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Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement
Accord relatif aux Pêches dans le Sud de l'Océan Indien

Report of the 2nd Extraordinary Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC-EXTRA2) of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

Held by video conference using the ZOOM platform

7 November 2024

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Agenda item 1. Opening

1.1. Welcome from the Scientific Committee Chair

1. The Chair of the Scientific Committee (SC), Mr Alistair Dunn, gave opening remarks. He welcomed the participants and noted that the purpose of this extraordinary meeting required by MoP11 is for the SC to assess the Comoros bottom fishing impact assessment (BFIA) and provide recommendations and advice to the Meeting of the Parties (MoP).
2. The list of meeting attendees is attached (**Annex A**).

Agenda item 2. Administrative arrangements

2.1. Adoption of the agenda

3. The agenda was adopted as proposed (**Annex B**).

2.2 Confirmation of meeting documents

4. The SC Chair confirmed the meeting documents.

2.3. Appointment of rapporteurs

5. Mr Jacques Chaumont (Urban Connections, Tokyo) was appointed to act as rapporteur, with assistance from delegates.
6. In this report, paragraphs with key recommendations and advice to the MoP have been highlighted in grey.

Agenda item 3. Comoros BFIA

3.1. Introduction to the Comoros Bottom Fishing Impact Assessment (BFIA)

7. The SC Chair recalled that the MoP had requested the SC to evaluate the Comoros BFIA for its lobster trap fishery at an extraordinary meeting (MoP11 report, paragraph 288). The SC Chair noted that under Section 4, paragraph 2 of the SIOFA Bottom Fishing Impact Assessment Standard (BFIAS), the SC is required to evaluate two aspects: the likely cumulative impacts of bottom fishing activity from vessels, and whether the BFIA meets an appropriate standard in light of international standards and the SIOFA BFIAS. In this meeting, the SC would be evaluating whether the BFIA meets the latter requirement.
8. Mr Vladislav Prudchenko (DGRS, Comoros) introduced the Comoros Bottom Fishing Impact Assessment (BFIA) relevant to its trap fishery targeting lobster in the SIOFA Area. The presentation described the vessel characteristics, fishing gear design, target species, potential bycatch, mapping of proposed fishing areas, impact assessment, risk assessment and interactions with VMEs, information on historical deep-sea stocks, and proposed monitoring, management and mitigation measures. The f/v Rinascente 9 will target *Jasus* and *Projasus* species either using longline trap or single trap methods, with two observers (a national observer and an observer from CAPMARINE) on board and various measures proposed to minimize impacts on VMEs and ensure sustainable fishing practices.

3.2. Questions and discussion on the Comoros BFIA

9. The SC Chair noted that Section 5 of the SIOFA BFIAS outlines five elements expected to be included in a BFIA: description of proposed fishing activities; mapping and description of proposed fishing areas; impact assessment; information on the status of deep-sea stocks to be fished; and monitoring, management, and mitigation measures. The SC Chair noted that the Comoros BFIA had been presented in a format that closely

