



9th Meeting of the Parties (MoP9)

Reunion Island, 4–8 July 2022

MOP-09-10

Transparency and distribution of Scientific Committee meeting documents

SIOFA Secretariat and SC Chairs

Submitted 02.06.2022

Document type	administrative paper <input type="checkbox"/> working paper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> information paper <input type="checkbox"/>
Distribution	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted ¹ <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential ² <input type="checkbox"/>
Abstract	
<p>In response to concerns on the lack of an agreed procedure, the SIOFA SC Chair and Vice-Chair, and the Chairs of SERAWG and PAEWG, have elaborated a document (SC-07-31 rev. 1) detailing a proposed process for assessing and distributing meeting documents, which was adopted at SC7.</p> <p>The document included details on the process flow (which should ideally be reflected also in the recruitment procedure of consultants), clarifying the role of Secretariat, Project Managers and SC HoDs in assessing the outputs of consultancy projects before further circulation and other elements that SC7 adopted for its use. Furthermore, the document included a report review form, which SC7 recommended the MoP to adopt as part of the recruitment procedures for consultants.</p> <p>SC7 further requested the Secretariat to develop document templates and reorganize the access system to meeting documents to reflect the contents of the document presented at SC7. These developments are presented here for the MoP to consider.</p>	

¹ Restricted documents may contain confidential information. Please do not distribute restricted documents in any form without the explicit permission of the SIOFA Secretariat and the data owner(s)/provider(s).

² Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions as per SIOFA RoP 20.



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Recommendations

- That MoP **REVISES** and **ADOPTS** the recruitment procedures for consultants to include the report review form, given in Annex B of [SC-07-31 rev. 1](#) (included in this paper, MOP-09-13, also as Annex B), as recommended by the SC7
- That the MoP **ADOPTS** the following elements:
 - a) Template for consultant reports (Annex D),
 - b) Template for communications when circulating draft consultant reports (Annex E)
 - c) Template for communications that distribute draft consultant reports to SC HoDs (Annex F)
 - d) Proposed classification system for restricted and confidential documents and regulation of access by meeting participants (Annex G) that were developed by the Secretariat as requested by SC7



Background

The implementation of rules regarding confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters has been a topic of discussion at recent scientific working groups of SIOFA. To assist this discussion, and to help clarify the procedures for documents at scientific meetings, the Scientific Committee Chair and the Chairs of the Working Groups proposed that the SIOFA Scientific Committee revise its procedures regarding the review, submission, and publication of scientific reports. Meeting documents may contain information that is subject to SIOFA rules relating to the confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters. We note that there may be some trade-offs between the provision of detailed information in scientific reports and rules relating to the confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters. Hence, we note that there may be circumstances where consultation between report authors and CCPs on specific issues will assist in ensuring that the rules are followed while allowing the appropriate level of information to be considered by the scientific working groups at its meetings.

Distribution of documents for the SIOFA Scientific Meetings was previously considered in paper MoP-04-14 (Du Rietz 2017). That paper noted that SIOFA Agreement Article 14 provides for the promotion of transparency in decision making processes and other activities carried out under the Agreement. Posting of meeting documents and meeting reports on the publicly available part of the website, as done by other RFMOs, would achieve this transparency.

After considering the approach proposed by the Scientific Committee (MoP-04-14), the MoP provided advice that was included in the document ([SC-07-31 rev. 1](#)) presented at the 7th meeting of the Scientific Committee. Two papers, submitted for evaluation to SC7, are also relevant to consider: [SC-07-INFO-03](#) (Orange Cyberdefense Consultants 2022) and [SC-07-08](#) (Ross Analytics 2022). In summary, these documents call for clarity on the requirements for and implementation of data confidentiality, and for strengthening the structuring of information access on the website. This paper aims to address these recommendations through a series of best practices for report and data publication.

