
13TH MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FAC)

Panama City, Panama, 26 to 27 February 2026

FAC 13 – Doc 17 Secretariat 2025 Administrative Report *Secretariat*

1. Summary and recommendations

This document provides an overview of general Secretariat activities since the last annual meeting.

FAC is invited to

- ***Note the contents of this document***

2. Background

Each year the Secretariat reports on its administrative activities to the FAC. This complements the Secretariat's reporting to the Commission each year on SPRFMO's cooperation with other organisations pursuant to Article 31 of the Convention (COMM14-Doc07), and the [Annual Report](#) produced after each annual meeting pursuant to Article 29 of the Convention. This year's reporting is rationalised to avoid duplication with this and other reporting to the FAC, and focus on the key activities and changes of relevance to the FAC.

3. SPRFMO Officers

Commission

Chairperson: Ms Jung-re Riley Kim (Korea, elected in 2024, 2024-2026 term)

Vice Chairperson: Ms Alexa Cole (United States of America, elected in 2023, re-elected in 2025, 2025-2027 term)

Scientific Committee

Chairperson: Dr Ricardo Oliveros Ramos (Peru, elected in 2024, 2024-2026 term)

Vice Chairperson: Dr Ignacio Paya (Chile, elected in 2024, 2024-2026 term)

Compliance and Technical Committee

Chairperson: Ms Rebeca Espinoza (Ecuador, elected in 2024, 2024-2026 term)

Vice Chairperson: Mr Zhao Ming (China, elected in 2025, 2025-2027 term).

Finance and Administration Committee

Chairperson: Mr Juan Santibañez (Chile, elected in 2025, 2025-2027 term)

Vice Chairperson: Ms María Sierra (Panama, elected in 2025, 2025-2027 term)

Eastern Sub-Regional Management Committee

n/a

Western Sub-Regional Management Committee

n/a

Secretariat

Executive Secretary: Mr James Brown (since April 2025); Mr Craig Loveridge (March 2021 – March 2025)

Coordination and Communications Officer: Ms Susana Delgado (since July 2016; staff since 2013)

Data Manager: Mr Bernard Vigga (since November 2023)

Compliance Manager: Mr Randy Jenkins (since November 2020)

Finance Manager: Ms Yanbin Liu (August 2016-August 2025); position vacant.

4. Key Secretariat Activities

SPRFMO Executive Secretary

Mr Craig Loveridge completed his four-year term as Executive Secretary in March 2025. Mr James Brown was appointed to the position of Executive Secretary at COMM13, in February 2025, and started in the role in April 2025 following a handover with Mr Loveridge.

SPRFMO Headquarters Agreement

During 2025, the Executive Secretary met regularly with New Zealand government representatives, in their capacity as hosts of the SPRFMO premises, to discuss SPRFMO activities and staff arrangements. The Secretariat provided MFAT with its biannual reporting on staffing, which MFAT reports on their website¹. An exchange of letters between New Zealand and the Chairperson of the Commission was facilitated for the entry into force of the Dependant Employment Arrangement on 24 April 2025, which allows eligible dependants of SPRFMO Secretariat staff to work in New Zealand under specified conditions.

Observer Programme Accreditation Process

The Secretariat coordinated the Observer Programme accreditation process, the outcomes of which are found in CTC13-Doc09, which summarises the evaluations and accreditation status of Observer Programmes assessed in 2025. Following the approval of COMM13, an observer programme accreditation evaluator contract was entered into with the *SeeMORE – Marine Observation Research Education* to complement the evaluation work of MRAG. The Secretariat worked with both providers to ensure the timely and appropriate implementation of the SPRFMO Observer Programme Accreditation process.

Administration of Projects, Grants, and Voluntary Contributions

The Secretariat administered the following ongoing or new projects and grants, and coordinated and/or conducted activities and tasks under them:

Counterpart	Project/Grant/Voluntary Contribution
China	Voluntary contributions for squid research (genetics)
European Union	Grant to support the establishment of the SPRFMO Observer Programme
European Union	Grant in support of science-based decision making in SPRFMO
United States	NOAA grant to support the Secretariat's compliance work
United States	Voluntary contributions to support jack mackerel MSE work
Vanuatu	Voluntary contribution to support science and other priorities, including jack mackerel research
The Pew Charitable Trusts	Voluntary contribution to support the in-person workshop of the Assessment Simulation Task Team for the Jumbo Flying Squid. The Secretariat facilitated what was the first cash voluntary contribution to SPRFMO from an Observer.