- followed this standard.
10. France (OT) thanked Comoros for the detailed presentation, then shared three remarks regarding the BFIA.
 - a. The need for precise identification of target species beyond just the genus level.
 - b. Concerns about VME impacts, noting observations from a lobster fishery in the French EEZ near SIOFA Subarea 4 showing impacts of trap lines on black corals.
 - c. Marine mammal interactions with plastic pollution, particularly risks of Amsterdam fur seal entanglement with plastic bands or straps used for bait boxes.
 11. Comoros explained that they primarily target *Jasus lalandii* and noted that single traps would be used, rather than longline traps, to minimize VME impacts, allowing for more precise placement utilizing technology such as echo sounders and 3D bottom mapping to avoid coral areas. Comoros also remarked that potential interaction with mammals would be closely monitored and recorded by observers.
 12. The SC discussed the issue of plastic packaging bands noting that these materials, when lost at sea, can pose a hazard for marine animals.
 13. France (OT) informed the SC that they are currently working on rules in the Saint Paul and Amsterdam Islands for maintaining rubbish on board and preventing loss of such materials at sea.
 14. Comoros suggested utilizing metal boxes installed inside the traps for bait as an alternative to reduce the risk of marine mammal interactions with plastic straps.
 15. The Cook Islands noted that there was much detail in the presentation, and the observers were chosen well. The Cook Islands then raised several concerns regarding the BFIA.
 - a. The lack of a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) or Effort (TAE) management limits.
 - b. The absence of specific references to SIOFA Benthic Protected Areas (BPAs).
 - c. The need for clarity on how proposed measures would be legislated and enforced.
 - d. Potential misidentification of target species, suggesting the collection and submission of biological samples for taxonomic verification.
 16. Comoros indicated that management measures would be implemented through license conditions, and while a TAC was not currently proposed due to limited data, it would be considered in the future following further data collection. It also recalled that CMM 01 allows the use of traps in SIOFA BPAs.
 17. The Cook Islands inquired if Comoros is planning for a species-specific size limit, as it will catch multiple species.
 18. Comoros answered that it was considering this measure, but more data collection would be required to set a minimum size by species.
 19. Australia supported the need for catch limits and suggested considering the approach used in SPRFMO CMM 14b-2024, which includes a TAC of 300 tonnes. Australia also noted that there are examples in CCAMLR 26-01(2019) regarding disposal of plastic packaging bands which could be referenced.
 20. Comoros remarked that it had received a suggestion from SPRFMO to not return to the same seamounts in consecutive trips to give them time for recovery, and with the numerous seamounts in the South Indian Ocean there should be sufficient space for fishing operations.
 21. The EU thanked Comoros for the well-structured presentation and questioned the

- proposed VME threshold of 1% of the total lobster weight per trap for triggering the move-on rule urging for consideration of a more precautionary level. Considering there are several aspects not only related to the BFIA but with the fishery itself, the EU requested an Agenda Item for the next SC10 to address this fishery. The EU agreed with the Cook Islands and Australia on the need to add a catch limit to the proposed fishing activity.
22. Comoros clarified that it had based the 1% threshold on a similar fishery within SPRFMO and is willing to implement a more precautionary VME threshold if deemed appropriate by the SC.
 23. Japan noted that while the BFIA was appropriate, based on currently available data, another impact assessment would be necessary after fishing operations and data collection have been conducted for a number of years. Japan also suggested the development of a specific observer program and move-on rules for this fishery and the need for further discussion on this matter during SC10.
 24. The SC agreed that SC10 include an agenda item to discuss the proposed fishery.
 25. The Cook Islands noted that the SPRFMO fishery's 1% VME threshold was based on traps containing approximately 20 kilos of lobsters, whereas this fishery's traps may contain 100 kilos or more. They also noted that longer distances between traps in longline configurations could reduce VME impacts as traps would lift rather than drag along the bottom during hauling.
 26. Comoros acknowledged this point and explained that it was part of the rationale to use single traps instead of line traps.
 27. The Cook Islands raised a concern about whether the MoP would need to consider a specific lobster CMM or add more detail in CMM 01(2024) that capture aspects of this fishery.
 28. The SC discussed potential interim management measures that could be considered until the 2025 MoP. Some CCPs suggested implementing both TAC and Total Allowable Effort (TAE) limits by Subareas (2, 3a, 3b, 4, 5 and 8), along with restrictions on the time spent fishing individual ridges and seamounts.
 29. Some CCPs suggested an overall TAC of 300 tonnes based on SPRFMO CMM14b-2024, local area seamount catch limit of 50 tonnes, TAE of 150 days, and 14 days fishing maximum per seamount, with these limits being per calendar year.
 30. Other CCPs expressed concern about these proposed limits, noting they represented a significant increase from current activity levels and noted that further discussion on this issue is needed at the requested Agenda Item during SC10.
 31. Comoros brought up several operational considerations, including the need to consider commercial aspects when setting effort limits such as the substantial time spent searching for lobster concentrations. Comoros noted that its first trip yielded 3 tonnes of catch despite 45 days of effort.
 32. Australia suggested that recommendations to the MoP should:
 - a. Consider various options for future management of this fishery, including as part of CMM 01(2024), as a standalone CMM, or under the New and Exploratory Fisheries CMM (CMM 17(2024)).
 - b. Request Comoros to bring forward a paper to SC10 detailing their logbook requirements for lobster trap fishing.
 - c. Include interim measures to cover the period until formal management arrangements can be established at the MoP in 2025.
 33. Comoros noted that it would be able to collect and provide additional data to the SC10

