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Potential Amendments to SIOFA CMMs and the Standards, Specifications and Procedures (SSPs) for the SIOFA VMS

The Chairperson of the SIOFA VMS Working Group

Meeting	Compliance Committee ✓ Meeting of the Parties ✓
Document type	Administrative Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Proposal or Working Paper ✓ Information Paper <input type="checkbox"/>
Distribution	Public ✓ Restricted ¹ <input type="checkbox"/> Closed session document ² <input type="checkbox"/>
Abstract	This paper presents the potential amendment to SIOFA CMMs and the SSPs for the SIOFA VMS, to ensure policy alignment between these CMMs and Policies, and the operational and technical aspect of the SIOFA VMS ahead of its anticipated entry into operation.

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.

Recommendations

- That the Compliance Committee **note** the potential amendments and **recommends** their adoption by the Meeting of the Parties (MoP);
- That the Compliance Committee **consider** the proposal of one CCP to delete the entry ('ENT') and exit ('EXI') data reporting elements from NAF messages in Table 1 of Annex 2 to CMM 16 (2025) and Annex 1 to the SSPs, and **advise** the MoP as appropriate;
- That the MoP **consider** these amendments, together with the recommendations of the Compliance Committee, and **endorse** them as appropriate;

Consideration of the use of the SIOFA VMS for the submission of entry and exit notifications

Following up on the discussions from the 12th Meeting of the Parties to SIOFA, the SIOFA VMS Working Group assessed the feasibility of automating entry and exit notifications within the SIOFA Agreement Area using the forthcoming SIOFA Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). The SIOFA VMS Working Group reviewed current reporting obligations under CMM 10 (2023) on Monitoring³ and assessed the extent to which VMS-based transmissions could satisfy these requirements. The analysis examined the possible technical pathways and outlined the policy, operational, and data-related considerations associated with each.

The SIOFA VMS Working Group noted that the increasing volume of vessel entry and exit notifications within the SIOFA Agreement Area is placing growing administrative pressure on both CCPs and the Secretariat. Under current requirements, notifications are submitted manually via email and subsequently entered into databases, creating inefficiencies and error risks. As fleet sizes and reporting obligations expand, there is a clear need for a more streamlined and scalable approach to managing these notifications.

The introduction of the SIOFA VMS presents an opportunity to automate the submission of entry and exit notifications. Such an approach would enable vessels or authorities to transmit required information directly through VMS, reducing reliance on manual processes. While technical options exist to support this, some limitations remain regarding data transmission capabilities and the handling of certain information fields.

Therefore, the SIOFA VMS Working Group suggested several solutions to allow these notifications to be sent automatically through VMS, which include:

- Making the use of VMS for entry and exit reporting mandatory.
- Replacing redundant data fields required by CMM 10 (2023) on Monitoring with the Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI), as defined in CMM 16 (2025) on Vessel Monitoring System.⁴ These data fields would automatically be associated with the vessel by the SIOFA VMS.
- Discontinuing reporting of the data field “activity in the Agreement Area”, except in cases where a vessel needs to provide its entry/exit reports via manual reporting, for example, in the event of an ALC malfunction.
- Reporting of observers onboard shall be transmitted by email and be limited to instances where an observer is present onboard a vessel when it enters the Agreement Area, thereby reducing the frequency of reporting.

To enable an automated system, the SIOFA VMS Working Group noted that the MoP must first ensure that the Agreement and existing CMMs permit the use of VMS for entry/exit reporting. The SIOFA VMS Working Group noted that while the phrase “...or other means of communication...” in paragraph 15 of CMM 10 (2023) on Monitoring is ultimately subject to the interpretation of the MoP, it may reasonably be construed as including VMS as an acceptable means of submitting the notification in an automated manner. However, it may nevertheless be useful to explicitly refer to the use of VMS for entry/exit reporting, so as to provide clarity and reassurance to CCPs that

³ Conservation and Management Measure for the Monitoring of Fisheries in the Agreement Area (CMM 10 (2023) on Monitoring)

⁴ Conservation and Management Measure for the establishment of a SIOFA Vessel Monitoring System (CMM 16 (2025) on Vessel Monitoring System)

automated transmissions generated through VMS are formally recognised as an acceptable means of fulfilling entry and exit notification obligations. As such, the SIOFA VMS Working Group recommended that paragraph 15 of CMM 10 (2023) on Monitoring be replaced by the following provisions:

“15. Each CCP shall monitor the entry to and exit from the Agreement Area of fishing vessels flying its flag, and their activities while in the Agreement Area.

15bis. Each CCP shall require its fishing vessels or relevant authorities to notify the Secretariat of each entry to or exit from the Agreement Area of vessels authorised to fish for species managed by SIOFA flying their flag, through a specific entry and exit notification by means of VMS reporting, in accordance with the requirements of CMM 16 (2025) (Vessel Monitoring System).

