Meeting Arrangements

29. The Commission reviewed the meeting arrangements and indicative meeting schedule, and confirmed decisions made at the Heads of Delegation meeting, held on Sunday, 9 December.

1.3.1 Establishment of small working groups (CNMs, CMR, others)

30. The Commission considered the need for the establishment of small working groups (SWGs) to progress work on specific issues. Ten SWGs were established to consider the following issues: (i) finalization of the provisional Compliance Monitoring Report (pCMR), led by the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC) Chair; (ii) the draft CMM on CMS under development intersessionally, led by the CMS intersessional working group (IWG) Chair; (iii) the tropical tuna CMM (led by the Commission Chair); (iv) south Pacific albacore TRP (led by Fiji); (v) requests for cooperating non-member (CNM) status (led by Australia); (vi) the TCC workplan (led by the TCC Vice-Chair); (vii) labour standards for crew (led by Vanuatu); (viii) the comprehensive CMM on sharks and rays (led by the Chair of IWG-Sharks); (ix) seabirds (led by New Zealand); and (x) terms of reference for a science-management dialogue (led by the Commission Vice-Chair and Australia).
31. Canada highlighted the range of SWGs that were established and observed the need over the longer term to establish a workplan for the Commission to help focus, organize and prioritize its work. He noted the alignment between this suggestion and the concerns of SIDS with respect to ensuring the ability of members to effectively participate in the work of the Commission.

1.3.2 Hosting arrangements for WCPFC annual sessions hosted by SIDS

32. The Chair opened the discussion on hosting arrangements for WCPFC annual sessions hosted by SIDS by noting that she and the Executive Director considered this to be a priority issue for discussion in light of the decision to change the venue for WCPFC15.
33. Vanuatu, on behalf of FFA members, introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP15: Considerations for SIDS to host WCPFC Commission Meetings**, which requests special consideration from the Commission and seeks flexibility, from time to time, to provide the opportunity for smaller island CCMs to host Commission meetings. They noted that the Commission had not adopted guidelines for hosting requirements, and that FFA members would continue to reject such suggestions, as this would effectively prevent some SIDS from hosting Commission meetings. They stated that the ability to host a Commission meeting in the countries that drove the establishment of this Commission is important, and that it is essential that Pacific peoples are provided the benefits derived from hosting delegations. More importantly, it provides an opportunity for those in the national fisheries administrations and domestic industries of SIDS to engage in and learn about the processes and work of the Commission. As such, they requested that CCMs accept that, from time to time, delegations will need to reduce the number of delegates they send to Commission meetings. To do this, they suggested that when a SIDS puts forward an offer to host a Commission meeting and meeting size will need to be restricted, that information on meeting capacity, infrastructure and logistics be provided to the Commission to inform their decision on what kind of actions and considerations each delegation would need to make to reduce their delegation size.
34. The Chair noted **WCPFC15-2018-OP03: Alternative options to enable SIDS to host WCPFC meetings**, submitted by Pew, WWF, Birdlife, EDF, IELP, ANCORS and IPNLF, and thanked the observers for providing the paper.
35. The United States thanked the FFA and observers for their papers. They acknowledged the desire of SIDS to host meetings and stated they would be happy to explore issues relating to this topic. The United States supported the suggestion that any logistical constraints be made known in advance, which would allow the Commission to make rational decisions on hosting and enable delegations to make appropriate decisions. The United States stated they would hesitate to have firm limits on delegation sizes, and limits on observers, but would be happy to work cooperatively with other CCMs in the future as needed.
36. Japan acknowledged the large size of its delegation of 77 people at WCPFC15 and explained this resulted from Japan's different fisheries (coastal, offshore and long distance) that target various species with different gear types. The large delegation is needed to enable Japan to adequately represent these differing interests and make rapid decisions during meetings. Japan stated that they were sympathetic with SIDS' concerns, but supported the approach taken by the United States in not wishing to make firm commitments at WCPFC15, especially with respect to firm limits on delegation size. Japan noted very strict limits (such as a restriction to 10 members) would not be acceptable to Japan, but welcomed future discussions. Japan suggested provision of specific information by prospective host countries (such as the number of hotel rooms, distance from hotel to meeting facility, and number of rental cars and flights) would be very helpful. It noted that they would make their best effort to reduce the size of their delegation if necessitated by limited host country capacity.
37. FSM stated that it was hard for them to withdraw from hosting WCPFC15 as originally planned but understood that large delegations have interests in ensuring their participation. They thanked all CCMs and observers who were cooperating in trying to find solutions. They noted the realities of insufficient car rentals, hotel rooms, and other facilities, but stated that decisions made in the meetings affect SIDS.

They noted that FFA had submitted **WCPFC15-2018-DP27: Proposal to Amend the Rules of Procedures – Rule 36** as a proposed amendment to rules of procedure, which would apply to all observers, and have the effect of removing the accreditation of any organization that does not participate for at least 3 years in one of the regular meetings of the Commission or its subsidiary bodies.

38. Chinese Taipei recognized the aspirations of SIDS to host meetings but stated that they were not in favour of limits on delegation size, and preferred that each delegation should determine its own size. It thanked the NGOs for submitting **WCPFC15-2018-OP03**, and expressed support for idea of co-hosting arrangements.
39. Korea thanked FFA and the observers for submitting papers. Korea stated that they fully understand the concerns raised by SIDS, and would need to reflect on limits to the number of delegates. It observed that some countries may need larger delegations than others, either because of language difficulties or interests at stake. It stated that it would be helpful to have suggestions from SIDS regarding delegation sizes, and looked forward to further discussion on the proposed amendment of the suggested change to the Commission’s Rules of Procedure as submitted in **WCPFC15-2018-DP27**.
40. The EU stated they understood the concerns as expressed by SIDS and FFA members, noting that this was an important issue. The EU fully supported the need for large delegations to make efforts to reduce their size, and suggested hosting by SIDS was in particular an option for meetings of subsidiary bodies of the Commission. They encouraged flexibility by all CCMs.
41. RMI expressed support for the views expressed by other FFA members. It noted that prior to the offer from FSM to host WCPFC15, which did not eventuate, Nauru had proposed hosting a Commission meeting, which also did not take place. RMI stated they would like to ensure that similar situations do not occur again in the future. It indicated that RMI would like to host the Commission meeting, and if they did propose to host, they would present all information required, and asked that all CCMs be flexible to enable them to host the Commission in the future.
42. PNG fully supported the FFA proposal, which they observed contained flexibility to allow SIDS that could host large numbers to do so, and those that cannot to be upfront about what is possible. They welcomed further discussion, and noted that PNG has a large delegation, and uses the opportunity to progress work of national interest through bilateral and other meetings.
43. Nauru presented draft language as contained in **WCPFC15-2018-DP30: FFA Members proposed Recommendation under Agenda item 1.3.2**. Following further consultations with members, FFA members proposed a revised recommendation addressing hosting of WCPFC meetings by SIDS.

44. The Commission agreed that when a SIDS or participating territory makes an offer to host a WCPFC meeting which may need meeting size adjustment, that the offer include information on the available meeting capacity, logistics and infrastructure. The Commission will take this information into account when considering offers to host WCPFC meetings and, where needed, CCMs will endeavour to accommodate such constraints, including by reviewing delegation sizes.

AGENDA ITEM 2 — ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

45. The Executive Director introduced **WCPFC15-2018-04: 2018 Annual Report of the Executive Director**, which is a requirement under Rule 13 of the Commission’s Rules of Procedure. He noted that the absence of a strategic plan for the Commission makes reporting on accomplishment of strategic

priorities of the Commission difficult. Consequently, the annual report is structured as a historical account of key developments, achievements and challenges of the Commission and its Secretariat as they pertain to the implementation of decisions and agreements of the Commission. The Secretariat's work programme is largely based on the decisions of the Commission and in accordance with the provisions of the WCPFC Convention. WCPFC14 effectively set the work programme for the Secretariat during 2018, with the main highlight being the adoption of CMM 2017-01. Specific tasks were sanctioned by WCPFC14 to be progressed intersessionally through the IWG meetings on electronic reporting and electronic monitoring (ER and EM) and FAD management options. Other intersessional work were agreed to be progressed through virtual working groups to consider a comprehensive approach for: sharks and rays management (IWG-Sharks); South Pacific albacore management (SPA-VIWG); the continuing review of the CMS and development of a new measure (CMS IWG); the development of a strategic investment plan for the special requirement fund; and access to observer reports and conduct of observers. These were in addition to the routine work in support of the annual meetings of the four subsidiary bodies of the Commission. Key highlights of achievements for 2018 include: timely submission of the report of the Independent Review Panel that reviewed the CMS; successful meetings of the Scientific Committee (SC), Northern Committee (NC) and TCC meetings; timely completion and delivery of the draft CMR; an updated stock assessment for bigeye tuna and stock assessments for South Pacific albacore, Pacific bluefin tuna, North Pacific swordfish, North Pacific shortfin mako shark, silky shark and whale shark; successful convening of the third meetings of IWGs on ER and EM, and FAD options; progress on the work of the IWG-Sharks to develop a comprehensive sharks and rays CMM; and good progress on the work of the CMS IWG, and implementation of the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Program (Common Oceans) (ABNJ) and Western Pacific East Asia (WPEA) projects. The Executive Director noted that staff numbers had been relatively stable, and financial affairs were in good order, with an unqualified audit report. He noted the voluntary trust fund contributions (itemized on pp. 8–9 of his report) and thanked the donors. He also noted the contributions made by SPC for scientific services; FFA for VMS services; and the ISC for scientific services for the NC. He acknowledged the presence of the director of IATTC, which is an important relationship because of the shared border and management area with the WCPFC. He also noted relationships with other Pacific regional organizations.

46. Tonga, on behalf of FFA members, thanked the Executive Director and his senior officers for an excellent report. Tonga thanked the Executive Director for placing considerable emphasis on the issue of climate change when he reported in September to the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in Nauru. It stated that, as clearly articulated by Tokelau in the FAC meeting on 9 December, climate change is the greatest challenge facing all members, and particularly WCPFC's SIDS members, both with respect to the future of their fisheries and their long-term survival. Tonga asked that all Commission members bear this in mind as the meeting progresses, stating that for many FFA member countries, the impacts of climate change are all too real, and it is essential that the Commission does everything it can, both to reduce its carbon footprint and to factor climate change impacts into the ongoing and future management of the key tuna stocks that are so critical to the future wellbeing of FFA members. Tonga stated that it looked forward to working together with members and the Secretariat to strengthen this aspect of WCPFC's work in the years ahead, and thanked the Executive Director and the Secretariat staff for their hard work throughout the past year.
47. The EU encouraged active involvement by WCPFC in the Kobe Process among tuna regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), suggesting there is much to learn and discuss with other RFMOs, both at a broad, global level and on an issue-specific basis, including on FADs, where recent progress was made by other RFMOs. The EU inquired regarding a joint workshop with IATTC on bigeye tuna growth, and regarding funding for inclusion of the FLUX standard in WCPFC electronic reporting standards that. In reply, the Chair noted the Kobe process would be addressed under Agenda Item 13. SPC indicated that IATTC had invited SPC and other scientists to address bigeye growth at a workshop

in January 2019 and that SPC and some CCMs would be taking part. The Secretariat stated that they would provide updates on funding for ER and EM during the meeting, and confirmed that Phase 2 of E-reporting for high seas transshipment reporting to accept data in XML conforming to FLUX standards would be scheduled in 2019 subject to availability of budgetary funds (refer pp. 19 of the report) . The EU asked to be kept informed about the IATTC meeting.

48. The Commission accepted the 2018 Annual Report of the Executive Director (**WCPFC15-2018-04**).

AGENDA ITEM 3 — MEMBERSHIP AND OTHER APPLICATIONS

3.1 Status of the Convention

49. New Zealand, as depositary of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, presented **WCPFC15-2018-05: Status of the Convention**. It advised that since its last report in December 2017, New Zealand had not received notification of any instruments of ratification or accession to the Convention.

50. The Commission noted the report on the Status of the WCPFC Convention (**WCPFC15-2018-05**).

3.2 Update on Observer Status

51. The Executive Director referred the meeting to **WCPFC15-2018-06: List of Observers** that provided the full list of observer delegations. A statement from the North Pacific Fisheries Commission was provided to WCPFC15 (**WCPF15-2018-OP20**).

52. FSM, on behalf of FFA members, noted that they recognise Article 21 of the Convention, which promotes transparency in the decision making of the Commission. It also noted the various calls made by observers regarding participation in certain areas of the Commission's work. However, as they have noted previously, they believe that the current process for observer status and participation requires strengthening. Under Agenda Item 1.3.2, FFA members (in **WCPFC15-2018-DP27**) suggested an improvement to the management of observer participation at Commission and subsidiary bodies' meetings. They also noted their ongoing concern regarding yearly increases in the number of participants, which is making it increasingly difficult for many FFA members to host Commission-related meetings. Considering this issue, FFA members have also suggested the Commission allow for flexible arrangements to enable FFA members to host WCPFC meetings.

53. Kiribati, on behalf of FFA members, noted that at WCPFC13, it was agreed that NGOs are to contribute to the meeting expenses as determined by the Executive Director and pay registration fees. FFA Members requested that the requirements relating to contributions and fees also be applicable to Non-Party Observers. In response to a request for clarification from the United States, the Chair indicated these were State observers as referred to in para.1 a) of **WCPFC15-2018-06**. The United States indicated it would like to have the opportunity for additional dialogue on the issue and would be interested in hearing from the State observers, what their views are, and whether they have a budget for this. In response to a query from Japan, the Chair indicated that only Nicaragua which is applying for CNM status was present as a State observer.

54. In response to queries from the United States and the EU regarding the proposed amendments to Rule 36 of the Rules of Procedure, FSM indicated that the language in the proposal in **WCPFC15-2018-**

DP27 regarding a “fishing entity” was consistent with the Rules of Procedure, and that the intent was to remove accreditation for the purpose of participation, as opposed to being an observer.

55. The Commission noted the updated list of observers to the Commission (**WCPFC15-2018-06**).

56. The Commission agreed to amend Rule 36 of the Commission Rules of Procedure as follows:

“4bis The Commission will automatically revoke the observer participation of:
(a) any observer organisation, State or fishing entity referred to in paragraph 1 (c), (d), or (e); and/or
(b) a non-governmental organization pursuant to paragraph 4, unless that observer has participated in at least one (1) session of any of the Commission or its subsidiary bodies in the preceding three (3) years, with the three years being a rolling three-year period. The Executive Director shall notify the relevant organisation, State, fishing entity, or non-governmental organization in writing where this rule has been triggered, and observer status revoked, for that organization.

4ter The automatic revocation of any observer status described in paragraph [4bis] (a) does not preclude that organization, State or fishing entity from reapplying for observer status to the Commission at any time. The automatic revocation of any observer described in paragraph [4bis] (b) does not preclude that non-governmental organization from reapplying for observer status at any time pursuant to paragraph 4.”

3.3 Applications for Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) status

57. The Commission considered applications for Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) status for 2019 in accordance with CMM 2009-11, including recommendations from the 14th meeting of the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC14). As outlined in **WCPFC15-2018-07: Cooperating Non-Member Requests for 2019**, eight applications for CNM status were received from Ecuador, El Salvador, Liberia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Thailand and Vietnam.
58. Tokelau, on behalf of FFA members, noted that Mexico has refused to make a commitment to accept high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI), citing that they have no vessels authorised to fish in the WCPO. Mexico is non-complaint with para 11(e) of CMM 2009-11 which expressly requires CNMs to “accept boarding in accordance with Commission high seas boarding and inspection procedures”. They noted that if Mexico has no vessel authorised to fish in the WCPO, there is even more reason to accept boarding to ensure no unauthorised fishing activity occurs by any of its vessels. Additionally, FFA members maintained their full support for the WCPFC11 decision that CNMs are to provide a contribution to the Commission. This is premised on the principle that all participants in the organisation must share the costs of conservation and management of these stocks, and the contribution is 50% of the amount that would be payable if the CNM was a member. They noted that all other CNMs had paid their financial contribution for 2018, as required under paragraph 2(g) of CMM 2009-11, and thanked them for this, but stated that Mexico had not paid their contribution for 2018. For those reasons, FFA members asked that Mexico’s application for renewal for CNM status be denied unless these issues can be resolved during WCPFC15.
59. Nauru, on behalf of the PNA, strongly supported the statement made by Tokelau on behalf of FFA members. It stated that they were no longer prepared to accept the situation where a CNM dictates to the Commission which CMMs they would adhere to, noting that discretion is not given to them in their duty to cooperate under the UN FSA, and is inconsistent with CMM 2009-11.

60. The United States thanked delegations for raising those concerns. In reply to their inquiry, the Chair noted that Mexico did not have a representative present.
61. Palau, on behalf of FFA members, stated that renewal of CNM status under CMM 2009-11 is conditional upon (a) compliance with measures adopted by the Commission and the fisheries laws and regulations of coastal States in the Convention Area, and (b) compliance with conditions in paragraph 11 of the measure, which includes the acceptance of high seas boarding and inspection. CMM 2009-11 para. 15 is very clear that a CNM that fails to comply with any of the CMMs is deemed to have undermined the effectiveness of the CMM and the Commission must take appropriate action including the revocation of CNM status and non-renewal. They stated that some CNMs have repeatedly been assessed as non-compliant with CMM obligations, and that the Commission must take appropriate action with respect to these CNMs. Further, all CNMs must comply with the requirements under CMM 2009-11, which some are currently not doing. The 2018 provisional CMR identifies that five CNM applicants were rated either non-compliant or priority non-compliant for 2017 activities. The Commission must consider the compliance status of CNMs when considering their applications. Compliance by CNMs with the measures adopted by the Commission is essential, and a clear requirement to participate in the Commission as a CNM. The Commission must take into account CNMs' level of compliance when determining whether or not to renew their CNM status. Finally, they noted it is in CNM applicants' own interest to provide complete and accurate data and information.
62. Samoa stated their view that Mexico's application should be denied, and that they should show a willingness to comply with the CMMs.
63. The Chair noted that as a matter of procedure, the Commission would accept or reject the application, and if accepted, refer it to the SWG to consider participatory rights. She noted Mexico's application was not supported by CCMs in the absence of significant changes. The Chair further noted that TCC had noted insufficient information was available regarding Nicaragua's CNM status request and referred the matter to the Commission. The Chair advised the application could be referred to the SWG for further consideration.
64. Palau, on behalf of FFA, thanked Nicaragua for their interest in applying for CNM status, and noted that this was the first time Nicaragua had applied to be a CNM. In its application, Nicaragua indicated its commitment to comply with requirements under CMM 2009-11. FFA members sought further information on the following: (i) noting that Nicaragua is a member of IATTC and ICCAT, FFA members inquired regarding their compliance status with these RFMOs; (ii) noting they have 7 purse seiners, inquired regarding their vessels' compliance status in the RFMOs in which they fish; and (iii) asked what type of fishing activities, if other than purse seining, Nicaragua is interested in participating in within the WCPO.
65. Nicaragua stated they were happy to answer any questions, and that they comply with all rules in IATTC and ICCAT. They indicated their readiness to comply with WCPFC CMMs and offered to give more information to the SWG.
66. PNG, on behalf of FFA members, stated that the decision of the Commission regarding financial contributions by CNMs was very clear. The non-payment of contributions and the lack of commitment to do so has been a subject of extensive discussion at previous Commission meetings. They stated that FFA members will not agree to CNM status for any applicant that has not paid outstanding financial contributions or is unable to commit to making the contribution for the following year. Additionally, the Commission must take appropriate action for those CNMs that have blatantly undermined any CMMs and any requirement prescribed by the Commission.

67. The United States indicated they would be happy to have discussions regarding Nicaragua's application. Regarding the broader issues, they noted that financial contributions could not always be considered a binding requirement. It stated that States faced a range of considerations in making voluntary contributions. WCPFC rules state that financial contributions are required only from States that are eligible to be members, but a number of CCMs have made it clear they do not wish to consider new members, suggesting CNM applicants should not be required to make financial contributions.
68. The Chair asked the SWG to consider Nicaragua's application, which would be returned to plenary, with the financial contribution considered at that time.
69. Solomon Islands, on behalf of FFA members, stated that TCC14 noted that Panama provided its Annual Report Parts 1 and 2, but that there were reporting gaps requiring clarification. The Secretariat wrote to Panama (letters dated 19 October 2018) identifying the gaps and requesting the provision of additional information 30 days before WCPFC15, while Panama provided additional information on December 8. They noted that Panama was consistently non-compliant in the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) for serious violations of their obligations, and it was unclear whether Panama had addressed those non-compliance issues.
70. The Commission agreed to accept the applications for renewal of CNM status in 2019 submitted by Ecuador, El Salvador, Liberia, Thailand and Vietnam. Members deferred consideration of requests from Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama pending further review by the SWG.
71. The SWG considering the CNM participatory rights made the following recommendations, in **WCPFC15-2018-CNM_SWG01: SWG CNM Report (Final)**:
 - i The SWG noted with appreciation the attendance and participation of Ecuador, Liberia, Panama and Nicaragua.
 - ii The SWG agreed to recommend that the CNMs accepted by the WCPFC plenary (i.e. Ecuador, El Salvador, Liberia, Thailand and Vietnam) have the same participatory rights in 2019 as they had in 2018.
 - iii Noting Nicaragua was a new CNM applicant, the SWG asked Nicaragua for further information on its compliance in IATTC and ICCAT, and to outline its prospective interests in the WCPFO.
 - iv Nicaragua submitted documentation, including a letter of good standing from IATTC and evidence that no Nicaraguan flagged vessel was on either the IATTC or ICCAT IUU Vessel List. Nicaragua explained that it was a Member of ICCAT but had no active fishing vessels in its Convention Area. Nicaragua affirmed its commitment to make a voluntary contribution. On the basis of the information provided, the SWG agreed to recommend that the Commission accept Nicaragua's application.
 - v With respect to Nicaragua's participatory rights, the SWG recommends that Nicaragua's participatory rights should be limited to purse seine fishing for one vessel, with no participatory rights for fishing on the high seas for highly migratory fish stocks in the Convention Area. The SWG further agreed to recommend that any introduction of fishing capacity is to be in accordance with paragraph 12 of CMM 2009-11 and CMM 2017-01 or its replacement measure.
 - vi The SWG noted that Mexico had neither attended the Commission meeting nor responded to the Executive Director's letter, and that this made it challenging to assess Mexico's application. Some members reiterated the importance of accepting a commitment to accept high seas boarding and inspection and a voluntary contribution; while other Members indicated flexibility on these aspects,

noting that such commitments can be difficult to make in the absence of a binding treaty-level obligation.

- vii There was no consensus to recommend acceptance of Mexico's CNM status.
- viii The SWG considered Panama's application, noting the TCC's advice that Panama had submitted its Part 1 and Part 2 Reports on time but that there were reporting gaps that could require clarification, and that some CCMs had also noted that Panama is consistently non-compliant in SPRFMO.
- ix Panama explained that it had worked closely with the SPRFMO Secretariat to address its outstanding data and compliance issues.
- x The SWG, with the support of Panama, recommends to WCPFC15 that Panama's application be accepted, and that Panama should:
 - a. Prepare an action plan outlining how it will improve its compliance with WCPFC, including to ensure that relevant data is provided on time and any improvement to its internal procedures necessary to improve its cooperation with WCPFC. This Action Plan should be provided to the Commission no later than the end of January 2019, and circulated to all CCMs;
 - b. Provide all outstanding data no later than the end of January 2019 to the Secretariat; and
 - c. Enhance its engagement with the Secretariat to ensure it can meet relevant reporting requirements.
- xi The SWG agreed that Panama's participatory rights should remain as they were in 2018.

72. The Commission approved the applications for CNM status for 2019 from Ecuador, El Salvador, Liberia, Nicaragua, Thailand and Vietnam.

73. WCPFC also approved the application for CNM status for 2019 from Panama, subject to Panama:

- a Preparing an action plan outlining how it will improve its compliance with WCPFC, including to ensure that relevant data is provided on time and any improvement to its internal procedures necessary to improve its cooperation with WCPFC. This Action Plan should be provided to the Commission by no later than the end of January 2019, and circulated to all CCMs;
- b Providing all outstanding data by no later than the end of January 2019 to the Secretariat; and
- c Enhancing its engagement with the Secretariat to ensure it can meet relevant reporting requirements.