if the fishery is permitted to operate.

34. The SC noted that there may be issues related to compliance with regard to the vessel.

3.3. Advice to the MoP on the Comoros BFIA

35. The SC noted that the BFIA proposed by Comoros addressed the requirements of the SIOFA BFIAS.

36. The SC noted that should the MoP decide to accept the BFIA, then

- a. The SC recommended that the MoP should consider requiring a more precautionary VME indicator species threshold than the currently proposed 1% of the total weight of the target species landed by a trap, given the potential impact when using traps that can catch up to 200 kilos.
- b. The SC recommended that the MoP may need to consider the status of the fishery and the most appropriate management framework for the Comoros trap fishery targeting *Jasus*, *Projasus* and *Palinurus* species, including through integration into CMM 01, development of a specific lobster trap fishing CMM, or inclusion in the New and Exploratory Fisheries CMM (CMM 17).
- c. Following the decision in paragraph b, the SC recommended that the MoP instruct SC10 on the advice that it needs from the SC.
- d. The SC noted that there is currently insufficient information to provide advice on management limits, therefore the SC recommended that the MoP should implement interim catch and effort limits for Comoros, consisting of a Total Allowable Catch of 300 tonnes (all crustacean species combined) annually, combined with a Total Allowable Effort of the proposed vessel fishing for 150 days per calendar year and a maximum of 14 days fishing per seamount per trip.

37. The SC invited Comoros to present a paper to the SC10 on potential revisions to CMM 02 (Data standards) for the vessel and observer logbooks to detail the additional recording information specified in the BFIA.

38. The SC requested the Secretariat to assist Comoros in the preparation of their submission to SC10.

39. The SC noted that there may have been some compliance issues that may need to be discussed by the Compliance Committee or the MoP.

Agenda item 4. Meeting close

40. The Executive Secretary, Mr Thierry Clot, thanked the SC Chair and the SC for their productive discussion and acknowledged the valuable contributions from participants. He also thanked the Secretariat staff for their support in preparing and conducting the meeting.

41. The SC Chair noted that the Secretariat would work with the rapporteur to finalize the report over the following days. He indicated that he would inform the MoP Chair of the key recommendations discussed during the meeting while the full report was being prepared for adoption by correspondence.

42. The SC agreed to adopt the meeting report by correspondence.

43. Several CCPs expressed their appreciation to the SC Chair for his leadership and the Secretariat for their preparation and support during and leading up to the meeting.

