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Proposal for a MoP Decision on the Practical Operationalisation of Article 13 of the SIOFA Agreement

Delegation of Seychelles

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Abstract	
This paper proposes that the Meeting of the Parties (MoP) adopt a structured, practical and resource-sensitive approach to the implementation of Article 13 of the SIOFA Agreement. It identifies priority support areas for eligible Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and developing SIOFA Contracting Parties, and sets out a simple implementation process for identifying needs, coordinating available support, integrating Article 13 considerations across relevant SIOFA workstreams, and reviewing progress over time. The proposal does not seek to amend the Agreement or create an open-ended funding mechanism; rather, it seeks to give practical effect to an existing commitment through clearer coordination, reporting and follow-up.	

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² Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

Recommendations
The Meeting of the Parties is invited to: • note the importance of giving practical effect to Article 13 of the SIOFA Agreement; • consider the priority support areas and implementation process identified in this paper; • adopt the draft decision contained in Annex 1; and • request the Secretariat, subject to available resources, to support the coordination and periodic reporting of Article 13-related needs, activities and progress.

Proposal for a MoP Decision on the Practical Operationalisation of Article 13 of the SIOFA Agreement

Background

1. Article 13 of the SIOFA Agreement requires Contracting Parties to give full recognition to the special requirements of developing States bordering the Area, in particular the least-developed among them and Small Island Developing States, in relation to the conservation and management of fishery resources and the sustainable development of such resources.
2. Article 13 further recognises the vulnerability of developing States bordering the Area that are dependent on fishery resources, the need to avoid adverse impacts on subsistence, small-scale and artisanal fishers and fishworkers, and the need to ensure that conservation and management measures do not transfer a disproportionate burden of conservation action onto developing States bordering the Area.
3. Article 13 also provides that cooperation should include action to enhance the ability of developing States bordering the Area to conserve and manage fishery resources and to develop their own fisheries for such resources, as well as assistance to enable them to participate in fisheries for such resources, including facilitating access in accordance with the Agreement.
4. Article 13 identifies forms of cooperation and assistance that may include financial assistance, human resources development, technical assistance, transfer of technology, improved data collection, reporting, verification, exchange and analysis, improved information on the impact of fishing activities on the marine environment, stock assessment and scientific research, monitoring, control, surveillance, compliance and enforcement, observer programmes, access to technology, and participation in the Meeting of the Parties and subsidiary bodies.
5. At the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC11), Seychelles, supported by other SIDS, underlined that Article 13 constitutes a core element of SIOFA's governance framework. While Article 13 has been regularly discussed, there remains a need to move beyond general exchanges and towards a more focused and operational approach that enables the MoP to discharge its responsibilities effectively and consistently.
6. The SC11 report records support for maintaining Article 13 as a standing agenda item and for enhancing discussions on mechanisms, processes and opportunities to improve delivery of Article 13 objectives. Seychelles and other SIDS further highlighted the need for targeted, sustained and practical support, particularly in relation to scientific participation, data collection and reporting systems, and engagement in SIOFA decision-making processes.
7. In this context, Seychelles considers that MoP13 is well placed to adopt a structured and operational approach to Article 13, without reopening or amending the Agreement, and in a manner that supports effective participation by SIDS while strengthening SIOFA's overall scientific and management outcomes.

Rationale for MoP13 action

8. Seychelles is bringing this proposal to MoP13 because Article 13 reflects an agreed commitment within SIOFA that requires a practical pathway for implementation. The proposal therefore does not seek to create a new obligation; it seeks to make an existing commitment more operational and more usable.
9. For SIDS and developing SIOFA Contracting Parties, participation in SIOFA work can be constrained by limited technical staff, travel budgets, scientific capacity, data systems and reporting resources. If these practical constraints are not addressed, SIDS may find it difficult to participate fully in scientific, compliance and management processes, even where they have direct interests in SIOFA fisheries and ecosystems.