74. Ecuador thanked WCPFC15 for approving Ecuador's CNM application and reminded delegates that Ecuador has been insisting on the need to have a legal and transparent procedure for accession to full membership of the WCPFC. It noted that a change in the CNM application format was implemented by WCPFC13 asking applicants whether they would want to become a full member, and observed that this information had been useless, because no further steps had been taken to set up rules to make this happen. Ecuador stated that the United States presented a discussion paper in 2017 (**WCPFC14-2017-DP18: Membership process in WCPFC**), which addressed the most relevant elements of the issue, but action has not been taken to develop a procedure to address the issue. It stated that Ecuador has been a CNM for many years, and that Ecuador and other Latin American and Asian countries had been asking to be full members for several years but had not received an adequate answer. Ecuador observed that

the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the UN FSA state that RFMOs shall not discriminate against any state or group of states having a real interest in the fisheries concerned. It stated that in coming to WCPFC annual meetings year after year and asking WCPFC to address the issue but not being listened to made them feel very much discriminated against as a country and member of the international community. It reminded delegates that following adoption by IATTC of a new Convention in 2003 (The Antigua Convention) several countries including, Belize, Canada, China, and Kiribati — became full members of the RFMO very easily, without impediments. It recalled having heard that the WCPFC is considered unique and stated that while they were sure this was the case, that uniqueness could not contravene specific principles of international law and the WCPFC Convention itself. Ecuador emphasized that the fear that some member countries might feel with regard to accepting new members had no basis, because it was very clear to them that becoming a member would not carry any automatic entitlement for participatory rights different than those they had as a CNM. Ecuador closed by encouraging delegates to set up a transparent framework and conditions for inviting new members, and specifically asked the Commission to accept Ecuador to become a full member.

75. The United States thanked Ecuador for its statement and agreed that the issue of membership was important. The United States noted they had not submitted an update to **WCPFC14-2017-DP18** because there was not a lot of new information available, and the Commission had a very full agenda. It observed there was no apparent way forward, noting that some members obviously view the Commission as closed, while they and other CCMs had a different view. The United States acknowledged that invitations to new membership required consensus, and stated they had never suggested that any particular application should be approved, but only that there should be a clear process for application, and an examination of the costs and benefits of accepting new members. It indicated this was only fair to other members of the international community that had asked to be considered for membership. They indicated they would be happy to discuss the issue intersessionally.
76. Tuvalu, on behalf of FFA members, reiterated that the application for CNM status is not a stepping stone to becoming a full member of the WCPFC.
77. The EU expressed agreement with the intervention from Ecuador. It stated that according to UNCLOS and the UN FSA, countries had the right to become full members of the WCPFC, and to refuse membership the WCPFC would need to have good reasons. The EU stated the WCPFC risked having a case presented to the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, which would not be good for the Commission.
78. Canada encouraged holding a dialog as suggested by the United States.
79. Palau, on behalf of PNA, stated that new members must be invited by consensus. It stated that the language had been carefully drafted to reflect the special situation of the Commission, and that they did not see that changing in the future.

3.3.1 Participatory rights of CNMs

80. The Commission agreed to the following limits to be applied to the participatory rights of CNMs (Convention / CMM 2009-11):
 - a) In accordance with the WCPF Convention and its conservation and management measures and resolutions, the following participatory rights apply to CNMs for fisheries in the high seas within the WCPFC Convention Area;

- b) In addition, unless otherwise specified below, CNMs may fish in waters under their national jurisdiction or other CCMs' national jurisdiction, in accordance with appropriate bilateral arrangements;
- c) CNMs shall ensure vessels flying their flags comply with all provisions of the WCPFC Convention and the WCPFC conservation and management measures. In addition, CNM vessels will be placed on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels (WCPFC RFV);
- d) CCMs shall ensure that CNM fishing activities that are conducted in waters under their national jurisdiction in accordance with bilateral arrangements are consistent with all relevant conservation and management measures and provisions of the WCPF Convention; and
- e) Renewal of CNM status by the Commission will take into account compliance with the national laws and regulations of any licensing CCM, and all conservation and management measures and provisions of the WCPFC Convention. CCMs shall identify any violations by vessels flagged to a CNM and report on any investigations of such violations to the Secretariat for attention by TCC.

Participatory rights of each CNM in 2019

- 81. **Ecuador:** The participatory rights of Ecuador for fishing in the WCPO are limited to purse seine fishing, with no participatory rights for fishing on the high seas for highly migratory fish stocks in the Convention Area. Any introduction of purse seine fishing capacity is to be in accordance with paragraph 12 of CMM 2009-11 and CMM 2018-01 or its replacement measure.
- 82. **El Salvador:** The participatory rights of El Salvador for fishing in the WCPO are limited to purse seine fishing only. The total level of effort by purse seine vessels of El Salvador on the high seas shall not exceed 29 days in the Convention Area. Any introduction of purse seine fishing capacity is to be in accordance with paragraph 12 of CMM 2009-11 and CMM 2018-01 or its replacement measure.
- 83. **Liberia:** The participatory rights of Liberia are limited to reefer vessels to engage in transshipment activities, and bunker and supply vessels to support fishing vessels in the Convention area.
- 84. **Nicaragua:** The participatory rights of Nicaragua are limited to purse seine fishing for one vessel, with no participatory rights for fishing on the high seas for highly migratory fish stocks in the Convention Area. Any introduction of fishing capacity is to be in accordance with paragraph 12 of CMM 2009-11 and CMM 2018-01 or its replacement measure.
- 85. **Panama:** The participatory rights of Panama in the WCPO are limited to the provision of carrier and bunker vessels. Panama's participatory rights also apply to vessels that supply food, water and spare parts to carrier vessels that engage in transshipment activities, provided that these vessels do not engage in activities supporting fishing vessels, including providing and/or servicing FADs.
- 86. **Thailand:** The participatory rights of Thailand in the WCPO are limited to the provision of carrier and bunker vessels only.
- 87. **Vietnam:** The participatory rights of Vietnam in the WCPO are limited to the provision of carrier and bunker vessels only.

WCPFC/IATTC Overlap Area

88. In accordance with the decision of WCPFC9 regarding the management of the overlap area of 4°S and between 130°W and 150°W, vessels flagged to Ecuador, El Salvador Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama will be governed by the IATTC when fishing in the overlap area.
89. In accordance with the Data Exchange MOU agreed by both Commissions, fishing vessels flying the flag of a member of either the IATTC or WCPFC shall cooperate with the RFMO to which they are not a member by voluntarily providing operational catch and effort data for its fishing activities for highly migratory species in the overlap area.
90. For the purpose of investigation of possible IUU fishing activities and consistent with international and domestic laws, vessels flying the flag of a CNM that is a Contracting Party to the IATTC will cooperate with those coastal State members of the WCPFC whose EEZs occur in the overlap area by voluntarily providing VMS reports (date, time and position) to those coastal States when operating in the overlap area.

AGENDA ITEM 4 — NEW PROPOSALS

4.1 Marine Pollution

91. Canada presented **WCPFC15-2018-DP02: Discussion paper — potential future amendments to WCPFC CMM on marine pollution (2017-04)**, which proposes changes to the measure for consideration (at WCPFC15, or when it is evaluated in the future). Canada suggested modifications to strengthen requirements regarding retrieval and reporting of lost fishing gear by vessels operating in the Convention Area.

4.2 Non-Entangling FADs

92. The EU introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP01: Proposal for amending CMM 2017-01** for the use of non-entangling fads in WCPFC fisheries.
93. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 6.3.1a.

4.3 FAD Definitions

94. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP03: Proposal for a definition of fish aggregating device**, and Korea introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP17: Proposed changes to conservation and management measure 2009-02 on the application of high seas FAD closures and catch retention**.
95. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 6.3.1c.

4.4 Bigeye Longline Catch Limits

96. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP04: Proposal on bigeye longline catch limits in longline fisheries: Conservation and Management Measure on Tropical Tunas**, which addresses para. 40 of the measure and proposes an objective method to adjust CCMs' longline bigeye tuna catch limits

to account for their respective levels of monitoring and control, particularly with respect to observer coverage levels and at-sea trans-shipment activity.

97. Korea thanked the United States for their efforts to fight IUU fishing and to submit a plan to improve reliability of data on the longline fishery, while noting the need for further consideration of the issue. Korea noted that the United States faces different conditions than other fishing nations, as it has Hawaii and American Samoa available as fishing bases, and stated that in their view it would be inappropriate to directly link observer and trans-shipment coverage to catch limits. It suggested the need for further discussion.
98. The issue was considered by the SWG on the tropical tuna measure, refer Agenda Item 6.3.1.

4.5 IMO Numbers

99. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP05**: *Amendment to CMM 2017-05 to expand the requirement for IMO numbers*.
100. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 9.3.3.

4.6 Sea Turtles

101. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP06**: *Revisions to CMM 2008-03 Conservation and Management Measure of Sea Turtles* and **WCPFC15-2018-DP07**: *Amendments to the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Minimum Standard Data Fields*.
102. The issue was discussed under Agenda Item 8.5.

4.7 South Pacific Albacore Target Reference Point

103. Fiji, on behalf of FFA members, introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP10**: *Proposal for establishing a target reference point for south Pacific albacore*.
104. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 6.2.2.

4.8 Implementation of CMM 2013-06

105. Cook Islands, on behalf of FFA members, presented **WCPFC15-2018-DP12_rev1**: *Views on the implementation of CMM 2013-06 (CMM on the Criteria for the Consideration of Conservation and Management Measures)*, stating they were pleased to see some improvement in how CMM proponents complete CMM 2013-06 impact assessments, although much improvement in the quality of the assessments was needed, which reflects CCMs' poor understanding of what SIDS considerations are when these CCMs are designing potential measures. They noted that to overcome this, proponents must consult with SIDS, which is a fundamental element of the CMM 2013-06 assessments. Without this input, proponents will not be able to address implementation issues and adequately identify disproportionate burden, which requires collaboration and consultation with SIDS before proposals are submitted to WCPFC. WCPFC15-2018-DP12 (rev.1) seeks to help address this issue; it includes an annotation of the questions in paragraph 3 of CMM 2013-06 for the SIDS impact assessments, to provide more structured guidance to inform how responses are developed. They hoped the Commission would find this useful to support CCMs in their development of proposals. They stated that genuine consideration of CMM proposals by SIDS requires active engagement, and that FFA members meet every year in October for management options consultations (MOC), which are dedicated to developing

and reviewing work that will contribute to the annual Commission meeting, which was an opportune time for consideration of proposals. They thanked CCMs who provided proposals for consideration during their MOC meeting and looked forward to working with others and further enhancing the development and use of CMM 2013-06 assessments.

106. RMI supported the comments by Cook Islands on behalf of FFA, while noting the number of proposals submitted under Agenda Item 4 at WCPFC15 and stressing they would consider CMM 2013-06 and its applicable mechanisms with respect to any proposals under consideration.
107. The United States stated that guidance on how to improve implementation would be useful, but that they had not anticipated it would be formally adopted. They suggested that the delegation paper be noted, or the issues be further developed intersessionally. This position was supported by the EU; they also stated they understood the concerns expressed by FFA, and that they faced difficulties in determining whether there were impacts on SIDS from their proposals.
108. RMI noted CMM 2013-06 continued to be less than effective from the view of SIDS and participating territories, and the guidelines were being suggested to help in implementing the CMM and to help all CCMs meet their obligations; it stressed WCPFC15-2018-DP12 contained guiding questions, not obligations. RMI also thanked Japan for its continuous engagement with SIDS.
109. The EU thanked RMI and stated that they sought to faithfully implement CMM 2013-06 whenever they propose a measure, and to engage proactively with FFA. They welcomed having the document as a reference submitted by FFA, but not as document to be approved by the Commission.
110. In the ensuing discussions, the Commission explored various ways in which the document could be made available to members for reference.

111. The Commission tasked the Secretariat to include WCPFC15-2018-DP12_rev1 providing FFA CCM views on the implementation of CMM 2013-06, on the webpage that will be established for and dedicated to the Implementation of Article 30 of the Convention.
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4.9 Labour Standards

112. Vanuatu, on behalf of FFA members, introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP13: *Draft Resolution on Labour Standards for Crew on Fishing Vessels***, and stated that Ministers from FFA members had reiterated that human rights abuses on fishing vessels operating in the Pacific must be addressed, and emphasised specifically the need for improved labour standards for all crew, including as part of the ongoing promotion of opportunities for Pacific Islanders working in the fishing industry. They stated the issue had rightly received significant international attention, thanked CCMs for providing constructive comments on the proposal to date, and voiced their appreciation for the support from all CCMs and the Commission to address the issue. They invited other CCMs to engage with FFA members in the margins of WCPFC15 to support progress of this resolution, including suggestions for improvement, and stated they view the resolution as a vital first step to ensure CCMs work constructively together to eliminate all human rights abuses inflicted on crew on fishing vessels. They noted it was fitting that this was being discussed on the 70th Anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights.
113. The issue was further discussed by a small working group.

114. The EU stated they fully supported the principles put forward, that these were present in their own laws, and that their vessels fully respected them, but expressed doubts about the legal basis of the WCPFC to adopt a Resolution on labour standards under Article 10(h) of the Convention. This view was supported by Japan, who also supported the concept, but questioned whether the Commission was the proper venue to address the issues and stated they would not support the resolution being converted to a binding document in a future Commission meeting. China thanked Vanuatu for accommodating its concerns during the course of small working group discussions, and stated their belief that the issue should be addressed elsewhere, but agreed to support the resolution because it was not binding.

115. The Commission adopted Resolution 2018-01 on Labour Standards for Crew on Fishing Vessels (Attachment E)
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116. WWF, on behalf of IPNLF, WWF, Pew, and BirdLife International, commended the Commission for adopting the Resolution on Labour Standards for Crew on Fishing Vessels. They noted that WCPFC is the first tuna RFMO to consider this issue, and they thanked the Commission for its leadership in forwarding fishery worker protections. They stated that human rights and labour abuses occur around the world, including in Pacific tuna fisheries, with stories of fishers being paid less than what they were promised, and stories of fishers being beaten, enslaved, or murdered. They stated that buyers and consumers expect their tuna to be free of human exploitation, and WCPFC has taken an important step in response. They supported WCPFC's initiative in passing the resolution and urged the Commission to consider how to make the provisions substantive and effective.

117. Vanuatu noted the important progress WCPFC had made on many issues, and emphasized the importance of this accomplishment, stating that poor labour conditions and mistreatment of crew cannot be tolerated, and it was essential all crew are afforded their basic human rights. Cook Islands also commended all members on taking a decision to protect the welfare of crew on fishing vessels. Cook Islands stated that the resolution was a first step and it would continue to work on the issue until workers at sea are more effectively protected. Indonesia expressed appreciation to FFA for their efforts and for the leadership shown by Vanuatu on the issue, and echoed Cook Island's view that this marked only a first step in protecting and ensuring the safety of labour at sea.

4.10 Seabird Mitigation

118. New Zealand introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP16: Seabird Interaction Mitigation: Amendment of CMM 2017-06**.

119. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 8.4.

4.11 TCC Workplan

120. The TCC Vice-Chair (RMI) introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP19: Update of TCC Workplan**.

121. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 9.3

4.12 Pacific Bluefin Tuna

122. Japan introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP25: Proposal for amending Conservation and Management Measure for Pacific Bluefin Tuna (CMM2017-08)**.

123. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 6.4.

4.13 Effective Participation of SIDS

124. Niue introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP26**: *Proposal to amend the financial Regulations for the effective participation of SIDS*.
125. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 5.

4.14 High Seas Boarding and Inspection: Authorities of the Fishing Vessel

126. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP31**: *High Seas Boarding and Inspection: Authorities of the Fishing Vessel* (originally notified under Circular 2018/74).
127. The issue was addressed under Agenda Item 9.3.5.

AGENDA ITEM 5 — SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OF DEVELOPING STATES

5.1 Implementation of Article 30 of WCPFC Convention and CMM 2013-07 (SIDS special requirements)

128. The Chair noted that para. 20 of CMM 2013-07 requires an annual review of implementation of this measure, and referenced **WCPFC15-2018-IP01**: *Summary from Part 2 CMM 2013-07 paragraph 19 annual reports (WCPFC-TCC14-2018-11)* and **WCPFC15-2018-DP21**: *Report of the European Union on Article 30 of the Convention and Resolution 2008-01 of WCPFC (EU)*.
129. Japan stated they fully recognized the importance of using the checklist in CMM 2013-06 and would continue doing so. It also stressed the importance of direct consultation with SIDS, where common grounds and differing views could be identified, and gaps filled. It stated they would continue to hold intersessional consultations with SIDS and encouraged other CMMs to do same. It noted they had provided overseas development assistance for infrastructure and capacity development equal to US\$4.1 billion over 2007–2016, which includes fisheries related projects, focussing on conservation and management of highly migratory species and assistance to small-scale fishermen. Japan noted the recent commitment by Prime Minister Abe for additional assistance related to human resource development, including over 5,000 people-to-people exchanges over the coming three years. Established in 2008, the Japan Trust Fund within WCPFC has assisted SIDS with capacity development for fisheries statistics and management. Japan has also provided support for SIDS through the Japan Promotion Fund so SIDS can use interest from the fund for various purposes. In November 2017 this was renewed until 2027. Japan expressed the hope these projects and funds would contribute to the development of SIDS.
130. The United States stated that it had provided a report related to the agenda item through their Annual Report Part 2. Assistance includes bilateral and multilateral assistance to SIDS-related fisheries as well as assistance through WCPFC, such as voluntary contributions to the SRF. It noted that when looking through the reports contained in IP01 it was hard to find detailed attachments, making accessing the relevant data difficult. The United States suggested that in the future they would prepare a delegation paper similar to WCPFC15-2018-DP21, and stated they would be happy to provide specific information to other CCMs on request. It also supported the provision of information on a dedicated webpage.
131. The EU stated that although they prepared a report each year, it seemed that it was not being read, because discussions in FAC and at other times seemed to support that view. The EU suggested that in 2019 when the Commission holds discussions in relation to application of Article 30 and related issues

that development cooperation provided by members for SIDS be detailed in the annexes prepared by the Secretariat for all members to review.

132. Palau, on behalf of FFA members, stated that the Special Requirements agenda item is always a priority. Embedding and operationalising the provisions of Article 30 across all aspects of the Commission's work requires CCMs to acknowledge and commit to responding to particular issues as they arise. FFA members are pleased with recent work that should provide more structure and responsiveness to how the Commission will support developing state CCMs in meeting their obligations. They directed attention to: (i) ensuring the effective participation of developing States, (ii) facilitating the effective participation of developing States in the work of the Commission, and (iii) ensuring SIDS impact assessments required by CMM 2013-06 are comprehensively developed through more considered and consultative approaches. They looked forward to working with other CCMs in progressing these issues.
133. Nauru supported the comments from Palau and stated that the fact SIDS are overburdened contributed to difficulties in absorbing all information, and to the frustrations highlighted by the EU. Nauru noted this was why they were asking for SIDS support.

5.2 Strategic Investment Plan by the FAC Special Requirements Fund Virtual Working Group.

134. Dr Liz Brierley (Australia), Chair of the SRF-IWG introduced **WCPFC15-2018-FAC_SRF IWG: Report from the Chair of the Special Requirements Fund Intersessional Working Group (SRF IWG) to the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) of WCPFC**. She briefly reviewed the history of the SRF-IWG and provided an update on the intersessional work of the SRF-IWG in 2018. The SRF-IWG engaged a research assistant (funded by New Zealand), who identified capacity needs of developing states and territories documented through WCPFC processes, and identified funding options available to fill these needs, both within provisions of the WCPFC and externally. The analysis demonstrated that most capacity development needs had associated support mechanisms. Members were asked to rank capacity development needs according to the priority they afforded the need from their national perspective. The responses were then aggregated. Some members felt that, despite access to the SRF, effective participation was inadequately supported by the Commission. She noted that members have differing views as to what effective participation means, particularly with regard to capability. The Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) notes the need for flexibility to respond to the needs of individual countries, and for travel assistance for members to send two participants to Commission meetings. There is also a need for more in-country capacity building and support that does not remove people from their work. The SIP also documents capacity building needs documented in the TCC CMR, and WCPFC Part 2 Annual Reports. She stated the Commission should consider whether capacity development needs could become public domain data in the future, noting a need for greater transparency in implementation of Article 30. The SIP noted that some members raised the need for a consolidated page on the WCPFC website to record: capacity needs (as detailed in the current SIP); funding options, eligibility and application processes (including references to external funding mechanisms as raised through Annual Part 2 reports and work of the SRF-IWG); SRF funding proposals and SRF project completion reports for projects under US\$10,000 (enhanced transparency); 2013-06 templates and assessments; and reports by CCMs on implementation of 2013-07.
135. The SRF-IWG Chair noted the need for members to consider three (3) issues: (a) approval of the SIP, and thus whether the Commission would support the participation of two delegates from SIDS at Commission meetings; (b) making capacity needs of Part 2 Annual reports and the pCMR publicly available through a website dedicated to implementation of Article 30; and (c) agreement regarding enhanced transparency mechanisms around implementation of Article 30.

136. Niue introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP26: Proposal to amend the financial regulations for the effective participation of SIDS**, noting that FFA members remain steadfast in their resolve to ensure the Commission enables the effective participation of SIDS in its work. They stated that ensuring effective and inclusive participation for all CCMs and providing the opportunity for those who need help in doing so, is a priority for FFA members, and in their view is the responsibility of the Commission and all CCMs. Effective and inclusive participation will ensure the Commission can continue developing robust fisheries management arrangements that take into account all members' needs. WCPFC15-2018-DP26 proposes an amendment to the financial regulations to provide support for two SIDS delegates to attend Commission meetings but noted this was simply a starting point. They stated they were open to investigating different avenues, such as the funding proposals provided in the report of the SRF-IWG and recognised that all members needed to approach the issue with flexibility and understanding so that SIDS have the opportunity to build their capacity and capability to engage and participate in the Commission decision-making processes.
137. Tuvalu, on behalf of FFA members, extended their appreciation to the SRF-IWG Chair for her efforts in guiding development of the SIP, which would ensure that the Commission can direct capacity building assistance when and where it is required. Tuvalu noted that the detail of this work would be considered in the FAC, but raised the following points:
- (i) Maintenance of the SIP is not a one-off process but requires the Commission and CCMs to incorporate it in various work streams to update and maintain the relevance of the SIP, in particular, the ongoing need to support developing States in implementing their obligations under the WCPFC.
 - (ii) The SIP should be used as a basis to inform what assistance is required, where the priorities lie, and how these priority capacity building needs will be resourced.
 - (iii) The need to provide support to facilitate effective participation. They stated that **WCPFC15-2018-DP26** was a starting point but recognised that some CCMs may not be comfortable with this approach, and stated they were open to hearing other options, and being flexible on how to achieve this.
138. Tuvalu further stated that building the capability of individuals working in small fisheries administrations is a fundamental responsibility of the Commission, along with ensuring that the small fisheries administrations (which are dedicated to ensuring the Commission achieves its sustainable management objectives) are able to comprehend, engage and participate in, and effectively contribute to the work that culminates in deliberations at annual sessions, such as WCPFC15. The mechanism established by the Commission to do this is the SRF. Tuvalu stated the need to ensure that the SRF is sustainably supported by the Commission to enable it to deliver required capacity building assistance. Tuvalu looked forward to working with other CCMs to propel the SIP as the platform for delivering meaningful assistance.
139. The United States requested clarification on how aspects of the proposals would be implemented. FSM supported the comments made by Tuvalu and agreed that the issues could be discussed in greater detail. It suggested the need to look carefully at what information is divulged from Part 2 reports, as some must be kept confidential.
140. The Chair observed that all members were likely able to support the principle of transparency, noting that the proposal was intended to support members, while acknowledging the need to understand what information was being made public. She confirmed the SRF-IWG Chair would develop a paper and the discussion on (b) and (c) (in para. 135 por encima de) would then be resumed. On (a), she noted Tuvalu had referenced **WCPFC15-2018-DP26**, and stated that the Commission needed to look at how to fund effective participation, and that the FAC needed guidance as it looks at how to fund this. She

observed that SIDS had indicated their needs, and that significant work had gone into developing the IWG outcomes, and that the Commission needed to look at how it would support those needs.

