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INFORMATION PAPER
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO ENABLE SIDS TO HOST WCPFC MEETINGS

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Information Paper

Alternative options to enable SIDS CCMs to host WCPFC meetings

Key Points

- *The WCPFC Commission meeting is now more than double the size of its first meeting.*
- *Some CCMs have expressed concern that the number of participants at Commission meetings now exceeds the capacity for some SIDS CCMs to host.*
- *Only 1 meeting to date has been significantly larger than the informal WCPFC capacity guideline of 550.*
- *Five Commission meetings have been hosted by small island developing State CCMs.*
- *While there are options available to enable smaller member States to receive the benefits of hosting WCPFC meetings, CCMs will need to reduce delegate participation numbers in order to have any meaningful impact on overall meeting size.*

Introduction

The annual session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), established to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), is attended by members (CCM), co-operating non-members (CNM), participating territories, intergovernmental (IGO) and non-governmental organizations (NGO). Each of these stakeholder groups have direct interests in the issues under the Convention's remit. For example, observers, excluding IGO Observers, within the Commission currently include research organizations, private donors, industry and conservation organizations, herewith referred to collectively as NGO Observers.

The number of stakeholders participating in the WPCFC Commission meeting has grown since the first meeting in 2004 and is now at a point where many SIDS CCMs are unable to host the meeting. Although this has raised concerns about the number of participants at the WCPFC annual meetings, there is no evidence that the number has impacted the effectiveness of the Commission. Rather, some CCMs have expressed frustration that they no longer have sufficient capacity to host the annual Commission meeting due to the increased size of the meeting. There have previously been proposals to limit and/or otherwise reduce meeting attendance to afford all CCMs the opportunity to host the annual meeting.

This paper presents additional alternative options to enable smaller member States to receive the benefits of hosting annual Commission meetings without unfairly penalizing any particular group of stakeholders.

Potential additional options to enable smaller CCMs to experience the benefits of hosting

Given the number of issues at hand, there is scope to consider a range of potential additional solutions, for example:

Minimum Hosting Requirements:

The Finance and Administration Committee has already noted a paper outlining suggested minimum capacity requirements for hosting Commission meetings (WCPFC12-2015 –FAC9-7). While these hosting requirements are currently used informally, they could be adopted formally by the Commission and be used by a CCM in evaluating its ability to host the annual session. It should be noted however, that only one annual meeting (2012) was attended by a substantially higher number of delegates than the current suggested number of 550.

Introduce a Cap for All Delegation Sizes:

Perhaps the most effective approach to reducing the overall size of the annual Commission meetings is to place a cap on all delegations, keeping in mind Rule 6(1) of the Rules of Procedure. When reviewing observer participation in 2016, the WCPFC legal counsel noted the Commission might, on a case by case basis, consider limits on all delegations, if the expected number of participants in a particular year had the potential to exceed the capacity of a meeting venue. For example, if delegations were capped at a maximum of 20 delegates, the 2017 meeting, which had a total of 569 participants (including the Secretariat), would have been reduced by 186 individuals (although 65 of these were from the host country), bringing that year's Commission meeting to a total of 383 delegates.

If this approach were adopted, it could be made more flexible by introducing a fee if delegations want to bring more than the designated cap, noting that the additional delegates may not necessarily be afforded the other components outlined in the minimum hosting arrangements document (for example in relation to hotel rooms, the additional delegates may need to be hosted with local families or share rooms). This fee, which could be scaled to deter excessively large delegations, as is done in the International Whaling Commission, could be aligned with the one that is currently applied to NGO

observers and the funds could be directed to the Special Requirements Fund. It may also be prudent to introduce an allowance for SIDS to address concerns of disproportionate burden either via a higher delegation cap or reduced fee. Furthermore, if the Commission proceeds with a delegation cap, there is no need for it to apply to every annual meeting, but could be invoked by the host country if it identifies a potential issue with capacity.

Co-hosting Arrangements:

A co-hosting arrangement could be developed to facilitate hosting by a country without the physical capacity to host an annual meeting. In a co-hosting arrangement one country would partner with a second country with the capacity and facilities to host, and in turn receive some of the benefits typically seen by the country in which the actual meeting takes place. An example of a similar situation being Fiji hosting the Ocean Conference held in New York City in 2017.

