



**SPRFMO**  
South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

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# 9<sup>TH</sup> FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

*18 to 22 January 2022*

**Document name:** SPRFMO FAC9-Report

**Meeting location:** Virtual

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## 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

*Held remotely, 18 to 22 January 2022*

### FAC 9 – Meeting Report

#### 1. Welcome and Introduction

1. The Finance and Administration Committee Chairperson, Mr Jimmy Villavicencio (Ecuador), opened the 9th meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee and welcomed participants.
2. Chairperson Villavicencio briefly provided an overview of the subjects to be discussed and pointed out the importance on agreeing on a budget that allows the Organisation to continue operating smoothly.
3. The list of participants is available as Annex 1 to this report.

#### 2. Administrative Arrangements

##### *a. Adoption of the Agenda*

4. **The FAC adopted** the Meeting Agenda (FAC9-Doc01) available as Annex 2 of this report without amendments.

##### *b. Meeting Documents*

5. **The FAC approved** the list of meeting documents (FAC9-Doc03\_rev1) received in accordance with RoP 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6.
6. The Executive Secretary noted that there was one late paper submitted by the UNEP Common Oceans Program (COMM10-Obs06), on the cross sectoral project for the ABNJ Deepseas Fisheries Project. The Paper (COMM10-Obs02) submitted by the IMCS network was added to the discussions of the FAC.

#### 3. SPRFMO Report of Income

7. In accordance with Financial Regulation 4.11, the Secretariat presented FAC9-Doc04\_rev1, reporting on annual contributions from Members, any voluntary contributions received, and any investments and other income received.
8. The Secretariat informed the meeting that recently, a voluntary contribution of NZ\$26,231 had been received from China. China noted that their voluntary contribution was made to support squid research. The FAC was appreciative of China's voluntary contribution.
9. Peru noted that their annual contribution (2021-22) has been delayed due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the national economy but noted that they plan to honour their financial obligation and expect to pay the full arrears soon.
10. **The FAC noted** the SPRFMO Report of Income (FAC9-Doc04\_rev1).

#### 4. SPRFMO Financial Reporting

##### *a. Financial Statements*

11. The Secretariat presented an overview of the 2020-21 Annual Financial Statements of the Commission (FAC9-Doc05).
12. **The FAC recommended** the Commission accept these Annual Financial Statements.



### *b. Auditor Report*

13. The Secretariat presented the Auditor's Report in accordance with Financial Regulations 9.7, 9.8 and 9.9. In the Auditor's opinion, the "*special purpose financial statements of the Organisation for the year ended 30 June 2021 are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the basis of accounting as described in Note 1 of the special purpose financial statements*".
14. **The FAC recommended** that the Commission accept the Auditor's Report.

### *c. Statement of Transfers of Appropriations*

15. **The FAC noted that** no transfers of appropriations were made during the Financial Year 2020-21 (FAC-Doc05.1).

### *d. Accumulated Surplus Account*

16. In accordance with Financial Regulation 4.3, the FAC reviewed the amount available in the Accumulated Surplus Account (Refer to Page 9, FAC9-Doc05). The FAC noted that the net amount available in the Accumulated Surplus Account, in excess of the three-month operating cost of the Organisation, was NZ\$437,964 as of 30 June 2021.
17. Some Members noted that in accordance with Financial Regulation 4.5, if the surplus is higher than that required for three months of operation, the surplus shall be returned to Members, unless decided otherwise by the Commission. Other Members expressed an interest in maintaining a healthy surplus for infrequent, but unexpected costs, and would prefer to be prepared to manage these situations without undue burden.
18. **The FAC recommended** that an amount of NZ\$437,964 be retained in the Accumulated Surplus account.