141. Japan indicated they supported funding a second person and understood there should be at least two people at each meeting, but raised the need for caution, as funding two delegates would increase the budget, and require a larger financial contribution from CCMs. They accepted that FAC needed direction but stated that they could not voice support until it was known how to fund participation by two delegates (e.g. through increased contributions or by dropping some projects), and the associated fiscal and program implications had been determined.
142. The Chair noted the need for general in-principle support from the Commission; following that the FAC could develop options and submit those back to the Commission.
143. The EU observed that the issue is complex. It voiced support for helping to enable effective participation and capacity building by SIDS, but suggested these be integrated in the SIP, and separate from funding of WCPFC. It noted that the EU has other funds available to support development, but that funds for WCPFC are limited, and the EU's contribution cannot always be increased. The EU noted that the issue was one of development, that should be addressed through the instruments available to fund development outside WCPFC. It also noted that effective participation was not necessarily dependent on the number of representatives from a country; it observed that at other RFMOs, support was provided only for one person, and that the EU was in some cases represented by only one person. The EU agreed that having more representatives was a benefit, but suggested delegations of one could also be effective. It questioned whether additional funding would in fact support a third representative if a second was already in place, as SRF funds the participation of a second person for some developing states. It also suggested that needs varied among countries, and that for a lesser-developed country the situation would be different than for an emerging economy, although both may be SIDS. It observed that some small country delegations were relatively large, which should be taken into account. The EU expressed their concern that financial contributions to WCPFC were increasing and noted that the IWG report presents some different options for funding participation of a second person. It suggested the need to set priorities, and see which countries were most in need of assistance for funding a second representative.
144. Cook Islands voiced strong support for the position put forward by FFA members, noting the issue was in fact not as complex as the current discussion suggested. It stated that the Commission is a decision-making body, and at the heart of the Convention is ensuring the effective participation by all members, and that SIDS have articulated what this means to them. It thanked the IWG for its work and noted that it identified several critical issues: numbers; capacity to participate; and being able to attend and participate in all elements of Commission meetings. The Cook Islands stated the need for the Commission to take a decision on principle, and to agree that effective participation means two persons for each SIDS, while leaving the options for how this could be funded to the FAC, which could reprioritize some funding lines, rather than necessarily increasing individual contributions.
145. Niue thanked the Chair of the SRF-IWG and stated that they were one of the countries that had been advocating for effective participation. It agreed that the SRF was an option but stated that it posed an administrative burden on SIDS and the Secretariat. It supported the statement by Cook Islands and observed that for one person to attend from a country was ridiculous. It stated that effective participation required more than just support for travel, and that it was not possible to compare countries such as the EU and Niue. It observed that having two or three people attend Commission meetings was also part of their continuity and succession plan, and that they needed to be able to be prepared to engage in the working groups. Niue closed by emphasizing the need to have two people at the Commission meetings.

146. Canada thanked the SRF-IWG Chair and noted WCPFC15-2018-DP26. It agreed this is a core element of the Commission's work and noted Canada had made some small voluntary contributions. It expressed the concern that if the Commission agreed to the approach in DP26 (as opposed to flexible funding of the SRF), the result could be that two delegates are funded, in place of possibly other support such as funding one delegate and increasing capacity development. Canada suggested looking at funding SRF but retaining flexibility for how that funding is used.
147. Samoa expressed thanks for the support expressed for the proposal. It noted the small size of their delegation, and questioned what effective participation means, suggesting it was much more than just being at the Commission meeting. It noted the number of working groups, and the difficulty attending and preparing for these, all of which have an impact on Samoa and the Pacific. It noted that the support being discussed was in fact itself insufficient to enable Samoa to effectively participate. Samoa noted the pressure SIDS face, as they lack the budget to attend the meetings, but are forced to make funds available to enable their attendance. It noted that SIDS are home to the fisheries resources that are being discussed by WCPFC. Samoa urged the Commission to fully consider the issues, and understand that while the proposal entailed extra expense, it would help in conserving the region's fisheries resource and making these available to all.
148. Nauru thanked Canada for their support on the issue and observed that the SRF was already funding some additional delegates, but suggested that SRF funding should be used to increase the capacity of SIDS' fisheries departments; in contrast, the funding in question was not developmental, but was to ensure the Commission can conduct its business. It noted that as an alternative it would be possible to implement Rule 1 of the Rules of Procedure, which requires that the Commission has just two meetings per year. Nauru suggested a readiness to look at budget reallocation to find the necessary funding.
149. Kiribati shared the views expressed by other SIDS, and acknowledged the assistance provided by developed states through the SRF and various trust funds, which have provided assistance to Kiribati. It lent their support to the statements of other FFA members, noting that their participation in the Commission meetings was vital, both as members of the Commission, and because much of the fishing activity in the WCPO take place in the waters of SIDS. It noted that it was very hard for SIDS to attend without having sufficient expertise and stated that their contribution has increased annually. Kiribati highlighted that their revenue from fishing constituted a basic contribution to the government's budget, and stated they were happy that this issue is being considered.
150. RMI supported the comments by FFA members and stressed the need to end comparisons with other RFMOs, given the number of WCPFC members that are SIDS for whom these issues are of great importance. It highlighted the number of scientific issues on the agenda, stating SIDS face challenges in monitoring, managing observers, and carrying out other activities, and suggested more support was needed.
151. The United States thanked the SRF-IWG and FFA members for providing DP26 and the views of their delegations, noting they appreciated how important the issue was to members and the Commission, and the broad support for the issue in principle. It noted the progress in building the SRF (to about US\$150,000 in 2018), while appreciating the challenge of adequately supporting the SRF through voluntary contributions alone. It indicated their preference was to provide support through mandatory contributions to the SRF, with priorities then determined. The United States stated that they did want to see how this would affect overall contributions, which could be examined by FAC.
152. The Chair thanked members for their constructive interventions, noting the increased scope and workload of the Commission, which had not been met with an increase in support for all members to participate, and which led to the formation of the SRF-IWG. She surmised that the principle is broadly

supported and appreciated the suggestion from Cook Islands that a reprioritization of the budget could be needed. She noted that the issue would be forwarded to the FAC with the provision that support be provided, and allow FAC to consider how this could best be done, with a report back to the plenary by the FAC.

153. Following the adoption of the Report of the FAC under Agenda item 12, and noting that this had considered funding to support the implementation of the Strategic Investment Plan, the Commission agreed to the following outcomes.

154. The Commission approved the 2018 Strategic Investment Plan as a means to target investment to address the priority needs as identified by developing states, including effective participation. (**Attachment F**). The Commission agreed that this Plan would be updated annually by the Secretariat for approval by the Commission and that the Secretariat would report to the Commission on implementation of the Strategic Investment Plan each year.

155. The Commission agreed to make any capacity assistance needs identified in the provisional Compliance Monitoring Report and in Part 2 reports (as may be agreed by TCC each year to be contained in the Executive Summary of the Provisional Compliance Monitoring Report), public domain data that will inform annual updates of the Strategic Investment Plan.

156. The Commission agreed to make the reports against implementation of 2013-07 (or its successor) contained in Part 2 Annual Reports public domain data.

157. The Commission directed the Secretariat to develop a webpage dedicated to the Implementation of Article 30 of the Convention. The Commission considered that the publicly available website would include the following information:

- Current and historical Strategic Investment Plans
- Funding options, eligibility and application processes
- Special Requirements Fund proposals and project completion reports for projects >\$10,000
- 2013-06 template and assessments to date
- Reports by CCMs on implementation of 2013-07

AGENDA ITEM 6 — WCPO TUNA AND BILLFISH STOCKS

158. The Chair opened the session by acknowledging the contributions made by Dr John Hampton (SPC) to the work of the Commission, and management of tuna stocks in the region more broadly, noting that he would be stepping down as head of SPC's Ocean Fisheries Programme in the coming year. She observed that his role was hard to summarize but stated that 2018 marked the 30th year he had attended an annual meeting on the status of the region's tuna stocks, and that his sustained contribution from a scientific perspective was peerless.

6.1 General Overview of Stock Status (bigeye, skipjack, SP albacore, yellowfin, Pacific bluefin, NP albacore and NP swordfish)

159. Dr John Hampton (SPC) provided a presentation on Status of Stocks and Fisheries, which represented recent information on the fisheries, focusing on purse seine and longline; the status of key tuna species assessed by SPC (skipjack, yellowfin, bigeye, and South Pacific albacore; and some information on ENSO and the impacts of climate change on tuna stocks. He noted that more detailed information was available in **WCPFC15-2018-IP12: *The western and central Pacific tuna fishery: 2017 Overview and status of stocks***. He noted 2017 WCP-CA tuna catches by species as follows: (i) skipjack (64% of the total catch) was a drop from the highest value, recorded in 2014, and a decrease of 10% from 2016; (ii) yellowfin (27%) was a record catch; (iii) bigeye (5%) was the lowest since 1996; and (iv) albacore (4%) was a record catch. He noted that the bigeye catch was not a significant portion of the total catch but was important in terms of the impact on bigeye stocks. Purse seine effort appeared similar to the level over the last three years. A large increase in purse seine sets on free schools (unassociated sets) was recorded since 2010, and a slight contraction in associated sets since 2011, related to implementation of the FAD closures. Many of the unassociated sets are “skunk sets”, with little catch recorded; once that is taken into account, the number of successful associated and unassociated sets is quite similar. There is significant variability in purse seine catch per unit effort (CPUE); FAD closures since 2009 have had a significant effect on bigeye CPUE, which is the goal. Overall CPUE has been reasonably consistent over time, while yellowfin CPUE has been high even during FAD closures. The longline catch has seen relatively equal levels of bigeye, albacore and yellowfin catch, with recent decline in overall levels, but a strong increase in albacore in 2017. There are 2 components to the longline fishery: (i) the tropical longline fishery (20°N–10°S), with catches of bigeye and yellowfin, which recorded reasonably stable catch and effort over the last 10 years. Declines in catch and effort in 2017 may be an artefact of incomplete reporting; CPUE for both species spiked in 2014–2015, but has since returned to more normal levels; and (ii) the southern longline fishery, targeting South Pacific albacore, where catch and effort increased significantly in 2017; CPUE has declined over the long term, but has shown a small increase since 2011.
160. He provided an overview of stock status, noting that spawning biomass depletion was the metric for denoting stock status, and that there had been a long-term declining trend for all species. Three stocks are not near the 20% LRP, while yellowfin is starting to approach that LRP, which would need to be examined in future years; skipjack is trending close to the 50% interim TRP. Regarding the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO), he noted that the indicators suggest we are currently in a weak El Niño phase, and the median of the NOAA forecast models suggests that this is likely to continue through at least the first half of 2019. Projected climate change impacts show substantial declines predicted for skipjack as the 21st century progresses, and more modest declines for yellowfin and bigeye. South Pacific albacore is actually projected to increase, but with the caveat that there is very large uncertainty in these projections.
161. In response to an inquiry from PNG regarding the increase in the number of skunk sets SPC stated it may be related to unassociated sets made by vessels in response to the FAD closures in effect since 2009 that were made in the absence of much experience in making such sets; he suggested the number of skunk sets may decrease as vessels gain experience.
162. Australia, on behalf of other FFA members, echoed the sentiments expressed by the Chair in relation to the enormous contribution of Dr John Hampton to the Commission and FFA members over many decades, and expressed their thanks. With respect to the presentation, they stated their understanding that the overview was for information but stated that FFA members wanted to draw attention to a number of larger issues raised in the report. These include the fact that the work of the Commission had been focused on bigeye tuna for several years, while currently the tropical tuna stock of most concern was

yellowfin, meaning the Commission would need to broaden its focus. They stated that new work would likely need to be focused on better quantifying the catch of small yellowfin in the far west of the WCPFC Convention Area. They welcomed continuation of the WPEA project, and noted the work in progress on reducing uncertainty regarding yellowfin growth. They stated that as long as there were major uncertainties about the status of tropical tuna stocks important to WCPFC CCMs, there could be no weakening of the tropical tuna measure.

163. Samoa, on behalf of FFA members, stated their concern over the South Pacific albacore stock status, and stated that the longline vulnerable albacore biomass is critical to the fishery.
164. The EU noted the value of the presentation on climate impacts. It stated that although all key tuna stocks were within safe biological limits, some stocks were assessed a different conservation status, and questioned whether this was appropriate. It suggested that the presentation could include other species (e.g., North Pacific bluefin tuna, North Pacific striped marlin), which could help inform discussions. In response to a query from the EU regarding a decreasing trend in purse seine effort, SPC stated that the reduction was real (not an artefact of the data), and suggested the US treaty and departure of some fleets from fishery likely had an impact.
165. Indonesia asked what factors were driving the increase in South Pacific albacore effort. SPC replied there was some increase in fishing effort by the Chinese fleet, as well as an increase to the far east of the convention area, and around Vanuatu and Solomon Islands; much of the increase was in the high seas, with a spike in effort south of 10°S.
166. China inquired about the portion of the South Pacific albacore catch taken by the troll fishery, and whether SPC conducted the assessment for South Pacific albacore in conjunction with IATTC staff. SPC noted that chartering arrangements had altered over the previous 3 years, and that detailed information was presented in **WCPFC15-2018-IP02: Trends in the south Pacific albacore longline and troll fisheries**. The troll fishery accounts for a catch of some 2,000–3,000mt of albacore per year, much of this around New Zealand; the fish are usually 1–3 years old. Regarding cooperation with IATTC, SPC noted that the last few assessments had been restricted to the WCPFC Convention Area, including the overlap area, but not farther east. SPC stated this was done to provide more targeted advice to the Commission, but that it may be worth doing a Pacific-wide stock assessment, especially because IATTC indicates catches in the EPO may have increased in the last few years.
167. Chinese Taipei noted the climate change impacts on tuna stocks, which projected three species would be negatively impacted, while south Pacific albacore could be positively impacted, and asked about the impact of climate change on tuna migration patterns. SPC stated changes in stocks were a response to weakening of upwelling and currents that take that upwelling to the WPO, with a resulting displacement of stocks to the east. SPC noted there could be some increase (or greater stability) of bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack stocks in the EPO. South Pacific albacore are displaced somewhat to the south, and climate change impacts at 10°–30° S differ from those in equatorial waters, which is reflected by the projected positive impact on these stocks. They noted there was large uncertainty in the climate change models with respect to changes in dissolved oxygen levels, to which South Pacific albacore are sensitive, and stressed that the projected 50% increase should not be considered reliable at present, noting the need for better resolution of the dissolved oxygen parameter.
168. In response to a query from New Zealand regarding trends in CPUE in the longline catch, SPC stated that yellowfin was a particularly important component in the southern longline fishery, and that they would need to look at this in the stock assessments. They noted that CPUE was relatively low in those areas, and that there were no striking differences in trends over time. SPC indicated they would examine the issue and report back to New Zealand.

169. Dr Shuya Nakatsuka (Japan), Vice-Chair of the Pacific bluefin tuna working group reviewed the status of Pacific bluefin tuna on behalf of the ISC, which is the science provider to the NC, and provided advice to SC. As the 2018 assessment was an update, the basic model construction was the same as that used for the 2016 assessment. Population dynamics were estimated using a fully integrated age-structured model (Stock Synthesis v. 3) fitted to catch, size-composition and CPUE data from 1952 to 2016 (fishing year). Life history parameters included a length-at-age relationship from otolith-derived ages, as well as natural mortality estimates from a tag-recapture study and empirical-life history methods. Nineteen fleets were defined for use in the stock assessment model based on a country/gear/season/region stratification. Quarterly observations of catch and size compositions, when available, were used as inputs to the model to describe the removal processes. Annual estimates of standardized CPUE from the Japanese longline fleets, the Chinese Taipei longline fleets, and the Japanese troll fleets were used as measures of the relative abundance of the population. Based on the diagnostic analyses, the ISC concluded that the model represents the data sufficiently and results were consistent with the 2016 assessment. He noted that ISC had previously assessed the stock to be at a historically low level, but that it was now gradually increasing, with a positive recruitment trend for the last 2 years. Fishing mortality is declining, presumably because of recently adopted conservation measures. The stock status assessment concluded overfishing is occurring and the stock is in an overfished condition. The harvest strategy **HS-02** (Harvest Strategy for Pacific Bluefin Tuna Fisheries) uses the low recruitment scenario until the initial rebuilding target is achieved and average recruitment thereafter, and it has been confirmed that the recent 10-year recruitment is better than that from the low recruitment period (1980–1989). The status quo projection resulted in a 90% probability of achieving the rebuilding target. In summary, the projection results indicate that the initial rebuilding target will be achieved (98% probability). The 2018 results are more optimistic because of recent good recruitment. In its advice to the Commission, SC14 noted “the current very low level of spawning biomass (3.3% B_0), the current level of overfishing, and that the projections are strongly influenced by the inclusion of a relatively high but uncertain recruitment in 2016. The majority of CCMs recommended a precautionary approach to the management of Pacific bluefin tuna, especially in relation to the timing of increasing catch levels, until the rebuilding of the stock to higher biomass levels is achieved.” (**SC14 Summary Report**, para 266).
170. S. Nakatsuka further stated the North Pacific swordfish 2018 assessment used an integrated model, and stock status was relatively good, with projections undertaken in various scenarios; SC noted the results. For North Pacific albacore no assessment was done in 2018 (the last was in 2017), and SC advice from SC13 is current.
171. New Zealand, on behalf of FFA members, stated they were aware of discussions regarding potential increases in catch limits. While very supportive of the harvest strategy approach, they stated they were also aware of the need for a precautionary approach and stated that catch increases should be considered only after continued positive developments.
172. The EU welcomed the update on the Pacific bluefin tuna stocks, and the more positive outlook, while reminding members that the first rebuilding target was well below any biological reference points adopted for other stocks, and that there was a long way to go in rebuilding the stock. They inquired how uncertainty was addressed for Pacific bluefin tuna, in comparison to approaches used by SPC for tropical tuna species. In reply, the presenter stated that uncertainty is accounted for through variability in terms of catch rate and CPUE, and by using historical recruitment levels; in the initial rebuilding period the low recruitment period is used. Steepness is high but does not affect the future recruitment level in the projection. Japan noted that the approach taken by ISC for Pacific bluefin tuna was highly precautionary as the low recruitment period used (from the 1980s) was below recent recruitment. The presenter stated that SPC provides projections based both on recent recruitment and low recruitment levels. That used for Pacific bluefin tuna was 30% lower than an average level, and thus assumes a recruitment reduction

of 30%. The EU noted the need to keep in mind that tropical tuna species are 50%–100% above maximum sustainable yield levels, while Pacific bluefin is a depleted stock, and thus the management response needs to be proportionate.

6.2 South Pacific Albacore

173. The Commission was provided with **WCPFC15-2018-08: Reference document for the review of CMM 2015-02 and development of harvest strategies under CMM 2014-06** (south Pacific albacore tuna).

6.2.1 Roadmap for effective conservation and management of South Pacific albacore

174. The Chair of the SPA-VIWG introduced **WCPFC15-2018-SPalbroadmap: Intersessional activity report from the South Pacific albacore roadmap virtual working group**, and noted that WCPFC14 adopted terms of reference (TORs) for a South Pacific albacore working group. She noted that a formal review of the measure was not needed because issues with the CMM were well documented. She stated that **WCPFC15-2018-SPalbroadmap_suppl: South Pacific Albacore Roadmap Previous SC, TCC, and Commission Discussions Regarding CMMs 2010-05 and 2015-02** compiled all comments since about 2010. A workplan was included as attachment 3 to WCPFC15-2018-SPalbroadmap and developing it would be the task for the SPA-VIWG over the next months. She stated that it was envisioned that a limit on the overall fishery should be in place as the harvest strategy was developed, with a TRP in place. The workplan contains three workstreams: the harvest strategy, addressing monitoring and reporting gaps, and establishing limits for the fishery. She also referenced **WCPFC15-2018-09: Technical aspects of a potential south Pacific albacore harvest strategy** (prepared by SPC) and noted that SC14 had recommended that WCPFC15 use the working paper to inform the development of the roadmap, and SC14 requested guidance from the Commission on the fisheries to be included, and the potential management control measures for that fishery.
175. Vanuatu thanked New Zealand for leading the intersessional process, and stated they were glad to see agreement on the need for TRPs. It noted WCPFC14 agreed on the need to set a TRP at WCPFC15.
176. China also thanked New Zealand and inquired whether the harvest control rule to be adopted by 2021 should also include a harvest allocation. It suggested that the Commission advise SPC that all fisheries should be controlled by a harvest control rule.
177. The EU stated in reference to **WCPFC15-2018-09** that the focus on the WCPO (as opposed to the entire Pacific stock as is done in the North Pacific albacore stock assessment) could negatively impact the harvest strategy, observing there was a significant increase in albacore catch in the EPO (25,000 tons in recent years). It also raised the issue of the overlap area between the WCPFC and IATTC, where members can make their own decisions about how their catches are allocated. The EU spoke about empirical and model-based approaches, and suggested these could be useful when used in conjunction, and asked whether current levels of longline observer coverage could impact the development of the proposed harvest strategy. New Zealand stated that the SPA-VIWG would not address which stocks were covered by the stock assessment, but acknowledged the concern, and that SC14 recommended both approaches be used. Observer coverage will help with data, and be beneficial in the long term, but how to do this remains a question. SPC stated that they formerly did a South Pacific-wide assessment, but then focused on the Convention area to tailor their specific evaluations. SPC noted the overlap area was included in the assessment. It stated that they could develop an estimate of implementation error using observer data from the Fiji fleet, where observer coverage is relatively good.

178. China stated that it was premature to adopt an Electronic Reporting standard for South Pacific albacore at WCPFC15 and hoped that Electronic Reporting could be addressed at WCPFC16 in conjunction with a focus on transshipment.
179. The United States thanked New Zealand for spearheading the roadmap for South Pacific albacore. It stated they are very concerned about the management of the fishery, as it is an important backbone to many island economies. It stated much work remained to be done to progress discussion on catch limits and allocation schemes and looked forward to continuing to participate in the IWG to move the roadmap process forward. The United States hoped the process can lead to economically viable fisheries, particularly for their longline fleet in American Samoa and their troll fishery.
180. The Chair noted the need for a roadmap workplan at WCPFC16 and suggested the SPA-VIWG could reconvene later in 2019 to discuss SC15 and TCC15 outcomes. She noted the United States had suggested a focus on longline catch and effort while retaining some flexibility.
181. Cook Islands, on behalf of FFA members, stated that the management control rule that FFA members were likely to ask SPC to test in the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the Harvest Control Rule is catch, although they noted this would be locally translated into national management control quantities for those FFA members that already use effort or other management controls on albacore fishing in their own jurisdictions. FFA would likely recommend to SPC that all fishing gears taking South Pacific albacore should be included as fisheries in the MSE, including the southern albacore troll fishery, while noting that future management action should be commensurate with the impact different gear types have on the stock. They noted FFA members' discussions were preliminary, with no decisions as of yet, and stated that as already agreed, WCPFC15 would adopt a TRP and then work would proceed in the Commission on determining catch and/or effort limits that will help us move towards the target.

182. WCPFC15 tasked the SPA-VIWG, Chaired by New Zealand, to continue work intersessionally to develop the Roadmap for Effective Conservation and Management of South Pacific Albacore.

6.2.2 Target reference point

183. The Commission considered **WCPFC15-2018-10_rev1: Potential target reference points for south Pacific albacore** (prepared by SPC). Fiji, on behalf of FFA members, introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP10: Proposal for establishing a target reference point for south Pacific albacore**, reminding members that WCPFC made a binding decision to adopt a TRP for South Pacific albacore at WCPFC15. They noted that each year FFA members gave a lengthy explanation of their TRP proposal, trying to anticipate and answer all questions, but that for every question they answer, a new question is raised, usually one that was answered the previous year. They posed the following question of other CCMs: "What do you expect will be the likely result of taking no effective management action, and what impact this will have on South Pacific SIDS?", stating that members likely know the answer, and FFA members are not prepared to let this happen. They noted their proposal was based on the best scientific advice and sought to start the Commission on the path towards effectively managing the stock in a way that would provide economic benefits to all participants. They thanked the CCMs that had engaged with them on the proposal and looked forward to the cooperation of all WCPFC members to ensure it is passed by WCPFC15.
184. China thanked FFA for the proposal, noting they had conducted bilateral discussions with FFA prior to WCPFC15. It noted that they supported the consensus at WCPFC14 to adopt a TRP, but stated FFA

was now proposing a TRP based on 45% spawning biomass in the absence of fishing, and changing the concept through a focus on CPUE, and limiting the TRP to longline fisheries that target South Pacific albacore. China stated they would pursue the issue through bilateral contacts with FFA and would seek to reach a common understanding.

