



8th Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC8)

Tenerife, Spain, 22-31 March 2023

SC-08-INFO-16

Transparency and distribution of Scientific Committee meeting documents

SIOFA Secretariat and SC Chairs

Document type	administrative paper <input type="checkbox"/> working paper <input type="checkbox"/> information paper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Distribution	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted ¹ <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential ² <input type="checkbox"/>
Abstract	<p>This document is a revised version of MoP-09-10 Transparency-and-distribution-of-documents for consideration by the 8th Scientific Committee, after it has been reviewed and commented at MoP9.</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.

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 parties. 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

1. Subject to any rules relating to the confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters, all meeting documents of the Scientific Committee or any of its working groups or subsidiary bodies (collectively, SC in the sections below) will be made publicly accessible on the SIOFA website, including documents containing only ‘public domain data’ and ‘public domain catch and effort data’ as defined in paragraph 2a) and 2b) of CMM 2016/03, and subject to the conditions outlined in paragraph 2c) CMM 2016/03. .
2. SC meeting documents subject to rules relating to confidentiality of data pursuant to paragraphs 2e) to i) CMM 2016/03 will be made accessible only as restricted ³documents on the SIOFA website.
 - a. 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.
 - b. The content of restricted documents will not be visible to the public.
3. 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 contain data, commercially sensitive information and financial matters, which is subject to confidentiality rules.
 - a. Where there is any risk, the Executive Secretary must consult with the author, the appropriate scientific Chair, and the relevant CCPs before providing access to the document.
4. Any document submitted by consultants to the SC will undergo a two-stage review process (see details in Annex B) that is intended to check for confidentiality issues and ensure that the paper is of sufficient quality for submission. The final stage of this review process should clearly indicate whether access to the document is to be restricted and to what level.
5. 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 as a restricted or confidential document.
6. Access to restricted documents on the SIOFA website is to be granted only to registered CCP meeting participants, and to officially registered SIOFA Observers. Restricted documents are not to be shared or made public in any form, in whole or in part. If consultants or external parties⁴ wish to have access to a restricted document, they should make a request to the Secretariat, justifying their need for access. The Secretariat will then contact the relevant CCPs to obtain their consent, along with any additional requirements of the CCP in relation confidential data to such as completion of a Confidentiality Agreement or Deed, prior to any transmission of documents.
7. Access to confidential documents on the SIOFA website is to be granted only to HoDs or to CP and PFE SC representatives invited to closed sessions as per Rule 20(1) of the SIOFA Rules of Procedure. No exceptions are foreseen.
8. Revisions of SC documents
 - a. Revised versions of documents submitted prior to and during the course of a meeting will be subject to the rules relating to confidentiality of data and commercially sensitive information and financial matters, and be made available as a public, confidential or restricted document, as appropriate.
 - b. 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. Adopted meeting reports will be made available as public documents on the SIOFA website in their entirety.

³ Restricted documents are accessible to only CCPs registered to a meeting of the SC or subsidiary body

⁴ External parties are scientists who are not representatives of CCPs or officially registered Observers.

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 – Declaration of honour on the respect of confidentiality of data for external parties to access restricted papers.



CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR EXTERNAL PARTIES TO ACCESS RESTRICTED PAPERS

This Confidentiality Agreement (“Agreement”) is entered into between Mr/Ms [REDACTED] (“the external party”) and Mr [REDACTED] (“SIOFA Executive Secretary”), on behalf of the Meeting of the Parties to SIOFA, concerning the following document [REDACTED]

- a. The external party understands that the restricted papers and information it contains are not public and must ensure that reasonable steps are taken to protect the confidentiality of said information.
- b. The external party 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 not to disclose to any other person or entity, either directly or indirectly, any SIOFA Confidential Information or Proprietary Data. Any use or disclosure of SIOFA Confidential Information or Proprietary Data is cause for legal proceedings and sanctions.
- d. If this Agreement is terminated for any reason, the external party must destroy the document, the information and data within [X working days] and must not make any copies.

Done in (place) [REDACTED], on (date) [REDACTED]

Signature of the external party

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, ownership and how it was obtained for the study, including any conditions that were associated with the data release. It should then specify methods used to analyse and interpret 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 must be substantiated by 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,

[An external party] has requested access to the [DOCUMENT #-NAME], which has been classified as a restricted / confidential document submitted to [Meeting Name].

We have identified that your data was included in this document, and therefore ask for your explicit permission to disclose the requested document, for the specific purpose of [purpose]. Please advise the Secretariat if you require additional arrangements in relation to the release of confidential data, such as the external party to enter into a Confidentiality Agreement or Deed.

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].

Under the SIOFA Scientific Report Review process [reference], 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.

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

[SIOFA Scientific Report Review Form](#)

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

There will be a 3 tiers classification system 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 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.

External parties can request the Secretariat to access restricted documents. However, external parties' access to restricted documents shall be subordinated to the explicit consent of the relevant CCPs, subject to confidentiality requirements of the CCP.

Tier 3 – Confidential documents

Include any paper which contains non-public domain data as defined in CMM 2016/03.

Only CPs and PFEs registered to a meeting shall have access to confidential documents

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 a non-confidential abstract or summary showing the purpose or intent of the document) of tier 3 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.