### *e. SPRFMO Contingency Fund*

19. In accordance with Annex 2 of the Financial Regulations, the Secretariat reported on the status of the Contingency Fund (FAC9-Doc05.2). The FAC noted that the level and resourcing for the Contingency Fund was NZ\$129,327 (33% of the level determined in Annex 2 of the Financial Regulations).
20. The FAC discussed the recommendation to approve the proposed budget amount of NZ\$30,000 to rebuild the Contingency Fund for Financial Year 2022-23 (as per FAC9-Doc06).
21. It was clarified that the Accumulated Surplus Account could be drawn on to contribute to the Contingency Fund (as was done last year) and potentially achieve the target rebuilding level sooner.
22. After discussions on the overall SPRFMO budget, **the FAC recommended** that NZ\$30,000 be allocated to rebuild the Contingency Fund.

### *f. Scientific Support Fund and Developing States Fund*

23. In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.4, the Secretariat presented the status of both the Scientific Support and Developing States Funds (FAC9-Doc05.3). The FAC was invited to make recommendations to the Commission regarding the proposed budget allocation for those Funds.
24. There was extensive discussion about the remaining balance for the Scientific Support Fund and the proposed 2022 allocation of NZ\$28,000. It was noted that the current remaining balance of NZ\$131,315 is sufficient to cover all proposed scientific activities proposed for 2022-23 (totalling NZ\$101,460), with a remaining balance of NZ\$29,855. Members expressed interest in opposing the 2022 allocation to the SC Support Fund and funding the proposed activities with the extant funds, to reduce the budget and financial burden on Members.
25. Chile noted that the proposed allocation for the Scientific Support category does not include two projects related to Jack mackerel research (connectivity and ageing) that were proposed to SC9 and included in the SC Workplan. It was also noted that costings for those projects have yet to be done, and so there was no attempt made to allocate funds when the financial requirements to carry out those projects are not yet known. The European Union noted



that they are considering providing funds to support research activities in SPRFMO and may be in a position to provide additional details after the meeting.

26. After discussions on the overall SPRFMO budget, **the FAC recommended** that the proposed allocation of NZ\$28,000 for Scientific Support be removed on the basis that sufficient funds remained in the fund to support the planned 2022-23 scientific activities. **The FAC agreed** that this would not be a precedent for future budgets and that it is essential to ensure that SPRFMOs scientific work is adequately resourced.
27. After discussions on the overall SPRFMO budget, **the FAC recommended** that the proposed allocation of NZ\$35,000 for Developing States be retained.

## 5. Future Budgets and Contributions

### *a. Draft Budget for financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24*

28. In accordance with Convention Article 15.4 and Financial Regulation 2, the draft budget for the Financial Year 2022-23 and the forecast budget for the Financial Year 2023-24 were examined by the FAC (FAC9-Doc06).
29. For Financial Year 2022-23, the net total proposed budget amount proposed by the Secretariat is NZ\$1,513,637 with a forecast budget for Financial Year 2023-24 also provided for an amount of NZ \$1,628,562. Both budgets assume that the current travel restrictions will ease, and that in-person hosted SPRFMO meetings will resume. The budget is supported by a travel plan (FAC9-Doc06.1) that, to the extent possible, identifies all proposed official travel, including the approximate expenditure and justification for each trip.
30. The Secretariat briefly described their budgetary expenses, including the resignation of the IT Manager, and the associated change to outsourced IT services. The Secretariat also noted the forecast costs associated with the performance review (NZ\$30,000) would be adequate to cover travel costs and associated ancillary expenses, but not fees for review panel members.
31. One Member inquired about the nature of the forecast database costs. The Secretariat noted that once the new Data Manager was acquainted with the systems, there will likely be desired changes and developments requested to improve efficiency and ensure effective stewardship of the organisations data assets, but no immediate changes are planned for the upcoming year.
32. One Member suggested reducing the proposed Contingency Fund allocation to NZ\$20,000 and noted its preference of maintaining the existing level of budgetary expenditures.
33. Observer Programme accreditation costs were discussed, with the European Union noting that it had agreed to fund the accreditation process for Members through to 31 December 2022. The FAC noted that in Paragraph 22 of CMM 16-2021, the “*SPRFMO OP Accreditation Evaluator shall be paid out of the Commission budget*”, and so no Member should be expected to pay the costs for the work of the Accreditation Evaluator from their own budget.
34. The FAC extensively discussed the importance of supporting the SC, as the success of the Organisation depends on scientific advice. It was also noted that due to exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID pandemic, there were Scientific Support funds that were unused due to travel restrictions and the delay of scientific projects. As a result, the FAC discussed removing the Scientific Support fund allocation of NZ\$28,000 from the budget for Financial Year 2022-2023, as sufficient funds remain to cover all proposed scientific activities for the upcoming year. Members noted that this was an exceptional decision due to the unusually large amount of unspent Scientific Support funds, and did not imply a lack of commitment to support SPRFMO scientific activities now or in the future.
35. Members noted the financial burden associated with the proposed steep increase in Member contributions during a time when many countries are experiencing significant economic challenges associated with the Covid19 pandemic. The FAC acknowledged that the anticipated annual contribution increase was mainly due to the reliance on voluntary contributions in past years.