185. The Pacific Islands Tuna Industry Association (PITIA), on behalf of its members in the South Pacific albacore longline fishery, express deep concern that the WCPFC continues to fail in its mandate to respond effectively to dire conditions in the WCPO South Pacific albacore fishery. They strongly encouraged WCPFC 15 to come to agreement on the harvest strategy elements they committed to under the Harvest Strategy Workplan CMM 2014-06, including establishing a TRP and developing a Harvest Control Rule for South Pacific albacore. They stated that the most recent stock assessment for South Pacific albacore supports the conclusion that the southern albacore stock is not overfished or experiencing overfishing, but the fishery is in a perilous state. Catch rates simply cannot support current costs, leaving many companies on the brink of financial failure. They stated that they are fortunate that the southern albacore stocks are biologically healthy, but the key to economic viability of a fishery is CPUE. They indicated they have observed a continually declining CPUE over several years, diminishing what was once a robust and attractive fishery to a shadow of itself, and said that the inability of the WCPFC to control a massive increase in high seas fishing effort is a sad indictment about this Commission's ability to manage the fisheries under its charge. They stated WCPFC must take heed of the management advice and implications contained in recommendations from SC10 to SC14, noting the critical importance of the fishery for the fishing industry, their communities, their people and their livelihoods and well-being. PITIA strongly urged the WCPFC 15 to make a decision to ensure the long-term commercial viability and sustainability of the southern longline fishery.
186. Chinese Taipei thanked FFA and noted confusion over the figures. It stated their understanding that a TRP is a starting point, and that when a TRP is adopted the Commission would not take immediate action to reduce effort, but stated the need to know what the impact on effort would be in the future. Chinese Taipei stated they need more time to understand a change to a CPUE-based TRP. It noted that **WCPFC15-2018-10_rev1** and **DP10** had not been reviewed by SC.
187. Cook Islands, on behalf of FFA members, stated they envisage a bright future for distant water vessels partnering with FFA members to sustainably fish for South Pacific albacore in their EEZs, and also for developing their own domestic fleets, but stated all those vessels need to be able to catch enough fish to be profitable. They noted the absence of any benefit in a fishery that makes no profit, makes a profit only two years out of five, or requires long-term government funding and subsidisation to stay afloat. They stated that the only way that fishery managers can promote profitability is to manage the stock at a level that maintains good catch rates. South Pacific albacore is assessed as a healthy stock because the stock assessment shows that the total biomass is high, which may be accurate, but the longline fishery does not fish the total biomass, but rather large adult fish, what the SPC calls the "vulnerable biomass". There are far fewer fish in the vulnerable biomass than there are in the total biomass. So, as explained in DP10, FFA members propose that the Commission agree on a TRP that will restore and maintain the vulnerable biomass of the stock at 17% above its 2013 level in order to ensure economically viable catch rates in the future. This will set the stage for future work in the Commission, including the setting of limits that will apply in EEZs and in the high seas and the agreement of harvest control rules. They encouraged engagement from other CCMs on their proposal and stated that FFA members were not willing to leave WCPFC15 without agreement on a meaningful TRP for South Pacific albacore that will provide the basis for effective management of the stock by the WCPFC and ensure the economic viability of their fisheries for this important species.
188. The United States voiced support for a TRP for South Pacific albacore that ensures the profitability of Pacific Island fishing fleets, and tentatively supported FFA's proposal. It noted they were very much

in favour of adopting a TRP, but argued that this should be done through the harvest strategies, and not through CMMs, which are for binding actions on individual members.

189. Samoa suggested there are benefits for all with the TRP, stating that if all fish were caught now, no fish will be left for the future, including for distant water fishing nations' future operations. Samoa noted that SIDS' fisheries are not subsidized, and stated the need to ensure continuity of fishing.
190. American Samoa stated that the US market for canned albacore is the largest globally, and the American Samoa canneries are one of the major sources of canned albacore. It stated that American Samoa's domestic longline fishery is almost entirely dependent on the South Pacific albacore stock, and has gone through great changes in the last ten years. In the early to mid-2000s, the fishery was profitable. In 2014, the economics of the fishery were so bad that it was better to tie up vessels in the fleet than to go fishing. Similar conditions were experienced in 2016 then, on average, every hook deployed by the fleet lost money. Several neighbouring domestic longline fleets have suffered similar economic conditions. It expressed the hope that WCPFC15 can adopt a TRP for South Pacific albacore that will lead to catch rates that restore profitability to domestic fisheries while maintaining adequate sources of albacore for processing, recognizing the importance of related impacts and vulnerabilities under Article 30 of the Convention. American Samoa looked forward to cooperating with other CCMs to address these important issues.
191. French Polynesia stated that they supported adoption of a TRP, which they see as a first step to development of a harvest strategy.
192. China observed that in 2016 the Commission adopted a TRP for skipjack based on biomass in the absence of fishing. It stated that in their view a consistent approach should be taken in setting stock TRPs, and that they were confused regarding the suggested CPUE-based TRP for South Pacific albacore.
193. Vanuatu, on behalf of FFA members, stated that South Pacific albacore is the foundation of domestic longline fishery operations in many FFA member countries and many SIDS are taking steps to improve the management of the fishery within their own waters including through MSC certification. A target reference point for South Pacific albacore is a key first step in the development of harvest control rules, and without progress in this area MSC certification will lapse. This is yet another reason why the Commission needs to follow through on its management commitments this year and agree to the FFA's TRP proposal.
194. Tonga stated that like other FFA member countries, South Pacific albacore is very important to Tonga. It noted that fish is their primary resource. It reflected on the development of Tonga's fishing industry and contrasted the current risk of overfishing the Southern albacore stock. It highlighted the high seas IUU fishing adjacent to their waters, and the impacts of climate change, and stressed the importance for sustainable management of these fisheries. It supported the proposal by FFA member countries, which they stated represents the best way to manage this resource, and stressed the importance of having a TRP approved by WCPFC15, which was being requested by 16 WCPFC members. Tonga sought the support of all member countries attending the meeting to ensure that the South Pacific albacore resource is managed sustainably.
195. EU stated that they are not directly involved in the fishery and could support the principle of a TRP that is based, in part, on economic factors. It expressed doubts about basing it solely on CPUE, but voiced support for the effort in principle. EU noted that SIDS were asking others to reduce their level of fishing effort to enable the fishing effort of SIDS. It acknowledged that some States are more

vulnerable but there is also a socioeconomic impact on those who must reduce their effort. In the UN FSA, countries involved must cooperate. EU invited all those involved in the fishery to make a sacrifice.

196. New Caledonia stated that they are very dependent on South Pacific albacore, which accounts for 65% of their catch. It stated they have good catch rates in their EEZ, but that their fleet is suffering from the huge fishing effort in the high seas pockets around their EEZ. New Caledonia supported making progress on the issue.
197. Tuvalu supported other FFA members, noting that a CPUE-based approach has been proposed because this is what determines profit; it also noted that spawning biomass estimates are not as robust for this species as for other species. Tuvalu stated that the discussion was limited to a TRP, and that a later process would address catch levels.
198. Niue supported comments from FFA members and encouraged members to consider WCPFC15-2018-10_rev1, and consult with SPC.
199. Following further consultation, the SWG Chair (Fiji) thanked all CCMs for agreeing on a TRP number, which would be an interim TRP. The SWG Chair acknowledged that FFA members had to give up a lot, but did so in the interest of moving forward and agreeing on a TRP. He stated this had been discussed for many years, and thanked the FFA Secretariat, SPC, and all delegations for their understanding and cooperation.
200. China stated that the 56% TRP for South Pacific albacore was a proposal from FFA, and in consideration to the wishes of FFA and the difficulty that the Chinese tuna industry has to face in the future, if there was consensus amongst other Members to adopt the proposed TRP, China would not block adoption of the TRP.
201. Japan thanked the SWG Chair and supported the proposed language. It stated that Japan catches a very small amount of South Pacific albacore but that they were active in the discussions because they understand the economic difficulties fishermen face. It noted that WCPFC16 would look at skipjack, and that Japanese fishermen are facing economic problems because of changed migration patterns of skipjack. Japan hoped these considerations could be extended to the discussion to be held in 2019.
202. Samoa, on behalf of FFA, felt very encouraged after the discussions with China and Japan. FFA and ministerial colleagues appreciated the support and concessions and thanked the EU and the United States for their support. They noted that at the ongoing climate change negotiations in Poland (COP 24), their Prime Minister spoke about the ocean and the need to preserve our resources, now and for the future, and stated that the obligations made today would go a long way to conserving our resources for the future. They thanked delegates, the WCPFC Secretariat, and the SWG Chair.
203. Chinese Taipei thanked CCMs and noted that South Pacific albacore is a very important resource to the Chinese Taipei delegation. It stated that they understood the importance of this step and said all CCMs must share the burden, which would require sacrifice on their part. Chinese Taipei joined China in not blocking the adoption of the TRP, noting that there was consensus amongst other Members to adopt the TRP.
204. The Cook Islands thanked everyone for their hard work and stated that the stock could now be managed for the benefit of everyone, which sends a positive signal to the industry and to Pacific peoples.

205. EU stated that they were happy to see this result. It noted there was a mention that there may be a need for stronger cooperation between the WCPFC and IATTC in relation to managing or working together for global assessment of South Pacific albacore in the EPO and WCPO.

206. The Chair reflected that the outcome reflected what was possible when all members cooperate, even if they all do not agree. She noted that the TRP for South Pacific albacore would be recorded in the harvest strategy section of the Commission webpage, not as a CMM.

207. WCPFC15 agreed on an interim target reference point (TRP) for south Pacific albacore at 56 percent of spawning stock biomass in the absence of fishing ($0.56 \text{ SBF}=0$)¹ with the objective of achieving an 8 percent increase in catch per unit of effort (CPUE) for the southern longline fishery as compared to 2013 levels.² If a future stock assessment indicates that this interim TRP will not result in the desired longline CPUE, then the interim TRP will be revised in order to meet this objective. The TRP shall be reviewed every 3 years, consistent with the SP albacore assessment schedule.

208. The Commission shall amend or develop appropriate conservation and management measures to implement a harvest control rule, developed in accordance with CMM 2014-06, with the objective of maintaining the south Pacific albacore spawning stock biomass at the target level on average and according to the timeframes specified in paragraph 209.

209. In order to manage the required reduction in catches, the timeline for achieving the interim target reference point shall be no later than 20 years. The Science Service Provider is tasked with identifying a range of alternative catch pathways and timeframes that achieve this, for consideration in 2019.

210. In undertaking the assessment identified in paragraph 209 information from all fisheries will be included while noting that any management measures must take account of the impact of different gear types.

211. The Scientific Committee shall refer to the target reference point in its assessment of the status of the WCPO South Pacific albacore tuna stock and in reporting to the Commission on management advice and implications for this stock.

212. Considering that the distribution of the South Pacific albacore stock goes beyond the WCPFC Convention area and the management of this stock is responsibility of both WCPFC and IATTC, WCPFC15 requested the Scientific Services Provider to coordinate with the IATTC scientific staff with the view to consider including the entire South Pacific in future assessments.

6.2.3 Harvest control rules

213. The Chair noted that the issue would be addressed through the future development of the workplan for the Roadmap for Effective Conservation and Management of South Pacific Albacore (Agenda Item 6.2.1).

¹ The method to be used in estimating the recent average spawning biomass in the absence of fishing shall be the same as that adopted by the Commission for the limit reference point, as described in paragraph 3 of CMM 2015-06.

² The proxy for CPUE will be the southern longline vulnerable biomass as estimated within the stock assessment.

6.2.4 Management strategy evaluation

214. The Chair noted that the issue would be addressed through the future development of the workplan for the Roadmap for Effective Conservation and Management of South Pacific Albacore (Agenda Item 6.2.1).

6.2.5 Review of CMM 2015-02 (SP albacore)

215. Two papers were prepared relevant to this agenda item: **WCPFC15-2018-IP03: Summary of CCM reporting under south Pacific albacore CMMs** (Secretariat and SPC), and **WCPFC15-2018-IP04_rev1: An assessment of the number of vessels fishing for south Pacific albacore south of 20°S** (SPC). There was no discussion under this agenda item.

6.3 Bigeye, Skipjack and Yellowfin

216. SPC introduced **WCPFC15-2018-12_rev2: Evaluation of CMM 2017-01 for bigeye tuna, with additional evaluations for skipjack and yellowfin tuna**. The 2018 Harvest Strategy work plan, as updated by WCPFC14, requested that “SC and SPC provide advice to the Commission on the likely outcomes of the revised tropical tuna measure” (CMM 2017-01) against its aim for bigeye that “the spawning biomass depletion ratio ($SB/SB_{F=0}$) be maintained at or above the average $SB/SB_{F=0}$ for 2012-2015”. SPC used the same detailed evaluation approach as used within previous tropical tuna CMM evaluations. Assumptions are made regarding the impact that changes to the FAD closure period and/or high seas effort limits will have on FAD-related effort, and the potential future catches of longline fleets. Under these assumptions, three scenarios of future purse seine effort and longline catch are defined: (i) ‘status quo’ (2013–2015 average fishing levels); (ii) ‘optimistic’ (e.g. CCMs with longline limits take their 2017 catch limit or 2013–2015 average level if lower); and (iii) ‘pessimistic’ (every CCM fishes the maximum allowed under the Measure).
217. Stochastic bigeye stock projections were used to evaluate potential long-term consequences of resulting future fishing levels under each scenario, in comparison to status quo conditions (2013–2015 average), across the 2017 bigeye assessment grid incorporating updated growth information, weighted as defined by SC13 for management advice. SPC noted that the results were strongly influenced by the assumed future recruitment levels. If recent positive recruitments continue into the future, all scenarios examined achieve the aims of the CMM, in that median spawning biomass is projected to increase relative to recent levels, and median fishing mortality is projected to decline (exception being the pessimistic CMM scenario, although fishing mortality remains below F_{MSY}). If less optimistic longer-term recruitments continue into the future, spawning biomass depletion worsens relative to recent levels under all scenarios, and the future risk of spawning biomass falling below the limit reference point (LRP) increases to 24%–40%, dependent on the scenario. In turn, all three future fishing scenarios imply notable increases in fishing mortality under those recruitment conditions, to median levels well above F_{MSY} .
218. The analysis for skipjack and yellowfin was consistent with that for bigeye and made the following assumptions: overall purse seine effort is constant at the 2013–2015 average level; yellowfin longline catch is consistent with that assumed for bigeye, and skipjack longline catch is negligible. Long term recruitment is assumed. For skipjack, all scenarios result in $SB/SB_{F=0}$ of .47, with 0% chance of being below the TRP. For yellowfin $SB/SB_{F=0}$ is .33 for the 2013–2015 average and optimistic scenarios (with a 7% risk of breaching the LRP); $SB/SB_{F=0}$ is .30 for the pessimistic scenario, with a 16% risk of breaching the LRP. With respect to whether the CMM will achieve its objective skipjack: reasonably ($SB/SB_{F=0} \sim 0.47$), while yellowfin is marginal, given risk, and notably not under the pessimistic scenario (8% reduction in $SB/SB_{F=0}$ from recent levels, 16% risk of breaching the LRP).

219. In response to a query from Korea, SPC clarified that 2012-2015 was used in calculating $SB/SB_{f=0}$, while comparisons were based on the 2013-2015 period.

220. Solomon Islands, on behalf of the PNA, thanked SPC for the excellent work and for including skipjack and yellowfin in **WCPFC15-2018-12_rev 2**. They stated that given the latest stock assessments, there was no longer a need to focus solely on bigeye and so having information available on all three species is vital, and the main messages that PNA take from the projections are:

- For bigeye, the measure is likely to achieve its objectives of stable spawning biomass, but there is certainly no room for increases in bigeye catch or effort.
- For yellowfin, the results are far less positive, and spawning biomass is likely to fall below recent levels in the long term. Of even greater concern is the introduction of reasonably high levels of risk that the stock will actually fall below the limit reference point.
- For skipjack, the projections show that spawning biomass in 2045 will likely be marginally less than the target reference point.

Solomon Islands surmised that the yellowfin and skipjack messages are concerning to PNA as these are the mainstays of PNA economies. They noted PNA countries would need time to explore the full implications, including the new skipjack assessment in 2019, but that at present the projections in combination provided irrefutable support for the FFA position in WCPFC15-2018-DP08 that any weakening of CMM 2017-01 would be inconsistent with the objectives of that measure and the precautionary approach.

221. Indonesia referenced the tables in Appendix 1 of **WCPFC15-2018-12_rev 2**, that relate to the estimation of the optimistic and pessimistic scenarios and inquired how decisions were made regarding these scenarios. It noted that Indonesia was making these comments in light of their views on bigeye tuna longline catch limits, as set forth in **WCPFC15-2018-DP29: Indonesia's bigeye tuna catch limits in longline fisheries**.

222. The EU stated their understanding that the pessimistic scenario assumed that bigeye catch was maintained at a high level although biomass is decreasing, resulting in a very high level of effort, and questioned whether this was realistic. In response, SPC confirmed that the assumption that catch levels were maintained in the future (over the long term) was likely to result in overly high fishing mortality estimates. The EU also noted it would be desirable to present in the tables the outcome of projections over shorter time periods, as was done at SC. Regarding management objectives and follow-up on recommendations of SC, the EU stated that in CMM 2017-01 the management objectives in the CMM were based on SC13 advice, which was precautionary because of uncertainty regarding the growth curve. SC14 adopted the growth curve, but advice from SC14 remains the same as it was in 2017 from SC13. EU indicated they would like a rationale for that advice from SC, and would like advice to be more explicit.

223. Japan inquired regarding skipjack, and the future projection for 2045, which projects $SB_{2045}/SB_{f=0}$ will be 47%, or close to 50%. It noted that if the goal is to maintain the ratio at 50%, this result is close, but inquired what the threshold would be at which it could be considered that the spawning biomass was being maintained "at around 50%". Japan noted that depending on the specifics, the Commission would likely want to recommend some deviation centred around 50% and asked how great that would be. SPC agreed there was a need to develop a definition of what "around an average" means (how close over time?). Japan stated this would have to be discussed under the harvest strategy.

224. Indonesia inquired whether TRP or LRP was the most important for determining the health of the bigeye stock. SPC noted this would be addressed in the discussion on TRPs.

6.3.1 Review of CMM 2017-01 (bigeye, skipjack, yellowfin)

225. The Chair noted that a number of reference documents were prepared for WCPFC15, including **WCPFC15-2018-11**: *Reference document for the review of CMM 2017-01 and development of harvest strategies under CMM 2014-06 (bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna)*; **WCPFC15-2018-IP05**: *Summary of the reports received under tropical tuna CMMs - from 2017 to 2018* (update of TCC14-IP07); **WCPFC15-2018-IP06**: *Catch and effort tables on tropical tuna CMMs - prepared by SPC-OFI* (update of TCC14-IP08); and **WCPFC15-2018-IP11**: *Summary of Notifications to WCPFC of Charter, Lease or other mechanisms*. The Report of the FAD Management Options Intersessional Working Group (**WCPFC15-2018-FADMO-IWG**) and the various delegation proposals were noted to be relevant to the discussions and were considered by the tropical tuna CMM SWG. She noted that CMM 2017-01 had five provisions that were expiring in 2018. One, relating to the Cook Islands did not need to be considered for extension. The others were considered under this agenda item.

6.3.1.a Para 19 of CMM 2017-01

226. The EU introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP01**: *Proposal for amending CMM 2017-01 for the use of non-entangling fads in WCPFC fisheries*, which proposes amendments to 2017-01 specifying that FADs to be deployed in the Convention Area be built using non-entangling materials, with a view to decreasing entanglement of sharks, sea turtles and other species. It also directs SC and TCC to work to develop biodegradable FAD designs by 2020. In response to a query from Korea regarding the impacts on catch of target species through the use of non-entangling FADs, the EU stated that their fleet was already using the designs in other fisheries, and their research revealed there was no impact.

227. Following discussion in the margins of WCPFC15, the EU reviewed proposed changes to their proposal. During the ensuing discussion France underlined the importance of adapting the best available standards for FADs, the need for WCPFC to contribute to the Kobe Process joint working group on FADs, and congratulated SPC for its work in monitoring drifting FADs in the Pacific. FSM stated that the PNA were moving to adopt a requirement for fully non-entangling FADs that will apply in all PNA EEZs in the future.

228. Members discussed the desirability and difficulties of applying the measure to drifting FADs, and the Chair noted that the measure applied only to WCPFC CCMs. Some CCMs highlighted the importance of addressing drifting FADs, and of ensuring fleets operating within the WCPFC Convention Area complied with the standards set by the Commission, while the United States raised the potential compliance difficulties faced by its vessels fishing in both the WCPFC Convention Area and the adjacent IATTC waters.

229. Following further consultation, the United States observed that the language as proposed was sufficiently similar to that used by the IATTC to enable its vessels to comply with the requirements of both RFMOs, and supported the measure on that basis, while noting that if changes were made by IATTC to its FAD standards they would want to revisit this section of the measure to ensure continued compatibility.

230. The Commission agreed to language for paras. 19–22 of CMM 2018-01.

6.3.1.b Para. 28 allocation process

231. The Chair referred to the text of para. 28 of CMM 2017-01: *“The limits set out in Attachment 1, Table 2 do not confer the allocation of rights to any CCM and are without prejudice to future decisions*

of the Commission. By 2019 the Commission shall agree on hard effort or catch limits in the high seas of the Convention Area and a framework for the allocation of those limits in the high seas amongst all Members and Participating Territories that adequately take into account Articles 8, 10 (3) and 30 of the Convention. The Commission shall also consider options as to how CCMs would use their limits”, and noted the need to determine a process for allocations to take place, and enable considerations at WCPFC16. She asked members for proposals including on how the Commission could start discussions in early 2019.

232. Korea stated that the high seas fish effort needed to be adjusted in accordance with Convention Article 8 (Compatibility of Conservation and Management Measures). It noted the need for sufficient time for discussions, and stated that the limits set forth in CMM 2017-01 Attachment 1, Table 2 do not confer any rights to CCMs, and that there was therefore a need to start our discussions without any assumptions. Korea suggested the need for a special session to address allocations in early 2019.
233. Solomon Islands, on behalf of FFA members, stated that workshops should be undertaken to determine high seas allocations, and referenced the discussion in **WCPFC15-2018-DP09: Views on Paragraphs 28 and 44 of CMM 2017-01**. They emphasized the need for preliminary discussions in advance of WCPFC16.
234. Kiribati noted they would participate in any work referred under para 28.
235. The EU stated that discussion on allocation needed a comprehensive approach, and that conversations regarding the high seas needed to also address allocation in EEZs. They noted both needed to be taken into account, and such an approach was in the spirit of cooperation and followed provisions of UNCLOS and the UN FSA; to address the high seas without considering the EEZs would be discriminatory.
236. Niue noted that WCPFC15 had made important progress in addressing conservation and management of the fisheries. It noted that implementation of para. 28 must build a framework for the need to adequately take into account artisanal fisheries, and stated that WCPFC needed to set aside sufficient time for needed discussions.
237. The Chair stated that Korea suggested a workshop be held in early 2019, and that a discussion on funding had not been held by FAC, and might not be possible given the schedule. The workshop duration would need to be 1–2 days. She noted that the wording in para. 28 and work agreed to be done in 2019 was specific. If a standalone meeting was to be held in 2019, funding (possibly external) would be needed. She observed that in the past requests had been made to the Executive Director to explore options, but the meeting would in that case be contingent on securing funding. She agreed it was hard to think about planning another meeting, but stated that if work did not begin before WCPFC16, there would be a delay in meeting the timeframes in para 28 of CMM 2017-01. The Chair suggested that WCPFC15 agree that the Commission hold a two-day meeting in early 2019, pending availability of funds, and the Executive Director is tasked to explore funding options and communicate with members intersessionally.
238. Japan stated that they could support the proposed meeting schedule and having it dependent on the availability of funds, but noted the need to determine the TORs, and observed the need to address the comment from the EU. Japan agreed with the need for the Commission to discuss para. 28, but stated there had to be a clear mandate in writing.
239. The Chair agreed that clear directions would be needed and stated she would work with the Executive Director to develop brief TORs, taking into account the comments raised. The WCPFC Vice-

Chair subsequently presented draft TORs for a workshop for the framework for allocation for review, noting the objectives were drawn from para. 28 of CMM 2017-01. The Chair invited comments noting the proposal was to have a 2-day stand-alone workshop, dependent on availability of funds.