At its 7th meeting, the SIOFA SC (para. 66 of the [SC7 report](#)):

- *ADOPTED the revised procedures detailed in Annex A of [SC-07-31 rev. 1](#) (also Annex A in this paper) for the submission of documents to the SC and its working groups.*
- *ADOPTED the report review form for SIOFA commissioned scientific consultant reports and associated presentations to the SC or its working groups, given in Annex B of [SC-07-31 rev. 1](#) (also Annex B in this paper).*
- *ADOPTED the Confidentiality agreement to access restricted and confidential papers, given in Annex C of [SC-07-31 rev. 1](#) (also Annex C in this paper, amended as directed by the SC Chair).*
- *REQUESTED the Secretariat develop:*
 - i. a standard template for consultant reports so that they are consistent with the report format required for reports submitted to SIOFA Scientific Working Groups.*
 - ii. a template for communications when circulating draft consultant reports that may contain confidential data to the appropriate CCPs for review and approval (i.e., where the report shows or presents confidential data, commercially sensitive information, or financial matters that have not been approved by SIOFA and the relevant CCPs).*
 - iii. a template for communications that distribute draft consultant reports to SC HoDs that request review and including appropriate confidentiality requirements.*



iv. a proposal for a classification system for restricted and confidential documents and regulation of access by meeting participants.

- *RECOMMENDED to the MoP that the recruitment procedures for consultants be revised to include the report review form, given in Annex B of [SC-07-31 rev. 1](#) (also Annex B in this paper).*

The SIOFA SC Chair has suggested that minor amendments be made to the Annexes that were adopted at SC7, to ensure the scope includes external scientists. These changes have been clearly tracked in this document and were purely editorial to clarify language.

Following the request of SC7, the Secretariat has developed a standard template for consultant reports, a template for communications when circulating draft consultant reports that may contain confidential data, a template for communications that distribute draft consultant reports to SC HoDs that request review, and a proposal for a classification system for restricted and confidential documents and regulation of access by meeting participants.

Aim

This paper aims to provide to the MoP all the key elements of [SC-07-31 rev. 1](#) that were adopted at SC7 (Annex A and C of this paper), for information.

It also aims to provide to the MoP the element of [SC-07-31 rev. 1](#) that SC7 recommended the MoP uses to revise the procedures for consultants (Annex B of this paper), for evaluation and adoption.

It finally aims to provide to the MoP the elements that SC7 requested the Secretariat to develop, which are included in this document as Annexes D, E, F and G, for information and potential adoption.

References

Du Rietz, K. 2017. Transparency and Distribution of Meeting Documents. Page 2. 4th Meeting of Parties, Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), Aanari Hotel & Spa, Flic and Flac, Mauritius.

Orange Cyberdefense Consultants. 2022. OCD-SIOFA Security Audit Restitution (Project SEC2021-06). Pages 1–21.

Ross Analytics. 2022. SIOFA independent audit of data security: access, dissemination and presentation of data (Project Code: SEC2021-05). Pages 1–57.

Annex A: Submission and publication of scientific working group documents

Subject to any rules relating to the confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters, all Scientific Committee or any of its working groups or subsidiary bodies (collectively, SC in the sections below) meeting documents will be made publicly accessible on the SIOFA website.

1. SC meeting documents subject to rules relating to confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters will
 - a. Be made accessible only as restricted or confidential documents on the SIOFA website.
 - b. The title, author and optionally the abstract that contains no confidential data, will be made publicly available on the website along with a note that the document is available only as a restricted document
 - c. The content of restricted or confidential documents will not be visible to the public
2. Any document submitted to the SC originating from a contributor that is not a CCP, including the Secretariat, must be assessed for the risk that it may be subject to rules relating to the confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters.
 - a. Where there is any risk, the Executive Secretary must consult with the author, the appropriate scientific Chair, and the relevant CCPs before approving the document for submission.
3. Any document submitted by consultants will undergo a two-stage review process (see details in Annex B) that is intended to check for potential confidentiality issues and ensure that the quality of the paper is sufficient for submission to the scientific bodies of SIOFA. The final stage of this review process should clearly indicate whether the document access is to be restricted and to what level.
4. Any document submitted to the SC by a CCP must indicate, as a part of the document submission, if this document should be placed on the restricted section of the SIOFA website or if it is to be considered confidential.
5. Access to public documents on the SIOFA website is granted to everyone that can access the website.
6. Access to restricted documents on the SIOFA website is to be granted only to registered meeting participants (to a CP or a PFE and to a CP or a PFE official contact), and to officially registered SIOFA Observers. Restricted documents are not to be shared in any form, as per the confidentiality agreement of all SIOFA meetings. If a non-registered Observer or external scientist wishes to have access to a restricted document, he/she should make a request to the Secretariat, justify his/her need and fill in a Confidentiality Agreement (see Annex C). The Secretariat will then contact the relevant CCPs to obtain their consent prior to any transmission of documents.
7. Access to confidential documents on the SIOFA website is to be granted only to HoDs, or to members invited to specific closed sessions as per Rule 20 of the SIOFA Rules of Procedure. No exceptions are foreseen.
8. Revisions of SC documents
 - a. Revisions of documents prior to and through the course of a meeting will be made available on the SIOFA website.
 - b. Revised documents will be subject to the rules relating to confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters, and be made available as either a public or restricted document as appropriate
 - c. Revised documents will replace previous versions on the website, and will be denoted by a suffix indicating the revision number (e.g., rev1, rev2, etc.)
9. Meeting reports signed and approved by the Chair will be made available as public documents on the SIOFA website, unless an explicit request is made by CCPs to restrict access to the document.