36. The Secretariat introduced COMM10-WP03 which updated the proposed draft and forecast budgets to show the effects of reallocating the amount previously proposed for an IT Manager into the item for IT support (reflecting the now outsourced IT services) and removal of the 2022-23 allocation to the Scientific Support Fund. **The FAC recommended** that the 2022-23 budget as shown in COMM-WP03 be accepted by the Commission.
37. In accordance with Financial Regulation 4.7, It was noted that the contributions have been calculated based on the financial formula adopted in the 6th Commission Meeting.
38. The FAC noted the significant increase in contributions was not associated with an increase in operating costs, but rather because voluntary contributions had supplemented the budget in previous years. The FAC agreed to recommend that the budget be funded through a combination of Member contributions and other sources to assist Members to manage the increase in budget fluctuations. In doing so, the FAC agreed to reallocate 2021-22 unspent travel and anticipated CNCP contributions to offset the 2022-23 budget. Chile expressed their willingness to maintain its contribution from the 2021-22 financial year. The FAC thanked Chile. The Secretariat agreed to transmit WP16 to Members and proposed the work continue in the Commission.

## 6. Matters Concerning the Financial Regulations

### *a. Operation of the Developing States Fund and the Scientific Support Fund*

39. The Secretariat prepared a paper (FAC9-Doc08) in response to a request made by FAC8 where several Members and the SC had expressed that they were in favour of reviewing the caps on the Scientific Support and Developing States Fund.
40. Regarding the operation of the Developing States Fund, FAC9-Doc08 included a proposal to remove the cap on unspent appropriations as set by Financial Regulation 2.4, transfer the balance of the Special Requirements Fund to the Developing States Fund and discontinue the Special Requirements Fund. The proposed change would allow for greater transparency of funding sources, including voluntary contributions, and would still be subject to the same level of FAC oversight as previously.
41. A clarification was made that allocations to the Developing States Fund that were not used for travel and meeting attendance could in fact be used for other purposes (e.g., capacity building activities); this was reflected in a revision to the paper (FAC9-Doc08\_rev1).
42. **The FAC agreed** with the proposed actions suggested by the Secretariat in FAC9-Doc08\_rev1 regarding operation of the Developing States Fund. The FAC noted that these actions would require a revision of the Financial Regulations and requested the Secretariat produce a Working Paper.
43. The Secretariat presented COMM10-WP05 containing suggested revisions to the Financial Regulations to support the operation of the Developing States Fund. One Member requested that the proposed text in paragraph 5 be adjusted to clarify that the funds are to be reviewed annually. Another Member requested more time to fully consider the proposed changes. The Secretariat offered to produce a revised paper incorporating the suggestion and **the FAC agreed** that this WP should be further considered during the Commission meeting.
44. FAC9-Doc08\_rev1 similarly proposed to remove the cap on unspent appropriations in the Scientific Support Fund. As the Scientific Support Fund grows, with the additional projects and allocations required to support the SPRFMO objectives, the likelihood of exceeding the cap has increased. Last year, the FAC recalled that a derogation was made to carry over the surplus, and the FAC is faced with the same situation again this year especially considering that many of the intended scientific activities have been delayed due to the pandemic.
45. Three options were discussed by the FAC to address the cap issue in the Scientific Support Fund: i) to retain the cap and make an exceptional decision again to carry over the surplus; ii) increase the cap; or iii) remove the cap altogether.





