TERMS OF REFERENCE

ANALYTICAL STUDIES TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE (MCS) STRATEGY FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

Background

The Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) will lead the development of a Regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) Strategy. The primary and overriding purpose of the Regional MCS Strategy is to support the sustainable use of oceanic fisheries resources throughout the Pacific Islands region, being the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of FFA members and adjacent waters, including ‘pockets’ of high seas surrounded by the EEZs of FFA members. While efforts will be made to ensure ongoing benefits for other compliance functions (e.g. customs, immigration, counter terrorism) are achieved, the focus of the regional strategy will be on providing effective compliance with fisheries management measures through the minimisation of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The Regional MCS Strategy will not deal with reef and other inshore fisheries and will be focused on commercial fisheries targeting tuna and associated pelagic species.

By boosting existing arrangements through regional cooperation, better use of existing compliance assets and developing appropriate infrastructure and procedures, the region will be better able to lead the way to an increased level of compliance with national, regional and Commission fisheries management measures in the broader Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Commission area. Provisions of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the WCPF Convention concerning compatibility (between in-zone and high seas areas) add weight to such an approach, and it will be important to ensure that initiatives developed under the FFA-driven Regional MCS Strategy are fully complementary to, and compatible with, current and future WCPFC measures.

This initiative has support from the highest level, including Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and the Ministerial Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC).

Purpose of the Regional MCS Strategy

The purpose of the Regional MCS Strategy is to:
– support fisheries management objectives and frameworks;
– ensure legitimate resource use;
– respond to the developments in MCS and compliance in the WCPFC;
– take into account other international and regional initiatives; and
– enhance the capacity of FFA Members to address IUU fishing issues; and
– provide strong deterrents for IUU fishing.

To achieve its purpose, the Regional MCS Strategy will establish a framework that will harmonise MCS priorities, operations and activities; provide operational MCS support through the establishment of a Regional MCS Coordination Centre (RMCC); manage and share MCS information; and investigate ways of increasing MCS capability, including the establishment of a regional patrol vessel fleet.

Development of the Regional MCS Strategy

The FFA Secretariat has been empowered to progress the development of the Regional MCS Strategy and a number of analytical projects and activities to underpin its development and transformation into operational plans. Funding for these projects has been secured.
Projects

The specific project objectives, outputs and outcomes are as follows:

**Project 1: Regional Oceanic Fisheries Risk Assessment**

*Objective:*
To consider and categorise the risks to oceanic fisheries resources in the Pacific Islands region arising from fishing that undermine fisheries management objectives and frameworks, including those risks relating to overfishing, overcapacity and environmental impacts.

*Outputs:*
The project will produce a risk assessment that:
- identifies, quantifies, and prioritises fisheries resource risks, threats and weaknesses, qualified in terms of species, spatial and temporal distribution, gear/methods, fleets and market drivers;
- examines existing monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activities and identifies a range of additional responses for the risks identified; and
- suggests performance indicators to be used as a baseline to measure the efficiency and efficacy of the responses.

*Outcomes sought:*
- more efficient and effective planning and targeting of MCS activities and resources to mitigate and resolve the residual risks identified by the risk assessment; and
- improved monitoring and performance of fisheries management frameworks and corresponding MCS initiatives.

**Project 2: Compliance Review**

*Objective:*
To assess the current level of, and impediments to, implementation by FFA members of agreed MCS measures including the FFA Minimum Terms and Conditions (MTCs), Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission conservation and management measures (CMMs) and reporting requirements, and the Vessel Days Scheme (VDS).

*Outputs:*
The project will produce a compliance review report that:
- identifies areas where agreed MCS measures, including fishing vessel licensing and license conditions, are not being implemented effectively or complied with;
- suggests reasons for non compliance;
- documents current capability to undertake MCS operations in terms of national assets, human capacity and institutional arrangements; and
- provides recommendations for monitoring and improving performance in complying with agreed MCS measures.

*Outcomes sought:*
- identify strengths and weaknesses in MCS processes and procedures with respect to compliance with existing national, sub-regional, regional and Commission management measures;
- plan and implement actions to improve and measure MCS performance relating to the implementation of MTCs and other obligations; and
- demonstrate the effectiveness of FFA in-zone arrangements and thereby increase leverage by FFA countries in Commission negotiations on MCS measures.
Project 3: Information Management

Objective:
To develop a framework and policy for the collection, processing, storage and exchange of fisheries data in support of national, sub-regional and regional MCS initiatives undertaken by FFA Members.

Outputs:
The project will produce an information management report that:
- reviews current and likely future priority information needs and availability in support of effective fisheries management;
- reviews information management capabilities (IT infrastructure and software) at FFA, member countries and other associated agencies, including the WCPF Commission;
- identifies data management gaps and means of addressing them;
- provides a path towards the harmonization of data standards; and
- develops a Scope of Work and costing for a comprehensive regional MCS information management system.

Outcomes sought:
- identify gaps and inconsistencies in regional and national information collection and exchange;
- improve MCS outcomes from more efficient and timely data collection, storage and exchange at both national FFA levels; and
- make decisions on investment in, and the operation and scope of, a regional MCS information management system.

Project 4: Regional MCS Coordination

Objective:
To identify the benefits and means of achieving improved MCS outcomes for FFA members by coordinating and combining national MCS assets and other resources and activities at a regional level, and examine the methodology and functional specification for the establishment, funding and operation of a Regional MCS Coordination Centre (RMCC).

Outputs:
The project will produce a report that:
- outlines the benefits of regional MCS cooperation;
- highlights the requirements for effective MCS coordination; and
- examines the role, function and establishment of a RMCC.

Outcomes sought:
The report will be used by FFA Members to achieve increased regional MCS capability by:
- achieving a streamlined and transparent information flow between members allowing for improved coordination and targeting of national surveillance and enforcement assets at the regional level;
- improving response times and provide support for national and regional MCS operations; and
- increasing the number and effectiveness of regional MCS responses, thereby substantially improving the capability to combat IUU fishing.
Project 5: Regional Capability

Objective:
To examine options for providing and effective a surveillance and response capability by identifying more efficient ways to use MCS assets, other possible providers and funding options, with a view to obtaining contracted surveillance and response capabilities and supplementing national programmes. Preliminary consideration will also be given to the development of ‘bluewater’ surface capability.

Outputs:
The project will produce a report that:
- reviews past and projected future involvement by key surveillance providers, including New Zealand, Australia, France and the US;
- considers and makes recommendations on optimal use of the full suite of key hardware surveillance assets, including civilian assets such as charted, licensed fishing and inter-island cargo vessels; and
- delivers a clear assessment of the cost effectiveness, including estimates of ongoing costs, for each approach considered, and avenues for long-term funding.

Outcomes sought:
The report will be used by FFA members to achieve:
- a balanced capability, utilising patrol vessels (national and other), surveillance aircraft and other surveillance technologies; and
- an increased, measureable capability which will meet national, regional and international expectations will cover current gaps in surveillance coverage.