Annex B: SIOFA Scientific Report Review Form

This form must be completed for all SIOFA commissioned scientific consultant reports and be made available as a part of the Terms of Reference for each project and included in consultant contracts with SIOFA.

Report submission

To be completed by the primary author

Title		
Authors		
Project code		
Primary author name and email		
Date submitted		
Contributing authors	<i>The primary author confirms that all contributing authors have agreed to their names being included as authors (indicate either Yes or No)</i>	Yes/No
Abstract (10 lines max.)		
Conclusion and Recommendations (if any)		

To be completed by the Executive Secretary

Project Manager			
Reviewed by			
Date received		Date reviewed	

Review Stage 1 – Secretariat and Project Manager review

To be completed by the Secretariat (for the document sections in italics, after consulting relevant CPPs) and the Project Manager (for the other sections), unless formally arranged otherwise between the Project Manager and the Secretariat.

Document section	Yes/No	Comment
Title: <i>Is the title an adequate description for information retrieval</i>		
Project code and title: <i>The SIOFA Project Code and Project Title, and objectives or terms of reference that are considered by the report are summarised in the introduction</i>		



Document section	Yes/ No	Comment
Abstract/Executive Summary: Clear and adequate indication of the paper's content; states the purpose of the paper; describes the investigation on which it is based; states the methods used; summarises the results and conclusions		
Recommendations: Clear and concise recommendations are made that are suitable for potential inclusion as statements in Scientific Working Group reports		
Presentation and style: The information is presented logically and using a style that is appropriate for Scientific Working Group submission		
<i>Confidential information: The report does not show or present any confidential data, commercially sensitive information, or financial matters that have not been approved for release by SIOFA and the relevant CCPs</i>		
Structure: Methods, results, discussion, and appendices are presented in a consistent and logical manner		
The abbreviations, formulas, units, and nomenclature used conform with applicable standards and rules		
The quality of the English language is satisfactory		
Calculations and treatment of SIOFA data: The calculations presented and treatment and interpretation of the SIOFA data is appropriate		
There are no apparent errors, unexplained omissions, or inconsistencies in the information presented		
Illustrations and tables: Illustrations and/or tables are all captioned, clear, and are appropriate for the analyses		
Interpretation: Conclusions are justified given the information presented in the report		
References: The references are complete and relevant to the analyses and conclusions		
<i>Acknowledgements: The document includes appropriate logos and acknowledges the role of SIOFA and any other funding agency or assistance received by the authors</i>		
<i>Terms of Reference: ToR of the project are appended as an annex of the report</i>		
<i>Requires circulating of the entire report or relevant sections to the appropriate CCPs for review (i.e., where the report shows or presents confidential data, commercially sensitive</i>		



Document section	Yes/ No	Comment
<i>information, or financial matters that have not been approved by SIOFA and the relevant CCPs)</i>		

Review Stage 1 – Outcome

To be completed by the Executive Secretary following the recommendations of the WG Chair or Project Manager (tick ONE box only).

