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SPC/Fisheries 26/Information Paper 1
9 July 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

TWENTY-SIXTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 5 - 9 August 1996)

1995 FOURTH SPC/FFA COLLOQUIUM REPORT

**FORUM FISHERIES COMMITTEE
TWENTY - SIXTH MEETING
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
1-5 May 1995**

Agenda Item 15.5 SPC/FFA Colloquium

Title: Report of the Fourth SPC/FFA Colloquium

FOURTH SPC/FFA COLLOQUIUM
Noumea, New Caledonia
10 - 11 April 1995

Record of Proceedings

1. Officers of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the South Pacific Commission (SPC) met in Noumea on April 10 and 11, 1995 for the 4th Annual SPC/FFA Colloquium as follows:-

Representing SPC

Mafaituuga Vaasatia Poloma Komiti, Director of Programs
Julian Dashwood, Manager Fisheries Program
Antony Lewis, Oceanic Fisheries Coordinator
John Hampton, Principal Fisheries Scientist
Tim Lawson, Fisheries Statistician
Russell Price, Computer Systems Supervisor, (OFF)
Peter Cusack, Fisheries Development Adviser
Steve Roberts, Post-harvest Fisheries Adviser
Tim Adams, Fisheries Resource Adviser
Michel Blanc, Acting Fisheries Education and Training Adviser
Aymeric Desurmont, Fisheries Information Officer

Representing FFA

Andrew Wright, Deputy Director FFA
Sam Taufao, Manager, Information Technology
Noel Omeri, Fisheries Development Officer

2. The meeting was chaired by SPC's Director of Programs, who opened the meeting and wished the proceedings well, expecting a spirit of 'give and take' and open frankness. The FFA Deputy Director replied that the colloquium was a valuable venue for fostering the relationship between FFA and SPC and it definitely helped the work programs of both organizations to mutually review their activities once a year.

3. After general discussion the Agenda, as appended in Attachment B, was adopted unchanged. SPC agreed to produce the record.

ISSUES ARISING FROM THE 3RD SPC/FFA COLLOQUIUM

4. The record of proceedings from the preceding (3rd) colloquium of Feb 1994 was reviewed, and items that had been flagged for action, and which were not covered under other parts of the agenda, were discussed.

5. The progress of collaboration between FFA and SPC coastal fisheries activities was reviewed. Last year's colloquium noted that FFA's established programs in economics and marketing offered good opportunities for collaboration with SPC in view of SPC's increased emphasis on socio-economic considerations in its future projects. FFA advised that, if its proposed restructuring was endorsed by FFC, FFA was likely to drop out of direct involvement in coastal fisheries. It was however agreed that there was a need for continued collaboration between the SPC Resource Assessment Section and the FFA Legal and Economic functions, to assist member countries in the development of coastal fisheries management strategies. SPC also expressed the hope of increased collaboration in these areas in the short-term, via the forthcoming FFA/SPC Regional Coastal Fisheries Management Workshop.

6. The meeting noted that improved telecommunications, particularly electronic mail (E-mail), offered the prospect for significantly increasing the efficiency of collaboration, information-sharing and work-program coordination. FFA described the progress of their project to establish a PEACESAT "node" and upgrade all member country PEACESAT terminals to simultaneous multichannel digital capability, which would substantially assist the establishment of a regional E-mail network, and which had been costed at around US\$690,000. Several funding options were being explored and SPC agreed to strongly support a collaborative approach, along with other regional agencies, in FFA's attempts to obtain external resources for this project. The meeting also agreed that it would be useful to bring this matter to the attention of SPOCC at its next meeting.

7. Another regional initiative requiring the cooperation of several regional agencies that was discussed, but not resolved, at the previous colloquium was the planning for a possible second phase to the Canadian South Pacific Ocean Development Program (CSPODP-II). FFA described the results of recent attempts to engage the Canadians in dialogue and had been told that it was likely to be another two years before CSPODP-II would be implemented. FFA is preparing a briefing for the Post-Forum Partners Dialogue on the issue.

8. In view of the proven potential for rapid communication on substantive issues between FFA and SPC, and in view of the fact that a lifting of the existing statutory requirement by member countries for an annual FFA/SPC colloquium had not yet been sought, it was agreed that it was an unnecessary administrative burden to also prepare formal quarterly reports on work-program activities to each other. It was also noted that, with the re-structuring of FFA's functions, the potential for overlap will be reduced still further.

