



7th meeting of the Parties of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement

SECRETARIAT REPORT ON STAFF RESOURCES AND SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES

In accordance with RoP Rule 8.1 f) and 8 g), this paper provides an annual report from the Secretariat on staff and activities for the seventh ordinary Meeting of the Parties.

This report covers the period between MoP6 (July 2019) to MoP7 (November 2020).

I- UPDATES ON THE SIOFA AGREEMENT

1. SIOFA Contracting Parties and Participating Fishing Entities

- Australia
- China
- Cook Islands
- European Union
- France (on behalf of its Indian Ocean Territories)
- Japan
- Korea (the Republic of)
- Mauritius
- Seychelles
- Chinese Taipei
- Thailand

2. SIOFA Officers

Body	Chair	Vice-Chair	Term in office
Meeting of the Parties	Interim co-Chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kerrie Robertson • Sampan Panjarat • Anne-France Mattlet (replaced by Benoit) 		5 July 2019 – 23 July 2020

Body	Chair	Vice-Chair	Term in office
	Tourtois on 6 February 2020)		
	Kerrie Robertson	Chumnarn Pongsri	24 July 2020 - current
Scientific Committee	Ilona Stobutzki	Tom Nishida	8 July 2016 – 31 July 2020
Compliance Committee	Johnny Louys		5 July 2019 – current
PAEWG	Patrice Pruvost		
SERAWG	Co-chairs : Tom Nishida and Lee Georgeson		

Decision on the Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties

On 24 July 2020, the Secretariat with the Chair's support, transmitted an intersessional decision as requested by the Cook Islands concerning the appointment of the MOP Chair and Vice Chair. The decision put to the Meeting of the Parties was as follows:

(1) that that MOP agrees to continue working intersessionally to amend Rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure for adoption at its next meeting, with the aim of implementing processes that will ensure a Chairperson is identified and secured at the end of each future MOP meeting; and

(2) nominating Kerrie Robertson (Australia) as MOP Chairperson; and Sampan Panjarat (Thailand) as MOP Vice-Chairperson.

All respondents agreed with the two decisions proposed. And the quorum was reached. Thailand, in its response, proposed an alternative name of Mr Chumnarn Pongsri. This proposal was circulated on 3rd July and no objections to this were received. Australia was explicit in its response that it was only in a position to accept the role until the conclusion of the 2020 annual meeting, in whatever form it takes, and requested that this be recorded in the outcome of the decision. **A decision to fill the position of Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties therefore needs to be taken during the 2020 Meeting of the Parties.**

Recruitment of a Chairperson of the Scientific Committee

Dr Ilona Stobutzki left her position as Chairperson of the Scientific Committee after the conclusion of SC4 on 31 July 2020. In the absence of a candidate from a Contracting Party, on 14 September 2020, the Secretariat transmitted an intersessional decision at the request of the Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties concerning a proposal to try a new approach and recruit an independent Chair for the Scientific Committee.

10 delegations responded positively to this intersessional decision. This satisfies the quorum requirement. After a review of the applications, two candidates were shortlisted and interviewed by a Panel composed of the MoP, PAEWG and SERAWG Chairpersons, and the Executive Secretary. The MoP Chairperson initiated an intersessional decision on 26 October 2020, to agree on Mr Alistair Dunn to be the next Scientific Committee Chairperson and arrangements linked to his recruitment. This decision passed on 28 October 2020.

II- SECRETARIAT STAFF RESOURCES

The Secretariat staff currently consists of 1 full time Executive Secretary post and a 75% FTE Data Manager post. A postgraduate intern (since March 2020) has been contracted under Regulation 11 of the Staff Regulations to provide additional help to the Executive Secretary with its daily operations.

Executive Secretary	Thierry Clot
Data Manager	Pierre Peries
Temporary Personnel under contract	Yannick Haronis (03/02/2020 to 03/25/2020) Replaced by Quentin Guibereau (06/15/2020 – current)

1. Executive Secretary

The previous Executive Secretary M. Jon Lansley put an end to his contract on 31st August 2019. The replacing Executive Secretary, M. Thierry Clot took office on 11th December 2019 and has shall serve for the 4 ensuing years.