10. A structured Article 13 process would help the MoP identify support needs in a transparent manner, match those needs with available capacity-building opportunities, and review whether support is improving participation and implementation over time.

11. Operationalising Article 13 would also benefit SIOFA as a whole by strengthening the quality of data, improving compliance with reporting obligations, widening participation in decision-making, and ensuring that conservation and management measures are both scientifically robust and practically implementable.

12. The proposal is intended to facilitate the practical implementation of Article 13 through improved coordination, identification of support needs, reporting, and access to relevant regional and international capacity-building opportunities, subject to available resources and any further decisions of the Meeting of the Parties.

Proposal

Seychelles proposes that the MoP adopt a decision to operationalise Article 13 through clearer mechanisms and guidance, including the following elements:

1. Recognition of Article 13 as an operational commitment

The MoP should reaffirm that Article 13 is not solely a contextual provision, but an agreed commitment that should inform practical action to support meaningful participation and effective implementation by eligible SIDS and developing SIOFA ~~CC~~Contracting Parties.

2. Identification of priority support areas

- participation of eligible SIDS and developing SIOFA ~~CC~~Contracting Parties in MoP and subsidiary body meetings, including through measures that facilitate effective engagement where feasible;
- scientific capacity building, including participation in research activities, scientific meetings and working groups;
- development and maintenance of fisheries data collection, management and reporting systems; and
- support for compliance with reporting and data standards in a manner consistent with national capacities.

3. Simple implementation process

To address the need for greater operational clarity, Seychelles proposes the following simple and practical process. The process is intended to be light, voluntary and resource-sensitive, while providing a clear pathway for identifying needs, coordinating support and reviewing progress.

Step	Purpose	Practical action
1. Identify needs	Allow eligible SIDS and developing SIOFA CC <u>Contracting Parties</u> to clearly state their practical Article 13 support needs.	Eligible Parties may submit a short needs note to the Secretariat before relevant MoP, Scientific Committee, Compliance Committee or working group meetings, using <u>an existing or newly developed template made available by the Secretariat on the SIOFA website</u> a simple template where appropriate.
2. Compile and map needs	Provide the MoP and relevant bodies with a clear overview of common needs and gaps.	The Secretariat, subject to available resources, may compile submitted needs and map them against relevant SIOFA workstreams, reporting obligations and available capacity-building opportunities.
3. Coordinate support	Avoid fragmented discussions and connect needs with realistic forms of support.	The Secretariat may facilitate links with relevant SIOFA bodies, technical experts, regional initiatives and

		international partners, without creating an automatic funding entitlement.
4. Integrate into workstreams	Ensure that Article 13 is considered when SIOFA develops or implements scientific, data, compliance and management measures.	Relevant SIOFA bodies should, where appropriate, take identified needs into account when planning work, developing guidance or considering implementation timelines.
5. Review and report	Create accountability and allow the process to improve over time.	The Secretariat should report periodically to the MoP on needs identified, support facilitated, progress made, remaining gaps and any further guidance required from the MoP.

4. Role of the Secretariat

- work, within existing mandates and subject to available resources, with eligible SIDS and developing SIOFA CCPontracting Parties to identify practical Article 13 support needs;
- facilitate access to relevant capacity-building opportunities, where appropriate, including through existing regional or international initiatives; and
- report periodically to the MoP on Article 13-related activities undertaken, lessons learned, remaining gaps, and any further issues requiring guidance from the MoP.

5. Integration with other SIOFA workstreams

Article 13 considerations should be taken into account, as appropriate, in the development and implementation of scientific frameworks, management procedures, conservation and management measures, data standards, and compliance processes, in order to ensure they are both scientifically robust and operationally feasible for eligible SIDS and developing SIOFA CCPontracting Parties.

6. Future review

The MoP should review progress on the operationalisation of Article 13 at a future session, with a view to refining mechanisms and support arrangements as necessary.

