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

*Panama City, Panama, 26 to 27 February 2026*

### FAC 13 – Doc 18 Secretariat Operational Plan 2026-2028 *Secretariat*

#### 1. Summary and recommendations

This paper presents a Secretariat Operational Plan outlining the activities for the Secretariat over the three-year period, 2026-2028. It is developed under the authority of the Executive Secretary and is subject to guidance from the Membership and the budget.

The FAC is invited to:

- *Endorse this Secretariat Operational Plan*
- *Recommend or comment on how this or future versions of this plan may be improved*

#### 2. Background

A conclusion from the first year in the role of Executive Secretary is that a more formal Secretariat plan would be useful in guiding the work of the Secretariat, prioritisation, budgeting, and establishing shared expectations between the Secretariat and the Commission. It would also be a useful basis for the Executive Secretary's performance planning and assessments with the Commission Chairperson.

The 2nd Performance Review also commented on the potential for a Secretariat Operational Plan to contribute to wider Organisational improvements as part of an organisational Business Plan. The absence of an organisational plan or strategy of some form does not need to postpone more formal Secretariat planning. The Secretariat is already contributing to the implementation of the work and plans of SPRFMO's subsidiary bodies.

The attached Secretariat Operational Plan has been drafted to identify six key areas of activity for the Secretariat over the coming three-year period, 2026-2028 (Annex 1). As the first such Plan developed in the first year in the role, it is high level with the expectation that it may be updated and refined in this three-year period, including to ensure alignment to any new organisational plans or strategies.

1. Running an efficient and modern Secretariat
2. Enhancing Secretariat systems
3. Operating a fit for purpose staffing model
4. Ensuring a Member-oriented approach
5. Maintaining an effective working relationship with the Host Government
6. Engaging externally

FAC review and comment on this first draft of an Operational Plan is welcome to improve this and future versions.



## Annex 1: SPRFMO Secretariat Operational Plan 2026-2028

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this Operational Plan is to help guide the work of the Secretariat, including planning, prioritisation, budgeting, and establishing shared expectations between the Secretariat and the Commission. It is expected to evolve over time with flexibility in its implementation, especially in relation to wider Organisational planning and tasking by the Commission.

[The Commission endorsed this Operational Plan at its 14<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in 2026, paragraph XX]

### 2. Secretariat Governance

The Secretariat is a part of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) ([Convention](#), Article 6). It is hosted by New Zealand, and was established under the 2014 [Headquarters Agreement](#) between SPRFMO and New Zealand and under the 2014 New Zealand Diplomatic Privileges (SPRFMO) [Order in Council](#).

Article 14 of the Convention requires that the Executive Secretary shall ensure the effective functioning of the Secretariat, which shall perform the functions delegated to it by the Commission. It shall be cost effective and its functioning shall, where appropriate, take into account the capacity of existing regional institutions to perform certain technical secretariat functions and more specifically the availability of services under contractual arrangement.

The Financial Regulations, Rules of Procedure and Staff Regulations establish the operating framework for the Secretariat. The FAC also plays an important role in the Secretariat's governance, with one of its functions being to advise the Commission on matters relating to the Executive Secretary and the staff of the Secretariat.

### 3. Current Status

Both the form and function of the Secretariat have evolved since its establishment in 2012, in response to internal changes (e.g., staffing) and external events (e.g., increase of CMMs, COVID, technological advances). Its Professional Category Staff service the core technical functions of the Secretariat, while its more operational functions are serviced through a mix of in-house staff and contracted services.

- Executive Secretary: James Brown
- Compliance Manager: Randy Jenkins (retiring in May; recruitment planned in early 2026)
- Data Manager: Bernard Vigga
- Coordination and Communications Officer: Susana Delgado
- Science Manager: position approved at COMM13, recruitment planned in early 2026
- Finance and Administration: vacant position, recruitment planned in 2026; complemented by contracted services provided by Findex NZ financial services

The Secretariat operates the Organisation's data management and VMS systems, supported by backend contracted service providers. While it administers the Scientific Support Fund and the assessments of observer programmes, the science and observer programmes are done externally by Members or contractors. IT Services are provided through contracted services.



## 4. Key Activities

### a. Running an efficient and modern Secretariat

Being cost effective is a requirement set out by the Convention for the Secretariat. Regardless of budget size, efficiency is essential to ensuring the effective use of not only Secretariat resources (which come largely from Members) but also Members' internal resources given that they are users of Secretariat-administered systems, ranging from reporting processes to meeting participation.

Some of the Secretariat's internal systems were reformed in 2025 and this work continues. This will include the following:

- Continuing to improve and document internal Secretariat policies and procedures, including related to internal financial controls.
- Ensuring accurate internal record keeping systems and practices.
- Mitigating the risks of single points of failure, e.g., ensuring appropriate access to systems, capability, handover notes.
- Embracing technology, including artificial intelligence, throughout the Secretariat's work.
- Implementing and refining the new staff performance management framework
- Encouraging staff development, in the context of the new staff performance management framework and with an emphasis on technical and linguistic skills.
- Reviewing and ensuring that the Secretariat is appropriately compliant with New Zealand law, e.g., on employment, tax, health and safety.