9. SPC and FFA agreed some time ago, at the technical level, to transmit any relevant reports arising from in-country projects to each other, to help avoid duplication and coordinate future work, particularly in the face of occasional duplicate requests from member countries to both organizations. This sharing of results had been particularly important between the FFA Research Coordination Unit and the SPC Coastal Fisheries Resource Assessment Section. However, there was still no formal endorsement from member countries for the principle of the transmission of reports from one agency to the other without specific permission being given in each case, despite both agencies having agreed at the 1993 Colloquium to seek approval to implement such a measure. SPC agreed to seek permission from its governing body for the full and frank sharing of results of in-country work with FFA, except where confidentiality was specifically requested by the country. The principle that all non-confidential reports should be

automatically shared with each other by default, rather than by request (which presupposes that the other party knows that the report exists), was endorsed as a working principle by both agencies.

REVIEW OF WORK PLANS AND NEW ACTIVITIES - COASTAL FISHERIES.

Capture Section and Fisheries Development

10. The SPC Fisheries Development Adviser briefly described the work of the SPC Coastal Fisheries Capture Section, which has suffered a progressive reduction in staffing, down from 7 in 1993, 4 in 1994, now to 3 in 1995. The section is responsible for the Deepsea Fisheries Development Project, with a particular focus on developing national capabilities in tuna fisheries. The section completed 11 country assignments last year, mostly in the area of FAD deployment, reflecting the large number of requests from member countries. Two years into this activity, the UNDP funded project has no money for the planned fourth year. For future work, volumes I and II of the long-awaited FAD handbook are expected to be finished soon, the vertical long lining handbook similarly, and several country assignments have been requested, including a major domestic tuna fishery development in FSM, a deepwater FAD design for Nauru, vertical long lining in Kiribati, a sashimi workshop in Chuuk and possibly a long lining demonstration in Palau.

11. FFA noted that the practical tuna fishery development work of the Capture Section ties in very closely with FFA's own efforts to promote the development of national tuna fisheries capabilities; that this was an activity that member countries strongly supported. The FFA Deputy Director asked for an update on the 1994 RTMF Recommendation to CRGA that the funding of master fishermen be given a high priority in the allocation of SPC core resources, and what was the outcome of the Needs Assessment that CRGA commissioned as a result.

12. The SPC Director of Programs responded that the last overall prioritisation exercise decided on by the South Pacific Conference did not have Fisheries at the top of the list, and that no extra budgetary funding had turned up since the fisheries program had prioritized another area. By and large, the work program was determined by the membership. The SPC Management Committee had yet to formulate the 1996 work program, but had heard the RTMF message on priorities loud and clear. The dilemma lay in trying to make ends meet with dwindling funding and competing priorities.

13. The FFA Deputy Director appreciated this dilemma and expressed sympathy with the problems of managing a multi-disciplinary agency, but still hoped that the Capture Section could be given high priority in SPC core resource allocation in view of the currently fragile status of this highly-regarded activity, and the good prospects for fruitful future collaboration with FFA's promotion of member country fishing industry development. The SPC Fisheries Program Manager mentioned that the CRGA Needs Assessment for the prioritisation of SPC core budget in support of the Master fishermen program would be carried out in time for the Assessment to be acted upon by the next South Pacific Conference.

14. FFA mentioned several complementary activities that had been carried out or were under consideration by FFA. These included the completion of several tuna investment studies for member countries, which are currently with countries for comment.

15. FFA described the work of the FFA Fisheries Development Officer and Assistant. Most member country requests are for market information and training, and over 200 people were assisted in 1994 with computer and other training. FFC23 decided that the proposed restructuring at FFA to include a post of Training Officer be placed in abeyance pending the outcome of the Regional Review of Institutional Arrangements. The proposed FFA restructuring to be considered by FFC26 would re designate both the Fisheries Development function and the Research Coordination function. The restructuring would provide more depth in FFA's key work-areas without the necessity of exceeding the staff cap level or budgetary constraints. The FFA Deputy Director noted that FFA is receiving many requests from countries to appraise and advise on investment proposals and joint-ventures, and the majority of this work is being carried by the Economics and Marketing Program.

16. FFA organized a 2-week Project Planning workshop in September 1994 and 14 participants from FFA member countries participated. Two subsequent workshops are being planned for 1995. Assistance was also provided to Palau and PNG in the structuring of their respective fisheries organizations.