2. Data Manager

The Data Manager post, M. Pierre Peries commenced 15 January 2018 and was renewed on 14th January for a new two-years term. The post is currently 75% of a full-time equivalent post. During the period between the resignation of the previous Executive Secretary and the entry into office of current one the Data Manager served as an interim Executive Secretary with great satisfaction.

3. Intern Assistant to the Executive Secretary

To support the Executive Secretary in his day to day tasks, a post graduate intern has been contracted for the first time on 02 March 2020. He was tasked to provide help with organizing the different committees and meeting, drafting of the different Secretariat reports, and writing synthesis for informal meetings.

The first recruited Assistant to the Executive Secretary put an end to his contract on 25 March 2020 due to the COVID19 pandemic. A second intern was recruited to replace him and took office on 15 June 2020 for a period of 6 months.

4. Development of SIOFA Secretariat

The recruitment of an assistant is of a great help to the Executive Secretary. It increases the Secretariat's capacities and does save some precious time for the development of the Secretariat activities (adaptation to the post-covid situation, update of meeting document templates...).

The present experimentation proved to be both beneficial to the recruited intern, experiencing a great training in diplomacy, international affairs and international law, as well as the Secretariat which can rely, for a reasonable budget, on supplementary workforce with a well suited academic background.

Therefore, the Executive Secretary suggests securing this position as a regular position under the authority of the Secretariat Staff with two possible 6-month internship vacancies per year.

Refer to the Proposal MoP-07-10 made by the Secretariat to amend the Staff Regulations in order to frame and facilitate this process

However, it appears that the SIOFA Secretariat is understaffed and the recruitment of an intern will not be sufficient to cover its needs. In addition to the recruitment of an intern, the Secretariat is planning on submitting a long-term structural solution for establishing a supplementary full-time staff for consideration at MOP8.

III- SECRETARIAT'S ACTIVITIES

This report provides a summary of the main activities of the Secretariat since the sixth ordinary Meeting of the Parties which was held in July 2019.

The main activities of the Secretariat between the end of MoP6 and MoP7 consisted of :

- the routine management of the Secretariat: including the collection of information report, preparation of meetings, financial management, interaction with CCP, the maintenance of the website, the exchanges with several organization (NGO, FAO, etc.)
- the departure of the Executive Secretary and the arrival of the new one;
- the arrival of the People Republic of China as 10th Contracting Party;
- the logistical and administrative management of the 5th Scientific Committee which was postponed several times and then cancelled due to COVID19;
- The development of a High Seas Boarding Questionnaire, a SIOFA Inspector card and inspection flag by intersessional consultations
- the organization of the 5th Scientific Committee by videoconferences and e-mail exchanges;
- the organization of the 4th Compliance Committee through correspondence and videoconferences;
- the organization of the 7th Meeting of the Parties through correspondence and videoconferences;
- The management of a misappropriation attempt on the contribution of one of our Contracting Parties. The Secretariat immediately filed a complaint in order to get INTERPOL's services quickly seized. As a result, the funds were blocked. The authorities concerned shall now follow the relevant procedure to request international assistance and ensure that the funds are returned to them.

The Secretariat also collaborated with different organizations during this assessment period:

- Contract with the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) as requested by the MoP6
- Participation in the ABNJ Deep Seas Project workshops
- Organization of a Webinar on the 17th July, relating to the ABNJ project and DSCC (<http://apsoi.org/information-board>)
- Communication with the International Whaling Commission about their report on *RFMOs Efforts in Addressing Cetacean Bycatch* and matters related to the SIOFA activities and further collaboration

1. Management of SIOFA Budget

- *Accounting and Bookkeeping*

The day to day management of the SIOFA budget adopted by the previous Meeting of the Parties is carried out by the Executive Secretary. A complete and up to date filing system is maintained and records the expenditure for each budget item. If at any time a CP/PFE requires an update regarding the expenditure of any budget item, details of expenditure can be provided by email.