240. Japan noted that IOTC and IATTC were addressing allocation, but that their approaches were similar to Article 10 of the Convention and did not have a true allocation framework. The EU noted that their previous intervention on this point and stated that they could not address high seas without looking at the situation in the EEZs. The EU noted there was an obligation to cooperate between EEZs and the high seas, and this should be reflected in the tasks or background. Japan responded that they were unsure they understood.
241. Tuvalu expressed a preference to retain wording that focussed on holding a workshop on high seas allocation. RMI agreed with Tuvalu regarding the workshop focus and saw no need to consider processes of other tuna RFMOs. It stated that the workshop would not have a real outcome they could foresee, noting that limits are already in place, and that some members were seeking to reinvent the situation.
242. During the ensuing discussion, members reiterated their positions, with some advocating for consideration of stocks throughout their range, and others seeking to limit the focus to setting high seas catch and effort limits. Japan indicated that it would be conducting bilateral discussions with the PNA and FFA members in 2019, and with the EU and the United States. Japan expressed their willingness to visit any members in the Pacific to have discussions, but not to hold a workshop. It encouraged other members to undertake such direct consultations, which they felt would facilitate the discussions. Indonesia stated their view that it was mandatory to have a workshop, noting that a discussion of the allocation framework would accommodate all these issues raised, including the relationship between high seas and EEZ allocations.
243. The Chair stated that in the absence of an agreement on the task a workshop was unlikely to be productive, and suggested members consider updating para. 28 of the measure with a new target date of 2020. Korea and RMI expressed support for this suggestion and there were no views to the contrary.

6.3.1.c FAD definition

244. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP03: Proposal for a definition of fish aggregating device**, noting that the existing definition of FAD was overly broad, as it includes natural objects of any size, and spoke of the need to adopt a definition of FAD that can be used in all of the Commission's work. It noted that FAD management options IWG had been working on FAD designs and materials, and in its third meeting proposed minimum guidelines for FADs. The United States proposed to modify the definition of FAD so as to focus on FADs of interest from the standpoint of management and noted the benefits of better aligning the WCPFC definition of FADs with the IATTC definition. The United States noted that Korea had a very similar proposal, and suggested it be discussed in the tropical tuna CMM SWG. The EU noted that the proposed definition mentioned only "objects deployed and/or tracked by vessels, for purse-seine fishing operations" and noted that FADs are also used with other fishing gear.
245. Korea introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP17: Proposed changes to conservation and management measure 2009-02 on the application of high seas FAD closures and catch retention**, noting their proposal was similar to that of the United States. Korea noted it had been almost 10 years since the current definition of FAD was adopted by the WCPFC, that improvements had been made in CMMs over this period, and that the current definition was overly broad.

246. Following further consideration of the two proposals by members in a SWG, Korea produced new proposed text in consultation with CCMs for inclusion in the FAD closure definition, which comprised a list of materials that should not be considered as FADs in the context of the FAD closure measure.
247. RMI thanked Korea for the proposed language, agreed in principle on the need to examine the issue, and suggested this be looked at in 2019. It noted there were some merits to the proposed list, but that some elements might require further assessment. RMI stated they were prepared to work with Korea and other members, and possibly examine the definition of FADs in 2019, including in the context of PNA FAD tracking.
248. The United States reminded members that two proposals had been submitted on the issue, and stated they had been involved with Korea in the discussions and would like to see progress at WCPFC15.
249. Japan thanked Korea for their efforts and expressed support for improving the definition of FADs, but raised the need to look at possible negative effects of changing the definition, and specifically about the potential impact of excluding logs; they suggested the need to look at the entire CMM with respect to the FAD definition, which could have a negative effect on tuna stocks. New Zealand and Cook Islands supported the views expressed by RMI and Japan. Tuvalu also expressed concern regarding log sets and the impact on bigeye stocks. Tuvalu agreed the issue of vessels setting on FADs when they assume they were setting on a free school should be addressed, but stated they were not yet prepared to develop a new definition. Their position was supported by FSM.
250. Following further consultations in the margins, Nauru, on behalf of the PNA, provided new language for consideration: *“In applying the provisions of paragraphs 16 and 17, any set where small amounts of plastic or small garbage that do not have a tracking buoy attached are detected shall not be considered to be a FAD set for the purposes of the FAD closure. This shall apply in 2019 only and will be reviewed to determine whether it resulted in increased catch of bigeye and small yellowfin tuna.”*
251. The WTPO reinforced their position statements made at WCPFC13 and WCPFC14, which called on the Commission to consider and adopt a more specific and enforceable FAD definition measure. The WTPO proposed defining FAD to mean “anchored, drifting, floating or submerged objects deployed and/or tracked by vessels, including through the use of radio and/or satellite buoys, for the purpose of aggregating target tuna species for purse-seine fishing operations.” It noted that using such a definition could help alleviate legal issues and penalties currently faced by vessels for making what they perceive to be unassociated sets.
252. The United States thanked Korea, the PNA and others who contributed to the compromise. They noted that, as expressed by other CCMs, at times their vessel captains have trouble with FAD requirements, because they inadvertently establish a set around small natural objects they might not be able to see. It noted the proposal was a one-year measure and hoped that the items Korea listed in its proposal could be considered further in 2019.
253. Japan thanked all CCMs involved and noted for the record that chopsticks were included in the definition of “*small garbage*”.
254. New Zealand stated their reservations about changing the definition, while recognizing the compliance issues raised by other CCMs, and appreciated the efforts to develop a compromise solution. It inquired how it could be determined if the revised definition would result in increased catch. In response to a suggestion from Indonesia to broaden the applicability to all tropical tunas, from bigeye and yellowfin, they noted that FAD closures are technical measures intended to address the catch of small bigeye and yellowfin, and preferred retaining that focus. RMI stated that the issue of assessing

changes in catch was not considered by the SWG. SPC noted that observers could potentially provide data to assess catch changes, but that it would require a change to logbook instructions, and specific instructions.

6.3.1.d Expiry of paras. 16, 17, 29, 39 and 56 of CMM 2017-01

255. Members held a discussion regarding expiry of paras. 16, 17, 29, 39 and 56 of CMM 2017-01. The United States thanked the Commission for considering the needs of American Samoa, as addressed by para. 29 of CMM 2017-01. It noted that the territory faces a number of unique challenges and has aspirational and developmental goals but was unable to take advantage of the measures put in place to protect SIDS. The United States noted that one cannery was closed, and another closed temporarily, and that the United States had closed the high seas to its boats on multiple occasions. It noted their strong support for transparent universal measures, stating they would favour a 4-month FAD closure, if other CCMs would agree on this as a potential compromise.
256. Tokelau noted the proposal for a 4-month FAD closure as an alternative to para. 17 of CMM 2017-01 was being made very late, had been examined at WCPFC14, and did not have their support. Cook Islands supported the position expressed by Tokelau. The United States noted the lack of consensus on a core compromise and stated that they remained concerned that para. 17 has a low conservation value, but stated they would allow it to continue for the 2-year duration of the measure.
257. Korea thanked CCMs for their efforts on the issue. It noted that some work remained to refine the definition of FADs, and welcomed the opportunity to work further with CCMs and PNA CCMs in 2019, in conjunction with work on the FAD tracking system. Kiribati thanked the United States and Korea for their efforts to develop a compromise.

258. The Commission agreed to adopt CMM 2018-01 Conservation and Management Measure for Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (**Attachment G**)

6.3.1.e FAD management options-IWG report

259. The Commission adopted the report of the FAD Management Options Intersessional Working Group (**WCPFC15-2018-FADMO-IWG**).

6.3.2 Target reference point (bigeye and yellowfin)

260. J. Hampton (SPC) introduced **WCPFC15-2018-13_rev1: Minimum TRPs for WCPO yellowfin and bigeye tuna consistent with alternative LRP risk levels**. He noted that SC14 reviewed information on what would be the minimum setting for a candidate spawning-biomass depletion-based TRP for yellowfin tuna that avoids breaching the agreed LRP with a specified level of probability under the current uncertainty framework (SC14-MI-WP-01). While SC14 noted that the main biological consideration for a TRP is that it should be sufficiently above the LRP, SC14 also noted that the choice of a TRP can be based on a combination of biological, ecological and socio-economic considerations. SC14 recommended that the analyses be repeated for bigeye tuna taking account of the updated 2018 bigeye stock assessment, and with both 'recent' and 'long term' recruitment assumptions. The additional bigeye analyses are contained within **WCPFC15-2018-13_rev1**, which updates SC14-MI-WP-01. SPC computed median levels of spawning biomass depletion ($SB/SB_{F=0}$) that are consistent with specified risk levels of breaching the limit reference point (LRP) of $0.2SB_{F=0}$. The analysis used:

- the structural uncertainty grid of models used by SC13 for advice from the 2017 yellowfin tuna assessment, and
- the structural uncertainty grid containing only ‘updated new growth’ models used by SC14 as the basis for advice from the 2018 update bigeye tuna assessment, under both the ‘recent’ and ‘long term’ assumptions for future bigeye recruitment, to generate 30-year projections that included stochastic variability in future recruitment under a variety of fishing levels scaled to the 2013–2015 averages.

261. The main results are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Median levels of $SB_{2045}/SB_{F=0}$ for the four nominated levels of risk of breaching the LRP.

Risk level	Yellowfin tuna	Bigeye tuna	
		‘Recent’ recruitment	‘Long-term’ recruitment
5%	0.36	0.33	0.38
10%	0.34	0.30	0.34
15%	0.31	0.29	0.32
20%	0.29	0.28	0.29

262. These are values of $SB/SB_{F=0}$ that, if achieved on average, are predicted to result in the specified levels of risk of breaching the LRP, and thus may be interpreted as minimum levels of $SB/SB_{F=0}$ consistent with those risk levels, under the current uncertainty framework. SC14 recommended that WCPFC15 take note of these results in consideration of management objectives upon which any candidate TRPs for yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna should be based, and in so doing clarify the management objectives for these species (including the selection of risk levels) so that additional work identified by SC14 can be undertaken.

263. Japan agreed that TRPs should be based not just on both biological and socioeconomic factors. It noted that a paper prepared for SC14 that addressed economic projections suggested the economic index of the longline fishery was declining but would increase for the purse seine fishery. Japan noted this needed to be considered when seeking to balance different gear types.

264. In response to a query from Indonesia, SPC stated that the 2018 bigeye stock assessment update showed a long-term increase in the spawning biomass ratio, but that that this did not really influence the current work. They noted the numbers represented minimum targets, and constituted a buffer from the LRP, with specified levels of risk. There are many other issues to consider, including economic aspects and ecological effects, and various parties may have differing views on what is important. SPC noted that rationalizing these issues is a focus of the harvest strategy work now underway.

265. Tonga, on behalf of FFA members, introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP08: Views of tropical tuna CMM**, setting out their broad management objectives for bigeye and yellowfin under the tropical tuna measure, and to be taken into account in considering TRPs for the stocks. The objectives are (i) to maintain the stocks above levels where there is a very low risk of breaching the LRP consistent with the guidelines in the UN FSA; and (ii) achieve modest increases to $SB/SB_{F=0}$ compared to recent levels in order to support ongoing economic management of the purse seine fishery and facilitate development opportunities for SIDS longline fisheries. They noted the Commission was beginning a discussion that

should result in a decision on TRPs in 2019. They noted their preferred objectives for the TRP-setting process and continuation of the current measure through 2019. They noted their objection to weakening of the measure.

266. New Zealand supported the statement by Tonga regarding FFA members' objectives.

267. The EU broadly agreed with observations made by SPC and SC, noting that if stocks remained within biological limits, TRPs could be adjusted based on other criteria. It questioned whether the TRP reflected the resilience of each stock, stating their understanding that the 20% LRP originated with work on demersal species that are far less resilient than tuna stocks, and suggested LRPs should be developed that are specific to the tuna stocks being managed. It observed that development of TRPs for multi-gear fisheries could not be based on a species-specific approach. EU suggested testing the TRP adopted for skipjack and applying lessons to other species. SPC stated that Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) found 20% was an appropriate LRP for productive stocks; less productive stocks would have LRPs of 30%–40%, but most species were fairly resilient. SPC noted the difficulty in discriminating in terms of resilience across species that are fairly closely related from an evolutionary standpoint. SPC indicated the Commission had taken heed of the precautionary approach in choosing an LRP 20%, and that much thought had been given to this.

268. FSM, on behalf of the PNA, supported the FFA position in WCPFC15-2018-DP08 as outlined by Tonga, stating that the proposed objectives for bigeye and yellowfin are relatively consistent with the objectives of CMM 2017-01 but also seek to ensure biological safety through reference to the LRP and to allow for consideration of increases to $SB/SB_{F=0}$ levels. They noted that these proposals were put forward as a starting point for discussions, but that much work was needed before these could be converted into candidate TRPs, including defining what "very low risk" and "modest increases" mean for short or medium-term management measures. They looked forward to hearing from other CCMs on their objectives for these stocks, and for the fisheries they support.

269. Japan stated, with respect to bigeye and the review of CMM 2017-01, that following adoption of CMM 2008-01, Japan has implemented all tuna measures faithfully, scrapped many vessels, and seen a large decline in catch, with a large reduction in purse seine sets. Japan noted that despite these efforts the situation with respect to bigeye was worsening in waters around Japan, with serious impacts on Japanese fishermen, including their catches and cultural activities centred around tuna species. Japan stated that they opposed any weakening of tropical tuna CMMs at WCPFC15.

270. Pew, on behalf of Pew, WWF, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, IPNLF, ISSF, and EDF, urged the Commission not to weaken the overall impact of management measures in the tropical tuna bridging measure. They observed that WCPFC members have agreed to apply the precautionary approach and stated that the Commission should not agree to a measure that does not meet the scientific advice to maintain bigeye and yellowfin fishing mortality. They noted the somewhat improved bigeye tuna stock status and stated the challenge for the Commission is to maintain this status. Given the high levels of uncertainty with respect to the long-term scenarios for the stock under the current management arrangements, they urged the Commission not to increase fishing mortality, but instead to use this opportunity to carefully consider developing management objectives for the stocks and accelerate development of a long-term harvest strategy for bigeye and yellowfin. They also noted the agenda items with respect to FADs, and urged the Commission to also follow the scientific advice to improve the sustainability of the FAD fishery by adopting science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets, and adopting a binding requirement to use FAD designs that minimize or prevent the risk of entanglement, with a clear timeframe to transition to the use of biodegradable materials as soon as possible.

271. The Chair stated that review of the measure would continue in a SWG. She referenced **WCPFC15-2018-DP29: Indonesia's bigeye tuna catch limits in longline fisheries**, which reflects Indonesia's views. She noted the Commission had not yet conducted a thorough review of WCPFC fisheries and management objectives.

272. The outcome of discussions on the tropical tuna measure are under Agenda Item 6.3.1 (see above).

6.3.3 Harvest control rules (skipjack)

273. There was no discussion under this agenda item.

6.4 Pacific bluefin tuna

6.4.1 Review of CMM 2017-08

274. The following reference documents were prepared on this agenda item: **WCPFC15-2018-16: Reference document for review of CMM 2017-08 and for the development of harvest strategies under CMM 2014-06 (Pacific bluefin tuna)**, and **WCPFC15-2018-IP07: Compiled information on Pacific bluefin tuna fishing effort and catch (TCC14-2018-IP12_rev1)**.

275. Japan introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP25: Proposal for amending Conservation and Management Measure for Pacific bluefin tuna (CMM2017-08)**, which was previously submitted to NC14. It noted a lack of consensus among CCMs at NC14 regarding an increase in catch limits. It stated that the NC/IATTC joint working group produced some items for future action, and that at the special session of NC held in the margins of the meeting, reached consensus on a change to the existing CMM (reflected in DP25) that carries forward the catch limit, and provides some flexibility regarding catch limits. The same measure was adopted by IATTC earlier in 2018.

276. New Zealand, on behalf of FFA members, thanked the NC Chair, and stated they had no objections to the proposal. The EU noted the presentation on the stock status indicated the condition was poor, and felt the flexibility was not proportional to the stock status. The NC Chair stated that if CCMs could not accept the current draft, it must be returned to NC for its consideration, and that the issues raised would be further considered in 2019.

277. The Commission agreed to adopt CMM 2018-02 Conservation and Management Measure for Pacific Bluefin tuna, which will replace CMM 2017-08 (**Attachment H**).

6.5 North Pacific albacore

6.5.1 Review of CMM-2005-03

278. The Chair noted two relevant documents — **WCPFC15-2018-17: Reference document for review of CMM 2005-03 and development of harvest strategies under CMM 2014-06 (North Pacific albacore)** and **WCPFC15-2018-IP08: Updated information on North Pacific albacore effort data (TCC14-2018-IP11)** — and the stock assessment update provided under Agenda Item 6.1.

6.6 North Pacific striped marlin

279. The WCPFC Secretariat prepared **WCPFC15-2018-18: Reference document for the scientific information and development of harvest strategies for North Pacific striped marlin (*Kajikia audax*)** for consideration by the Commission.

6.6.1 Designation as a Northern stock and rebuilding plan

280. The Chair noted that the issue of designation of North Pacific striped marlin and formulation of a rebuilding plan had been before the Commission for several years. WCPFC14 tasked SC14 to provide advice, which it did in the form of proposed criteria that could be used to determine whether this could be designated as a northern stock. A recommendation was made previously for the Commission to adopt a rebuilding plan for the stock, but that has not occurred.

281. The United States confirmed that the issue was a longstanding one but stated that SC14 had provided the needed information. It stated that they did not believe the language in the Convention is vague, but agreed that it could be helpful to formalize the process for designating a “northern stock”. The NC’s purview is stocks that occur mostly north of 20°N, and the United States stated the criteria should be based on where the majority (or greater than 50%) of the stock occurs. The first criteria suggested by SC14 to consider is the proportion of total biomass of the stock occurring north of 20°N; if information is available to suggest that the total biomass of the stock occurring north of 20°N is greater than 50%, then the United States believes that the stock should be designated as a northern stock. For North Pacific striped marlin, the information provided by SC indicates that the proportion of the biomass north of 20°N was estimated to be 2–4 times larger than the proportion of biomass south 20°N; consequently, it should be designated as a northern stock for process reasons. The United States noted its continuing concern about North Pacific striped marlin and looked forward to a new stock assessment from ISC in 2019, and stated they intended to introduce a rebuilding plan for North Pacific striped marlin in 2019. The United States stated the stock would benefit from the designation, because NC could then begin a discussion on rebuilding and bring a sound recommendation for the Commission to consider.

282. The EU stated that the table provided by SC14 was a useful tool for making such an assessment, but stated there was a need to list the CCMs involved in harvesting the species (directly or indirectly), as not all are members of the NC. The EU inquired whether any subsidiary bodies had taken action for the species, noting the recurring recommendations from the NC, and the continuing circular discussion at Commission meetings. It observed the stock is heavily overfished, and recommended that the Commission recommend that ISC conduct projections, and that based on that advice and recommendations from SC15, WCPFC16 should adopt a recovery plan.

283. RMI, on behalf of FFA members, noted the long-standing debate over whether or not certain stocks, including North Pacific striped marlin, should be designated as northern stocks. They stated that clear criteria for making this determination are still absent, and that while the debate has continued, important stocks are not being managed. They stated the problem was exacerbated by SC not being given the opportunity to properly review the science for the stocks, as assessments are conducted by ISC with no real opportunity for proper review by WCPFC. They stated that the lack of agreement on the designation of the stocks was affecting their proper management and impacting on the reputation of WCPFC and its members. They observed the NC has seemingly become a “Commission within a Commission” with its own science and rules. They opposed designation of any additional stocks as northern stocks, noting that a number of FFA members have an interest in the stocks under discussion and are determined to see them managed effectively by the Commission. They stated they expected stock assessments for the stocks to be presented to SC to allow for comprehensive review by all CCMs, and CCMs having the

greatest impact on the stocks to bring management proposals to WCPFC for debate and hopefully approval.

284. Canada agreed that the issue been tabled many times and appreciated the clarity SC brought to the issue. It endorsed the approach of the United States proposal, which they stated was in line with the convention text and intent, and enabled further action in response to the scientific advice.
285. FSM, on behalf of FFA members, stated that key information to determine whether North Pacific striped marlin is a northern stock is not available, and therefore it should remain as a WCPO stock. They noted the United States has submitted a draft rebuilding plan to NC14 for north Pacific striped marlin, but stated that a full stock assessment needs to be undertaken prior to the establishment of the rebuilding plan to inform the current starting point, the appropriate risk level, and the appropriate rebuilding period. They proposed that WCPFC15 request the ISC to present a new full stock assessment for north Pacific striped marlin to SC15 in 2019 so that Commission members are able to assess the appropriate level of risk and the appropriate rebuilding period to rebuild stocks to $0.2SB_{F=0}$.
286. Japan noted that their colleague from ISC indicated that results of the stock assessment were provided to SC; the last assessment was performed in 2015, and presented to SC. It stated that it nevertheless seemed that the Commission, as a whole, was less interested than NC members in northern stocks. Japan stated if the species was designated as a northern stock, NC could act, based on the 2019 stock assessment; otherwise the Commission would be facing the same issues in 2019. Japan indicated their wish was to focus on conservation and management of the stock.
287. The Chair stated it was unfortunate that the same discussion was repeated each year. She noted any member could provide a recommendation to the Commission, and that there was no lack of data for anyone to take action. She noted that WCPFC14 had agreed to try and resolve the designation issue, and that SC14 did what was asked, but that the criteria did not help, and inquired whether a rebuilding plan could be developed.
288. The United States stated that they were asking that North Pacific striped marlin be designated as a northern stock because it would raise the priority for NC and require NC to take action. It observed that all NC decisions are brought to the Commission for adoption, and that all stock assessments for northern stocks are reviewed by SC before they are acted upon. The United States noted again the clear information from SC14, and stated that if WCPFC15 declined to designate the stock as a northern stock the Commission should not come back to the issue.
289. The NC Chair acknowledged the frustration expressed by the WCPFC Chair. He noted that when NC advised on species not designated as northern stocks, that advice was typically ignored, and that NC was consequently very reluctant to work on species that had not been designated as northern stocks. The Chair noted that the designation issue was almost impossible to resolve, but that management of the stock, which is the is core business of the Commission, has been neglected in part because of the designation question, and stated it needed to be set aside.
290. CCMs held further discussions regarding designation and action on a rebuilding plan. RMI noted they were prepared to work with FFA and others to develop a measure for the stock. The EU agreed on the need to take action, and asked whether NC could be tasked with proposing a rebuilding plan, or SC or SPC should be tasked with this. EU suggested there should be a clear timeline of what is to be done and by whom.
291. The United States reiterated its view that harvest strategies need not be in the form of a CMM, and committed to submitting a draft rebuilding plan for consideration by WCPFC16.

292. The Commission noted that it was unable to agree on the designation of North Pacific striped marlin as a northern stock. The Commission acknowledged that North Pacific striped marlin is experiencing overfishing and is overfished and notes that the ISC work plan for 2018-19 includes completing a benchmark North Pacific striped marlin assessment which will be presented to SC15. The Commission agreed with the concern expressed by SC and NC over the status of North Pacific striped marlin. It accepted the recommendations of SC11, SC12, SC13 and SC14 that the Commission develop a rebuilding plan, and of NC13 and NC14 which “urged the Commission to develop a rebuilding plan for the stock as a matter of priority”. In the absence of any action in response to date, the Commission strongly encouraged those CCMs whose fleets are catching North Pacific striped marlin to submit a draft rebuilding plan to WCPFC16 to provide for the update of CMM 2010-01 Conservation and Management Measure for North Pacific Striped Marlin.

6.7 Others

293. Australia noted the scientific advice and recommendation by SC13, which was confirmed by SC14, on the need for stronger management of South Pacific swordfish, including development of appropriate management measures for the area north of 20°S. Australia noted that in the context of those recommendations they consider the current CMM to be relatively weak, which represents a real risk for the future of the stock. Noting this and SC’s recommendations, Australia stated they would explore further options for improved management of the South Pacific swordfish and would submit recommendations to SC15 and TCC15 in 2019. They stated they would be mindful of Article 30 of the Convention and the need to avoid disproportionate impact on SIDS.

AGENDA ITEM 7 — HARVEST STRATEGY

7.1 Management Objectives (all stocks/fisheries)

294. The Chair noted that the outcomes of discussions on tropical purse seine fisheries at WCPFC13 and in the “strawman document” were not agreed, but were used by SPC as indicative in terms of MSE, and have been included in SC discussions regarding performance indicators. She stated that the management objectives were likely to form part of the proposed 2019 dialog for which TORs are being considered.

7.2 Monitoring Strategy (all stocks/fisheries)

There was no discussion under this agenda item.

7.3 Harvest Strategy for Pacific bluefin, North Pacific albacore and North Pacific swordfish

295. The NC Chair stated that a harvest strategy had been adopted for Pacific bluefin tuna and North Pacific albacore, and these have been adopted by the Commission. The NC is now working on MSEs; workshops have been held for Pacific bluefin tuna and North Pacific albacore. Work has started on a harvest strategy for North Pacific swordfish.