Training

17. SPC Fisheries Training Officer's presentation started by mentioning the recent staff movements within the Section: departure of previous FETA now Head of NZ School of Fisheries in Nelson, New Zealand; change of PA and the newly established FITA position (Fisheries Information and Training Associate) filled by former DFMR Librarian, for one year (trainee position). Section's work in 1994 was kept in line with the Section's objectives defined in 1992: coordination of fisheries training in the region, planning of training and manpower, and training implementation. To coordinate training activities the Section has three tools on hand: the Fisheries Training Directory which is being up-dated and whose second version should be published by the end of 1995, the SIG Bulletin on Fisheries Education and Training which is released bi-annually, and the Fisheries Personnel database which has not raised a great interest in the region and thus is not a priority any more. Planning of manpower was carried out through HRD plans for two member countries, CNMI and Western Samoa, the latest being funded by AIDAB. Planning of Fisheries Technical Training is on-going with a questionnaire sent to all past SPC/Nelson course participants (180) to assess the usefulness of a training which has been on for 16 years and another questionnaire sent to all CFOs to quantify present and forthcoming fisheries technical training needs. Planning of fishing vessel crew certification is progressing: a workshop held in Suva in September 94 made some important recommendations re. the need to adopt a regional standard structure for the certification of fishing vessel crew. The meeting also recommended that SPC/FFA/Forum should cooperate to form a working group to coordinate activities in this area. Next step is to produce a set of resource materials to assist with the delivery of the Pacific Island Qualified Fishing Deckhand course which was identified as the basic level of this new certification structure. This program is funded under the SPC/FFA/UNDP joint project. FTO then described the various training activities carried out in

1994: the Safety at Sea Public Awareness project is progressing well (3 posters, stickers, laminated cards, and tee-shirts already produced). A safety at sea video soon released. Very positive feed back from member countries although the need for local language translation was raised on several occasions. The 16th SPC/Nelson course started on February the 13th with 11 participants. Practical fishing module will be run in the North Province of New Caledonia for the second time in a row. The Post-harvest training program (including one regional and several in-country workshops) was completed at the end of 1994. The remaining funds (from CSPOD I) will be used to run a regional workshop on quality assessment and grading of sashimi tuna, probably hosted by FSM in August. Late last year, Training Section staff coordinated the planning of production of the Coastal Fisheries Programme videos. As a result, four Post-harvest video were filmed early in 1995 including the "on-board handling of sashimi grade tuna". In cooperation with Capture Section, two one-week FAD Fishing Skills workshops were run in Tonga (40 trainees) in February 1994. Two two-week practical fishing courses were also run in Wallis and Futuna in September 94, in cooperation with New Caledonia Fisheries Department. Linked to these workshops is the production of a series of teaching modules on FAD Fishing Skills. 7 modules have been drafted and trailed in Tonga, Wallis and Futuna. The modules cover aspects of FAD fishing such as Safety at sea, Fish Handling, Fishing Business Management, and fishing techniques. The Safety at Sea module is now ready for distribution. 9 training attachments were organized by the Training Section in 1994.

18. FFA noted that, despite the considerable human resource development work carried out by both agencies over the past decade, the capacity of member country fisheries staff to handle complex fisheries management issues had on the whole declined, and suggested that training continue to be given high priority. It was noted that the problem was much more fundamental than the technical level, and that more effort was required at primary and secondary school level education throughout the region.

19. The SPC Director of Programmes noted that this was a problem across the board, not only in Fisheries, and the decline in member country capacity was a serious issue of which SPC was very conscious. The SPC Fisheries Program Manager emphasized that it was not a decline in the quality or training of national fisheries staff that had resulted in this reduction in capacity to deal with fisheries management problems, but that the problems themselves had become a great deal more complex. A decade ago fisheries development plans were still being made without reference to ecological limits and international economic issues, and the small countries of the Pacific did not have the ability to specialize too deeply due to their small human resource base. SPC agreed to endorse a general concern for declining national capacities to address increasingly complex fisheries management problems through their representation at the next FFC, and the need for agencies to be more "proactive" in education.

20. FFA briefly described their training-related activities, including access negotiation and surveillance workshops, and the potential for linkage between the SPC training database and the FFA organizations and people database. SPC has experienced problems in getting information updates from member countries on staff and their training status, and FFA had difficulties in obtaining member country responses to the issue of employment of Pacific Islanders aboard foreign fishing vessels. This last matter will be raised at the next PNA meeting.

Information

21. The SPC Information Section has expanded with the recruitment of a Project Assistant in October 1994, a Fisheries Associate (position shared with the Training Section) in February 1995 and a Fishery Information Officer in March 1995, these last two positions being funded by the Government of France. The SPC Information Section Coordinates the provision of information, both routinely and on request, to assist fisheries scientists, development officers, extension agents, planners, managers and others involved in developing and managing fisheries at national, regional and international levels. During 1994, 34 publications were completed including the quarterly Fisheries Newsletter in English and French; the bi-annual Information bulletins of six special interest groups (Fisheries Education and Training; Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge; Pearl Oyster, Beche-de-mer, Ciguatera and Trochus) in English and French, and the annual Fisheries Address Book. In the first quarter of 1995, 17 publications have already been released. With the new staff, the Section has the following goals:- To create one more SIG Bulletin on Fish Aggregation Devices; to publish several of the former IFRP country reports; to produce a booklet on acronyms and definitions of fisheries terms; and to be on schedule with SIG and periodical publications.