The 4th Meeting of the Parties approved to employ the Reunion based accountants Crowe Horwath to provide accounting and bookkeeping advice throughout the year. This is a service of several hours per month that is necessarily focused upon the preparation of the financial statements. The Executive Secretary has met with M. Lala on 10th September to develop a bidding framework between both parties. The conditions agreed upon are the following:

“1. The SIOFA secretariat and the Crowe Howarth bookkeeping firm commit themselves for a period of one year, for the upcoming year, on 31 December of each year. The SIOFA Secretariat and the Crowe Howarth bookkeeping firm must commit themselves by tacit agreement to the renewal of the present contract.

2. Payments for the services will be made every three months for the past period.

3. Three months' notice must be given for the termination of this contract.

4. The work to be carried out by the accounting office will be:

- Help with accounting during the year (bookkeeping ...)

- Write payslips,

- The preparation of financial reports according to the format recommended by the Meeting of the Parties of SIOFA (Anglo-Saxon format)”

- *The External Auditor*

Mr Arnaud FAYOL is the external auditor for SIOFA, his engagement was previously authorized by SIOFA Chairperson following consideration of three quotations submitted. Mr FAYOL is based in Saint-Denis and worked with the SIOFA in 2019 for a third consecutive year. This first three-year term will come to an end on 31 December and may be renewed following the decision of the Meeting of the Parties under regulation 11.1 of the Financial Regulations of the Meeting of the Parties. The Secretariat suggests renewing this contract for the three upcoming years. The budget dedicated to the External Auditor has been of EURO 2 170 per year to this day and has been reevaluated to EURO 2 500 per year for the three upcoming years in the event of a renewal.

2. SIOFA Budget appropriations

During his term in office the interim Executive Secretary has applied to an EU voluntary fund. This led to an agreement in December 2019: EURO 78.800,00 have been granted to reimburse 78,79% of the eligible costs of the “SIOFA Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem Mapping”. A first transfer of EURO 54.866 was received on 16 December 2019 and a second one of EURO 23.934 is pending processing of final claims. This voluntary contribution was kindly provided via a grant application prepared by the Secretariat. This process requires substantial works for the Secretariat but most important, it enabled the SIOFA to undertake a highly prioritized work as identified by its Scientific Committee.

In addition to that, the Australian government made a voluntary contribution of AUD 55.000 received on 16 July 2020 and directed towards the cumulative Bottom Fishing Impact Assessment.

As it is outlined in meeting document ‘MoP6-Doc07 Secretariat Report on Financial Resources’. The bank balance of SIOFA is in good shape as it has been possible to make savings on several budgets due to the above-mentioned contributions and the remote process adopted for all of the SIOFA meetings this year.

Appropriations remain available for expenditure up to 12 months after the year of allocation. At the end of this period any funds left unspent from each appropriation is transferred to a sub-account to build up a reserve. This reserve currently totals EURO 253509 and does not include an addition EURO 73759 of unspent 2019 funds due to be transferred to the reserve fund at the end of 2020.

3. Organisation of each Meeting of the Parties and any subsidiary bodies

Since MoP6 the Secretariat has made all necessary arrangements for the following SIOFA meetings and production of each meeting report.

Protected Areas & Ecosystems Working Group (PAEWG2) (Videoconf.)	26 May & 16 June 2020	Online
Stock & Ecological Risk Assessment Working Group (SERAWG2) (Videoconf.)	11, 23 & 25 June 2020	Online
Fifth Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC5) (Videoconf.)	07 – 31 July 2020	Online
Fourth Meeting of the Compliance Committee (CC4)	09-11 November 2020	In Progress
Seventh Meeting of the Parties (MoP7)	16 – 19 November 2020	In Progress

The international health crisis between MoP6 and MoP7 forced the Secretariat to take adaptive measures and make sure the following SIOFA meetings are held. For the first time in the history of our young RFMO every annual meetings and committees were held remotely. Webex and Zoom hosted all these meetings, demanding innovation in parole distribution and support service for the presentations.