This would not involve splitting a meeting between two locations, or taking benefits away from the country in which the meeting is held. Rather, arrangements could recognize that host countries receive certain benefits. These benefits would be valuable to WCPFC members with smaller meeting capacities, but can be conveyed in ways that do not involve physically hosting the annual meeting. For instance, in hosting an annual meeting, a country may have the chance to expose its domestic industry and policy-makers to the work of the Commission, as well as deriving increased economic activity. Co-hosting arrangements could be developed to provide the country that does not physically host the annual meeting with (for example) an honorary economic development payment, such as from the special requirements fund or another source. This also could be used to build awareness, understanding and capacity within its domestic stakeholders relative to the Commission's business, such as by providing travel and lodging to attend the meeting or have Commission staff visit the co-host country for special forums. There would also be recognition as an official co-host, including being offered the opportunity to lead on a ceremonial event at the meeting.

Such arrangements are likely to dictate that a new model of cooperation would be required among members to the Commission. However, given the region has pioneered cooperative relationships this seems possible.

Rotate Meetings of Subsidiary Bodies:

If a country cannot host the annual meeting in its present size, another alternative would be to rotate the locations of meetings of subsidiary bodies and working groups, which would still benefit host countries without requiring the same level of accommodations and facilities as the annual meeting (noting the Head Quarters Agreement that requires that at least one meeting be held in FSM annually). Priority and assistance could be given to SIDS members as hosts. In this scenario, any of the subsidiary bodies would meet in FSM every other year, and in the alternate years could rotate according to a schedule developed by the Commission. Several working groups meet annually or periodically, often adjacent to a meeting of a WCPFC subsidiary body. But they could meet in alternate locations, such as adjacent to meetings of regional organizations, which may increase the WCPFC Secretariat's travel costs while minimizing the costs on delegations of SIDS.

Re-registration of Observers:

To address any concern regarding the number of approved accredited observer organizations in the WCPFC, the Commission could look to implement a re-registration process. This could be automated provided that continued involvement in the Commission is demonstrated (via attendance). One potential approach could be to insert the following into Rule 36 of the Rules of Procedure:

4bis The Commission will automatically suspend the participation of a non-governmental organization pursuant to paragraph 4 only if that non-governmental organization has not participated in at least one (1) session of any of the WCPFC meetings in the preceding five (5) years, with the five years being a rolling five-year period. The automatic suspension of a non-governmental organization does not preclude that same organization from reapplying for observer status at any time pursuant to paragraph 4. The Executive Director shall notify the relevant non-governmental organization in writing of such decision not later than 120 days following the Commission meeting where this rule has been triggered for that organization.

Background Information

Participation in the previous 5 years

In the last 5 years (2013-2017), the average participation (total number of all delegates) at the WCPFC annual meetings was 511, fewer than the 550 the informal WCPFC guidelines recommend host countries to accommodate (see WCPFC12-2015 –FAC9-7). Of this total, the average number of CCM delegates participating in the Commission meeting was 410 people, which is dominated by a handful of CCM delegations (refer to Table 2). In contrast for example, NGO observers (including conservation, industry, research and other organizations) accounted for less than 11% of the total attendees at annual WCPFC meetings; a proportion that is similar to their share of total attendees at other tuna RFMOs.

Overview of meeting attendance

Note: The data presented in this section is based on attendance at annual Commission meetings between 2005-2017 (the inaugural meeting in 2004 is not included as an attendance list was not provided in the report of that Commission meeting) and the CCMs status (e.g. as a CCM, CNM, etc) in 2017. For example, Indonesia is counted as a CCM throughout the period although it became a full member in 2013, having previously participated as a CNM.

Over the life of the Commission, its annual meeting size has steadily grown (Figure 1) with CCMs, CNMs and participating territories representing ~86% of attendees on average over the life of the Commission. Using 2017 data as a snapshot of RFMO attendance and in comparison to other tuna RFMOs, WCPFC had the second largest number of CCM attendees and the largest number of NGO and IGO attendees. However, the proportions of stakeholders represented at the WCPFC is similar to that of both the IATTC and IOTC (Table 1). It is also important to note that a key agenda item for the 2017 WCPFC meeting was the renegotiation of the tropical tuna CMM, a management arrangement for more than half of the global tuna catch.

Table 1: Attendance at Commission Meetings of Tuna RFMOs in 2017 and proportion of total participation.

RFMO	Members, cooperating nonmembers and participating territories	IGO attendees	NGO attendees
WCPFC	476 (87%)	27 (5%)	47 (9%)
IATTC	196 (89%)	4 (2%)	21 (10%)
ICCAT	578 (92%)	9 (1%)	42 (7%)
IOTC	181 (85%)	5 (2%)	26 (12%)

Note: Percentages do not incorporate Secretariat delegates.