296. The a representative of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Foundation (who indicated they had an interest in the import and distribution of tuna, swordfish and mahi mahi into North American and EU markets) noted its specific interest in North Pacific swordfish and pan-Pacific mahi mahi. It stated that there is a growing market demand for sustainability assurance for all fish products and an imperative to support small-scale fisheries. With regard to swordfish, recognising the progress the Commission has

made for the North Pacific stock, it asked the Commission to continue to develop the harvest strategy, but also to urgently implement management reference points for the stock to address the market needs. The same market needs for visible sustainability apply to mahi mahi. It requested the Commission to: (i) ensure all fishery participants are immediately required to provide catch and effort data for this species; (ii) instruct SC to develop an appropriate stock assessment within the next three years; and (iii) in advance of the delivery of the stock assessment, define precautionary management measures based on the results of the productivity-susceptibility analysis reported in **WCPFC–SC2–2006/EB WP–1**. The Foundation noted that all stocks need reference points, but believe these stocks should be prioritised.

297. In reply to a query from the EU regarding financial support needed for the MSE work, the NC Chair stated that financial support was provided by member countries, including Japan and the United States, and that enough resources were available to pursue the work.

7.4 Terms of Reference for a Science-Management Dialogue

298. SPC introduced **WCPFC15-2018-20: Key decisions for Managers and Scientists under the Harvest Strategy Approach for WCPO tuna stocks and fisheries**, noting that the paper provides ideas on decisions managers will need to consider as the harvest strategy process proceeds. It noted the key role of the science–management dialogue was to address cross-cutting issues, enable managers to provide leadership and guidance to scientists, and to facilitate the iterative decision-making process and enable provision of feedback.
299. RMI noted the need to address multiple gear and species fisheries, and to examine principles and practicalities for data collection. It warned against revisiting issues that had already been addressed.
300. The EU suggested a case study could be helpful, if focussed on non-contentious issues.
301. China stated that they understood the majority of CCMs would like to have a mechanism for a science-management dialogue, but stated that participation in this approach in other RFMOs is very low.
302. The Executive Director presented **WCPFC15-2018-21: Terms of reference for a science management dialogue**. He stated that WCPFC14 agreed to reprioritize the agendas for the Commission and SC meetings to provide sufficient time to allow for a discussion of the WCPO harvest strategy, and recognized the need for a dedicated science-management dialogue. The TORs were developed in response to that recognition by the Commission, and were developed jointly by the Secretariat and SPC, to provoke discussion on two components: consideration elements and consultative draft TORs. Discussions were held at SC14, both in plenary and in a SWG. The TORs in **WCPFC15-2018-21** are a refinement that account for the discussions at SC14. The objectives of the dialogue are to (i) enhance mutual understanding and capacity building, (ii) facilitate the iterative process of harvest strategy decision-making by the Commission and its committees, and (iii) to refine candidate harvest strategy options and forward a reduced number of acceptable candidates to the Commission to increase effectiveness. The key tasks of the dialogue are to review and refine SC outputs on MSE, and make recommendations to the Commission regarding appropriate candidate harvest strategies that meet management objectives for the fishery stocks.
303. SPC outlined Appendix 1 of **WCPFC15-2018-21** to provide an idea of how an initial meeting could be structured, suggesting two days would be appropriate.
304. New Zealand, on behalf of FFA members, thanked the Executive Director and recalled agreement at SC14 that such a dialogue would be useful to help the Commission make use of best-practice fishery

management processes, as well as some disagreements on matters of detail. They outlined that FFA members' view was that the first meeting of the science-management dialogue should be a trial — if the subsequent Commission meeting assesses it has not met its probationary objectives, it would be discontinued. They stated the recommendations of the body should carry weight within the Commission, and it should be a formal subsidiary body of the Commission in the form of a Committee under Article 11(6) of the Convention. It would not be a capacity-building workshop, but would make recommendations for consideration by the Commission, and should include a scientific and a management representative from each CCM. They noted the paper suggests the dialogue begin through an informal "capacity-building" session, followed by a formal "decision-making" session, but FFA members feel strongly this should not be a capacity-building process; after four capacity-building management objectives workshops, further learning about the Harvest Strategy Approach should be by implementing it. Other stakeholders should either be included in national delegations, or as observers, and closed sessions should be allowed for any discussions as decided by the committee.

305. Japan expressed no preference whether this should be a subsidiary body or more informal working group, but stated that if it will make recommendations, it should be a subsidiary body. It preferred it be held in conjunction with the annual meeting, because their scientists attend SC, while managers attend the annual meeting. They expressed concern that SPC stated they could not calculate all indicators for skipjack and stated a discussion would have to be held on how these could be calculated.
306. Niue, on behalf of FFA members, supported earlier comments by New Zealand, and stated that in their view:
- a) this would not be a body to filter the output of SC, and SC would continue to report directly to the Commission. This would be a body for generating science-based management recommendations to the Commission, while SC would continue to provide scientific input and answers to questions posed by the Commission;
 - b) it should not be restricted to considering only the application of the harvest strategy approach — other aspects of best practice management should also be considered, including the application of the ecosystem approach, and measuring and accounting for social and economic drivers of fishery performance. It could also be useful in advising the Commission on aspects of allocation between CCMs, in their roles as flag States and coastal States;
 - c) the dialogue should have a role in reviewing (and possibly developing) harvest strategy measures, and should not affect the right of individual or groups of CCMs to propose measures; and
 - d) FFA members feel very strongly it should meet immediately after SC, as clearly explained at SC14. SC should to be shortened slightly to make room for the dialogue to follow, and FFA members have a proposal for doing so.
307. PNG, on behalf of the PNA, supported the comments of New Zealand and Niue, and supported beginning a science-management dialogue in 2019. They noted this could help the Commission to mainstream harvest strategy development in its work. They noted that PNA support for the dialogue is contingent on the meeting happening immediately after SC, in order to optimise efficiency and have the greatest chance of influencing decision making at the following Commission meeting.
308. The United States voiced general support for establishment of a working group for the harvest strategy. It suggested it could be open to involvement of external experts, and suggested the need for flexibility in terms of its function and size, but stated that the focus should be on the harvest strategy.
309. Chinese Taipei supported having a physical meeting in 2019 to progress harvest strategy development. It suggested the meeting be held as a working group in 2019, with the potential to form a subsidiary body in the future. They supported having managers, scientists and stakeholders at the

meeting, and stated it should be held one or two days before the annual meeting to be most cost-effective. This position was also voiced by the EU which noted the importance to consider the cost implications.

310. Canada support holding a dialogue that includes fisheries managers, scientists and others (e.g., industry and NGOs). It suggested further discussion was needed on the structure of the body.
311. Korea supported establishment of a dialogue through a working group under the control of the Commission. It noted it could be given authority in the terms of reference (TORs) to ensure that it can make appropriate recommendations, and suggested it be co-chaired initially by the TCC and SC chairs (with others possibly elected subsequently to reduce the workload of the TCC and SC chairs). Korea suggested one senior fisheries scientist and one manager should attend for each CCM, as well as other stakeholders, with a two day meeting to cover the four key stocks. Korea suggested that the dialogue be scheduled in conjunction with the annual meeting and focus on the development of the harvest strategy.
312. The Philippines supported the statements by the EU and Korea.
313. Palau on behalf of the PNA Chair, stated they were only prepared to support the proposed dialogue if it is held immediately following SC. They noted this has been their consistent position since the management objectives/harvest strategy workshop process ceased in 2015, and that the PNA sees no merit in a meeting held in conjunction with the WCPFC annual meeting because delegations then arrive with their national positions already determined. They noted that some key delegations did not participate at the senior level in the management options workshops, making the discussions there useless. Holding meetings late in the year and in conjunction with the Commission presents serious disruption to FFA and PNA member preparation, which they cannot sustain. PNA was adamant the proposed dialogue can only work in conjunction with the SC.
314. RMI, on behalf of the PNA, stated they were relatively relaxed about the formal classification of the dialogue, but that to be effective it:
- should be able to make recommendations to the Commission that have the same weight as issues forwarded by SC and TCC;
 - not be simply a capacity building workshop;
 - be subject to the normal rules of participation, quorum, chairing and decision-making; and
 - have funding for participation by a scientist and a manager from each SIDS.
315. Indonesia supported the proposal for a science–management dialogue, but noted the need for information on the cost implications. The Executive Director provided the following estimates: for a 2-day meeting attached to SC and held in Pohnpei, about US\$85,000. If a stand-alone meeting in Pohnpei, around US\$180,000. If held in conjunction with WCPFC16 in Port Moresby, about US\$98,000. In response to a query from the EU, the Executive Director stated that for a dialogue held after SC, the amount quoted was the cost of an additional ticket to bring in a manager, because the Commission already funds a delegate to SC. For stand-alone meetings the cost is for both delegates. If the dialogue is held in conjunction with the annual meeting the cost is for one additional ticket, hopefully for a national scientist.
316. The Chair summarised that there was broad support for the need for the dialogue to happen, which would focus on development of harvest strategy elements. With regard to the structure, while there was no broad support for a formal subsidiary body, members supported formal status so it can provide advice

to the Commission. She noted the divergence was on the timing. She suggested putting the timing issue aside and focussing on the TORs.

317. Following further discussion in a SWG, Japan stated that while Article 11, paragraph 6 of the Convention allowed for the establishment of subsidiary bodies, including working groups, which can report to the Commission, Japan was unsure whether they can make recommendations to the Commission, or to SC or TCC. The Legal Adviser confirmed that Article 11, paragraph 6 of the Convention provides for the Commission to establish subsidiary bodies and working groups. She noted this was a broad function within the Convention. She stated that a review of past practice in the Commission indicated that intersessional working groups had been established and had provided recommendations directly to the Commission and also to other subsidiary bodies. She noted the Commission has a fairly broad mandate. Japan stated that while past practice was not strictly speaking legal advice, if the Commission had been doing this, and CCMs supported it, Japan could also support it.
318. The Chair stated that members were in agreement to see how the process would work for during the first year, and had agreed on it being a working group, but needed to determine how outcomes are handled, and whether they should be channelled through SC and TCC. Earlier discussions had suggested a separate forum was needed to develop harvest strategy options and if the aim is to advance harvest strategy work, the group needs to have that ability. Currently practice is to establish IWGs that provide recommendations to the Commission, and this proposed process would be similar. The Commission is adopting a long-term approach to harvest strategies but are taking a trial approach for 2019.
319. Canada stated its assumption that recommendations would come to the Commission, and if needed to SC for further advice and analysis.
320. Indonesia stated its understanding that the proposed working group would focus on communications between scientists and managers. It noted SC outputs mostly address stock assessment work, but MSEs and the harvest strategy will be different, and not really focussed on stock assessments. Indonesia suggested a step could be missing, and requested further explanation, perhaps from SPC, on the harvest strategies and how to arrange the process.
321. The Chair noted the issue was how the dialogue communicates with SPC so that the Commission can then make decisions. She noted that after past discussions on the harvest strategy, the Commission tasked SPC with work that was provided to subsequent meetings. She asked members whether they preferred tasking SPC in December to return the next December, or to provide the taskings in August, with results provided in December. She noted that the objective was to help inform the Commission and enable it to make decisions. The timing of meeting would influence the ability of SPC to provide advice, and asked delegates to confirm their views on timing of the meeting.
322. The members reiterated their previous positions, with some advocating for holding the dialogue in conjunction with SC, and others for holding a two-day session prior to the annual meeting. The Chair summarized the views expressed, and the challenges associated with each proposal. She asked the Commission to consider how quickly it sought to progress the harvest strategy work, noting that a workplan exists but has not been advanced.
323. Following further discussions with members, and in the absence of a compromise, the Chair proposed the harvest strategy discussion be held during the Commission regular annual session, where the SC report and SPC advice were available. She noted this would entail extending the Commission meeting (with some cost implications) or reducing its agenda.

324. Pew stated that Commission members had agreed that development of harvest strategies was a core component of the Commission's business and one of the most important elements of its future work. It stated that the Commission needed to give the harvest strategy work the serious attention it deserves, which requires both time and having the right people at the table. It encouraged the Commission to revisit the idea of a science-management dialogue and find a way to allow the necessary discussion to occur, and experiment with different schedules, perhaps rotating from being associated with one Commission meeting to another.
325. RMI and Tokelau supported the Chair's proposal in view of the lack of a compromise, with Tokelau stating that it was a sound idea to mainstream the harvest strategy issues into the work of the Commission, while allowing for some discussion in the SC. The EU stated it would support the Chair's proposal, noting it was clear that various members had different ideas of what the dialogue should achieve, and that some saw it as an opportunity to prepare for the next annual meeting. The EU stated its view the dialogue as a chance for managers to understand their role in the MSE framework. It stated that if it is scheduled as a stand-alone dialogue it should be distinct from the agenda of the Commission. EU noted that at present only a few people understand the mechanics of the MSE (and they probably work for SPC), and there was a need to have managers involved, which is the role of the dialogue. Tonga stated they understood the importance of the dialogue and supported the Chair's proposal. Australia stated they had hoped to secure agreement for a dialogue, but in its absence recognized the importance of progressing the work through the SC, TCC and Commission meetings. Australia suggested that the harvest strategy process not be closed in 2019, and the question of how to progress the science-management dialogue be revisited at SC16.
326. Commission members agreed to extend the WCPFC16 meeting by one day to allow for more in-depth discussion of harvest strategy issues. The Secretariat estimated that the additional cost for such an extension was approximately US\$6,000. The Chair noted that members would have input to the agenda and scheduling when arrangements for WCPFC16 were finalized, and that a decision on whether to continue this approach for subsequent Commission meetings could be made by WCPFC16, particularly in light of the desire of some members to revisit the issue of a dialog at WCPFC16.

<p>327. The Commission agreed to hold a 6-day annual meeting in 2019 with additional time devoted for the Commission to discuss harvest strategies.</p>

7.5 Review of Work Plan

328. The Chair noted that WCPFC14 adopted **WCPFC15-2018-IP09: *Agreed workplan for the adoption of Harvest Strategies under CMM 2014-06***. The Chair of the Harvest Strategy SWG (Australia) introduced revisions to the workplan that reflected SPC capacity and resource constraints. It noted that the workplan had initially called for SPC to commence MSE work on bigeye and yellowfin in 2019, but that work was now deferred to 2020 because of constraints faced by SPC. Australia noted the addition of three items for 2019:
- South Pacific albacore — identifying a range of alternative catch pathways to the interim TRP and timeframes that achieve this;
 - Skipjack — SC to advise on required analyses to support TRP review; and
 - SPC to review potential options to capture multi species issues under the harvest strategy process.
- Regarding the need for clarity on whether decisions on harvest strategy elements are “interim”, the proposed approach is for the workplan to not state whether a future decision will be interim or otherwise

but to simply schedule the decision and then let the Commission determine its interim nature. A more substantial review of the Harvest Strategy Workplan, with inclusion of more detail, is anticipated during SC15 and WCPFC16.

329. Japan noted its earlier concern regarding difficulties faced by SPC in calculating some performance indicators for skipjack for the purpose of estimating skipjack MSE, especially in relation to avoiding impacts on small fishers. Japan noted its prior intention to address the issue through the harvest strategy working group, but given that a working group meeting would not be held they wanted to (i) confirm that SPC cannot calculate these indicators, and (ii) if that was correct, confirm that a CCM could present the issue in a paper relating to calculation of the skipjack TRP.
330. SPC stated that as part of the harvest strategy work they were conducting extensive stakeholder engagement as they sought to develop performance indicators. SPC agreed that the MSE framework would not include as many of the performance indicators as stakeholders wanted to see because of the need for a proper modelling framework, and some aspects (e.g., allocation) are very hard to model. SPC stated they would do their best to develop proxies or other quantities that can inform these questions. With respect to the issue raised by Japan they stated it should be possible to get some information on skipjack abundance in areas where small scale fisheries are located, but that they would discuss the issue in detail as work progressed. Japan stated they would be happy to cooperate with SPC on the issue.
331. In response to a suggestion from China, the Chair noted the presentation of species in the workplan was not an indication of their priority.

<p>332. The Commission adopted the Updated Workplan for the Adoption of Harvest Strategies under CMM 2014-06 (WCPFC15-2018-HS_SWGWorkPlan_01, dated 14 December 2018) (Attachment I*).</p>
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AGENDA ITEM 8 — WCPO SHARK STOCKS AND BYCATCH MITIGATION

333. The Chair noted that a reference document had been prepared — **WCPFC15-2018-22: Reference document for bycatch mitigation CMM reviews.**

8.1 Report of the Shark-IWG, including Proposal for a Comprehensive CMM for Sharks and Rays

334. Shingo Ota (Japan), the IWG-Sharks Chair noted that the IWG had operated under TORs agreed at WCPFC14, and thanked the participants, and Dr Shelley Clarke, who had assisted as technical advisor. He stated that prior drafts had been circulated, with the 4th draft reviewed by SC14, the 5th draft by TCC14, with the 6th draft available for review at WCPFC15 (**WCPFC15-2018-IWGSharks: 6th Draft Consolidated Text for the Conservation and Management Measure for Sharks**).
335. During WCPFC15 an SWG was established to review and refine the 6th draft. After several rounds of discussion, the SWG produced a draft CMM for sharks. During the SWG Japan submitted a proposal to replace para 7 of CMM 2010-07 (how to implement full utilization of sharks) as follows:

“9. In order to implement the obligation in paragraph 8, in [2019, 2020, 2021] as an interim measure, CCMs shall require their vessels to land sharks with fins naturally attached to the carcass

or to take alternative compatible measures to ensure that individual shark carcasses and their corresponding fins can be identified on board the vessel, such as:

individual shark carcass with corresponding fins are stored in bag;

fins are bound to the carcass using rope or wire; or

tags are attached both to shark carcasses and corresponding fins

10. *All CCMs shall report on the implementation of the measures in paragraph 9 no later than 30 July each year for review by TCC. The report by CCMs shall contain the detailed explanation of implementation of paragraph 9 including how the compliance can be monitored. The TCC in [2021] shall recommend the measures for [2022] and thereafter to implement the obligations in paragraph 8 [and 8bis] to be adopted in the Commission.”*

336. Although the SWG extensively discussed this proposal and made many refinements, no consensus was reached. The SWG agreed, however, that this proposed language could be a good basis for future discussion, and thus should be recorded in the minutes of WCPFC15.
337. During plenary discussions regarding the SWG outcomes, some members noted the need for better reporting requirements, and others called for review of the proposal by TCC.
338. Australia stated that while it was disappointed that the Commission is unable to adopt a combined measure on sharks at WCPFC15, it wished to thank Japan for the huge amount of work in consulting with Commission members through the year, leading the small working group, and their efforts to develop alternative measures in concert with their industry. Australia looked forward to building on this work at WCPFC16. The United States also expressed its thanks to the IWG-Sharks Chair, and looked forward to further discussions in 2019 to strengthen the measure.

339. The Commission tasked TCC15 with considering the outputs of the shark intersessional working group and encouraged interested Members to submit proposals to TCC15.

8.2 Proposal for Best Practice Guidelines for Safe Release of Sharks

340. The Commission adopted the Best Practice Guidelines for Safe Release of Sharks (**Attachment J**).

8.3 North Pacific blue shark – Designation as a northern stock

341. The United States stated that it examined the information provided by SC14 regarding designation of North Pacific blue shark as a northern stock, but stated that the data did not allow making a determination that the stock is mostly located north of 20°N, and that the United States believes it does not support designation as a northern stock at this time. There were no other discussions under this agenda item.

8.4 Review of CMM 2017-06 on Seabirds

342. New Zealand introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP16: Seabird Interaction Mitigation: Amendment of CMM 2017-06** and expressed thanks to various members for helping with the proposal, and to SPC for helping to prepare scientific information to support the proposal. The amendments would add hook-

shielding devices to the list of acceptable measures to reduce seabird bycatch south of 30°S, and add a requirement to require the use of seabird mitigation measures in the area 30°S to 25°S.

343. The measure was discussed in a SWG, and members reached consensus in plenary regarding **WCPFC15-2018-DP16_rev2** following further small changes. New Zealand thanked all members for their support for the measure and for their work over several years.

344. Australia expressed their appreciation to New Zealand for its work on the issue. New Caledonia thanked all the delegates for their input on this issue and particularly delegates from the EU, China, Korea and Japan for the efforts made to take into account their specific circumstances. New Caledonia stated that they would continue operating transparently and seeking to ensure sustainability, and would seek to improve data collection between 25° S and 30° S by increasing observer coverage as much as possible.

345. French Polynesia also thanked all those involved, and especially New Zealand for coordinating the positions of all interested parties, and for considering the fisheries development aspirations of SIDS. It noted that much remained to be done for seabirds, and that French Polynesia was ready to assist whenever possible.

346. The EU also thanked members for their hard work. It noted that during the discussion that the EU was opposed to the exceptions within the measure, but stated that these were not that important at present, because they did not have relevant impacts on seabirds. EU stated that if fisheries are developed in zones that are currently exempted from the measure there would be impacts, and given that members have a responsibility to protect endangered species, there could be a need for revisions in the future.

347. The Commission agreed to adopt CMM 2018-03 Conservation and Management Measure to Mitigate the Impact of Fishing for Highly Migratory Fish Stocks on Seabirds (Attachment K).

8.5 Review of CMM 2008-03 on Sea Turtles

348. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP06: Revisions to CMM 2008-03 Conservation and Management Measure of sea turtles** and **WCPFC15-2018-DP07: Amendments to the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme minimum standard data fields**, both of which seek to increase sea turtle protection, and stated it looked forward to additional work in the margins of WCPFC15 to progress the measures.

349. Following significant discussions in the margins of WCPFC15, the Commission reached agreement regarding revisions to CMM 2008-03. The United States thanked members for their cooperation on the issue, noting it was a very important step. Regarding WCPFC15-2018-DP07, the United States noted that work to modify the ROP minimum data standards was ongoing, and stated that it would work further on the issue.

350. The Commission agreed to adopt CMM 2018-04 Conservation and Management Measure for Conservation and Management of Sea Turtles (Attachment L), with a date of implementation of 1 January 2020.
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AGENDA ITEM 9 — ADOPTION OF REPORTS FROM SUBSIDIARY BODIES

351. The reports of the subsidiary bodies were taken by the Chair as read and were not presented to the Commission. However, recommendations of subsidiary bodies not addressed under other agenda items were considered under this agenda item.

9.1 SC14

352. The Chair referred the Commission to **WCPFC15-2018-23: Synopsis of SC14 summary report for agenda item 9.1**. She noted that in addition to SC14 recommendations addressed under other agenda items, SC14 had recommended to the Commission that it initiate efforts to identify and promote best practices for safe release of whale sharks.
353. The EU stated that the work of the SC and advice the Commission received was outstanding and thanked its members. It suggested that it would be useful when discussing projections for species under management to consider both very long-term projections, and shorter periods (e.g. 5 years, and up to 15 or 20 years) to further inform Commission decisions. It also stated that it perceived there were inconsistencies in terms of the advice offered for various species. As an example, the EU contrasted the very precautionary advice offered for bigeye tuna, which had a quite positive stock status assessment, and the lack of proportionately cautionary advice for Pacific bluefin tuna, the stock of which has been assessed to be overfished, with overfishing occurring. The EU suggested the need to ensure there is greater consistency among species when advice is elaborated.
354. The Chair noted these were helpful suggestions for members to keep in mind, observing that the stakes of Commission decisions were increasing, and members could always think about how to do business better. She stated there was a need to match information, advice and decisions, and a need to look at cases where the Commission did not receive advice on issues for which it asked for advice.

355. The Commission adopted the SC14 Summary Report (**WCPFC15-2018-SC14**).

9.2 NC14

356. The Chair referred the Commission to **WCPFC15-2018-NC14: NC14 Summary Report (Revision 1)**, during the discussion of the NC14 Summary Report and relevant recommendations.
357. The United States stated it was encouraged by progress in undertaking the North Pacific albacore MSE, and that an MSE for Pacific bluefin tuna had been initiated. It noted these multi-year evaluations required resources from commission members and stated that a good plan to undertake the MSE was in place for North Pacific albacore, and that a plan was being formulated for Pacific bluefin tuna.

358. The Commission adopted the report of NC14 (**WCPFC15-2018-NC14**).

9.3 TCC14

359. The Commission was referred to **WCPFC15-2018-24_rev1: Reference Paper for TCC14 Recommendations for Agenda 9.3 – revision 1**, which was prepared as a quick reference guide to the recommendations of TCC14 of relevance to WCPFC15 discussions. The full report of TCC14 was also

tabled for consideration (**WCPFC14-2018-TCC14: TCC14 Summary Report Final - issued 30 November 2018**).