46. It was noted that there was an important distinction between unspent appropriations versus uncommitted appropriations (most of the appropriations towards the Scientific Support Fund are committed as indicated in the SC multi annual workplan).
47. Members generally supported a derogation of Scientific Support funds for Financial Year 2022-23 as not all Members were comfortable with removing the cap on surplus funds nor was there broad acceptance to increase the cap at this point. There was, however, acceptance of rolling over the unused funds to be made available for the upcoming financial year. It was noted by the FAC that by agreeing to another derogation, the potential administrative burden associated with dealing with excess surplus in future years has not been mitigated.
48. **The FAC recommended** the Commission approve a derogation to carry over the unused Scientific Support funds from Financial Year 2021-22 for use in the Financial Year 2022-23 but does not recommend any further changes to the cap at this time.

## 7. Matters Concerning the Secretariat and the Staff Regulations

### *a. Secretariat report on 2021 intersessional period activities*

49. The Secretariat referred to FAC9-Doc09\_rev1 and highlighted that Annex 1 shows a significant increase in the number of data files being processed by the Secretariat (twice the amount received last year, mostly related to transshipment notifications) and Annex 2 shows the number and type of new tasks assigned to the Secretariat last year (in addition to those assigned previously). One Member requested additional detail regarding one of the meetings that the Executive Secretary attended as well as clarifications on the presented list of observers. The Executive Secretary committed to circulate a letter after the meeting regarding his participation at the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Globe Dialogue with Regional Seas Organisations and Regional Fishery Bodies (virtual workshop). The Secretariat committed to produce a revised paper with the necessary clarifications. Noting the lack of time the FAC was not able to note the paper but recommended that the Commission consider a rev2 version once it was available.

### *b. Secretariat Staffing Strategy*

50. Before introducing FAC9-Doc10, the Executive Secretary updated the FAC regarding recent changes that have occurred within the Secretariat. Mr John Cheva has resigned from his part-time position after working for the Organisation for 5 years and Ms Marianne Vignaux, the previous Data Manager, has moved on from the Organisation after working for SPRFMO since (and prior to) its inception. The FAC acknowledged the efforts of past staff and wished them all the best in the future.
51. The Executive Secretary introduced the new Data Manager, Dr Tiffany Vidal, and the FAC warmly welcomed her to the Organisation.
52. The Executive Secretary introduced a workplan to develop a Secretariat strategic plan that intended to use Member input to inform Secretariat tasking and priorities and ensure that the future resourcing needs of the Organisation are met. The FAC expressed disappointment that they did not get a staffing strategy considering that this item had been requested in 2020 and felt that a Secretariat strategic plan was unnecessary. The FAC reiterated its request for a staffing strategy, to be presented at the next FAC meeting, to ensure the staffing profile is appropriate.
53. The Executive Secretary informed the FAC that those professional staff who required visas to work in New Zealand are issued with Official visas that expire after ten years and that currently there is one Secretariat staff member who is approaching the ten-year maximum. The Executive Secretary intends to work with the appropriate New Zealand government authorities to bring forward a paper to FAC next year that will provide a more complete picture of this situation and any related Member considerations.



*c. Secretariat staff performance review summary*

54. The Executive Secretary referred to FAC9-Doc11\_Restricted which summarised the staff performance reviews according to Staff Regulation 6.6. **The FAC noted** this paper with no discussion

## 8. Meetings of the Commission & Subsidiary Bodies

*a. Date and Venue for 2023*

55. The Russian Federation confirmed their ability and intention to host the 2023 Annual meeting (COMM11) in St Petersburg. The FAC warmly welcomed this confirmation and expressed a sincere hope that they would be able to resume face-to-face meetings in 2023.

