

SPC/Fisheries 16/WP.9
18 July 1984

ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

SIXTEENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 13 - 17 August 1984)

SOME ALTERNATIVE MECHANISMS FOR OBTAINING ADDITIONAL INPUT INTO THE
WORK OF THE TUNA AND BILLFISH ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

SOME ALTERNATIVE MECHANISMS FOR OBTAINING ADDITIONAL INPUT INTO THE
WORK OF THE TUNA AND BILLFISH ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

Introduction

The Twenty-Third South Pacific Conference agreed:

"to direct the Secretariat to consult with the Forum Fisheries Agency about convening a meeting of coastal states, distant-water fishing nations and international organisations with an interest and experience in this field, to explore ways and means of obtaining input from the distant-water fishing nations in pursuing the objectives of the revised priorities of the extended Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme."

A meeting of coastal states and distant-water fishing nations was accordingly convened by the Commission at its headquarters in Noumea from 18 to 22 June 1984.

Before the meeting went on to discuss ways and means of obtaining the necessary additional input, the meeting reviewed the objectives, achievements and future activities of the Commission's Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme and considered the types and possible sources of additional input. Following this review there was considerable discussion of the ways and means of obtaining the necessary input. These were summarised as follows:

- "(i) Since the time when the South Pacific Conference directed that this Meeting be convened there has been a significant increase in the data input from distant-water fishing nations (DWFNS).
- (ii) There remain data gaps, but the situation will be further improved as a result of offers of additional input which have been made during the course of the Meeting.
- (iii) The Meeting has indicated strong support for the continuation of the work being done by the Tuna Programme.
- (iv) From the indications given by those DWFNS attending the Meeting, there are some difficulties in their full co-operation, given the existing mechanisms under which the Programme operates.
- (v) The present ad hoc arrangement for financial input into the Programme does not provide a satisfactory basis for its continuation, but any improvement will be difficult under existing mechanisms.
- (vi) It would therefore be useful for some consideration to be given to mechanisms which would:

- (a) enable those DWFNS who are already members of the Programme to participate fully in the provision of data input;
 - (b) enable those DWFNS who are not members of the Programme to participate fully in the provision of data input and financial input.
- (vii) There has been some useful discussions of alternative approaches, but it seems that some delegations are not in a position to take that to a conclusion.
- (viii) While the Programme Co-ordinator has presented a paper outlining possible approaches, it would now be useful for the Secretariat to prepare a detailed paper on possible mechanisms which would enable the objectives in (vi) to be met. Such a paper would be prepared in consultation with other regional organisations (SPEC, FFA), the countries of the region, and DWFNS (including those invited to the meeting but not participating in it). Given the success of the Programme so far, it may be desirable for any new approach to depart to the least possible extent from the present situation.
- (ix) Alternative approaches could then be considered, if possible, by the Sixteenth Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries, and at the next South Pacific Conference."

In accordance with the wishes of the meeting, as outlined in (viii) above, the Secretariat has prepared this draft paper outlining some possible institutional mechanisms which governments might consider as alternatives for achieving (vi)(a) and (b) above.

The Secretariat would like to point out that as it was the wish of delegations that the paper should be circulated as soon as possible, it is not feasible for the SPC Secretariat to hold meaningful consultations with SPEC, FFA, countries of the region or DWFNS before distributing the paper.

It should be noted, however, that this paper is intended only as a draft and it represents neither the Secretariat's views on the issue nor an exhaustive list of possible alternatives, nor an in-depth study of the listed options. Time and available manpower resources would not enable these to be achieved.

The Secretariat would, however, welcome comments, views and suggestions from Governments and Administrations, regional organisations as well as DWFNS, on the paper to be submitted in writing, preferably before the meeting or tabled during the meeting.

Some Possible Alternative Mechanisms

1. Maintaining the Status Quo

Positive aspects:

- (a) A system is already established for the budgeting, implementation and management of the programme and dissemination of results to the countries of the region.
- (b) Costs to Island governments are minimal.
- (c) Donor governments are familiar and satisfied with the Programme.
- (d) Results from the Programme are reviewed by individual countries, the SPC annual Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries incorporating the Expert Committee on Tropical Tunas, the CRGA and the South Pacific Conference, which collectively provide the direction for the Programme.
- (e) The existing staff have the training to undertake field programmes such as additional tagging to assist with the evaluation of interaction between fisheries.