44. The meeting was brought to a close at 11:44 a.m. UTC.

Annex A: List of Registered Participants

Delegation	Title	First name	Last name	Position	Organisation
Australia	Mr	Trent	Timmiss	HoD	ABARES
Australia	Mr	Adam	Camilleri	Adviser	DAFF
Australia	Ms	Stacey	Antunovich	Adviser	DAFF
Australia	Dr	Brooke	D'alberto	Alternate	ABARES
Australia	Dr	Lyn	Goldsworthy	Advisor	UTAS
China	Dr	Heng	Zhang	HoD	East China Sea Fisheries Research Institute, China Academy of Fisheries Science
China	Dr	Yongchuang	Shi	Alternate	East China Sea Fisheries Research Institute, China Academy of Fisheries Science
Cook Islands	Dr	Stephen	Brouwer	HoD	Ministry of Marine Resources
EU	Dr	Sebastián	Rodriguez Alfaro	HoD	Marine Sciences/EU
EU	Mr	Roberto	Sarralde Vizquete	Alternate	Instituto Español de Oceanografía
France-OT	Dr	Alexis	Martin	Head of Delegation (HoD)	Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle
France-OT	Ms	Charlotte	Chazeau	Expert	MNHN
Japan	Dr	Takehiro	Okuda	HoD	Fisheries Resources Institute, Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency
Japan	Mr	Taisuke	Iwano	Head of Delegation	Fisheries Agency Government of Japan
Japan	Mr	Kazuki	Tsuda	Alternate	Fisheries Agency Government of Japan
Japan	Mr	Ichiro	Nomura	Chairperson of Meeting of the Parties	Fisheries Agency Government of Japan
Mauritius	Mr	Vikash	Munbodhe	Participant	Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Mauritius	Mr	Doorvanand	Kawol	Participant	Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Seychelles	Mr	Rodney	Govinden	HoD	Seychelles Fishing Authority
Seychelles	Ms	Sabrena	Lawrence	Alternate	Seychelles Fishing Authority
Chinese Taipei	Mr	Chia-Chun	Wu	Delegate	Chinese Taipei
Chinese Taipei	Ms	Chia-Ti	Li	Delegate	Chinese Taipei
Chinese Taipei	Ms	Chia-Jung	Wang	Delegate	Chinese Taipei
Thailand	Mr	Weerapol	Thitipongtrakul	HoD	Department of Fisheries, Thailand
Thailand	Mr	Aekkarat	Wongkeaw	Alternate	Department of Fisheries, Thailand
Thailand	Mr	Bunyarit	Permnak	Alternate	Department of Fisheries, Thailand

Delegation	Title	First name	Last name	Position	Organisation
Thailand	Ms	Kanyarat	Woraprayoth	Alternate	Department of Fisheries, Thailand
CNCP Comoros	Mr	Mahamoud	Abidina	Head of delegate	DGRH
CNCP Comoros	Mr	Mohamed	Ali Mohamed	Alternate	DGRH
CNCP Comoros	Mr	Vladislav	Prudchenko	Independent expert	DGRH
Observers Madagascar	Mr	Simon	Raharimandimby	HoD	Ministry of fisheries and blue economy Madagascar
Observers Madagascar	Mrs	Zo	Rakotonanahary	Alternate	Ministry of fisheries and blue economy Madagascar
SIOFA SC Chair	Mr	Alistair	Dunn	Director	Ocean Environmental
SIOFA SC Vice Chair	Dr	Pavarot	Noranarttragoon	Senior expert	Marine Fisheries Research and Development Division Department of Fisheries, Thailand
SIOFA SC Vice Chair	Dr	Zhou	Fang	Alternate	Shanghai Ocean University
Rapporteur	Mr	Jacques	Chaumont	Rapporteur	Urban Connections
SIOFA Secretariat	Mr	Thierry	Clot	Executive Secretary	SIOFA Secretariat
SIOFA Secretariat	Mr	Pierre	Peries	Data Officer	SIOFA Secretariat
SIOFA Secretariat	Mr	Johnny	Louys	Compliance Officer	SIOFA Secretariat
SIOFA Secretariat	Dr	Marco	Milardi	Science Officer	SIOFA Secretariat

Annex B: Adopted Agenda

1. Opening

- 1.1. Welcome from the Scientific Committee Chair
- 1.2. Introduction of participants

2. Administrative arrangements

- 2.1. Adoption of the agenda
- 2.2. Confirmation of meeting documents
- 2.3. Appointment of rapporteurs

3. Comoros BFIA

- 3.1. Introduction to the Comoros Bottom Fishing Impact Assessment (BFIA)
- 3.2. Questions and discussion on the Comoros BFIA
- 3.3. Advice to the MoP on the Comoros BFIA

4. Meeting close