*b. Potential hosting 2024 & 2025*

56. Ecuador confirmed their ability to host the annual meeting in 2024 (COMM12) and the FAC thanked them for their flexibility considering the delays in the annual meeting cycle caused by the Covid19 pandemic.

*c. Scientific Committee Meeting 2022 and potential hosting 2022 & 2023*

57. Korea re-confirmed its ability and intention to host the 2022 SC10 meeting (subject to global circumstances). The dates would be sometime between mid-September and mid-October including the pre-SC workshops. Korea would confirm the dates in consultation with the Secretariat and the SC Chair as soon as possible, and advise the Commission accordingly.
58. Panama offered to host the 2023 SC meeting.
59. On behalf of the SC, the FAC thanked Korea and Panama for their offers.

## 9. Other Matters

*a. FAC Vice-Chairperson (currently vacant)*

60. There were no nominations for a FAC vice-Chairperson, and the Chairperson requested that Members consider the vacant position further during the upcoming Commission meeting.

*b. SPRFMO Anniversary Campaign*

61. The Secretariat presented FAC9-Doc13 outlining potential options and activities to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the organisation. The FAC agreed that much had been accomplished and that this should be celebrated. The reprint of the Convention was generally supported, however the FAC considered that the anniversary campaign should have a low environmental impact. The FAC also queried whether the timeframes were too ambitious for agreeing the content of any publications. **The FAC recommended** that the proposed budget allocation of NZ\$20,000 is accepted noting that the item for polo shirts would be removed, the timeframes may be extended, and the Secretariat should remain mindful of environmental impacts when progressing the campaign.

*c. 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Common Oceans ABNJ Program*

62. The FAO presented the Deep Seas project (COMM10-Obs01), its relationship to SPRFMO activities and the extent to which SPRFMO could be involved. Many members expressed in principle support for the proposal by the FAO and recommended that Members continue working on this issue in the margins. The FAC noted that SPRFMO comments on the proposal would be provided to the Commission.



63. COMM10-Obs06 was presented by a representative for the Global Ocean Forum who outlined the cross sectorial project intention to build and enhance capacity in ABNJ. The FAC was unable to consider this paper during its meeting due to timing constraints and recommended that the Commission give it further consideration.

## 10. Adoption of Report

64. **The FAC9 adopted** the report on 22 January 2022 at 12:33 pm NZDT.

## 11. Meeting Close

65. The meeting was closed on 22 January 2022 at 12:34 pm NZDT



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## 9<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FAC)

*Held remotely, 18 - 22 January 2022 (NZDT)*

### ANNEX 1 – List of Participants

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# 9<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FAC)

*Held remotely, 18 - 22 January 2022 (NZDT)*

## ANNEX 2 – FAC 9 Meeting Agenda

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
2. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS
  - a. Adoption of the Agenda
  - b. Meeting Documents
3. SPRFMO REPORT OF INCOME
4. SPRFMO FINANCIAL REPORTING
  - a. Financial Statements
  - b. Auditor Report
  - c. Statement of transfers of appropriations
  - d. Accumulated Surplus Account
  - e. SPRFMO Contingency Fund
  - f. Status of Scientific Support Fund & Developing States Fund
5. FUTURE BUDGETS AND CONTRIBUTIONS
  - a. Draft Budget for financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24
  - b. Contributions for financial years 2022-23 and estimate for 2023-24
6. MATTERS CONCERNING THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS
  - a. Operation of the Developing States Fund and the Scientific Support Fund
7. MATTERS CONCERNING THE SECRETARIAT & THE STAFF REGULATIONS
  - a. Secretariat report on 2021 intersessional period activities
  - b. Secretariat staffing strategy
8. MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION & SUBSIDIARY BODIES
  - a. Date and Venue for 2023
  - b. Potential hosting 2024 & 2025
  - c. Scientific Committee 2022 and potential hosting 2023 & 2024
9. OTHER MATTERS
  - a. FAC Vice-Chairperson (currently vacant)
  - b. SPRFMO Anniversary Campaign
  - c. 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Common Oceans ABNJ Program
10. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT
11. CLOSE OF MEETING