



SIOFA | APSOI

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

10th Meeting of the SIOFA Compliance Committee (CC10) and 13th Meeting of the Parties to SIOFA (MoP13)

Savoy Seychelles Resort & Spa, Beau Vallon, Seychelles, 1–3 July and 6–10 July 2026

MoP-13-12

SIOFA Meeting Document Framework

The SIOFA Secretariat

Meeting	Compliance Committee <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting of the Parties <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Document type	Administrative Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Proposal or Working Paper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Paper <input type="checkbox"/>
Distribution	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted ¹ <input type="checkbox"/> Closed session document ² <input type="checkbox"/>
Abstract	
<p>At MoP11 and MoP12, the Secretariat was tasked with presenting an overview of the criteria and process by which meeting documents are classified, and with identifying the implications for the Rules of Procedure.</p> <p>This document responds to those requests. It establishes a classification framework for meeting documents, sets out access rights by document classification and user group, and identifies rule-by-rule implications for the Rules of Procedure.</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.

Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The MoP to adopt this document as the operational framework for the classification, access and handling of SIOFA meeting documents.• The MoP to note the gap between established SIOFA practice and the current Rules of Procedure with respect to document types, classification and access rights.

SIOFA Meeting Document Framework

Background

At MoP11, "The MoP REQUESTED that the Secretariat present a working paper to MoP12 with an overview of the criteria and process by which papers are classified as working papers or information papers and for determining whether papers should be made public or their access restricted. The MoP REQUESTED that the Secretariat indicate the potential implications for the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the MoP when preparing the paper and highlight any relevant provisions from the RoP." (para. 18 of the MoP11 Report)

At MoP12, "The MoP NOTED that the draft SIOFA Meetings Documents Policy required further development and refinement. The MoP REQUESTED that CCPs provide comments on the draft to the Secretariat in the intersessional period and TASKED the Secretariat to present an updated draft to MoP13." (para. 251 of the MoP12 Report)

This document responds to these requests. It sets out the criteria and process by which meeting documents are classified and identifies the implications for the Rules of Procedure.

Document types and submission rights

The RoP currently recognises two categories of document: "proposals" (Rule 10.5) and "any other document" (Rule 10.6), with one undefined reference to "information papers" (Rule 18.4). It does not use the term "working paper." In practice, SIOFA and all its subsidiary bodies consistently use working papers and information papers.

Type	Definition	Who may submit	Deadline	RoP
Proposal	Submission for the creation or amendment of a CMM	Contracting Parties and Participating Fishing Entities (SIOFA Agreement, Art. 6(1)(a))	Submitted 40 days before; circulated 35 days before	Rule 10.5
Working Paper	Document submitted for decision or action of the MoP or its subsidiary bodies. The papers contain recommendations.	CCPs, Secretariat	Submitted 40 days before; circulated 35 days before	This is a SIOFA established working practice. The term is not included in the RoP.
Information Paper	Document submitted for information only; no decision or action required.	CCPs, Observers, Secretariat	Submitted 14 days before; circulated 10 days before	Rule 10.6, Rule 18.4
Other Paper	Document conveying logistical or procedural information relating to a meeting	Secretariat	(the deadlines vary in function of the document)	Rule 8(d)

Classification criteria

Meeting documents are classified at the time of drafting by the submitter. The Secretariat does not alter the classification assigned by the submitter; however, where the Secretariat identifies information that may warrant a different classification, it brings this to the attention of the submitter. When producing its own meeting documents, the Secretariat applies the same classification criteria.

Documents are classified according to the following categories:

Public	Documents containing information that is publicly available. Per CMM 03(2025), this includes documents containing general vessel information and 5-degree aggregated observer, catch-and-effort, and length-frequency data, subject to conditions ensuring that no individual vessel can be identified and, where applicable, that flag State authorisation has been obtained.
Restricted	Documents containing information that is not in the public domain but that may be accessed under controlled conditions. Per CMM 03(2025), this includes catch-and-effort and length-frequency data aggregated at a spatial resolution of 1°×1°, where no single fishing event can be identified.
Confidential	Documents containing no-public-domain data, which may only be accessed, used or released with the explicit written authorisation of the data owner, per CMM 03(2025). Documents relating to financial matters fall into this category and shall be treated in closed session (Rule 20.2 of the RoP). Documents containing personal or private information shall also be classified as Confidential.

Restricted and Confidential documents must carry a visible classification watermark on each page.

Access Rights

In accordance with Article 14 of the Agreement, Public documents remain available on the SIOFA website following the meeting; Restricted documents remain accessible only to authorised participants unless the relevant data owner consents or the MoP decides otherwise; and Confidential documents are not made publicly available.

Access via the SIOFA website

Access to meeting documents on the SIOFA website is managed, by the SIOFA Information and Communication Technology Expert, through individual logins assigned to user groups upon registration.

The table below sets out access rights by classification and user group

		Group/Role			
Context	Document Classification	Head of Delegation/ Alternate	Delegate	Observer	General public
SC- CC - MoP	Public	✓	✓	✓	✓
SC- CC - MoP	Restricted	✓	✓	✓	✗
SC- CC - MoP	Confidential	✓	✗	✗	✗

✓ access granted

✗ access denied

Access during meetings

Where restricted documents are presented during a meeting, the distribution and discussion of the document shall be limited to authorised participants. By established practice, it is the responsibility of the Head of each delegation to determine which members of their delegation may be granted access to restricted documents.

Implications for the Rules of Procedure

The gap between established SIOFA practice and the current RoP has potential consequences. As requested by MoP11, the Secretariat has identified the following implications:

- **Rule 8(d):** Rule 8(d) refers to "administrative and other reports" without defining them or extending them beyond Secretariat outputs. As a result, the full range of documents the Secretariat routinely produces and circulates lacks a clear basis in the RoP. This creates uncertainty about the Secretariat's authority to produce and circulate documents that are central to the conduct of SIOFA meetings.
- **Rule 10.5:** Rule 10.5 refers to "proposals" only. In practice, the 40/35-day deadline is applied to all working papers, regardless of whether they constitute formal CMM proposals. This means that submission and circulation deadlines (which are binding obligations under the RoP) are currently applied to document types that have no legal recognition in the RoP. If challenged, this gap could call into question the regularity of document circulation and, by extension, the validity of decisions taken on the basis of those documents.
- **Rule 20:** governs open and closed sessions but does not address: (a) the handling of Restricted or Confidential documents within open sessions; or (b) confidentiality obligations on participants during meetings. This may have practical consequences. Where restricted or confidential documents are discussed in open session, there is currently no provision in the RoP preventing participants to the meeting from disclosing that information outside the meeting, recording proceedings, or communicating with media on items still under discussion. The classification framework can only be effective if it is supported by binding confidentiality obligations during meetings. Without such obligations, the MoP has no enforceable basis to protect sensitive information once it has been introduced in session.