9.3.1 Regional Observer Programme

360. The Commission agreed to adopt the TCC14 recommended amendments to CMM 2007-01, CMM 2018-05, Conservation and Management Measure for the Regional Observer Programme, (**Attachment M**).
361. The Commission agreed to adopt the TCC14 recommended amendments to the ROP minimum standards (**Attachment N**).
362. The Commission agreed that the TCC Observer-related working group would continue to operate electronically in 2019, led by Mr. Tom Graham (United States). The TCC Observer-related working group was tasked to:
- a. Conduct further work, with input from the Secretariat and drawing from experiences using the Compliance Case File System and CCMs' investigations, to determine what additional data fields, if any, should be added to the ROP minimum required data fields to support CCM investigations and more general compliance-related needs, such as flagging possible violations of Commission decisions to trigger CCM investigations or as part of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (also see task (f)).
 - b. More fully consider gaps in the capacity of ROP Providers to respond promptly and fully to requests for observer reports, such as in terms of human resources, training, and equipment, and explore ways to fill those gaps, including the possibility of a process through which ROP Providers may seek and receive financial or other support from the Commission to improve their capacity.
 - c. Explore ways to support ROP Providers' efforts to improve their debriefing processes such that observer reports can be more fully vetted and provided more quickly, including the possibility of giving higher priority to trips that are flagged through the Pre-Notification Process (also see task (g)).
 - d. Explore the potential utility of using the Compliance Case File System to facilitate and track CCM requests for observer reports.
 - e. Explore whether pre-notifications can be sent by ROP Providers directly to the Secretariat without first having to be entered in the data service provider's ROP database along with all the minimum required data fields.
 - f. In concert with task (a), reconsider the summary data fields to better align with the Commission's priorities in terms of compliance.
 - g. In concert with task (c), explore the role debriefing can have in reviewing and filtering Trip Monitoring Summaries to make pre-notifications as efficient and useful as possible.
 - h. Explore, as part of the Pre-Notification Process, the possibility of supplementing the WCPFC Observer Trip Monitoring Summary form with more detailed information from the observer (e.g., using "comments" pages) regarding any affirmative indications on the Summary form, such as more detailed information about the activities in question, which could support a CCM's investigations of those activities, and/or references to particular sections/pages of the full observer report that could help narrow a CCM's request for more information from the ROP Provider.

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| i. | Continue to develop mechanisms related to the provision of observer reports, taking into account the outcomes of the tasks listed above and the possible approaches described in WCPFC-TCC14-2018-14 and WCPFC-TCC14-2018-DP07. |
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9.3.2 Transshipment

363. The Chair noted that TCC14 held a lengthy discussion on transshipment, and that FFA member CCMs had submitted a paper on the issue to WCPFC15 (**WCPFC15-2018-DP14: *Transshipment Regulation: Review of CMM 2009-06***).
364. Tuvalu, on behalf of FFA members supported endorsement of the TCC report and its recommendations, in particular undertaking a review of CMM 2009-06 regarding transshipment as a priority in 2019. Noting that review will require detailed analysis, they offered to work with other CCMs on the terms of reference (TORs) and workplan for this issue.
365. China stated that high seas transshipment was of vital importance for distant water fisheries, which is why China has participated in the establishment of transshipment regulations in several RFMOs, including WCPFC. It noted unregulated high sea transshipment may be used for IUU fishing activities, and regulation of high seas transshipment is the basis of CMM 2009-06, with 100% observer coverage on receiving vessels, and detailed procedures. China noted that CMM 2009-06 had been implemented for eight years, and it was time for WCPFC to review its effectiveness, with a view not to ban high seas transshipment, but to simplifying procedures for the purpose of reducing the work load of the WCPFC Secretariat staff and flag CCMs in reference to other tuna RFMOs (e.g., IOTC and ICCAT), especially with regard to reviewing the need to “notify the information in Annex III to the Executive Director at least 36 hours prior to each transshipment”, as called for in para. 35a(iii). In addition, China noted that the obligations under para. 35a(i-v) were to be undertaken “as appropriate”, and that their interpretation of “as appropriate” was that they should not conduct the obligation assessment of the paragraph as it had been in the past. With respect to para. 35.a.(v) calling on CCMs to “Submit to the Commission a plan detailing what steps it is taking to encourage transshipment to occur in port in the future”, China stated its view that this was not mandatory, because of the phrase “as appropriate” in para. 35a. It stated that their policy was to encourage Chinese fishing companies to invest in and use ports in SIDS, and that Chinese authorities could provide financial assistance to Chinese companies for infrastructure improvement, noting they had several examples where this occurred. China noted that current regulation of high seas transshipment activity was in line with the relevant provisions and objectives of the WCPFC Convention, but stated that it had been unable to access an annual transshipment report from the WCPFC Secretariat, and thus were unaware what the current level of high sea transshipment was, and could not assess the overall trend. China requested that the Secretariat provide such a report for WCPFC16.
366. Tuvalu reiterated its strong support for a review of the measure in 2019.
367. The EU also supported a revision of the CMM on transshipment. It noted the various views held by members, and stated that transshipment is an open door for IUU and other problems. The EU observed that their preference was to have no transshipment at sea, and that revising CMM 2009-06 would be difficult. The EU stated that, at a minimum, the level of observer coverage of transshipment should be increased.
368. Japan thanked FFA for their views, and agreed that transshipment at sea should be discussed at TCC15. It supported China’s intervention, and stated that strengthening the monitoring of existing legal transshipment would prevent illegal activities. Japan suggested that the TCC review should focus on how to prevent illegal transshipment by carrier vessels without observers.

369. RMI supported the intervention by Tuvalu and looked forward to working with other members on the issue. In response to a query regarding inclusion of the issue in the TCC workplan, the TCC-Vice Chair clarified that the issue had not been addressed in detail in the working group discussion on the TCC workplan.
370. Chinese Taipei supported a review of the measure in 2019, and also supported the positions expressed by Japan and China.
371. Korea agreed that the measure be reviewed in 2019, noting that at-sea transshipment was an integral part of longline operations, especially for fishing fleets from Asia. It noted that the CMM was in the form of a recommendation rather than a regulation. Korea stated that very high penalties should be imposed in response to IUU activity but did not agree with a ban on at-sea transshipment.
372. Papua New Guinea supported a review of the transshipment measure and asked that the Secretariat provide as much information as possible on transshipment on the high seas to support this.
373. FSM supported the comments from FFA, RMI and PNG, noting the issue had been discussed for some time. Given the proposal to ban high seas transshipment, it agreed a review was warranted, both to strengthen the measure and to enable a more robust approach to monitoring and compliance, and supported inclusion of the issue in the TCC workplan.
374. Canada supported holding a discussion on transshipment in 2019 and requested that the Secretariat provide an analysis of the existing situation with regard to transshipment, which should be included in the Secretariat's workplan.
375. The Commission discussed establishment of an electronic IWG to review CMM 2009-06, and agreed it would be co-chaired by RMI and the United States, with data support provided by the Secretariat as available. PNG noted the importance of information related to the VMS, HSBI, and catch in the high seas pockets. The Chair noted that data availability could impact the work of the IWG and highlighted the need for consultations between the Secretariat and the co-chairs regarding timing and resource availability.

376. The Commission agreed to the TCC14 recommendation that the template provided in TCC14-2018 RP03 Annex 3 be used by all applicable CCMs for their future reporting in Annual Report Part 1, as per CMM 2009-06 paragraph 11 (**Attachment O**).

377. The Commission agreed that TCC's assessment of a CCM under paragraph 13 of CMM 2009-06 will include that CCM's report on observer coverage achieved for their carrier vessels conducting transshipment at sea in their Annual Report Part 2.

378. The Commission agreed to conduct a review of the existing transshipment measure (CMM 2009-06) in 2019, with the review to commence through an electronic intersessional working group, with the group led by two co-chairs, from RMI and the United States.

9.3.3 Commission VMS

379. The Chair raised the issue of assessment of CMM 2014-02 paragraph 4. The TCC Chair stated that the issue arose at TCC14 during compliance analysis. Members expressed differing views on whether the measure was still relevant, but there was agreement that assessments could not be made against the obligation. The Chair stated that Commission should acknowledge that this presented difficulties for

compliance assessment. The Chair stated that a resolution was not possible at WCPFC15. The Commission agreed not to assess the provision in 2019.

380. The EU stated that a key output of TCC was the identification of areas where TCC faced difficulties in making compliance assessments. It noted the limited time available to follow-up on key highlights from TCC and encouraged members to consider a process to resolve such issues. The EU observed that TCC14 had difficulties assessing compliance with the CMM related to FAD closures, and predicted this would happen again at TCC15.

381. The Chair stated that the CMR was adopted early during WCPFC15 in an effort to enable discussion on difficulties faced by TCC with respect to compliance monitoring. She noted that this could occur during regular reviews of CMMs, but stated that some issues did not come up for regular review. She stated that known problems must be addressed, and thanked the EU for their comments, and encouraged Members to consider the issue for resolution in the future.

382. Canada agreed that the issue should be considered during the review and the update of the CMS and TCC workplan, and suggested that review and development of audit points would be of help. The TCC Chair stated that TCC had worked to address a number of simpler issues over a number of years, and that what remained were the more complicated obligations, for which it was more difficult for TCC to provide good recommendations. She noted that the CMS process may enable additional room for this review.

383. The Commission agreed to extend the “Manual reporting in the event of ALC malfunction” requirement (Attachment 1 to the VMS SSPs) for a further two years (until 1 March 2021), taking into consideration the need for more timely provision of manual reports through automated online facilities or via electronic reporting where flag CCMs directly upload the required information.

384. The Commission approved the addition to the WCPFC approved ALC/MTU list of the following ALC units:

Model/Approved Type	MTU	Manufacturer	Comm System	Service Provider
Skywave IDP-690		ORBCOMM/Skywave	INMARSAT ISATDATA PRO	Skywave
ORBCOMM ST6100		ORBCOMM/Skywave	INMARSAT ISATDATA PRO	Skywave
iTrac101B (iTrac II)		MetOcean Telematics	Iridium SBD	MetOcean Telematics
BB3		SASCO	Iridium (mini LEO)	SASCO
BB5		SASCO	Iridium (mini LEO)	SASCO
RomTrax Wifi		Rom Communications	Iridium SBD	Rom Communications

385. The Commission agreed to amend the WCPFC VMS SSPs, section 2 paragraph 7, so that ALC/MTU units can be included on the approved ALC/MTU list based on the Secretariat's Assessment that any newly nominated ALC/MTU meets the minimum standards and following a specified period after the circulation of this advice to all CCMs. The replacement paragraph for section 2 paragraph 7 is provided below:

7. The Secretariat will assess proposals for inclusion of additional ALC/MTU makes and models on this list from both CCMs and equipment manufacturers. The Secretariat shall include the ALC/MTU make or model being proposed on this list, if no CCM objects in writing within 30 days of the Secretariat circulating notice of its intent to all CCMs, and, if in the Secretariat's assessment, the ALC/MTU make or model meets the minimum standards for the Commission VMS as set out in Annex 1 of CMM 2014-02 (or its successor measure), the WCPFC SSPs, as relevant, by determining that the ALC/MTU make and model has the ability to successfully report to the Commission VMS, and by using the methodology established by the FFA with expenses for type approval processing to be borne by the proposing entity. Where the Secretariat concludes in its assessment that a proposed ALC/MTU make or model does not meet these requirements, or if a CCM objects in writing to the Secretariat's proposal to approve a new ALC/MTU make or model, the Secretariat within the annual report shall make recommendations regarding the proposed ALC/MTU make or model for the TCC's consideration and the Commission's approval. The Secretariat will recommend, as needed, to TCC the removal of units currently on the list of approved ALC/MTU makes and models that it has determined no longer meet the minimum standards set out in Annex 1 of CMM2014-02 (or successor measure), or do not have the ability to successfully report to the Commission VMS. If an ALC/MTU make and model is removed from the list of approved ALC/MTU types, flag CCMs will ensure that their fishing vessels replace non-type approved ALC/MTUs with approved ALC/MTUs by the next replacement of the ALC/MTU, but no later than three years after the Commission's decision.

386. The Commission approved the updated Standard Operating Procedures for the WCPFC VMS (**Attachment P**).

387. The Commission agreed that CMM 2014-02 paragraph 4 should not be included in the list of obligations for review by the Compliance Monitoring Scheme in 2019.

9.3.4 Expanding the requirement for IMO Numbers

388. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP05: Amendment to CMM 2017-05 to expand the requirement for IMO numbers**, as recommended by TCC14, and expressed appreciation for the overall support for the proposal from Commission members. In reply to a query from Canada the United States stated that the proposed language was drawn from that used by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to avoid any conflicts with IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme. PNG, on behalf of FFA members, expressed their support for the proposal.

389. The Philippines stated that at TCC14 their delegation asked for assistance from the proponent before adoption and noted that their concerns had been addressed.

390. Pew, speaking also on behalf of EDF, IPNLF, ISSF and WWF, commended the Commission on its decision to expand the requirement for IMO numbers, which they stated would have a positive effect on transparency and the ability of fisheries managers and enforcement agencies to identify and trace vessels. They stated it would further strengthen the monitoring, control, and surveillance programme of

the WCPFC and the efforts of coastal States and fishing States in fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Obtaining IMO numbers for eligible vessels is becoming increasingly easy, as the managers of the IMO work closer with flag States to help them fill their data gaps and obtain numbers for their fleet, in bulk. They stated that they were ready to assist delegates access further information on obtaining IMO Numbers, or get in direct contact with the programme's managers.

391. The Commission agreed to amend CMM 2017-05 to expand the requirements for IMO numbers, and adopted CMM 2018-06 Conservation and Management Measure for WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels and Authorisation to Fish (**Attachment Q, WCPFC15-2018-DP05**).

9.3.5 High seas boarding and inspection: authorities of the fishing vessel

392. The United States introduced **WCPFC15-2018-DP31: High seas boarding and inspection: authorities of the fishing vessel** (originally notified under Circular 2018/74) regarding submission to the Executive Director the name(s) and contact information of its Authorities of the Fishing Vessel for the purpose of CMM 2006-08, noting that 11 CCMs have not identified their relevant authorities.

393. New Zealand, on behalf of FFA members, noted that the United States should review their proposal in accordance with CMM 2013-06 to evaluate its impact on SIDS. Japan thanked the United States for their submission, and stated that they could support the proposal, but related that in some cases they had provided contact points, but these were not shared within the same country. Japan noted this was particularly a problem with respect to the United States, which sometimes used old contact points. It requested that the United States distribute the most updated contact points within their government.

394. The Commission agreed that no later than **1 March 2019**, any CCM that has not done so already shall submit to the Executive Director the name(s) and contact information of its Authorities of the Fishing Vessel for the purpose of CMM 2006-08. If a CCM fails to do so by that date, the CCM's primary official point of contact for the Commission shall be considered its Authorities of the Fishing Vessel, and the Executive Director will make that information available to CCMs on the public side of the WCPFC website, on the list of Authorities of the Fishing Vessel.

9.3.6 Update of TCC Workplan

395. Mr Laurence Edwards (RMI), TCC Vice-Chair introduced the outcome of the SWG to update the TCC workplan: **WCPFC15-2018-SWG TCC Work Plan: TCC Workplan 2019-2021**. He expressed his appreciation to the SWG participants and confirmed that the TCC Workplan was ready for adoption.

396. The Commission adopted the TCC Workplan 2019-2021 (**Attachment R, WCPFC15-2018-SWG TCC Workplan**).

397. The Commission adopted the report of TCC14 (**WCPFC15-2018-TCC14**).

9.4 ERandEMWG3

398. The Chair referenced **WCPFC15-2018-35: Reference paper for ERandEMWG3 recommendations for Agenda Item 9.4**, taking the report as read.

399. The EU stated it supported acceptance of the report, but would like the planned work to include FLUX in the ER standards to continue to be progressed.
400. Vanuatu, on behalf of FFA members, supported the endorsement of the report and its outcomes, and suggested the working group next meet in 2020, consistent with the previous 2-year spacing of meetings, which would allow some important related work to be undertaken, such as Project 93.
401. Korea thanked the ERandEMWG Chair, Kerry Smith (Australia), for her hard work. It noted that E-Monitoring could be a useful tool, and detailed some of the progress Korea was making at the national level on E-Reporting and E-Monitoring. Korea supported endorsement of the report.
402. FSM, on behalf of the PNA, supported the statement made by Vanuatu and FFA members. The PNA thanked the working group chair for her efforts and the WCPFC Secretariat for the support they provided. They looked forward to contributing to the comprehensive data review proposed by the working group and now included in the SC draft workplan. PNA ministers have directed the development of a PNA Electronic Monitoring Program, which was reinforced by the recent call by the President of FSM to have all longline vessels subject to electronic monitoring by the year 2023. Building on the results of several trials of E-Monitoring technology on longliners in PNA waters, PNA members have started work with The Nature Conservancy on developing a PNA Electronic Monitoring Program. PNA members stated they that look forward to working with other CCMs in this important area, particularly to improve monitoring and scientific data collection on high seas distant water longliners.

Update or revision of E-reporting SSPs

403. The Commission agreed with respect to maintaining adopted standards, matters of substance (such as major changes or new proposals) shall be considered in a manner consistent with already established processes for new proposals. The Secretariat shall administer minor changes to the SSPs that reflect decisions of the Commission by circulating a draft to all CCMs advising that the change had been made and would come into effect on a date at least consistent with that in the SSPs. CCMs shall be provided the opportunity to raise concerns and if so, the change becomes a matter of substance and will be handled as such.

Standards for E-reporting of high seas transshipment

404. The Commission adopted the E-Reporting Standards for transshipment declarations and transshipment notices (**WCPFC-2018-ERandEMWG03-03 Attachment 1, Attachment S**).
405. The Commission agreed that where transshipment declarations and transshipment notices are submitted to WCPFC in accordance with the E-Reporting Standards for transshipment declarations and transshipment notices, the following information will not be required:
- a. the observers signature;
 - b. a unique document identifier;
 - c. for the offloading vessel to supply data on the quantity of product already on board the receiving vessel;
 - d. for the receiving vessel to supply data on the fishing gear that the offloading vessel used to take the fish; and
 - e. for the receiving vessel to supply data on the quantity of product to be transhipped.

406. The Commission also agreed to

a. add a footnote to Annex I of CMM 2009-06 that says “CCMs shall submit information required in Annex I or in accordance with E-reporting Standards for transshipment declarations and transshipment notices”; and

b. add a footnote to Annex III of CMM 2009-06 that says “CCMs shall submit information required in Annex III or in accordance with E-reporting Standards for transshipment declarations and transshipment notices

E-monitoring concept paper

407. The Commission agreed to prioritising E-monitoring in areas where independent data collection and verification is currently low and asked SC15 and TCC15 for advice on priority areas.

408. The Commission supported the continuation of intersessional work, led by the ERandEMWG Chair Kerry Smith (Australia) to further develop a draft conservation and management measure on E-monitoring for consideration by the Commission in 2020. The ERandEMWG Chair was tasked to provide a report on progress to WCPFC16 in 2019.

ERandEMWG3 Report

409. The Commission adopted the ERandEMWG3 Summary Report (**WCPFC15-2018-ERandEMWG3**).

AGENDA ITEM 10 — COMPLIANCE MONITORING SCHEME

10.1 Consideration and Adoption of the Final Compliance Monitoring Report (CMR)

410. The Commission considered the provisional CMR recommended by TCC14 through a small working group led by Alexa Cole (United States), the TCC Chair, which compiled the final CMR for adoption. The TCC Chair provided a report on the SWG outcomes. The review of compliance by CCMs was undertaken against an updated priority list of Commission obligations agreed to at WCPFC14 for 2018, and in accordance with CMM 2017-07. The current CMS does not require an overall assessment of each CCM, but only asks WCPFC to identify a compliance assessment for each specific obligation. Some obligations were assessed by WCPFC15 as “CMM Review”. The CMS working group noted that in some cases, such as in relation to CMM 2016-01, the obligations in question have already been revised in CMM 2017-01, but encouraged the Commission to consider whether additional revision is needed to resolve the difficulties in assessment. WCPFC15 assessed the following obligations as CMM Review: CMM 2014-02, para 4; and CMM 2016-01, paras 14, 16 and 18. There were two obligations that WCPFC15 was not able to assess due to a lack of consensus as to the compliance status. Therefore, the following obligations were not assessed: CMM 2016-04, para 3(2) (Japan, relating to a difference of opinion on the reporting period for the measure) and CMM 2016-01, para 22 (Philippines).

411. Commission members and the Commission Chair expressed their appreciation to Alexa Cole for her work in chairing TCC.

412. The Commission adopted the 2018 Final Compliance Monitoring Report (covering 2017 activities) (**WCPFC15-2018-finalCMR, Attachment T**).

10.2 Review of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme

10.2.1 Report from the independent panel to review the Compliance Monitoring Scheme

413. The Chair stated that **WCPFC15-2018-26: Report from the independent panel to review the Compliance Monitoring Scheme** was considered by the CMS IWG, as discussed in **WCPFC15-2018-27A**, and highlighted by the CMS IWG Chair under Agenda Item 10.2.2.

414. Australia, on behalf of FFA members, thanked the Review Panel for their comprehensive and valuable report that incorporated FFA members' views. FFA members had reviewed the recommendations and recognised several of these in development of the FFA proposal on the draft CMS measure. As stated at TCC14, while the priority task for FFA members is development of the measure, some recommendations are distinct from the measure and it would be useful to progress these to support the CMS process and the broader work of the Commission. These relate to continued development of the Commission's IMS to support implementation of the CMS and support MCS activities; continued development of training resources and learning aids for the IMS; and options to mitigate the impacts of unscheduled disruption to the Secretariat and trends analyses of capacity development information. These were discussed in the context of the revised TCC workplan and FFA members strongly recommended they be included in the workplan.

415. The Chair noted that members should draw on the report's recommendations. She expressed gratitude to the three members of the review panel for considering a very large body of work that should serve as a guide.

416. The Commission noted the Report from the Independent Panel to review the Compliance Monitoring Scheme and agreed that the recommendations therein would serve as a reference for the Commissions consideration of future work to enhance the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (**WCPFC15-2018-26**).

10.2.2 Report of the CMS-IWG, including Proposal for a CMM for the Compliance Monitoring Scheme

417. The Commission considered the following papers related to the CMS: **WCPFC15-2018-27A: Summary of CMS IWG comments on the report from the independent review of the CMS**; **WCPFC15-2018-27B: Compilation of CMS IWG comments on the "Draft list of principles document"**; and **WCPFC15-2018-DP11_rev1: Comments on the working draft text for the Compliance Monitoring Scheme - revision 1**.

418. Mr Glen Joseph (RMI), as CMS-IWG Chair noted that the IWG was established at WCPFC14 to undertake two tasks: (i) to consider the report from the Independent Panel on the Review of the CMS (**WCPFC15-2018-26**), and (ii) to develop a proposed conservation and management measure for the CMS for consideration at WCPFC15. A summary of the views of the CMS-IWG on the Independent Panel report is contained in **WCPFC15-2018-27A**. The development of the proposed CMM for the CMS was progressed through submission of draft text from members, including a consolidated draft from FFA, and discussed at an informal meeting held in conjunction with SC14. A face-to-face meeting of the IWG was financially supported by New Zealand and was convened immediately prior to TCC14.

Further work produced **WCPFC15-2018-CMS IWG: Review of the WCPFC Compliance Monitoring Scheme — CMS IWG Working Draft Text – revision 3**. The CMS-IWG welcomed further development of the proposal through the CMS SWG during WCPFC15.

419. Following further work, Glen Joseph (RMI) as the CMS SWG Chair, presented the sixth working draft. Members expressed support for the proposal, and the TCC Chair noted that it was a strong measure that would support the CMS. CCMs also acknowledged the efforts of the CMS-IWG Chair and all Commission members for engaging in a spirit of compromise and cooperation.

420. FSM, on behalf of FFA members, stated that various areas of future work were contemplated by the proposed CMS measure: (i) the development of a risk-based framework to inform compliance assessments; (ii) the development of audit points for assessing CCMs' compliance with obligations; and (iii) a comprehensive review of the Commission's reporting requirements. They noted the work has been generally considered by FAC, with budgetary allocations made for CMS work. Two of these work areas have also been specifically included in the TCC Workplan. They noted the need to finalise any terms of reference for the work and suggested these be developed based on the draft terms of reference submitted by FFA in **WCPFC15-2018-DP11_rev 1: Comments on the working draft text for the Compliance Monitoring Scheme**. They also thanked the United States for their cooperation and engagement in developing the measure.

