# 14TH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

*7 to 12 September 2026, Tórshavn, Faroe Islands*

## SC 14 – Doc 08
## Scientific Support Fund and Voluntary Contributions – Status and Review

*Secretariat*

## 1. Summary and recommendations

This paper reports on the outstanding 2026-27 SC activities and the funds available in the Scientific Support Fund (SSF) and science-related Voluntary Contributions (VCs). This is to support the SC's implementation of Multi-Annual Workplan activities this year (2026-27) and to inform refinements of the Multi-Annual Workplan and associated funding needs for next financial year (2027-28) for COMM15 consideration. The paper also invites the views on potential improvements to the Scientific Support Fund to better support the SC. All funds are reported in New Zealand Dollars.

The SC is invited to:

- ***Note*** *the following funding currently available for SC activities:*
    - *$57,000 SSF balance*
    - *$24,000, Chile VC, jack mackerel*
    - *$61,600, China VC, squid*
    - *$57,000, EU VC, jack mackerel MSE*
    - *$48,000, EU VC, assessments for other species*
    - *$46,000, EU VC, VME thresholds*
    - *$1,830, US VC, jack mackerel MSE*
    - *$1,938, Vanuatu VC, jack mackerel*
- ***Consider*** *the pending 2026-27 SC activities, including their timing and resource allocation.*
- ***Provide feedback*** *on the SSF and its administration, including experiences and potential improvements.*

## 2. Background

The Scientific Committee (SC) Multi-Annual Workplan is resourced by in-kind and financial contributions. This includes the SPRFMO Scientific Support Fund (SSF), which is funded from the annual Commission 'Scientific Support' Budget Category. Members and Observers also make voluntary contributions (VCs) for a range of activities, including for science.

Each year at the annual meeting, the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) and the Commission consider the annual 'Scientific Support' Budget Category transfer to the SSF. The allocation is based on SC reporting and requests, particularly the draft SC Multi-Annual Workplan.

An action of the FAC workplan (COMM14-WP17_rev2, Annex 5b) is that the Secretariat lead a review of the SSF as provided for by Financial Regulation 2.5, which provides that the Commission will review the 'Scientific Support' budget category at least once every four years. This is the first review of the SSF since the dedicated SSF account was established in 2017.

# 3. 2026-27 Fund Balances

## 3.1. Scientific Support Fund

**$57,000** of Commission funding is currently available in the SSF for activities this financial year (1 July 2026-30 June 2027). Commission approval would need to be sought to accrue to 2027-28 any unspent SSF appropriations beyond $50,000 (Financial Regulation 2.4). While some VCs are currently held in the SSF, their balances are reported separately below for clarity and because of the different constraints around them. In particular, VC balances are available beyond this financial year.

## 3.2. Voluntary Contributions

This section summarises available VCs and those utilised this financial year, including available balances and purpose. Individual VC providers determine their terms and conditions, including purpose and time periods. Unspent VC funds are generally carried over into the following financial year. Where a VC time period is specified, funds typically need spending in that period, and any unspent funds are returned to the VC provider.

### 3.2.1. Chile

**$24,000** remains available from Chile's VC which was originally allocated to **jack mackerel** work but is unspent.

### 3.2.2. China

**$61,600** is available from China's VCs for the support of **squid** scientific research ($51,330 provided most recently in June 2026). This VC has been used to co-fund the SC14 rapporteur (with the Vanuatu VC) and support the squid assessment work (with the Pew VC) for which $2,000 remains earmarked) and. It has also been used for the squid connectivity work (undertaken by China and Peru), with $8,000 of the available balance allocated to further research by coastal State Members.

### 3.2.3. European Union

The Secretariat is working with the EU to finalise a new EU grant for a two-year project, 'Support to science-based decision making in the SPRFMO'. It is being planned to run from 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2028. The project has five Work Packages (WPs) which would be implemented with and through the SC and its Multi-Annual Workplan. The first WP is related to project management and implementation, with the remaining four addressing science and data work:

1. Jack mackerel MSE – $145,000 ($88,000 for the current MSE contract + $57,000 follow up contingency)
2. Assessments for other fished species including chub mackerel – $48,000
3. Determining VME thresholds – $46,000
4. Data management overhaul – $159,000

This project follows the conclusion of the June 2024–May 2026 project (Science based decision making) and builds on some of the outputs. Final financial and project reporting to the EU is currently being finalised. The concluded project had four WPs:

1. Sustainable management of the Jack mackerel stock.
2. Sustainable management of other species in the SPRFMO Convention Area (which was reallocated to the MSE work approved by COMM14).
3. Improve the collection, storage, use and quality of data support science and compliance.
4. Enhance the governance and performance of the Organisation (the Second SPRFMO Performance Review 2024).

### 3.2.4. United States of America

**$ 1,830** is available from the US's VCs to support the **jack mackerel** MSE work. The 2025 VC ($34,381) and balance of the 2024 VC ($9,319) were used to support the jack mackerel MSE workshop (June 2026, SCW17), and SC14 expert participation.

**$9,731** remains available for the publication of a Special Issue in a scientific journal and leads from the 2023 Symposium on State of the Art of Habitat Monitoring, held in Chile and sponsored by SPRFMO.