Expected outcome

Adoption of this proposal would:

- support the practical implementation of Article 13 of the SIOFA Agreement;
- improve the ability of eligible SIDS and developing SIOFA CCPontracting Parties to participate effectively in SIOFA processes;
- provide a clear process for identifying needs, coordinating support and reviewing progress;
- strengthen capacity in science, data collection, reporting, compliance and implementation;
- promote more consistent consideration of Article 13 across relevant SIOFA workstreams; and
- enhance the effectiveness, fairness and inclusiveness of SIOFA decision-making.

Annex 1

MoP Decision on the Practical Operationalisation of Article 13 of the SIOFA Agreement

The Meeting of the Parties to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement:

RECALLING Article 2 of the Agreement, which provides that the objectives of the Agreement include ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources in the Area and promoting the sustainable development of fisheries in the Area, taking into account the needs of developing States bordering the Area, in particular the least-developed among them and Small Island Developing States;

RECALLING FURTHER Article 4(g) of the Agreement, which provides that the special requirements of developing States bordering the Area that are Contracting Parties, and in particular the least-developed among them and Small Island Developing States, shall be given full recognition;

RECALLING ALSO Article 13 of the Agreement on the special requirements of developing States;

MINDFUL OF the vulnerability of developing States bordering the Area, in particular the least-developed among them and Small Island Developing States, that are dependent on the exploitation of fishery resources;

ACKNOWLEDGING the need to ensure that conservation and management measures adopted by the Meeting of the Parties do not result in transferring, directly or indirectly, a disproportionate burden of conservation action onto developing States bordering the Area, in particular the least-developed among them and Small Island Developing States;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that effective participation by eligible developing States in the Meeting of the Parties, subsidiary bodies, scientific work, compliance processes and implementation of SIOFA obligations contributes to the effectiveness and legitimacy of SIOFA;

NOTING that Article 13 contemplates cooperation and assistance including financial assistance, human resources development, technical assistance, transfer of technology, improved data collection and reporting, scientific research, monitoring, control, surveillance, compliance and enforcement, observer programmes, access to technology and participation in SIOFA meetings;

ACKNOWLEDGING discussions held at SC11 regarding the practical implementation of Article 13;

DESIRING to establish a structured, transparent and resource-sensitive process to support the practical operationalisation of Article 13 ~~without amending the Agreement or creating an open-ended funding mechanism~~;
AGREES that:

1. Article 13 should continue to be considered within relevant SIOFA processes, as appropriate, including general consideration of the special requirements of SIDS participating within SIOFA;
2. priority support areas may include participation in MoP and subsidiary body meetings, scientific and technical capacity building, fisheries data collection and reporting systems, and support for the implementation of reporting obligations;
3. a simple implementation process should be used to support the practical operationalisation of Article 13, including: (a) voluntary identification of practical support needs by eligible SIDS and developing SIOFA ~~CC~~Contracting Parties; (b) compilation and mapping of needs by the Secretariat, subject to available resources; (c) facilitation of access to relevant capacity-building opportunities; (d) consideration of identified needs by relevant SIOFA bodies; and (e) periodic reporting and review by the MoP;
4. the Secretariat is requested, subject to available resources, to engage with eligible SIDS and developing SIOFA ~~CC~~Contracting Parties regarding practical Article 13 support needs, facilitate access to relevant regional and international capacity-building opportunities where appropriate, and report periodically to the MoP on Article 13-related needs, activities, progress, gaps and any further issues requiring guidance;

5. relevant SIOFA bodies should take Article 13 considerations into account, as appropriate, in the development and implementation of scientific frameworks, management procedures, conservation and management measures, data standards, compliance processes and implementation timelines, while maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of SIOFA obligations and measures;
6. this decision does not amend the Agreement, alter the obligations of CCPs under the Agreement or measures, create an automatic entitlement to funding, or establish an open-ended funding mechanism, and shall be implemented subject to available resources and any further decisions of the MoP; and
7. the MoP should review progress on the operationalisation of Article 13 at a future session, with a view to refining mechanisms and support arrangements as necessary.