15tris. In the event of a malfunctioning of the ALC on board a fishing vessel preventing the entry and exit notification by means of VMS reporting required under paragraph 15bis, the flag CCP shall require its fishing vessels or relevant authorities to provide the notification to the Secretariat, within 24 hours of the vessel's entry into or exit from the Agreement Area, via a manual report transmitted by email. The manual report shall include information on the activity of the vessel in the Agreement Area.

15quater. If a fishing vessel enters the Agreement Area with an observer on board, the flag CCP of the vessel shall require the vessel or its relevant authorities to notify the Secretariat by email, within 24 hours of the vessel's entry into the Agreement Area, of the presence of an observer on board the vessel.”

In addition, the SIOFA VMS Working Group recommended that Annex I to CMM 10 (2023) be deleted. The data formats would be replaced by those required under CMM 16 (2025).

More detailed information about the SIOFA VMS Working Group discussions on this topic is available on the meeting pages of the 8th,⁵ 9th,⁶ and 10th⁷ Meetings of the SIOFA VMS Working Group.

⁵ <https://siofa.org/meetings/vmswg08>

⁶ <https://siofa.org/meetings/VMSWG09>

⁷ <https://siofa.org/meetings/cc/10th-meeting-siofa-vms-working-group-vmswg10>

Possible Amendments to the NAF Messages Data Elements in Annex 2 Of CMM 16 (2025) On Vessel Monitoring System and Annex 1 of the SIOFA VMS SSPs

At its 10th Meeting, the SIOFA VMS Working Group noted that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) number is not currently included in *Table 1: NAF message data elements* of Annex 2 to CMM 16 (2025). This is notwithstanding that CMM 16 (2025) recognises the IMO number as a Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI) for vessels transmitting VMS position reports via their FMC pursuant to paragraph 6(a) of the CMM. A similar omission is also observed in the Standards, Specifications, and Procedures for the SIOFA VMS (SSPs). As such the SIOFA VMS Working Group tasked the Secretariat to draft a discussion paper for it to consider prior to the 10th Meeting of the Compliance Committee and the 13th Meeting of the Parties to SIOFA, which was reviewed by the SIOFA VMS Working Group via correspondence.

Further to that consultation via correspondence, the SIOFA VMS Working Group recommended a number of amendments to Table 1 of Annex 2 of CMM 16 (2025) and Annex 1 of the SSPs and sought to clarify the applicability of the use of IMO Number in the NAF Messages Data Elements. The outcomes of those discussions are set out in *Discussion Paper on Possible Amendments to the NAF Messages Data Elements in Annex 2 of CMM 16 (2025), on Vessel Monitoring System, and Annex 1 of the SIOFA VMS SSPs*, available for reference on the SIOFA Website.⁸

[Annex 1](#) to this paper includes the proposed Amendments to the NAF Messages Data Elements in Annex 2 of CMM 16 (2025) on Vessel Monitoring System and Annex 1 of the SIOFA VMS SSPs.

As part of the consultation process for this paper, one CCP proposed deleting the entry ('ENT') and exit ('EXI') data reporting elements from NAF messages in Table 1 of Annex 2 to CMM 16 (2025) and Annex 1 to the SSPs. The proposed deletion has not been reflected in the amendments, as they are inconsistent with the recommendations and conclusions formulated by the SIOFA VMS Working Group in paper [VMSWG-09-01](#) on the use of the VMS for the automation of entry and exit reporting, which is also discussed in the previous section of this paper. Noting this, the SIOFA VMS WG further recommends that the Compliance Committee and the Meeting of the Parties consider the deletion proposed by one CCP of the entry ('ENT') and exit ('EXI') data reporting elements from NAF messages in Table 1 of Annex 2 of CMM 16 (2025) and Annex 1 of the SSPs.

⁸ <https://siofa.org/media/2825>.

Annex 1 Possible Amendments to the NAF Messages Data Elements in Annex 2 of CMM 16 (2025) on Vessel Monitoring System and Annex 1 of the SIOFA VMS SSPs.

This Annex presents the proposed amendments to the NAF message data elements in CMM 16 (2025) and the SSPs, as agreed by the SIOFA VMS Working Group. The proposed changes aim to clarify the inclusion and designation of key data elements, ensuring consistency across all measures and policy documents, and effectively addressing the gap identified above.

The amended table below shall replace Table 1 in Annex 2 of CMM 16 (2025) and the table in Annex 1 of the SSPs, reflecting the changes agreed by the SIOFA VMS WG.

In addition, minor changes are proposed to the introductory text that accompanies these tables. Furthermore, the footnote () in Annex 1 of the SSPs would become redundant and should therefore be removed.*

CMM 16 (2025)

Annex 2

Data formats for transmission of VMS position reports

A. North Atlantic Format (NAF)

1. VMS position reports sent in NAF format shall be transmitted using one of the following application layers (secured connection):
 - i. Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS);
 - ii. File Transfer Protocol (FTP) with Transport Layer Security (TLS) (FTPS);
 - iii. Email.
2. VMS position reports sent in NAF format shall contain, at minimum, the [mandatory](#) data elements in Table 1.

