



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

NPFC-2025-COM09-Final Report

## North Pacific Fisheries Commission 9<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting

24-27 March 2025

Osaka, Japan (hybrid)

### FINAL REPORT

#### Agenda Item 1. Opening of the Meeting

1. The 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) was held in a hybrid format, with participants attending in-person in Osaka, Japan, or online via WebEx, on 24-27 March 2025, and was attended by Members from Canada, China, the European Union (EU), Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Chinese Taipei, the United States of America (USA), and Vanuatu. Panama, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES), the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC), the International Monitoring Control and Surveillance (IMCS) Network, the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC), the Pew Charitable Trusts ([Pew](#)), the Ocean Foundation, the Ocean Governance Institute (OGI), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and Greenpeace International attended as observers. The meeting was opened by Mr. Shingo Ota (Japan), who served as the Commission Chair.

#### 1a. Welcome Address

2. The Chair welcomed the participants to Osaka and thanked the Secretariat for its dedicated efforts to organize the meeting. The Chair noted that this meeting marks the 10th anniversary of the NPFC. The Chair briefly reviewed the history of the Commission, noting that the NPFC Convention entered into force on 19 July 2015, following the ratification by Japan, Canada, China, and Korea. The Chair highlighted key achievements of the Commission over the past decade. The Chair noted that while the Commission has achieved significant progress, several challenges remain, including the low stock status of Pacific saury, the need to reduce fishing mortality for chub mackerel based on the latest stock assessment, the absence of completed stock assessments for several species, questions about VME protection, and the need for improvements in monitoring, control, and surveillance mechanisms. The Chair also emphasized the importance of making progress on a regional observer program for at-sea transshipment. The Chair's full statement is attached as Annex A.

*1b. Appointment of Rapporteur*

3. Mr. Jacques Chaumont was appointed as the Rapporteur.

*1c. Adoption of Agenda*

4. The Commission adopted its agenda (Annex B) with the understanding that Agenda Item 9 would be taken up earlier due to availability of the presenting scientific Co-Chair, and a session of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) would take place during the afternoon break to complete its remaining work. The List of Documents and List of Participants are attached (Annexes C, D).

*1d. Meeting Arrangements*

5. The Executive Secretary, Dr. Robert Day, outlined the meeting arrangements.

Agenda Item 2. Membership of the Commission

*2a. Status of the Membership*

6. The report on the status of the Convention by the Republic of Korea, the Depositary of the NPFC, was taken as read (NPFC-2025-COM09-IP01). Since the previous Commission meeting, the total number of Members remains at nine.

*2b. CNCP applications*

7. The TCC Chair, Ms. Alisha Falberg (USA), reported that TCC08 had extensively reviewed Panama's application to renew its CNCP status. Despite the late submission of the application, the TCC had agreed to consider it. Following discussion, the TCC was unable to endorse the application but recommended that the Commission further review Panama's application for CNCP status for 2025-2027, noting that Panama was requested to provide more information in writing about their monitoring capabilities ahead of the Commission meeting.
8. Panama presented additional information (NPFC-2025-TCC08-WP07 SuppDoc.1) to address the concerns raised by Members during the TCC meeting, reaffirming its commitment to sustainable fishing and conservation of marine resources in the NPFC Convention Area. Panama provided details on its institutional capacity to exercise effective control over its fishing fleet, including its Fisheries Monitoring Center, national observer program, and an electronic monitoring program that will become mandatory from 15 April 2025. Panama confirmed its willingness to participate in the NPFC Regional Observer Program once it enters into force on 1 April 2026, and requested approval of its application for CNCP status for the 2025-2027 period until the 2027 annual meeting.

9. Several Members expressed general support for Panama's application while raising concerns about: the late submission of their CNCP application; past incidents involving Panamanian-flagged vessels; and the potential commencement of fishing activities before the implementation of the NPFC Regional Observer Program in 2026.
10. Following further exchange of views, the Commission agreed to grant CNCP status to Panama for the period 2025-2027, with the condition that Panama's participatory rights in NPFC fisheries would begin on 1 April 2026, only when the Regional Observer Program for Transshipment is implemented. The Commission encouraged Panama to make a voluntary financial contribution commensurate with what would be assessed should it become a Contracting Party.