Negative aspects:

- (a) The data coverage is inadequate for total resource evaluation and assessment of interaction amongst fisheries.
- (b) The present arrangements for continuation and funding of the Programme are on a two-year basis giving rise to some uncertainty for Governments and Programme staff about the future of the Programme.
- (c) There is no formal mechanism for obtaining input from many of the distant-water fishing nations exploiting the resources within the area of the SPC, particularly in the high-seas areas.
- (d) There is no formal mechanism for exchange of information and co-operative work with countries exploiting common resources outside the area of the SPC.

2. Incorporation of the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme into the regular work programme of the SPC

Positive aspects:

- (a) The present system for the management of the Programme and the dissemination of results to the countries in the region would still apply.
- (b) Results from the Programme would continue to be reviewed as at present and the direction would continue to be provided by the Island countries for which the SPC works.
- (c) There would be continuity of funding at least to the extent of the limitations of the SPC's overall budget and Programme staff would have the same security of employment as applies to regular work programme staff.
- (d) There would be minimal disruption to the work of the Programme.

Negative aspects:

- (a) The data coverage would not improve over the present situation.
- (b) Island countries and territories would be required to pay their assessed contributions to the budget of the Programme.
- (c) There would still be no mechanism for input from distant-water fishing nations fishing within the SPC's region or from countries catching common resources outside the area of the SPC.

3. Modification of/or addition to the Canberra Agreement to enable broader participation, including oceanic fisheries matters

Positive aspects:

- (a) The present system for Programme management and dissemination of results would apply with slight modifications to accommodate increased distribution of results.
- (b) Data coverage would be increased and mechanism could be established for obtaining regular scientific and technical input from countries presently not members of the SPC.
- (c) More large and developed countries would be encouraged to contribute to the funding of the SPC and the Programme.

- (d) As the structure of the Programme would not change significantly, donors would be able to identify with the Programme and its results.
- (e) The work of the Programme would continue to be reviewed as at present.
- (f) It is possible that the legal constraints affecting United States control of its own distant-water fishing fleet could be overcome (this possibility requires legal opinions which are beyond the scope of the Secretariat of the SPC).

Negative aspects:

- (a) It could be difficult for political reasons to accommodate increased membership while remaining under the umbrella of the SPC.
- (b) There could be legal difficulties associated with any amendment to the Canberra Agreement.
- (c) New financial arrangements for the funding of the Programme would need to be negotiated.
- (d) The present members of the SPC could expect to have relatively reduced control over the operation of the SPC and the Programme.
- (e) Island countries might find the Programme relatively less responsive to specific requests made of it by them.

4. The establishment of an entity wholly or partially separate from the SPC

There is a wide spectrum of possibilities, all of which have political and legal implications requiring consideration by governments. The alternatives appear to include such varied possibilities as the establishment of a broadly based (article 64 of the Law of the Sea Convention) independent body under a separate treaty, or a less autonomous but broader membership grouping such as governs the operation of CCOP/SOPAC. The political advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives can only be evaluated by governments. While the positive and negative technical aspects of the alternatives vary somewhat, they could in general be compared with the above-mentioned alternatives as follows:

Positive aspects:

- (a) Data coverage would be increased as would scientific and technical input from countries not presently members of the SPC.
- (b) Distant-water fishing nations would be able to participate equally with coastal states in the work of the Programme.

- (c) It would be possible to carry out research over a much greater part of the area of distribution of the total common resources.
- (d) The problems associated with the present ad hoc arrangements for continuing the work of the Programme would be overcome.
- (e) The increased membership by the participation of the larger developed countries would greatly facilitate funding of the Programme.
- (f) The United States' problem of control over the activities of its own vessels would be overcome.

Negative aspects:

- (a) The formation of such a body requires political action, could necessitate lengthy deliberations and negotiations before a decision is made.
 - (b) The present members of the SPC could have less control over the direction of resource survey and assessment than is the case for the present Programme.
 - (c) Because of the larger membership, a new body could be less responsive to the requests made of it by the Island countries of the SPC.
-