22. In describing the work of the FFA Information Unit it was mentioned that it had been possible to employ a qualified librarian on local terms, but this arrangement would finish next year. The FFA Newsletter is increasing its circulation, and is now subject to a subscription of SI \$100 per year. FFA will be using Microsoft Publisher software in future and will shortly be including color photographs in the newsletter. It was expected that the PEACESAT improvement project would greatly assist in the timely dissemination of information to member countries.

Resource Assessment and Research

23. SPC described the work of the Coastal Fisheries Resource Assessment Section, which since September 1994, and until August 1997 is almost entirely devoted to the UK-funded Integrated Coastal Fisheries Management Project (ICFMAP), in collaboration with the SPC Post-Harvest Section. The first year of the project will be taken up on regional-level activities, including involvement in the FFA/SPC Coastal Fisheries Management Workshop, collection of historical coastal fisheries resource statistics from member countries, and setting up proposals for national sub-projects. The last two year will be spent in assisting member countries to develop management strategies for specific national coastal fisheries. 6-12 national sub-projects will be implemented during this time and proposals will be prioritized and pre-programmed during the FFA/SPC Coastal Fisheries Management Workshop in June, by a committee of member country representatives. The only other activities are the completion of several ACIAR-funded publications (including the Aitutaki Trochus Fishery Case-Study, and the Handbook of Abundance Estimation of Benthic Invertebrates), and the continuing pre-project administration of the EU OCT-funded Remote-Sensing/GIS project. Funding for this latter activity is becoming increasingly unlikely since, if EU insist that SPC contracts for remote-sensing services be openly tendered, it is unlikely that either of the two associated OCT's, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, would support the project.

24. In response to questions from FFA, SPC mentioned that draft proposals had so far been received from only four member countries for ICFMAP collaborative assistance since the first official notification had been issued three weeks ago. SPC agreed that the demise of the EU RS/GIS project would leave SPC as the only major regional organization without any RS/GIS capability, and that the responsibility of being "lead agency" in this field should be passed to SOPAC.

25. FFA described the work of the Research Coordination Unit which, if FFC accepts the proposed restructuring, would be disestablished in the near future. The Unit is fully occupied in finishing off a series of resource profiles for each of FFA's member countries. Niue, Nauru and Kiribati are the only ones remaining. The only other major issue remaining is the investigation of the live food-fish export trade.

26. SPC described the recent ACIAR Pearl Oyster Project Coordinators meeting in Kiribati, and mentioned that work in Kiribati was behind schedule due to lack of oysters. Natural populations are very low and the first spawning will be late this year or early 1996. Surveys of Christmas and Line Islands will be undertaken and the Cook Islands has offered to have seeding trials done on 1000 oysters in the Cooks due to the low populations in Kiribati. There will probably be a 2nd phase on this project.

27. FFA mentioned that a high-powered UK aid team was currently in the Pacific reviewing the British aid program, and that a press release from Suva had suggested that an overall cut in UK funding to the region of 30% was going to be made in view of the increasing proportion of the UK aid budget that is being channeled through the European Community. With the increasing awareness of sustainable resource management issues, particularly in the wake of the last Forum meeting, it might be a good idea to look at developing alternative long-term funding prospects for the Resource Assessment Section.

Post-Harvest

28. The work of the SPC Post-harvest Fisheries Section for 1994/95 was described by the Post-harvest Fisheries Adviser. The Section, like the Resources Assessment Section, has since September 1994 been working under the UK funded Integrated Coastal Fisheries Management Project (ICFMAP). The Sections aims under this project is to optimize production from Pacific Island inshore fisheries through better resource management, while simultaneously fostering the generation of greater economic returns through more efficient and effective post-harvest handling, processing and marketing of coastal resources.

29. Some activities, from the now terminated Fish Handling and Processing Project still appear in the work program. These include a number of Canadian funded sub-projects which are coming to term or were extended. These include:

- Post-harvest Fisheries Training Sub-project: the sub-project is being extended so that remaining funds can be used to run a regional workshop on the Handling, Quality Assessment and Grading of Sashimi Tuna which is scheduled for August 1995.

- Post-Harvest Fisheries Training Video Sub-project: an intensive program of video production at the beginning of 1995 will mean that four new post-harvest training videos will be distributed throughout the region soon. These videos will be on the topics of on-board handling of sashimi tuna; air-freighting of fish; and two retailing videos.
- Women's Fisheries Development Sub-project: the project as of February 1995, has a fresh start and a new face to look after women's fisheries development issues. Additional funding from CIDA through CORA has meant that SPC was able to recruit back in to the position after a three year break.
- Women-in-fisheries Support Sub-project for PNG: the project came to term at the end of 1994.