- *The Fifth Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC5)*

Protected Areas & Ecosystems Working Group (PAEWG2) and Stock & Ecological Risk Assessment Working Group (SERAWG2) were held on Webex in several sessions between May and July 2020. This first test was conclusive, Webex being able to support presentation documents and providing a chat box both usable to ask to speak and to write comments.

A few weeks after the end of these working groups, the Fifth Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC5) made an innovation that was asked by several CCP: closed captions. The Secretariat hired VITAC, a USA-based company whose captioners provided real time subtitles during the whole meetings. We noted variable quality service between sessions, but this innovation was saluted by the CCPs as it helped following the exchanges for non-native English speakers.

- *The fourth Meeting of the Compliance Committee (CC4) and Sixth Meeting of the Parties (MoP7)*

The remote process for these meetings allowed to save funds on the provisional budget lines for meeting support. The only expenses were directed to the subscription to the video platforms, the closed captioning service, and the rapporteur. No venue, catering and accommodation expenses were required this year.

The Chairs of the Scientific Working Groups made the Secretariat aware of the need to recruit a professional rapporteur, in order to obtain fast and reliable synthesis work, faithfully reporting the observed exchanges.

The services of reporting for PAEWG2, SERAWG2 and SC5 were provided by Mr. Alex Meyer, employed by the Japan-based company Urban Connections. The Secretariat is greatly satisfied with his work and is convinced that professional services are not only a comfort but a necessity for this task to be accomplished in a precise and qualitative manner.

Mr. Meyer informed the Secretariat, that he could not be available for the Compliance Committee and the 7th Meeting of the Parties.

The Secretariat is convinced that the work of rapporteur needs to be done by a professional and that the Secretariat has not the capacity to undertake this task on its own.

The work of Rapporteur at the 3rd Compliance Committee and the 6th Meeting of the Parties had been carried out with the support of NAFO, which had seconded Ms Jana AKER funded by FAO as rapporteur leader, and whose work had brought great satisfaction to the MoP. To be able to call upon professional rapporteurs as Ms Aker or Mr Meyer at the next MoP, the MoP6 included the expenses related to the work of the rapporteur in the 2020 budget.

4. SIOFA Jul.17 webinar

Due to time constraints, it was not possible during SC5 to deal with information that some observers would have liked to share. Therefore, the Secretariat organized a Webinar on July 17, 2020.

This was the opportunity for William Emerson and Tony Thompson to introduce the DSF Project to the SIOFA Scientific Committee participants and to Duncan Currie to make a presentation of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition.

This webinar allowed the participants to provide feedbacks.

All the presentation are available on the SIOFA Website

5. SIOFA IUU Vessel List

The Secretariat was invited to join an information exchange group on the IUU vessel list. Given the fact that RFMOs are increasingly cross-referencing IUU vessels from non-tuna organizations and vice versa, the Secretariat was invited to participate in this new online reporting group.

The Secretariat has been contacted to take part to the Tuna Compliance Network (TCN). The initiative is intended to exchange between RFMO secretariat about IUU vessel and cross listing.

The procedure is the following: a user account is created for each member of the RFMO secretariat, who can then log on to the system and receive and display update messages. Participants in the exchange group are currently Compliance Officers in the five tuna RFMOs (ICCAT, IOTC, CCSBT, IATTC and WCPFC), SPRFMO, SEAFO and NEAFC.

The fact that the RFMOs compile in a single list the vessels listed in their own register, and those from other RFMOs or organizations, requires the Secretariat to monitor crosslisting at every update made on other RFMO's IUU list, this requests the SIOFA to undertake an intersessional decision involving the MoP as required by CMM 2018/06 on every change of a cross-listed list.