### 3.2.5. Vanuatu

**$1,938** is available from Vanuatu's June 2025 VC ($45,000) for the **jack mackerel** benchmark workshop (June 2026, SCW16) and SC13 invited assessment expert. The VC was also used to co-fund the SC14 rapporteur (with the China VC).

Vanuatu's 2026 VC ($35,000) was fully utilised for the MSE work approved by COMM14 (co-funded with the EU VCs).

### 3.2.6. The Pew Charitable Trusts

Pew's 2026 VC ($17,050) was fully utilised for the squid assessment work (also funded with the China VC).

## 4. 2026-27 Activities

This section details the 2026-27 Workplan activities that are partially complete, ongoing or yet to be initiated with their respective Workplan funding allocations and balances. The SC may wish to consider and adjust the planning and funding allocation of these activities within the parameters of the Commission agreed Workplan.

Activities and costs for 2027-28 onwards will be set out in the SC Chairperson's draft Multi-Annual Workplan (forthcoming SC Working Paper) which the SC will work on over the course of the SC14 meeting. This will form the basis of the proposed 2027-28 'Scientific Support' Budget Category transfer to the SSF and any proposed accrual of unspent 2026-27 appropriations in the SSF beyond $50,000.

| Code | Activity | Status | Funding |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1.3 | Squid Workshop including potential assessment techniques, abundance indices and simulated assessment; to be held in person | Not yet held.<br>SCW18 held in July 2026 in Shanghai was originally planned for 2025-26 but rescheduled. | $25,000 was budgeted in the Workplan and is available |
| 3.1.8 | Perform a stock assessment to evaluate the current status of the jumbo squid fishery. | Pending | $10,000 is available from the original allocation for item 3.1 Squid assessment:<br>• $2,000 China VC<br>• $8,000 SSF Commission funding |
| 3.1.10 | Extend the Operating Model to explicitly incorporate environmental effects on population dynamics, enabling research on climate change impacts. | | |
| 3.1.11 | Design climate-sensitive harvest control rules tailored to squid life history and the SPRFMO decision-making framework. | | |
| 3.4.1 | Collect samples for population genomic studies (Convention Area and adjacent National Jurisdiction Areas) | Ongoing: Peru and China sampling has been funded. | $59,600 is available from the China VC. $8,000 of this is earmarked for Chile and Ecuador sampling. |
| 4.3.2 | Publication of a Special Issue from the Symposium on State of the Art of Habitat Monitoring | Pending. A Special Issue is currently being prepared and expected after SC14. | $9,731 is available from the US VC |

# 5. SSF Review

This section outlines the architecture and management of the SSF, changes to the Secretariat's administration of it, and seeks SC views on where there may be further room for improvements.

## 5.1. SSF Architecture

The SSF is a standalone bank account of the Secretariat. It has been established on the basis of Regulation 2 (Budget) of the Financial Regulations:

> *2.4 Unless otherwise decided by the Commission, for the budget category "Scientific Support" unspent appropriations may accrue between financial years, up to a limit of $50 000. Beyond this level such funds shall be treated as surplus and transferred to the accumulated surplus account.*
>
> *5. The Commission will review the "Scientific Support" and "Developing States" categories at least once every four years.*

Beyond this, the Financial Regulations do not establish a Fund or any specific reporting or administration requirements as they do for the other Organisational funds i.e. the Contingency Fund, Developing States Fund, Spanish Interpretation Fund (Financial Regulation Annexes 1-3).

### 5.2. SSF Administration

The annual budget allocation is based on the draft SC Multi-Annual Workplan developed at each SC meeting, which the Commission may adjust before adopting, in the context of the wider draft Organisational budget which the FAC recommends to the Commission. At the start of the financial year (1 July), the Secretariat transfers the budget allocation to the SSF.

In the past, some VCs have been held in the SSF. Going forward they will be held outside of the SSF and then disbursed through the SSF as they are drawn on for scientific activities (some VCs are used only partially for scientific activities). This separates and simplifies the management of the VCs and the Organisational funds in the SSF, which have different requirements, and improves the monitoring and reporting of both. Expenditure of all these funds is on the basis of the SC Multi-Annual Workplan agreed by the Commission and any preferences of VC providers.

### 5.3. Unspent Appropriations

The SSF contains the accumulated unspent appropriations from previous financial years. As noted above, unless otherwise decided by the Commission, unspent appropriations may accrue between financial years, up to a limit of $50,000. Beyond this level such funds are to be treated as surplus and transferred to the accumulated surplus account (Financial Regulation 2.4) i.e. they are no longer available for science activities and are reallocated by the Commission through the budget process.

Until COMM14 this approach was not routinely applied, with unspent appropriations being automatically rolled forward to the following financial year. In 2025 the Secretariat changed how it reports on the SSF to FAC to align with the financial year (July-June) and the Financial Regulations and improve transparency and usability for Members and the Secretariat. This report to SC makes similar changes to support its planning and budgeting in the current and future financial years. Any Secretariat recommendations to the FAC on accruals between financial years are made in consultation with the SC Chairperson and based on financial year budgeting in the draft Workplan.

### 5.4. Areas for improvement

The Secretariat seeks the experiences and views of the SC on any further potential future improvements to the SSF, including its architecture and administration. For example:

1. *What currently works well? What could be improved?*
2. *How can the SSF best support SC multiannual planning?*
3. *Can reporting to SC and FAC be improved on the SSF and science related VCs?*