The number of attendees may well be influenced by the location. For instance, the number of locally based stakeholder groups has been demonstrated to increase if the meeting is hosted in their country. The 2012 Manila meeting saw 145 people on the Philippines delegation while among observers, 27 were on the Greenpeace delegation and 8 people on the WWF delegation – largely from the offices of the host country. Again, the 2015 Bali meeting was a notable anomaly with Indonesia tripling its next largest delegation size to 51 people while amongst NGOs 11 people were on the MDPI and Pew delegations, 12 people on the Greenpeace delegation, 7 on the Earth Island Institute delegation (total NGO participation was 76) (Figure 1).

Since the 2012 meeting in Manila (the largest to date), some CCMs have consistently had large delegation sizes – e.g. 20 or more people, which is twice as large as the average CCM delegation size during this period (Table 2). Since 2012, the average delegation size of all observers and specifically NGO observers was two people per delegation and the participation of NGOs has continued to decline over the last 7 years relative to the overall meeting size.

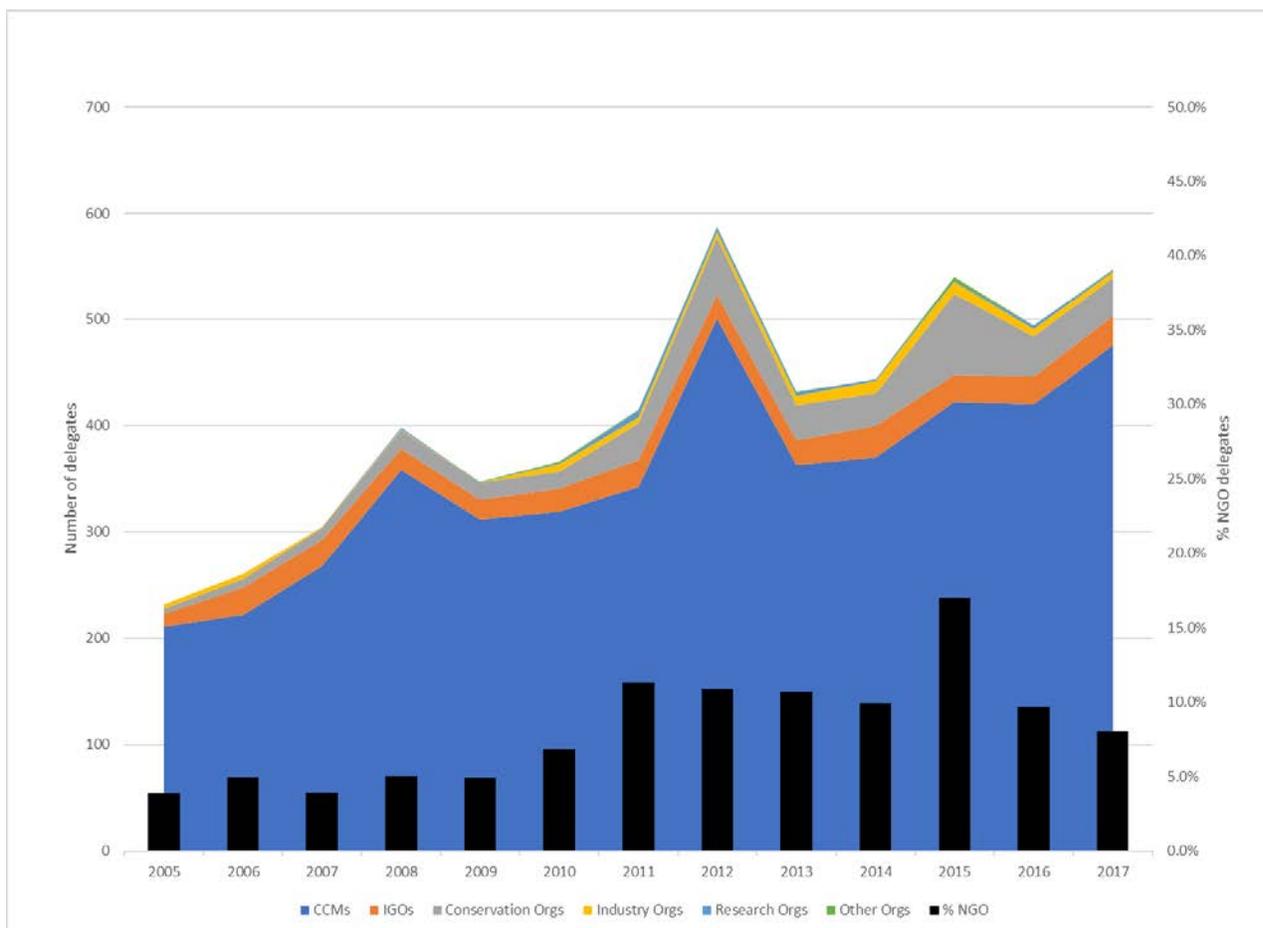


Figure 1: Annual Commission meeting growth and NGO participation as a percentage of total attendance. NGO participation is further categorized by conservation, industry, research and other NGO organizations.