Table 1: NAF message data elements

Data Element	Field Code	Definition	Mandatory / Optional	Contents
Start Record	SR	Defines the start of the message structure.	M	No Data
Address	AD	Indicates the destination. Provider and Secretariat to define code for SIOFA VMS	M	3-Alpha code
From	FR	3-alpha code describing the country which FMC is submitting the report.	M	3-Alpha code
Sequence Number	SQ	Message Sequence Number	M	0-999999
IMO Number	IM	IMO ship identification number	M³	IMO ship identification number⁴

Data Element	Field Code	Definition	Mandatory / Optional	Contents
Internal Reference Number ³	IR	Unique Number attributed by the flag state	<u>O</u>	3-Alpha code. 0-999999999
Type of Message	TM	Letter code of the type of message	<u>M</u>	POS = position report, MAN = manual report, ENT = entry report, EXI = exit report
Radio Call Sign (IRCS)	RC	Vessel detail: international radio call sign of the vessel	<u>M</u> ⁴	IRCS
Latitude (decimal)	LT	Latitude expressed in degrees and decimals (WGS-84)	<u>M</u>	+(-)DD.ddd
Longitude (decimal)	LG	Longitude expressed in degrees and decimals (WGS-84)	<u>M</u>	+(-)DD.ddd
Vessel Speed	SP	Speed of the vessel	<u>M</u>	Knots * 10
Vessel Course	CO	Heading of the vessel in degrees	<u>M</u>	1-360
Flag State	FS	State of registration of the vessel	<u>M</u>	3-Alpha code
Date	DA	Date of reported event	<u>M</u>	YYYYMMDD
Time	TI	Time of reported event	<u>M</u>	HHMM
End of Record	ER	Indicates the end of the message/report	<u>M</u>	No Data

³ Where applicable, in accordance with footnote 2 of this CMM and with paragraph 2.d. of CMM 07(2025) (Vessel Authorisation).

⁴ Where applicable, in accordance with footnote 2 of this CMM and with paragraph 2.c. of CMM 07(2025) (Vessel Authorisation).

Standards, Specifications and Procedures (SSPs) for the SIOFA VMS

Annex 1: Description of the North Atlantic Format (NAF)

Data Elements of NAF Messages

~~VMS position reports sent in All NAF Messages format sent to the SIOFA VMS shall contain, at minimum, the mandatory information required in data elements in the following table: paragraph 1. f) of CMM 16 (2025). The general structure and data elements are as below~~

Data Element	Field Code	Definition	Mandatory / Optional	Contents
Start Record	SR	Defines the start of the message structure.	<u>M</u>	No Data
Address	AD	Indicates the destination. Provider and Secretariat to define code for SIOFA VMS	<u>M</u>	3-Alpha code
From	FR	3-alpha code describing the country which FMC is submitting the report.	<u>M</u>	3-Alpha code
Sequence Number	SQ	Message Sequence Number	<u>M</u>	0-999999
<u>IMO Number</u>	<u>IM</u>	<u>IMO ship identification number</u>	<u>M⁴</u>	<u>IMO ship identification number</u>
Internal Reference Number [*]	IR	Unique Number attributed by the flag state	<u>O</u>	3-Alpha code. 0-999999999
Type of Message	TM	Letter code of the type of message	<u>M</u>	POS = position report, MAN = manual report, ENT = entry report, EXI = exit report
Radio Call Sign (IRCS)	RC	Vessel detail: international radio call sign of the vessel	<u>M⁵</u>	IRCS
Latitude (decimal)	LT	Latitude expressed in degrees and decimals (WGS-84)	<u>M</u>	+(-)DD.ddd
Longitude (decimal)	LG	Longitude expressed in degrees and decimals (WGS-84)	<u>M</u>	+(-)DD.ddd
Vessel Speed	SP	Speed of the vessel	<u>M</u>	Knots * 10
Vessel Course	CO	Heading of the vessel in degrees	<u>M</u>	1-360
Flag State	FS	State of registration of the vessel	<u>M</u>	3-Alpha code
Date	DA	Date of reported event	<u>M</u>	YYYYMMDD
Time	TI	Time of reported event	<u>M</u>	HHMM
End of Record	ER	Indicates the end of the message/report	<u>M</u>	No Data

^{*}Submission of IR is optional

³ <https://www.naf-format.org/index.htm>

⁴ [Where applicable, in accordance with footnote 2 of CMM 16 \(2025\) and with paragraph 2.d. of CMM 07\(2025\) \(Vessel Authorisation\).](#)

⁵ [Where applicable, in accordance with footnote 2 of this CMM and with paragraph 2.c. of CMM 07\(2025\) \(Vessel Authorisation\).](#)

Structure of the position report

Each data transmission shall be structured as follows:

- *double slash (//) and the characters 'SR' indicate the start of a message,*
- *a double slash (//) and field code indicate the start of a data element,*
- *a single slash (/) separates the field code and the data,*
- *pairs of data are separated by space,*
- *the characters 'ER' and a double slash (//) indicate the end of a record.*