Reports cannot progress to Stage 2 of the review process and must be revised until all major issues identified in this section have been satisfactorily resolved.

Status	Requirement	Selection (✓)
Accepted	Approved by the project manager (and CCPs where relevant) for circulation to SC HoDs for comment as a draft report	
Accepted	Needs only minor discretionary changes	
Accepted	Needs minor, but essential changes	
Not accepted	Needs substantial editorial changes (including removal of confidential data)	
Not accepted	Needs substantial reanalysis and editorial changes	

Review Stage 2 – SC HoDs comments

To be completed by the Executive Secretary by including the comments of SC HoDs

Review Stage 2 – SC HoDs review publication approval

To be completed by the Executive Secretary following the comments and evaluation of SC HoDs

Status	Selection (✓)	Comments
Return to author for revision		
Approved by the WG Chair as a final report, and will be placed on the RESTRICTED section of the SIOFA website		
Approved by the WG Chair as a final report, and will be placed on the PUBLIC section of the SIOFA website		
Other (please specify):		

Executive Secretary signature:

Date:

Reports may only be circulated to SC HoDs, submitted to the Scientific Working Groups, or placed (if required) in the public domain once the final report has been accepted and this form has been completed, with no outstanding issues or concerns, and has been signed by the Executive Secretary.

Annex C – Attestation of honour on the respect of confidentiality of data for non-registered Observers or external scientists to access restricted papers



CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR NON-REGISTERED OBSERVERS OR EXTERNAL SCIENTISTS TO ACCESS RESTRICTED PAPERS

This Confidentiality (“Agreement”) is entered into between Mr/Ms _____ (“the Observer”) and Mr Thierry Clot (“SIOFA Executive Secretary”), concerning the following document

a. The Observer understands that the Confidential Information and Proprietary Data of SIOFA are not public and must ensure that reasonable steps are taken to protect the confidentiality of said information.

b. The Observer agrees not to use any Confidential Information or Proprietary Data for their personal benefit or for the benefit of others.

c. The Observer agrees that he or she will not disclose to any other person or entity, either directly or indirectly, the Confidential Information or Proprietary Data. Any use or disclosure of Confidential Information or Proprietary Data is cause for legal proceedings and sanctions.

d. If this agreement is terminated for any reason, the Observer must destroy the information and data, and must not make any copies.

Drawn up in (place) _____, on (date) _____

Signature of the Observer

Signature of the Executive Secretary



Annex D - Template for consultant reports

This template is intended to provide guidance for the compilation of SIOFA consultant reports, with the aim of ensuring consistency in the outputs of projects and that no key elements are missed in the report. This guidance is largely based on Annex B, which SC7 recommended the MoP to adopt. The template is not intended to be overly prescriptive, to allow for the differences between projects, and with the aim of reducing the frequency of future revisions.

Title

Should be an adequate description for information retrieval

Abstract/Executive Summary

Clear and adequate indication of the paper's content; states the purpose of the paper; describes the investigation on which it is based; states the methods used; summarises the results and conclusions. Ideally not longer than 300 words.

Recommendations

Clear and concise recommendations that are suitable for potential inclusion as statements in Scientific Working Group reports

Introduction

The introduction should cover the general and specific context of the report, and make explicit reference to the project code and title as well as the objectives or terms of reference that are at the basis of the consultation

Materials and Methods

This section should be explicit on the data that was used and how it was obtained for the study, including any conditions that were associated with the data release. It should then explicit methods used to analyse the data to a level sufficient for technical discussion. Any abbreviations, formulas, units, and nomenclature used should be defined here, and conform with applicable standards and rules in the scientific field.

Results

Concise results of the analyses. Illustrations and/or tables are all inserted in this section, referred to in the text, captioned, clear, and appropriate for the analyses

Discussion

Interpretation of the analyses results in the context of available information. Conclusions are justified given the information presented in the report and elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

The report should acknowledge the role of SIOFA and any other funding agency or assistance received by the authors. Appropriate logos to acknowledge funding should be included in the cover page rather than in this section.