30. The plan to establish a Regional Post-harvest Fisheries Centre in the Pacific, associated to the Marine Studies Program at USP, was dropped last year after deciding that it was very unlikely that the project would attract funding through the EU (Lomé IV funding). In its place, RTMF 25 and subsequently the SPC Conference, approved a modified approach in which the Marine Studies Program would be asked to allocate one of its new core budget positions to the post of Lecturer in Post-harvest Fisheries (this was achieved in May 1994) and be responsible for academic teaching in the post-harvest fisheries area, while SPC would retain responsibility for vocational training and applied research.

31. Under ICFMAP the section is preparing for inputs into the major workshop on the Management of South Pacific Inshore Fisheries to be held in June. The future work program under the project will depend on the outcome of the workshop which will decide and prioritize submissions for assistance in writing up and developing resource management plans. It was hoped that FFA would provide an input into workshop sessions in the post-harvest area, especially on seafood trade and markets. FFA responded that due to commitments in other areas they would not be participating in the workshop.

32. FFA also asked for details of the likely work program in the post-harvest fisheries area under the new project and what impact the old project had made in the Pacific over the last eight years. In response an example of the type of inputs was provided, citing beche-de-mer products and how it could be possible to improve the quality of these products, improve packaging, draw up standards etc. The specific input would depend on which projects are prioritized in the June workshop. A number of examples of what impact the old project had in the Pacific were cited (tuna jerky production in various countries, information dissemination, etc.) and it was agreed that it was difficult to make an accurate assessment.

UNDP Regional Fishery Support and Capacity Building Project

33. The FFA Fisheries Development Officer briefed the Colloquium on the financial progress of the FFA/SPC jointly-implemented Regional Fishery Support and Capacity Building Project (RFSCBP), and touched particularly on the UNDP clawback of funds and the necessity to postpone activities from this year's budget. SPC has used very little of the UNDP funding drawn down to date and this might be seen by UNDP as an opportunity to justify cuts, even

though there will be heavy expenditure on the FFA/SPC Coastal Fisheries Management Workshop before the end of June. FFA has not yet drawn down the 4th quarter funds for 1994 and it is in both agency's interests to see the advance drawn down for the 2nd and 3rd quarters are fully utilised before the tripartite review during FFC 26.

34. There was general agreement on the desirability of frank and fearless discussion on both sides before dealing directly with UNDP on this project, as made clear by a recent case of misunderstanding which underlines the importance of full cooperation. Both agencies agreed to copy all correspondence relating to RFSCBP to each other as it arises. FFA also agreed to endorse SPC's submission to UNDP to transfer some of the savings from deferred training activities under the RFSCBP to SPC's UNDP-funded Offshore Fisheries Development Program, for which UNDP has indicated that it will be unable to fund the final year.

FFA/SPC Coastal Fisheries Management Workshop

35. SPC outlined progress towards implementation of the workshop, to be held in the last week of June and the first week of July, 1995. Several notifications have gone out to member countries along with approaches to potential keynote speakers, and official nominations are now being received. The response is looking good and, although several potential speakers have commented on the short notice given before the workshop, interest in the issue appears to be high.

36. FFA apologised that, due to unprecedented staff turnover in the key workshop areas that FFA had planned to address (Research Coordination, Economics and Legal), it was unlikely that FFA would be able to commit itself to any role in the workshop beyond the US \$37,000 that had been transferred to SPC from the FFA component of the UNDP Regional Fishery Support and Capacity Building Project to fund the participation of representatives of SPC/FFA member countries.

OCEANIC FISHERIES PROGRAM - UPDATE

37. Under the review of last years' activities, the main thrust was the implementation of the South Pacific Regional Tuna Resource and Monitoring Assessment Project (SPR TRAMP).

38. FFA expressed appreciation to the OFP for their help in preparing for the Multilateral High-Level Conference as it was the first occasion for DWFNs and PINs to discuss sensitive issues together since the early 1980s. FFA also thanked SPC for their scientific support and valuable input regarding the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. OFP personnel have participated in various international meetings related to the UN Conference, such as the Ad Hoc Consultation on the Role of Regional Fisheries Agencies in Relation to High Seas Fisheries Statistics in December 1993 and the Sixteenth Session of the Coordinating Working Party on Fisheries Statistics in March 1995.

39. SPC has not yet received an official response from the Fisheries Agency of Japan (JFA) regarding a request made by SPC to JFA for authorization to release aggregated catch and effort data for Japanese longline, pole-and-line and purse-seine data to FFA. The Japanese delegation, headed by Mr. Saito, which was visiting SPC at the time of the present SPC/FFA Colloquium, stated that JFA would consider the matter and provide an official response shortly. SPC will advise FFA on receipt of the official JFA response.

40. FFA stated that it intends to broaden conservation efforts in management of tuna resources in response to concerns that the region is not fully meeting the Law of the Sea requirements regarding conservation and consultation. FFA has established a sub-committee to look at options for future management organizations or arrangements. It was felt that resolving the issue of management organizations or arrangements will be a most important and challenging task.