Therefore, the Secretariat suggests to keep a divided list with in one part, the IUU vessels established as such by SIOFA and, in the other part the list of IUU vessels listed by all the organizations included in CMM 2018/06 para 24. This new presentation respects the entirety of CMM 2018/06 concerning the list of IUU vessels and has the advantage to help other RFMOs to identify the original listing RFMO. This presentation will be detailed at the next CC to check it is in accordance with all objectives of CMM 2018/06.

6. Compliance Monitoring Scheme

CCPs Compliance Report

In accordance with CMM 2018/11 Compliance Monitoring Scheme, para 27 the Secretariat has, prior to the 2020 ordinary Meeting of the Parties, prepared a questionnaire listing all the obligations contained in the Agreement and SIOFA CMMs with which CCPs must comply. This questionnaire will be reviewed in light of this year's CMS discussion and circulated to CCP for comments consideration before its circulation for preparation of the SCR next year.

7. Development of SIOFA Web site

The website is being continually developed to disseminate information and provide basic functions to the SIOFA Secretariat including sharing and storing of meeting documents, information on the next meetings and committees.... Public and restricted access options are available for distribution and storing of documents. A 'username' and 'password' necessary to access restricted documents has been provided to all Official Contacts. Anybody who has misplaced their login details may contact the data manager. The Secretariat noted the demand for automatic email notifications and modification of their password, but these devices can unfortunately not be provided by our website server yet. Solutions will be sought by the Data Manager.

A major development has been made to cope with the international health crisis and to support the committees held by video conference this year. The Data Manager launched and updated several forums on each item that needed to be discussed remotely before any decision by video conference. The forums are based on meeting documents and were open for discussion to each registered contact.

An information board was developed to share general information and communication documents open for all visitors. It already contains information about the Regional Technical Seminar and the Call for Action organized by the FAO, the reports and meeting presentations of the Webinar the Secretariat organized on 17 July 2020 and a paper from the ICES Journal of Marine Science.

8. Collection of data necessary to accomplish the objectives of the Agreement

The databases are continuously developed and maintained through updates and structural adaptations. Several databases are running: three relating to fisheries data and one to the Monitoring Control and Surveillance. Since MoP6 :

- A **scientific observer data database** was added to the 3 main databases for fisheries data (datasets, summary catch, vessels catch and effort).
- A new database on the theme of Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) was created alongside the entry-exit reports database: **the IUU vessels database**. It helps with the collection and storing of data under CMM 2018/06.

9. Official Travel - Attendance at meetings of other organizations and with SIOFA CPs

Since the sixth ordinary Meeting of the Parties the Secretariat has attended the following meetings of other organizations.

- *SIOFA Data manager mission at CCAMLR headquarter (13-24 January 2020) Hobart, Australia*

The investigation made by the DM at CCAMLR head office gave many ideas and concepts that will drive SIOFA and the data manager future developments especially about: observer data collection form, GIS technologies for online mapping, VME taxa guide, secure files exchange procedure.

This mission also strengthened the CCAMLR staff relation with SIOFA and the Data Manager was very well welcomed by everybody at the headquarter. It will encourage further and stronger future collaborations.

- *SIOFA Executive Secretary mission at FAO headquarter (26-28 January) Rome, Italy*

The Executive Secretary has been invited to attend the ABNJ Deep Seas Project final project Committee regarding the “Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction”

The “Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction” (ABNJ Deep Seas Project for short) is a five year project designed to enhance sustainability in the use of deep-sea living resources and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach.

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project started in September 2015 and is one of four projects under the Common Oceans Program.

The project is an integral part of the FAO Program on Deep-sea fisheries and its suite of projects.

It seems to the Secretariat that the project is relevant to SIOFA.