421. The United States stated it would be happy to engage with other interested CCMs on specific issues, such as development of audit points.

422. The Commission adopted CMM 2018-07 Conservation and Management Measure for Compliance Monitoring Scheme (**WCPFC15-2018-CMS IWG_04, Attachment U**).

423. The Commission noted that the measure includes an ambitious workplan for 2019 and that FAC had allocated some budgetary resources to support this work. The Commission welcomed the expressions of interest from some Members to work with other Members during the intersessional period in 2019, to develop draft audit points for the assessment of obligations through the Compliance Monitoring Scheme.

424. The Commission agreed that the list of obligations to be assessed in 2019 through the Compliance Monitoring Scheme should be based on the approved list from 2018 (**Attachment V**).

AGENDA ITEM 11 — ADOPTION OF THE 2019 IUU VESSEL LIST

425. The Chair introduced **WCPFC15-2018-28: WCPFC IUU Vessel List for 2019**, which presented for the consideration of WCPFC15 the relevant information for a decision on the 2019 WCPFC IUU Vessel List.

426. The Commission adopted the 2019 WCPFC IUU Vessel List (**Attachment W**).

427. The Commission tasked the Executive Director to:

- a. seek the former flag CCM's or non-CCM's cooperation to provide any information on these vessels, including their respective master's names and nationalities;

- b. write to all CCMs to provide information to the Commission if the vessels on the WCPFC IUU Vessel List are located, or if there are any known changes to name, flag or registered owner, including any action that port states have taken such as denial of port entry and services to those vessels or any information from cannery State of any landings made by these vessels;
- c. write a letter to other RFMOs and other relevant bodies conveying this same message for cooperation to locate these vessels; and
- d. promptly reported any information received to CCMs.

AGENDA ITEM 12 — REPORT OF THE TWELFTH ANNUAL SESSION OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

12.1 Report of the Twelfth Finance and Administration Committee

428. The Commission considered the report of FAC12 (**WCPFC15-2018-FAC12-14**). The FAC co-Chair Magele Etuati Ropeti (Samoa) presented the FAC report, and thanked CCMs who participated in the FAC sessions held on the 9th, 12th, 13th and 14th of December. The main recommendations included: that a supplementary retirement plan for locally engaged staff be implemented in 2019; support for the Secretariat’s efforts to develop and implement an environmental policy; approval of the terms of reference and budget for a consultancy to undertake a building survey and develop a maintenance plan for the Commission buildings; and agreement to keep the SRF at a target base level of US\$150,000, which is equivalent to ~2% of CCM contributions, to support implementation of the SIP and other needs as identified by developing States parties.
429. Australia stated that FFA members requested that US\$100,000 amount be set aside in a dedicated line item in the TCC budget for future CMS work. The Chair confirmed that this would be done by the Secretariat.
430. PNG inquired whether the observer budget for cross endorsements had an allocation to include cost recovery in the future. The Secretariat stated that cost recovery had been discussed, but the Secretariat had not considered this as a tasking for the next session of the FAC. RMI expressed agreement with PNG and asked that the intention to arrange for full future cost recovery be indicated. The United States recalled that it had offered to fund this through voluntary contributions and stated it would like to see what funds they could arrange to help continue the training. The United States proposed that the issue and any suggestions regarding cost recovery be raised at FAC13.

12.2 Budget Approval for 2019 and Indicative Budgets for 2020 and 2021

431. The Commission adopted the report of the Twelfth Session of the FAC (**WCPFC15-2018-FAC12**), including the 2019 budget of **\$8,041,652** and indicative budgets for 2020 and 2021 of **\$7,966,937** and **\$8,092,140**, respectively (**Attachments X**).
432. The Commission agreed that a new row should be included in Part 2.3 titled “CMS Future Work” with an amount of **\$100,000** in 2019, that is transferred from Sub-Item 2.3 “Information Management System” in 2019. Note 6 should also be shifted to be notation for the “CMS Future Work” budget line.

433. The final adopted 2019 budget and Annexes are provided in (Attachment Y).

AGENDA ITEM 13 — ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

13.1 Corporate Plan

434. The Executive Director introduced **WCPFC15-2018-29: Draft medium-term corporate plan**, as required by WCPFC14. He explained that in 2016 and 2017, the Commission was engaged in developing a new long-term planning framework, and an annual short-term planning document. Following significant work, at WCPFC14 the Commission was unable to agree on a way forward for the strategic plan, so decided on a medium-term corporate plan. But when it agreed on the tasking, the Commission provided little instruction in terms of process and key objectives, and no budget for its development. The draft Corporate Plan in **WCPFC15-2018-29** is the Secretariat’s best effort to provide a framework to assist the Commission and the Secretariat in organizing its work. In the absence of consultations with members, the Secretariat relied on the materials gathered during the consultations with members and stakeholders in 2016 when developing the draft Strategic Plan, as a reflection of some of the views and perspectives of Commission members and stakeholders. Accordingly, the goals and guiding objectives for the Medium-Term Corporate Plan were adapted and are refinements of those in the draft Strategic Plan. The plan is an organic and living document, subject to regular renewal and refreshment. A short-term consultancy was involved. The Executive Director noted he was seeking guidance on the process to further progress development of the plan, which needs to benefit from input from stakeholders and members. He stated he was encouraged that FAC sought to develop terms of reference for that process.
435. The EU suggested holding consultations intersessionally, and noted it was important to consider the cost implications of the plan. It suggested that regarding Goal 6 of the plan (Enhance the transparency and effectiveness of Commission governance and operations) the EU would like to have language added to ensure that relevant aspects of UNLCOS and the UN FSA are implemented, with provisions that apply to WCPFC applied through the Commission’s daily work.
436. New Zealand, on behalf of FFA members, noted with concern that the matter had been before the annual meeting for the past two sessions without substantive progress. They stated their concern to ensure the agenda item was not subject to prolonged discussion with little real value. They stated their view that there were two options:
- a. Abandon the Corporate Plan, and continue to run the Commission on a year-to-year basis as necessary to implement the Convention, its CMMs, and any subsidiary body workplans formally adopted by the Commission (this is not an ideal option); and
 - b. Task the WCPFC Secretariat to work with members to refine a draft Corporate Plan focusing on the Secretariat, and bring it back to WCPFC16 next year for adoption.

FFA members’ view is that the Commission needs to provide guidance to the Secretariat on how to progress development of the Plan, and that FFA members see clear value in having a Corporate Plan focussing on the work of the Secretariat. In an effort to progress the issue, a number of members developed draft terms of reference for the development of a Corporate Plan for the Secretariat (**WCPFC15-2018-FAC12-13**). FAC received the report positively but there has been no opportunity to seek more formal agreement on the terms of reference. However, FFA members consider there is a need for a Corporate Plan for the Secretariat, developed in consultation with Members.

437. Noting that some members needed further time to consider the terms of reference, the Commission agreed to request that the Executive Director should continue to progress the draft intersessionally during 2019.

438. The Commission directed the Executive Director to progress, intersessionally with interested CCMs, the further development of the draft Medium-Term Corporate Plan (**WCPFC15-2018-29**) to guide the work of the Secretariat and to report back to WCPFC16.

13.2 Kobe Process

439. The Executive Director presented **WCPFC15-2018-30: Kobe Process**, which includes (as Attachment A) a concept note from the Chair of the Steering Committee of the Kobe process, which last met in July in the margins of the meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries. The Executive Director noted that the Chair of the Steering Committee was present at WCPFC15. The Executive Director provided a background on the Kobe Process, which is intended to provide a platform for cooperation among the five tuna RFMOs.

440. The Chair of the Kobe Process Steering Committee stated that cooperation between RFMOs was useful where common challenges exist, where cooperation can be beneficial, and where such cooperation does not impinge on autonomy. He briefly reviewed the history of the Kobe Process, and the current effort to determine the correct format, scale and focus for cooperation. He stated the Concept Note proposed three main categories: (i) cooperation, exchange of information and coordination among RFMO secretariats (members of the Kobe Process steering committee); (ii) organisation of meetings of existing or new working groups covering specific topics (e.g., FADs, MSE, and bycatch), with open participation and voluntary contributions; and (iii) organisation of new large-scale meetings, which he noted could only work if properly prepared, and which are accompanied by many reservations. He encouraged members to discuss the options, and asked the Commission to allow the Chair and Executive Director to work further on these issues.

441. Japan stated that they had indicated at meetings of other RFMOs where they are a member that Japan very much supported cooperation among RFMOs, and the organisation of small and medium-sized meetings that focus on specific themes, such as MSE, which is a very new and emerging issue. It expressed reservations regarding large-scale meetings that inevitably cover a wide range of issues, including some that are very controversial, and noted the severe conflicts that develop in those settings were not helpful.

442. Tokelau, on behalf of FFA members, thanked the members of the Steering Committee of the Kobe Process for bringing forward some suggestions regarding the future work of the tuna RFMOs. They noted FFA members have always recognised the potential benefits of a process that allows the tuna RFMOs to learn from each other's successes by facilitating better information sharing and cooperation. However, they stated they were also very aware of the risks that the global process can pose for FFA members. They stated they have worked hard in the WCPFC to establish management frameworks that recognise the sovereign rights and aspirations of the SIDS in the Pacific, in whose EEZs the vast majority of WCPO catch is taken. They stated they are wary of any process that could undermine the progress made in the region, and stated that unfortunately, the earlier Kobe process did exactly that. They also raised the issue of the cost of engaging in additional processes on top of the already congested schedule of regional meetings and deadlines. They stated they had yet to be convinced that the potential benefits of reinvigorating the Kobe process will outweigh the costs.

443. Canada stated they did not participate in the earlier high-level sessions of the Kobe Process, and understood the current smaller-scale meetings seemed to have good results. It noted that it was unfortunate it was being raised at the conclusion of WCPFC15 and stated they did not fully understand the concerns of FFA members. Canada noted the issue was to how to make the process work better, and suggested that sharing specific practices and experiences (e.g., on managing transshipment at sea) could be very useful among tuna RFMOs. Canada supported involvement in the Kobe process, while expressing reluctance regarding high-level meetings.
444. The EU thanked the presenters, noting the Kobe Process is important, and creates synergies and enhances complementarities between RFMOs. It suggested the process offered only benefits to members. Based on the Concept Note, the EU suggested meetings and working groups offered the most value in the short and medium term. It expressed regret that the WCPFC was not represented in the 2018 Tuna RFMO FAD working group meeting, and stated this was an essential subject for WCPFC members. The EU expressed less interest in the large-scale meetings, but said they may be useful at some time. It saw no risks for any members of the WCPFC in participation, noting that the rights of coastal states were not discussed at the level being proposed, and that the Kobe Process could in any case only reinforce these rights. The EU stated that issues could be addressed in a manner to support developing states throughout the different RFMOs, which offered benefits and synergies rather than risks.
445. The United States stated they would be most interested in working group meetings, which provide an opportunity for technical cooperation. It stated they would like to see support from all RFMOs.
446. Australia stated they could support ongoing meetings of the steering committee, if these were restricted to the Chairs and directors of the tuna RFMOs, and if they developed suggestions for areas of work where coordination and cooperation across the tuna RFMOs could lead to tangible outcomes. It does not support proposals for large global omnibus meetings of all tuna RFMO members as seen under previous iterations of the Kobe Process. Australia asked that the WCPFC Executive Director communicate this position when discussing the potential viability of reigniting the Kobe Process, either in the Kobe Steering Committee or in other forums such as the network of Regional Fisheries Bodies.
447. The EU requested that WCPFC be represented at the 2019 Tuna RFMO FAD working group meeting.

448. The Commission noted the update on the Kobe Process (WCPFC15-2018-30).

449. The Commission supported continued involvement by the Commission Chair and the Executive Director in meetings of the Kobe Process Steering Committee, and the participation in a 2019 meeting of the joint tuna RFMO FAD Working Group by the WCPFC FAD-IWG Chair and a member of the WCPFC Secretariat.

13.3 Research Projects

13.3.1 ABNJ Project

450. Janne Fogelgren (FAO ABNJ Tuna Project) introduced **WCPFC15-2018-31: Report to WCPFC on Progress of the Project Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the ABNJ**. He thanked FAO's partners in the region (WCPFC, FFA, SPC, IATTC, and the government of Fiji), as well as ISSF, WWF and Birdlife International for their collaboration. FAO highlighted the large, successful electronic monitoring and surveillance program in Fiji, involving over 50 vessels, and

a new project (to begin in 2019) in conjunction with ISSF to provide training and undertake trials on biodegradable FADs in the WCPO. They also noted the possible interest from The Global Environment Facility (GEF) in supporting a follow-up ABNJ project.

451. New Zealand, on behalf of FFA members, acknowledged many of the good outcomes of the various ABNJ tuna projects, particularly in the areas of bycatch mitigation and data improvement. They supported the proposed extension of the Common Oceans project through December 2019 and the associated work programme. Regarding the proposed Phase 2 of the ABNJ Project, FFA members stressed the need for any project development to be consistent with, and support, the WCPFC's priorities. They noted with disappointment that a Phase 2 planning meeting was scheduled at the same time as WCPFC15. They stated it was critical that the Commission was meaningfully engaged with the project coordinators to ensure that the WCPFC and the priorities of its CCMs are taken into account.
452. The EU supported the continuation of the project, and noted its contributions, especially in the area of bycatch mitigation.
453. Nauru on behalf of the PNA, fully supported the statement made by New Zealand on behalf of FFA members that any future ABNJ project must support rather than drive the objectives of WCPFC SIDS. They stated that while the ABNJ project has provided valuable input in many areas, it has also introduced some anomalies, such as the huge amount of time spent on shark and other bycatch issues at SC. Any future ABNJ project must be mindful of GEF's purpose, which is to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to achieve environmental outcomes and fulfil their international obligations. The purpose of GEF is not simply to supplement RFMO funding. They stated that the ABNJ project has delivered a range of benefits to WCPFC SIDS, but has also invested in a wide range of activities that are very loosely related to that overall purpose. They noted they will convey these views throughout the design phase, but requested that the Executive Director and all CCMs also be mindful of this when the design team conducts its consultation.
454. The United States echoed the sentiments expressed by other members, and noted they appreciated the hard work done by the project and encouraged the Secretariat to work with ABNJ in the design of a phase 2.

455. The Commission noted the updates on Progress of the Project Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the ABNJ (WCPFC15-2018-31).

13.3.2 Pacific Tuna Tagging Project

456. J. Hampton (SPC) introduced **WCPFC15-2018-32: Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme**, noting that the programme remains an important part of the Commission's science programme, and undertakes tuna tagging cruises each year. In 2018 the programme targeted bigeye tuna in the western tropical Pacific, and in 2019 the focus will be on skipjack within the warm pool. He noted the cooperation from many CCMs, including in assisting with the complex task of tag recovery, and noted in particular the observer programmes and fishery administrations that provide assistance with recovery.
457. Korea thanked SPC and the Secretariat and offered congratulations on the voyage conducted in 2017 targeting skipjack. Korea expressed their satisfaction they could support the tagging program through voluntary contributions, which will continue through 2021.
458. RMI, on behalf of FFA members, thanked SPC for the report. They noted they had strongly supported the project at SC14, and value it highly because the tuna tagging data is becoming increasingly

important in reducing the uncertainty in tropical assessments, and in providing an index of abundance for the most valuable stock in the region, as well as helping with ageing, and migration and connectivity studies.

459. The Commission noted the updates on the Pacific Tuna Tagging Project (**WCPFC15-2018-32**).

13.3.3 WCPFC Tissue Bank – application of the Nagoya Protocol

460. J. Hampton (SPC) introduced **WCPFC15-2018-33: Project 35b: WCPFC Tuna Tissue Bank**, stating that it is an important science activity of the Commission that provides important biological inputs to the stock assessments. Implementation of the Nagoya protocol involves access to and sharing of genetic resources, and SPC, the Secretariat and the WCPFC Legal Adviser are working to assess any associated legal issues and will provide SC and the Commission with options to address any that arise.

461. Kiribati on behalf of FFA members, stated they supported Project 35b at SC14, including the recommendations to maintain and enhance the WCPFC Tissue Bank and its associated workplan and budget for 2019. They noted that the work is extremely important to many components of the Commission's work, particularly regarding the improvement of stock assessments. In addition, they highlighted the valuable work being completed by CCMs' observers and port samplers that are trained and tasked with collecting the biological samples, stating that their contribution is essential to the ongoing success of the Commission's work.

462. The United States supported the suggestion to seek technical advice to better understand the issues associated with the tissue bank and stated they would be happy to engage with the Secretariat and SPC, possibly through SC, to ensure any concerns they had were addressed.

463. The Commission noted the updates on Project 35b: WCPFC Tuna Tissue Bank (**WCPFC15-2018-33**).

13.3.4 WPEA Project

464. Dr Sungkwon Soh (WCPFC Science Manager) introduced **WCPFC15-2018-34: Update on WPEA Project**, which is active in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. The project will be completed in April 2019; a third phase (the Western Pacific East Asia Improved Tuna Monitoring Activity) funded by New Zealand is expected to be fully implemented in 2019 and scheduled for completion in 2022. Key activities of the current WPEA project include:

- a) collection of tuna catch data and estimation of national annual tuna catch by species and by gear;
- b) capacity building in science;
- c) development of guidelines on adaptive management and monitoring of HMS to address climate change;
- d) market-based sustainability, including characterizing tuna supply chain in each country and establishing certification/eco-labeling systems;
- e) development of reference points and harvest control rules at national level;
- f) application of an EAFM to selected tuna fisheries;
- g) updating of national tuna management plans, and national tuna fishery profiles; and
- h) review of legal, policy and institutional arrangements in line with WCPFC requirements.

465. Tuvalu, on behalf of FFA members, stated that the WPEA project has provided the Commission with very valuable data on previously unavailable catch landings in Indonesia, Philippines and Viet Nam. They noted the project is now entering its third iteration with funding from New Zealand after two cycles of support under the GEF International Waters Initiative, and that data from this project is crucial to the ongoing refinement of stock assessment models prepared by SPC. They also noted a need to continue to improve data collection, especially in artisanal fisheries, and asked the countries involved to further enhance and resource this project.
466. Indonesia thanked WCPFC for supporting the project, noting the positive outcomes, both for Indonesia and other countries. It noted the development of a tuna management plan and harvest strategy work in their waters that will be compatible with the harvest strategy being developed for the WCPO. Indonesia also noted outputs in progress, and the increase in the capacity of their scientists and managers. Indonesia acknowledged the support from New Zealand for the third phase of the project.
467. The Philippines thanked the Commission, UNDP, SPC and the Secretariat for their support through the project. The Philippines looked forward to continuing cooperation with the Commission, and thanked New Zealand for their support.
468. Vietnam stated that it was happy to be present and able to express their thanks to WCPFC for its help in implementing the project, stating their fishery management has improved and the project helped in revising Vietnam's fisheries law. The project also helped build capacity to collect fishery data and increase capacity in fisheries management. Vietnam signalled its readiness to implement the project funded by New Zealand, which was just approved by its government. Vietnam reiterated their interest in being a full member of WCPFC in the future.

469. The Commission noted the updates on the WPEA Project (**WCPFC15-2018-34**).

13.4 Election of Officers

470. The Commission made a number of appointments to Commission positions commencing in 2019:
- a) Ms. Jung-re Riley Kim (Korea) was appointed as WCPFC Chair, and Dr. Josie Tamata (Niue) as WCPFC Vice-Chair;
 - b) Mr. Jonathan Kidu (PNG) was appointed as a new FAC Co-Chair;
 - c) Mr. Laurence Edwards (RMI) was appointed as TCC Chair, and Dr. Robert Day (Canada) as TCC Vice-Chair; and
 - d) Mr. Masanori Miyahara (Japan) was appointed as NC Chair, and Mr. Michael Tosatto (United States) as NC Vice-Chair.
471. There were no nominations for SC vice-chair, so the position will remain vacant during 2019.
472. In support of 2019 Intersessional Working Group activities, to be progressed electronically, the Commission confirmed the following:
- a) Mr. Tom Graham (United States) would continue to lead the TCC Observer-related IWG;

- b) Ms. Sarah Williams (New Zealand) would continue to lead the South Pacific Albacore Roapmap IWG;
- c) Ms. Kerry Smith (Australia) would continue to lead the ERandEMWG; and
- d) Mr. Sam Lanwi (RMI) and Dr. Alex Kohl (United States) would co-chair the Transshipment Review IWG.

13.5 Future Meetings

473. The Chair noted that PNG had offered to host WCPFC16, which was confirmed by PNG.
474. Korea thanked PNG for offering to host WCPFC16, while expressing concerns regarding the high accommodation cost and security issues. Korea announced it would be making a financial contribution to help support participation by SIDS and territories at WCPFC16. Korea stated that it would consider how the contribution would be made but were considering a contribution to the SRF.
475. PNG acknowledged Korea's concerns, and stated these were being addressed, and that PNG would be communicating with the Secretariat as details were finalised.
476. Vanuatu supported PNG's interest in hosting WCPFC16, stating they had displayed the capacity to host large meetings.
477. RMI thanked Korea for its offer of support to SIDS and territories.

478. In 2019, the Commission agreed that:

- a) **SC15** would be held on Wednesday 7th – Thursday 15th August 2019 in Pohnpei;
- b) **NC15** would be held on Monday 2nd – Friday 6th September 2019 in Portland Oregon, USA;
- c) **TCC15** would be held on Wednesday 25th September – Tuesday 1st October 2019 in Pohnpei;
- d) **WCPFC16** would be held on Thursday 5th December – Wednesday 11th December in Port Moresby, PNG, with FAC13 and the HOD meeting held immediately prior to WCPFC16, on Wednesday, 4th December.

AGENDA ITEM 14 — OTHER MATTERS

479. No other matters were raised for discussion at WCPFC15.

AGENDA ITEM 15 — SUMMARY REPORT OF THE WCPFC15

480. The Chair outlined the process for adoption of the Summary Report for WCPFC15, with an outcomes document containing agreed decision points to be circulated to the Commission within seven working days following the close of the annual session, and the draft Summary Report to be provided as soon as possible. CCMs would be given thirty working days after circulation of the draft Summary

Report to provide any changes. The complete Summary Report would be finalised intersessionally and posted on the Commission website; representatives would be advised accordingly.

AGENDA ITEM 16 — CLOSE OF MEETING

481. Samoa spoke on behalf of FFA members, the FFA Director-General and FFA Secretariat in thanking the Commission Chair for her work over the last 4 years. They stated she had guided the Commission well through sometimes turbulent seas. Samoa's comments were echoed by many of the members and observers present, who also wished the Chair every success in her next endeavours. They also congratulated the Vice-Chair on being confirmed as Chair beginning in 2019.
482. The Executive Director voiced his gratitude for the Chair's leadership and guidance in the work of the Commission, noting that in his various roles in many Pacific organisations he had never worked with a Chair who was as engaging, inspiring and easy to work with. He thanked the Chair for being a tremendous leader and a good friend to the Secretariat, and assured the incoming Chair that the Secretariat would offer her the same support and cooperation.
483. The Chair said that to call 2018 a busy year would be an understatement, but observed WCPFC15 was finishing before midnight. She thanked members for working through long days and late into the night, and for making good progress and delivering good outcomes to the Commission. She noted that it was a testimony to how important the Commission is, and why participants do the work. The Chair thanked the United States and Hawaii for welcoming the Commission to Honolulu, and expressed the hope that members would have the opportunity to enjoy Honolulu before returning home. She noted the lack of agreement on the harvest strategy dialog and a consolidated sharks measure, but said that engagement on these issues would continue until agreement is reached. She noted the excellent progress on many other issues, including adopting a strong tropical tuna measure and other important CMMs, including a TRP for South Pacific albacore. She congratulated all CCMs for their hard work that culminated in these outcomes. She thanked CCMs for their warm appreciation, and the Executive Director and the Secretariat staff, as well as SPC, for their excellent support. She wished everyone success and expressed her full confidence in the incoming Chair.
484. The meeting closed at 9:25 pm on Friday, 14 December 2018.

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*Draft WCPFC15 Summary Report circulated for Participants review and comments
Draft as at 31 Jan 2019*

WCPFC15 Summary Report Attachment A – Attachment Z

When reviewing the word version please refer to the pdf file that contains the “Attachments for the draft WCPFC15 Summary Report”