41. FFA reviewed the status of discussions relating to the development of a multilateral access agreement between certain FFA members and Taiwan.

42. FFA reported on discussion at the 9th Regional Fisheries Surveillance Officer's Meeting held recently at Honiara concerning observer treatment by some distant water fishing fleets. The meeting noted the proposal to establish an FFA sub-regional office in Micronesia would be considered by FFA. The proposal was largely aimed at strengthening FFA's surveillance and monitoring capacity throughout Micronesia. Also with respect to surveillance, FFA advised that Australia and the European Union would co-fund components of an enhanced programme in monitoring and control at FFA, including the research and development of a vessel monitoring system (VMS).

43. In reviewing the activities of the Oceanic Fisheries Program (OFP), Dr. Antony Lewis, Oceanic Fisheries Coordinator (OFC), placed emphasis on SPRTRAMP, which started in June 1994 with the arrival of funds for Year 1 to institute continuous scientific monitoring in the region and to continue to refine stock assessments. Two senior scientists, the Port Sampling/Observer Coordinator, a research Officer (Data) and three scientific observers have been recruited. The observer component of SPRTRAMP will have as its main objectives the study by-catch and discards, observation of fishing practices, and collection of biological data. It was noted that the SPC and FFA observer programs are already working in close cooperation, and both will also work closely with national observer programs.

44. Dr. John Hampton, Principal Fisheries Scientist (PFS), reviewed the work of the Tuna and Billfish Research Section of OFP, which includes two main types of activity, biological research and stock assessment. He noted that even though the two SPRTRAMP scientist positions have been filled, two other senior scientist positions remain vacant due to lack of funds.

45. At present, one scientist is studying the relation between tuna fisheries and the environment, e.g. how oceanographic and meteorological events such as El Nino affect tuna fisheries. A project to analyze yellowfin otoliths for aging is being organized; the ORSTOM laboratory in Brest, France, may be contracted to undertake this work. The OFP is involved in a study of yellowfin reproduction being conducted by the University of Hawaii; the study

involves the collection of yellowfin gonads through observer programs. Bigeye stock structure studies will also be coordinated.

46. Concerning assessment studies, most work is currently based on tagging data. The work being conducted in collaboration with Dr. John Sibert, adding spatial structure to previous analyze of tagging data, is progressing and producing interesting results. A study funded by ACIAR will result in a simulation model on three species of tropical tunas and three gear types, with an economic component included in the bioeconomic model.

47. The OFP will be involved in a WPYRG assessment of yellowfin based on a spatially-disaggregated age-structured model, which will be funded by the University of Hawaii. Dr. Dave Fournier will undertake a lot of this work and will provide valuable information on yellowfin stocks in the region.

48. The albacore SPARCLE-based assessment has raised some potential concerns, in that stock biomes appears to be declining, and there have been two years of poor recruitment since 1985. The assessment is however reliant on voluntary data through SPAR, and this currently introduces much of the uncertainty in the analysis. There is a need to acquire higher resolution data from NMFS, as up to now OFP only have access to annual summaries. A proposal to update this assessment has been put to CORA. The OFP is confident they will be able to obtain this data, but the funding remains uncertain.

49. FFA asked if a SPAR meeting would be forthcoming. OFP replied they had hoped for SPAR meeting this year, with Australia to host, (one is due) but the AUD 15,000 initially set aside for this meeting had gone elsewhere. A proposal for funding a 6th SPAR meeting was also proposed to CORA but remains uncertain.

50. Mr. Tim Lawson, Fisheries Statistician, presented the work of the Fisheries Statistics Section of the OFP. The fisheries statistics work of the OFP, which concerns logbook data, aggregated catch and effort data, annual catch statistics, port sampling and observers, has continued without major changes, except for the implementation of the observer component of SPR TRAMP. The number of vessels for which logbook data are processed exceeded 1,000 for the first time for the 1994 fishing year. Aggregated data were recently received from the Fisheries Agency of Japan covering longline and purse seine in 1993; 1993 pole-and-line data should be received shortly. Korean purse seine data have still not been provided by the National Fisheries Research and Development Agency. Annual catch statistics are currently being compiled for 1994 Yearbook, which should be published shortly after SCTB8 next August.

51. The OFP has received requests for aggregated data from several third-party scientists during the past year. FFA has been previously advised of a request from Dr. Alain Fonteneau (ORSTOM, currently based at IATTC) which included aggregated American purse seine Treaty data. FFA advised that the Fonteneau request was being processed by FFA; FFA will consult with Mr David Burney of the United States Tuna Foundation within the next 10 days and will then advise SPC.