¹ <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/intergovernmental-organisations/international-organisations-in-new-zealand/south-pacific-regional-fisheries-management-organisation-sprfmo>

Banking

The accounts held with the SPRFMO bank, BNZ, were reviewed and efficiencies and cost savings found. Several dormant bank accounts were closed, and greater use was made of higher interest yielding accounts while maintaining liquidity of funds.

Strict banking regulations continued to result in the withholding of SPRFMO's incoming and outgoing international payments. Senior level engagement with the bank has improved an understanding of SPRFMO's activities and context and has facilitated these processes, but it remains necessary to provide a high level of paperwork in every instance to release funds. This can be burdensome for Members as well as the Secretariat.

Internal Systems Improvements

The incoming Executive Secretary led a range of internal system improvements with the support of the wider Secretariat staff.

The following internal policies were updated:

- Annual leave, to reflect new systems; encourage staff to take leave; fully align with the Staff Regulations.
- Sick leave, to align with the Staff Regulations and New Zealand Holidays Act.
- Mobile Phones, to simplify the process for reimbursing staff costs.
- Credit cards, to clarify the process for staff to reimburse any personal expenses incurred on a SPRFMO credit card and the process of reimbursing SPRFMO expenses incurred personally.

The following new internal policies were established:

- Home leave, to clarify and align entitlements and planning process with the Staff Regulations and organisational budget process.
- Staff Training and Development, placing emphasis on staff development and establishing eligibility and the application and reporting process.
- Employee Assistance Program, explaining how staff can access support services.
- IT, reflecting the service agreement procedures in place with the Secretariat's IT service provider
- Security, reflecting the mandatory 2018 Secretariat Security Standards² and related 2019 Mobile Device Acceptable Use Policy.

A new annual staff performance planning and assessment process was established to align with performance management best practice. This includes a new performance plan template and guidance, with performance conversations throughout the year.

There was an internal refresh of understanding and expectations around security (including but not limited to reference to the Secretariat Security Standards), and staff duties under the Staff Regulations and UN Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service.

The Secretariat's IT hardware, software, systems and practices were rationalised and modernised to reduce operating costs and increase efficiency and security. There was a move away from a server-based system to SharePoint and desktops retired in favour of a laptop only environment (with the one exception of the Data Manager for budgetary reasons); a video conferencing system was installed to improve online collaboration; and software licences were rationalised.

Secretariat providers

All services and subscriptions were reviewed (e.g., for software licences, utilities). Changes made included receiving invoices where possible in NZ\$ to stabilise and reduce costs and allow for GST rebates. The secure

² <https://sprfmo.int/assets/Basic-Documents/56f9eb86e0/Secretariat-Security-Standards-March-2018.pdf>

box account with NZ Vault was closed as it had not been accessed for a number of years, and SPRFMO's PO Box was reopened after a period of closure.

SPRFMO's insurances were reviewed, and organisational travel insurance established in place of taking out insurance for individual trips. This approach has reduced both organisational costs and insurance-related risks.

Vitae was commissioned as the Secretariat's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, with the previous provider having lapsed. This provides staff with free access to confidential wellbeing services, including counselling and support for challenges in their personal or professional life. The EAP model is use-based rather than subscription-based, allowing organisational costs to be managed according to actual usage.

The main Secretariat providers are:

- Financial services and payroll: [Findex New Zealand](#)
- Auditors: [Crowe New Zealand Audit Partnership](#)
- Bank: [Bank of New Zealand \(BNZ\)](#)
- Fishery database: [Dragonfly](#)
- Observer Programme Accreditation Evaluator: [MRAG](#) and SeeMORE – Marine Observation Research Education
- VMS Service Provider: [CLS](#)
- IT services: [Redstripe](#)
- Website development and hosting: [Silverweb](#).
- Premises/landlord: [CBRE](#)
- Employee Assistance Program: [Vitae](#)

Financial Services Reform

The Secretariat's financial systems were reformed with the contracting out of services to Findex NZ. Key changes included:

- Fully utilising and upgrading the Secretariat's accounting software, Xero
- Building a new payroll system and changing the software provider to DataPay of DataCom, which includes an integrated leave management system.
- The Financial Controls manual was re-written to incorporate established and improved practices, create clarity of controls and processes, and to document the basis for the controls and practices.

The Secretariat's accounting system now allows for more reliable and tailored financial management, including reporting against the budget, grants and voluntary contributions. While refinements are ongoing, these changes address a number of the issues identified by the Second SPRFMO Performance Review. The ongoing reforms are further elaborated in FAC13-Doc13.3 (See FAC13-Doc13.3 for detailed information on these reforms.).