10bis. The EU stated that any new incident involving a Panama-flagged carrier vessel engaging in unauthorized transshipment within the NPFC area would lead the EU to object to the renewal of Panama's CNCP status at the following Annual Meeting.

11. Panama expressed its gratitude for being granted CNCP status and affirmed its commitment to the principles of cooperation, transparency, and compliance that underpin the work of the Commission, as well as its dedication to responsible fisheries management and strong stance against IUU fishing.

#### Agenda Item 3. Report from the Secretariat

12. The Executive Secretary presented a summary of the annual report on the Commission's activities for the intersessional period between the 8<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting of April 2024 and this current Commission meeting (NPFC-2025-SR).
13. Some Members made suggestions for future improvement of the Secretariat Report, including clarification of the key outputs from meetings (to not imply the list was exhaustive) or omission of the list entirely (as they are well-described in the respective meeting reports), placing focus on implementation of the Secretariat's Work Plan, and inclusion of sections on challenges experienced by the Secretariat and options for addressing them. The Executive Secretary acknowledged the feedback and noted that future Secretariat Reports would reflect such feedback.

#### Agenda Item 4. Performance Review of the Commission – overview of progress

14. The Commission reviewed the Performance Review matrix update document (NPFC-2025-COM09-IP09), noting that some parts required updating based on the latest work of subsidiary bodies.
15. The USA recognized the substantial progress made by the Commission toward addressing a number of the Performance Review recommendations but highlighted that there had not been sufficient time to discuss the substance of these recommendations in the TCC or FAC. The USA recalled paragraph 94 from the COM08 Final Report, which outlined an intersessional process for updating the matrix and seeking Member input on priorities and timeframes, and requested that this process be implemented as tasked.
16. The EU agreed with the USA, and noted that improving data collection for both target and bycatch species and marine ecosystems should be considered as a key priority, as it was the cornerstone for robust scientific advice, effective monitoring of compliance, and science-based management decisions.
17. Russia highlighted recommendations 4.2.1 (related to data collection and harmonization of data collection formats), as well as 4.5.4 and 4.5.5 (related to climate change), as particularly important areas requiring further attention.
18. The Commission agreed to implement the process outlined in paragraph 94 of the COM08 Final Report for further reviewing the matrix and considering possible improvements to the process. The Chair indicated that he and the Secretariat would initiate this process following the annual meeting, in consultation with Members.

#### Agenda Item 5. Report of the 9th Scientific Committee meeting

##### *5a. Review of the SC09 Report and response to COM08 taskings*

19. The Chair of the SC, Dr. Janelle Curtis (Canada), summarized the outcomes of the 9<sup>th</sup> SC meeting and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies (NPFC-2025-SC09-Final Report & NPFC-2025-COM09-IP10) for discussion by the Commission.
20. Several Members expressed concern about the status of chub mackerel, with one Member noting the sharp decline in CPUE and catch levels and concerning changes in biological parameters. ~~Questions were raised about whether the SC's recommendation to reduce fishing mortality was adequate given the severity of the observed decline.~~