52. Following a recommendation made at SCTB7, the OFP has undertaken to revise the SPC logbooks, which cover longline, pole-and-line and purse seine. The draft revised logbooks have been distributed in the form of an OFP Internal Document to all SPC members, fishing nations, and to FFA for comment. Several responses have been received. FFA will present its comments on the draft revised logbooks during the current visit. SPC expressed concern about the logbook recently adopted for the Preferential Access agreement, which includes information on searching behaviour that has not been requested on logbooks used in the past; SPC considers that the information on searching behavior will not be particularly useful, at least for research purposes, that information on searching behavior is best collected by observers, and that the added complexity of the form may introduce data quality problems.

53. The OFP was responsible for editing of the report of the FFA/SPC Observer Workshop, held from 21 to 23 February 1995 in Brisbane. The draft report has been distributed to participants and several comments have been received. FFA will provide comments on the draft report in the immediate future.

54. SPC commented on an FFA proposal to publicize the work of observer programs in the region, noting that with only the FSM and Treaty observer programmes, it may not be the appropriate time. Perhaps publicity should be considered in a year or two, when both SPRTRAMP and national observer programs are fully established. FFA agreed that it would be good to get observer/port sampling programs in place before publicizing.

55. FFA showed concern about distribution of OFP Internal Report 28 (By-catch and discards in Western Pacific Tuna Fisheries: A review of SPC data holdings and literature). OFC stated that the report had been prepared at the direction of SCTB5. The report was then revised and presented to SCTB7. SPC agreed not to publish the report as an OFP Technical Report at present.

56. The FFA Deputy Director then discussed several FFA activities relating to tuna. It was noted that due to the success of the U.S. Compliance programme, including application of the Lacey Act, some foreign vessel operations are relocating from Guam to other ports in the region, such as Fiji, where they hope the possibility of violations being detected are reduced. FFA intends to increase its activities in improving port monitoring activities in the region, the first initiative of which will be a fishing vessel boarding workshop supported with FAO TCP funding late in 1995. It was also noted that VMS would be developed first in one or two FFA member countries before being considered for regional application.

57. In support of the initiative by FFA member countries to promote domestic tuna industry development, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had provided funding for FFA to review investment issues in the fisheries sector for nine FFA Member countries. It was hoped that this work would provide a sound basis for FFA member countries to review their policy relating to foreign investment in the fisheries sector and provide a stimulus for further development of the domestic tuna industry in the region.

58. FFA also reported on work that is likely to commence in the near future concerning management and administrative arrangements for the tropical longline fishery. It was noted that FFA and the OFP could collaborate closely in this work.

59. In response to a question from SPC concerning the proposal to restructure FFA, the Deputy Director considered the likely response by member countries at FFC26 would be positive. He noted that in the past, FFA's personnel and financial resources had been thinly stretched and that in the last 18 months it had become obvious that the secretariat needed to focus its efforts in 3 key areas - legal services, enforcement and economics. In discussing funding of FFA it was noted that the Regional Register now provides a valuable source of funding for FFA.

60. It was recalled that the World Bank had presented a study of the fisheries sector in the region to the February meeting between FFA member countries and donor agencies. FFA noted that it had set had an opportunity to review a draft of the report presented to that meeting as had been hoped. The FFA reported that it had discussed the possibility of the World Bank establishing a long term presence in the region as opposed to the current practice of short term consultancy arrangements. The World Bank was yet to respond to this suggestion although prospects did not appear good.

61. The discussion then turned to the Multilateral High Level Conference held in December 1994 in Honiara. One of the recommendations was for a technical consultation on scientific data and information exchange to be held prior to SCTB8, which is scheduled for 21-23 August 1995. FFA commented that this consultation should remain strictly scientific, with no political or legal people involved at this stage. A consultation on VMS was to be funded by Japan and held in Tokyo, but the timing did not work out. The US has offered to host the meeting, with funding support if it fell during the current fiscal year. The meeting is now planned for September in Honolulu.

FFA FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION

62. The FFA Deputy Director discussed FFA funding issues. FFA management's main funding concern is trying to get member countries to participate more in the work programme; 74% of the work program budget currently comes from Australia and New Zealand. Since 1991 various strategies have been considered for Island States to increase their contributions to the FFA. Actual contributions are 1.7M SID. FFC24 suggested establishing a sub-committee to look into this. The Sub committee consists of Western Samoa, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea who, taking into account existing XB funding arrangements, identified a need to increase member countries contributions by 24%. The Sub-committee have tabled a report for consideration at FFC26.

63. FFA reported that Australia increased their contribution to FFA by AUD400,000 following the 1994 South Pacific Forum. Although this will provide much needed support for programmes funded previously by other donors who are gradually withdrawing, e.g. Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Kingdom, the matter of funding FFA countries to be a source of concern for FFA management.