First because the issues relating to resources assessment, by-catch, ecosystem approaches to fisheries and fight against IUU fishing are recurrent from one RFMO to another. It can therefore only be positive and constructive to work jointly and share knowledge on these same issues. Second, this project will improve the cooperation between RFMOs from same ocean basins or geographical regions, leading to cost-effective efforts on scientific surveys, resources assessments and links to ecological habitats (e.g. deepwater sharks, VME). Finally, one way to implement efficient actions against IUU fishing is better cooperation. This project represents another opportunity to increase SIOFA visibility by strengthening the relationships between Indian Ocean RFMOs.

As there is no direct contribution required, participation to this Phase II project will have no financial impact on SIOFA budget. Participation to meetings and working groups, feedbacks and some data sharing is expected.

SIOFA has been asked to send a simple agreement on principle to be involved in this Phase II project before 21 February 2020. After consulting the Chair of the MoP, the Secretariat thanked the ABNJ coordinators and confirmed its participation on 26 February.

- *Attending to meeting of others organization*

In order to learn and collaborate with any regional fisheries management organisation with competence over high seas water adjacent to or overlapping the Agreement area or that could have an interest concerning the management of demersal fisheries, the SIOFA attended or is registered to attend to the following meetings as Observer.

ORGANISATION	DATE
North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO)	From 21 st to 25 th September 2020
39th meeting of the Scientific Committee (CCAMLR)	From 19 th to 23 rd October 2020
39th meeting of the Commission (CCAMLR)	From 26 th to 30 th October 2020
Tenth meetings of the Working Party for Collaboration and Cooperation in Tuna Fisheries (WPCCTF) of the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC);	29 th October 2020
Data Collection and Statistics Working Group (IOTC)	From 30 th November to 3 rd December
23rd Session of the Scientific Committee (IOTC)	From 7 th to 11 th December 2020
Eleventh meetings of the Working Party for Collaboration and Cooperation in Tuna Fisheries (WPCCTF) of the SWIOFC;	10 th December

10. Official Travel Reports

All the reports are available to Official Contacts on the internal communication section of the non-public part of the SIOFA website with the rest of the Official Travel Reports. <http://apsoi.org/internal-communication>

As requested, this year, the Secretariat will circulate the official travel reports to official contacts along with posting it on the website in the future.

11. SIOFA Circulars

Except for the working papers, circulars have been used to issue requests and to distribute information to SIOFA Members.

Since MoP6, 14 circulars have been produced and circulated to SIOFA Official Contacts covering the following subjects:

- SIOFA Circular 2020-01 Derogation request by Cook Islands from the observer coverage
- SIOFA Circular 2020-02 Scheduling of the 5th Scientific Committee and working groups
- SIOFA Circular 2020-03 Postponement of the 7th Meeting of the Parties
- SIOFA Circular 2020-04 Decision in response to Japan letter regarding temporarily suspension of observer's coverage
- SIOFA Circular 2020-05 Decision to suspend temporarily observer coverage on trawler vessels

- SIOFA Circular 2020-06 Letter from the MoP co-Chairs persons about the 7th MoP
- SIOFA Circular 2020-07 MoP Chair, Vice-Chair and ROP amendments
- SIOFA Circular 2020-08 Voluntary contribution from Australia
- SIOFA Circular 2020-09 Regarding the decision to suspend temporarily observer coverage on trawler vessels
- SIOFA Circular 2020-10 Regarding the dates for the 7th Meeting of the Parties
- SIOFA Circular 2020-11 Regarding the dates for the 4th Compliance Committee
- SIOFA Circular 2020-12 on Precautionary measures against Fraud Attempt
- SIOFA Circular 2020-13 Regarding the 7th Meeting of the Parties
- SIOFA Circular 2020-14 Recruitment of an independent Chairperson for the SIOFA SC

All SIOFA Circulars are available to Official Contacts on the internal communication section of the non-public part of the SIOFA website.

12. SIOFA Intersessional decision

A synthesis of all the Intersessional decisions are available on the SIOFA Website / Information Board, and accessible to all. The Secretariat will provide an information paper on decisions taken intersessionally to the MoP7.

The complete intersessional decision outcome is available on the secure part of the website.