References

The references are complete and relevant to the analyses and conclusions

Annexes

ToR of the project are appended as an annex of the report

Annex E - Template for communications when circulating draft consultant reports that may contain confidential data to the appropriate CCPs for review and approval

Dear SIOFA CCP,

[Non-registered Observer organization/external expert] has requested access to the [REPORT #-NAME], which has been classified as a restricted paper submitted to [Meeting Name].

We have identified that your data was included in this report, and therefore ask for your explicit permission to disclose the requested report, for the specific purpose of [purpose] and under the condition that the [non-registered Observer organization/external expert] signs an attestation of honour with the Executive Secretary of SIOFA prior to the report.

This attestation is aimed to ensure that the confidentiality of the released report will be protected, used fairly and not further disclosed.

Please kindly acknowledge the reception of this email and submit your response to the Secretariat (secretariat@siofa.org) within 2 weeks, or no later than [DAY MONTH YEAR], at [XX:XX] UTC time.

Best regards

The SIOFA Secretariat

Annex F - Template for communications that distribute draft consultant reports to SC HoDs that request review and including appropriate confidentiality requirements

Dear SIOFA SC HoDs,

Please find attached to this email the draft consultant report for the project [project code, ToR #], that is to be submitted to [Meeting Name].

This report has been reviewed in Stage 1 (by the Secretariat and Project Manager) and has been found acceptable for submission to Stage 2 of the review process (by SC HoDs), but please note that minor revisions might have been identified in the first stage of revision and not yet applied. The detailed outcome of the first stage of review is attached to this email, for your information.

Please evaluate the contents of the draft report, with an explicit request to consider any confidentiality aspects of the report and provide a .

Your comments should be returned in a free email format to the SIOFA Executive Secretary (thierry.clot@siofa.org) within one week, or no later than [DAY MONTH YEAR], at [XX:XX] UTC time. The Executive Secretary will then collate and synthesize your comments and produce a final evaluation of the draft report.

Best regards

The SIOFA Secretariat



Annex G - Proposed classification system for restricted and confidential documents and regulation of access by meeting participants

Papers that present information considered restricted could be posted in a secured section of the website, and only their title and authors (and optionally the abstract) made publicly available. Additionally, confidential documents intended for closed sessions as provided in Rule 20 of the SIOFA Rules of Procedure might be provided only to members of those closed sessions.

Based on Annex A, we propose that a three-tier classification system be adopted for documents:

Tier 1 – Public documents

All meeting documents shall be made publicly available on the accessible part of the SIOFA website prior to any meeting, subject to any rules relating to the confidentiality of certain data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters.

Meeting reports (including their annexes) signed/approved by the Chairperson shall be considered public documents.

Tier 2 – Restricted documents

Meeting documents subject to rules relating to confidentiality, shall be made accessible only via a secure part of the SIOFA website. Access to the restricted documents on of the website shall be made available only to official contacts (SIOFA Contracting Party or Participating Fishing Entity HoDs) and registered participants (including Observers) of a meeting that the documents are submitted to.

Non-registered Observers or external scientists can request the Secretariat to access restricted documents. However, non-registered Observers' or external scientists' access to restricted document shall be subordinated to the explicit consent of the relevant CCPs and the signature of a corresponding attestation of honour (Annex C).

Tier 3 – Confidential documents

According to Rule 20 art. 1 of the SIOFA Rules of Procedure, the Meeting of the Parties or the subsidiary body concerned can decide that exceptional circumstances require that a meeting, or part thereof, be held in closed session. Notwithstanding art. 1, art. 2 provides that closed meetings be arranged in any case for financial matters (restricted to budget contributors) and the selection and appointment of the Executive Secretary. Confidential documents are documents submitted for consideration in one of these closed sessions and shall therefore be made available only to members invited to the closed sessions.

No other access to confidential documents shall be foreseen.

However, we also note that in order to improve transparency, and following the recommendations of MoP-04-14, we are proposing that document titles and authors (and optionally an abstract) of restricted and confidential documents also be made available on the public section of the SIOFA website. This would allow external observers and scientists to be aware of the existence of reports (but not the confidential content) that may be relevant to their work within and outside SIOFA.

Revisions of papers through the course of a meeting will be made available on the appropriate (public, restricted, or confidential) part of the SIOFA website, according to their original classification.