64. It was reported that FFA had experienced a high turnover of staff during the last 10 months. Although the FFA considered that new staff were good for the work of the Agency, in terms of introducing the secretariat to new ideas and approaches, the turnover experienced in the

recent past made it difficult to establish regionally efficient services from FFA. The FFA reported on new appointments to the posts of Director, Legal Counsel, Trust Fund Officer, Manager, Economics and Marketing, noting existing vacancies in the posts of Executive Officer and Manager, Surveillance, Monitoring and Control.

SPC Funding and Administration

65. SPC's Director of Programs gave an overview on SPC funding, stating that Australia, France, New Zealand and the United Kingdom all make X-Budgetary contributions to the CFP; with other donations from Canada, Japan and the United Nations Development Program. Three positions are funded from core. The Oceanic Fisheries Program receives no core funding. The European Union-funded SPRTRAMP is up and running. Australia has increased its annual X-Budgetary contribution to OFP this year.

66. The Fisheries Program Manager noted that the CFP had committed funds for 2 years and hoped that current donors would continue at the same levels as present funding. When FFA asked about the Coastal Fisheries Program Manager position, the Fisheries Program Manager replied it was on hold due to funding constraints but the aim is to have someone appointed to the post by the end of 1995.

67. The Oceanic Fisheries Coordinator position is open until 28 April and the Fisheries Program Manager hopes for an appointment soon after. He stressed that as the program is an important tool in fisheries management in the region it was imperative to have someone in place.

68. The present Oceanic Fisheries Coordinator stated that funding remains tight, if not critical for the program. The Oceanic Fisheries Programme has previously been supported by 4 traditional donors on year-by-year basis. Longer term commitments are now however provided by two donors (Australia, France). Counteracting this, USAID pulled out in mid-94, and some of that shortfall (USD 250,000 pa) has had to be filled by external technical consultations, and extensions on EC-funded projects. Difficulties are basically the same as those mentioned by FFA i.e. project funding can be obtained for attractive projects, but not for institutional support. The GEF is however a possible source of funds in the medium term.

69. FFA noted that it had always been a concern of FFA member countries that there has never been any core funding support to OFP. FFA appealed to SPC to keep OFP on a strong and secure footing and noted that it was not in the regional interest to have only uncertain XB funding supporting the OFP. FFA did not want to meddle, but stressed that the work of OFP is of key importance to FFA and the region.

70. The Director of Programmes replied that SPC management would be addressing the issue later.

71. The Deputy Director of FFA shared the Fisheries Program Manager's comment about appointment to the OFC post. He noted that under the leadership of the present incumbent FFA/SPC relations had improved dramatically. FFA believed that it could be difficult to find someone of such high calibre to replace the incumbent and hoped that SPC would try and ensure that the work of OFP would not be disrupted or jeopardized with the leaving of the present OFC.

72. FFA asked if an RTMF was planned for next year. SPC replied in the affirmative, but stated that dates had not been set.

73. FFA related that a two to three day technical session was held last year by FFA and SOPAC on computing and communications issues, which proved extremely beneficial to both parties. The FFA Manager of Information and Technology recognized that almost every organisation has different perspectives and ideas, and FFA would like all PICs to have a common approach on requirements in this area. FFA would like SPC to join them in this initiative. SPREP are also very keen. SOPAC will request the attendance of OFP staff to attend the next meeting around June, but timing remains flexible.

74. SPC's Senior Administration Officer briefed the meeting on the outcome of the SPOCC Terms and Conditions review in Fiji last week. The Sub-committee on the Review would like to harmonize all SPOCC organizations. Forum Secretariat has accepted most of the Ruhen report apart from the salary scale with an overall reduction from about 8-18%. The main recommendation of the sub-committee is to keep salaries at the same level as September 1994. SPC staff in Solomon Islands would align with FFA's scale. SPC Suva staff would align with the Forum Secretariat. Various allowances were to be maintained for Solomon Island based staff. The Committee was sympathetic to staff based in Solomon Islands and Western Samoa. A 21% gratuity was offered to ensure staff remain in post. If they remained for a second term the percentage would increase to 33%.

75. FFA requested a copy of sub-committee report and were given one. Reduced salary would still lead to recruitment but the calibre of persons recruited could be adversely affected. The Deputy Director stated that 1995 may not be a good year for implementation as many countries were suffering financial difficulties, even so, he stated that a study of contributions versus benefits from organizations such as SPC and FFA should be undertaken.

Institutional Review

76. FFA thanked all fisheries program staff for their support in this joint venture. The Chairman of the UN Conference was a member of the review team. The Team has visited all FFA member countries and all island territories in the region and will be putting forward their recommendations shortly. The team had been asked to produce a 20-page summary for presentation to FFC26 and then to CRGA22.

The Meeting then closed.