Table 2: Large Delegations since 2012

CCM	Average 2012-2017	Maximum delegation
<i>China</i>	20	27
<i>Japan</i>	51	66
<i>Korea</i>	20	25
<i>PNG</i>	42	54
<i>Philippines*</i>	51	145
<i>Chinese Taipei</i>	27	31
<i>USA</i>	35	44

*Philippines data is skewed by the number of delegates while it was the host country in 2012 and 2017. Outside of these its average was 19.

Steps already taken by the Commission to facilitate reductions in meeting size

The increasing size of annual meetings has been identified as a potential issue for a number of years within the Commission. The Commission thus far has investigated two approaches to address the issue of meeting size and the ability of members to host the annual meeting:

1. Recommended requirements of host countries; and
2. A fee for NGO observer participation at the annual session.

In 2015, a paper was submitted to the Finance and Administration Committee (WCPFC12-2015–FAC9-7) that outlined the recommended requirements of potential host countries to hold the annual meetings of the Scientific Committee, Technical and Compliance Committee and the Commission. This document, noted by FAC 9, and currently used informally, suggested that a minimum capacity for hosting the annual meeting of the Commission should include:

1. The meeting venue will need the capacity to accommodate a minimum of 550 people, and provide two smaller meeting rooms for 40-60 people for working groups and space for the Secretariat office. Some delegations may also require delegation rooms. The hosting country must be able to reserve the venue on the meeting dates set by the Commission and confirm this at the Commission meeting.
2. Hotel rooms for all participants
3. Internet services

WCPFC13 agreed that *“observers from non-governmental organizations will be required to pay a reasonable fee for participation at meetings of the Commission to contribute to the additional expenses generated by their participation”*, despite the general acceptance that RFMOs benefit from observer participation, for example through research and support provided to delegates. This second approach to reducing the WCPFC meeting size was designed to recoup hosting costs while providing an incentive to minimize observer organization delegation sizes. The Commission was advised by the WCPFC Legal Advisor at WCPFC13 that it was *“not inconsistent with Article 21 of the WCPF Convention, especially if accompanied by other efforts to promote transparency and openness at WCPFC meetings”*. Importantly, this decision only applies to a specific proportion of the accredited observers. For example IGOs and observers on CCM delegations are excluded from this fee.

The notice of the meeting for WCPFC14 included the following statement:

“The Commission at its WCPFC13 meeting decided that observers from nongovernmental organizations (NGO) would be required to pay a reasonable fee for participation at Commission meetings, taking into account international practice. Accordingly, a fee of \$500 must be paid by each NGO observer delegation wishing to participate as an observer at WCPFC14, which covers the participation of two representatives per NGO, and a further fee of US\$350 for each additional representative from the same NGO delegation.”

While the NGO observer fee has only been implemented at one Commission meeting, the attendance level in 2017 indicated that it may have had a limiting effect with NGOs at their lowest number relative to overall meeting size since 2010 (Figure 1).

Commission membership

An issue that may be conflating the issue of annual meeting size, and therefore where it is hosted, is the number of accredited observer organizations approved by the Commission to participate in WCPFC meetings. To date, 54 observer organizations, including both IGOs and NGOs, have been accredited by the Commission. However, of this total, only 38 are defined as NGOs under paragraph 1(f) of Rule 36 of the WCPFC Rules of Procedure. These include:

- 23 conservation organizations
- 9 industry organizations
- 4 research organizations
- 2 private donors

Of the 23 accredited conservation organizations, only 7 have attended more than 5 Commission meetings (Birdlife International, Earth Island Institute, Greenpeace, International Sustainable Seafood Foundation (ISSF), Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), The Pew Charitable Trusts and World Wildlife Fund (WWF)).

Conclusion

Although there may be a number of CCMs that are seeking to host the annual WCPFC meeting, it must be recognized that the Commission has the momentous and important responsibility of management of half of the world’s tuna catch. As such, there are likely to be a large number of stakeholders that seek to participate in these meetings, which may result in Commission meetings of

sizes that cannot be accommodated by smaller CCMs. It is important therefore to consider a range of possible solutions and note that the solution must address the real issue: How to effectively share the benefits from hosting a meeting among CCMs. If the Commission determines that a reduction in the size of the WPCFC annual session is the most appropriate solution to benefits sharing, all stakeholders will need to reduce delegate participant numbers to impact the overall meeting size. This paper has presented options to accommodate the interests of States in hosting WCPFC meetings without erroneously placing limits on any particular group.