### b. Enhancing Secretariat systems

Systems are central to efficiency and effectiveness, and improvements made in 2025 will be built on, especially in the areas of finance, data and security. There remains scope to further automate the Secretariat's financial reporting and analysis. As outlined in the Data Working Group Strategy, current systems are lacking –they are inefficient for the Secretariat and Members alike, and more value can be generated from the data holdings. While the Secretariat has in place good practices that meet or exceed current [Secretariat Security Standards](#) (from 2018), this is a constantly evolving and high-risk area. Data breaches and ransomware attacks to other organisations, including fisheries organisations' data systems, illustrate that the costs of failure can be very high.

- Finance systems, including reporting, will be improved and automated
- The Secretariat will review its standards and practices, with a focus on IT and data security.
- The Secretariat will implement the Data Strategy and Workplan, with the Data Working Group and Members.

### c. Operating a fit for purpose staffing model

The appropriateness of the staffing model has been under consideration since at least 2019, including through the following papers:

- FAC6-Doc07 Performance Review recommendations concerning the FAC recommendation 396 (b)
- FAC7-Doc12 RESTRICTED Secretariat Structure Review
- FAC9-Doc10 Development of a Secretariat Strategic Plan and Associated Staffing Strategy
- FAC10-Doc12 Secretariat Staffing Strategy
- FAC11-Doc11 RESTRICTED 2024 Secretariat Staffing Strategy

The model has continued to evolve with the outsourcing of the finance function in 2025 and the planned 2026 recruitment of a Science Manager. The 2025 appointment of a new Executive Secretary and the planned 2026 appointment of a new Compliance Manager also shift the skill sets in the Secretariat. With these changes, it is timely to take stock of the current model and how it might be improved:



- The Executive Secretary will review the body of reports provided to FAC and assess how the current model might be improved for consideration at the next annual meeting.
- In the interim, new appointments will be as renewable 5-year fixed terms, to maintain flexibility.
- In the short term, intern(s) will be engaged, and, in the longer term, secondments will be invited.

#### **d. Ensuring a Member-oriented Approach**

As set out above, the Secretariat is a part of the Organisation, the Commission tasks the Secretariat, and the Staff Regulations require staff to conduct themselves with the interests of the Commission in mind. The Secretariat, therefore, has a conscious Member-oriented approach to its work. This could be strengthened through improving or formalising some of the existing practices:

- Ensuring Secretariat-written products are clear, concise, and relevant to Members
- Delivering on and as necessary clarifying tasking of the Secretariat, including by improving the CMM proposal template
- Providing guidance and support to Chairpersons in delivering their roles
- Supporting Members' and CNCPs' effective implementation of SPRFMO measures
- Improving and regularising post-meeting surveys to seek feedback from delegates
- Exploring capacity-building opportunities for Members on SPRFMO-related matters, whether from SPRFMO (e.g., DS Fund applications) or externally (e.g., connecting to UN support).

#### **e. Maintaining an effective working relationship with the Host Government**

The Secretariat is independent from New Zealand. It has matured since its establishment as its practices, policies, and experiences have grown. At the same time, New Zealand, as Host Government, provides essential support on matters such as staff visas and wider implementation of the Headquarters Agreement and related Order in Council. There is a good working relationship between the Secretariat and New Zealand on hosting issues, and maintaining this is important to ensure the smooth and effective operation of the Secretariat.

- The Secretariat will regularly engage with New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) Protocol Division on the effective hosting of the Secretariat and implementation of the Headquarters Agreement and related Order in Council.
- The Secretariat will clarify the interpretation and implementation of the Order in Council with MFAT, including as it relates to staff employment issues.

#### **f. Engaging externally**

The Secretariat actively cooperates with other organisations, as reported annually to the Commission in relation to Article 31 of the Convention (e.g. COMM14-Doc07). This and wider external engagement are important to delivering the objectives of the Organisation. It can create efficiencies and bring in additional external resources. At the same time, engaging externally requires resources and is best done off the back of organisational effectiveness and performance.

There is room for enhanced external engagement by the Secretariat to lift the relationships and profile of the Organisation. SPRFMO's significant achievements and context, such as stock recovery and precautionary and ecosystem-based management, are not as widely recognised as they could be. This would be done selectively, and in consultation with the Chairpersons as appropriate and focusing on areas of most relevance to SPRFMO.

- The Secretariat will engage with Members' representatives in New Zealand to improve and maintain relations and channels of communication, including hosting a gathering of Ambassadors/official representation after each annual meeting.
- The Secretariat will look to ensure reporting by, and representation of, SPRFMO (by the Secretariat, Chairpersons, or Members) in relevant international fora, and those of the United Nations, and its specialized agencies, and subsidiary bodies.