21. The Chair of TWG-CMSA, Dr. Kazuhiro Oshima (Japan), explained that due to the drastically changing productivity of Chub Mackerel in recent years, they did ~~not~~ provide MSY-related ~~and/or~~ SPR-related reference points, however, those vary over time and are uncertain, therefore they are potentially misleading with respect to stock status. He noted that future projections under current fishing mortality showed the stock would decline in future years, which formed the basis for the scientific advice.
22. Members discussed structural improvements to the SC's work, with suggestions for adopting management cycles for different stocks to optimize SC's capacity, and establishing a peer review system for stock assessment to address methodological challenges like scaling issues.
23. On the topic of domestic stock assessments, Members acknowledged their value while emphasizing the need for transparent, collaborative scientific processes. Several suggestions were made to improve stock assessment approaches, including developing a formal process for using domestic assessments as interim advice, For NPFC stock assessments, Members suggested ~~considering~~ considering less frequent benchmark assessments with regular updates between them, and standardizing how stock status is presented across species to ~~avoid inconsistencies~~ enhance consistencies as much as possible.
24. Members expressed broad support for the ~~proposed~~ VME protection measures proposed by SC09, particularly the closure of additional areas on Yuryaku Seamount and the incorporation of the translation table for VME indicator corals.
25. The SC Chair confirmed that the discussions at the SC on data needs and gaps that could be possibly addressed through ~~had not recommended establishing~~ a regional observer program for pelagic fisheries have not been finalized at this time. However, ~~the SC will continue agreed to continue~~ to discuss data needs and data gaps that could be filled by a regional observer program and inform the TCC about progress in these ~~developments~~ discussions.
26. The biological characteristics of pelagic species were discussed, with emphasis on how these stocks reproduce in national waters before migrating to offshore feeding areas. Several Members noted that both reproduction and feeding ~~these offshore~~ areas are particularly vulnerable zones for the survival of these resources, which has implications for their conservation and management.
27. The USA gave a statement on high seas bottom fisheries, ~~noting they require unique management approaches given potential impacts on deep-sea vulnerable marine ecosystems~~.

~~They highlighted the importance of updated impact assessments, additional scientific advice on temporary prohibitions or time/area closures, and concerns regarding stocks with no assessments that show indications of overfishing.~~ The USA's full statement is attached as Annex X.

28. The Commission discussed the prioritization of species for stock assessment. Some Members suggested that Japanese sardine should be prioritized based on catch levels and effort, while others suggested that neon flying squid should be given priority as it has widespread fishing activities across the Convention Area and is currently not assessed by any Member. The Commission agreed to task the SC to continue to work on stock assessments for both neon flying squid and Japanese sardine, ~~with the Small Working Group on Japanese sardine to be upgraded from an informal to a formal working group, initially meeting in a virtual format.~~
29. The Commission also requested the SC to consider the frequency of stock assessments, including the possibility of conducting benchmark assessments less frequently with updates in between, and to explore the potential benefits of a peer review system.
30. In response to SC's request for guidance on providing advice for priority species where collaborative work towards NPFC stock assessment is not being conducted, the Commission agreed that SC should continue to observe domestic stock assessments, report the results to the Commission without endorsing them, while working towards conducting NPFC stock assessments for priority species.
31. On the topic of bottom fisheries, Greenpeace International, DSCC, and Pew expressed concern that the proposed closures on Yuryaku Seamount did not reflect extensive peer-reviewed science identifying VMEs across many areas of the seamount chain. They urged broader protections in line with the UNGA resolutions and the NPFC Convention, and drew attention to their submitted observer paper (NPFC-2025-COM09-OP6).

#### *5b. Adoption of the SC09 Report and Recommendations*

32. The Commission discussed additional recommendations to the Scientific Committee based on the proposal submitted by the EU (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP11).
33. The SC Chair provided a written response to the EU's proposal (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP12), and several Members offered further revisions to the EU's recommendations. The Commission agreed to forward the recommendations (Annex X) as revised to the SC to consider incorporation into its work plan.

34. The Commission noted the importance of reporting bycatch data for all priority species. The Science Manager presented summaries of available bycatch information for Japanese sardine and Pacific saury, as well as the ratio of chub mackerel and blue mackerel catches reported by members. Several Members suggested that reporting requirements for bycatch should be clarified to ensure all catches are properly accounted for in stock assessments. The EU submitted a proposal to amend open CMMs to strengthen and clarify bycatch reporting requirements (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP10). ~~After reflecting comments from Members, t~~The Commission agreed to the proposed changes.
35. The Commission adopted the reports and the recommendations of the SC with the understanding that the proposed amendments to the two CMMs would be discussed under Agenda Item 8.

Agenda Item 6. Report of the 8th Technical and Compliance Committee meeting

*6a. Review of TCC08 Report and response to COM08 taskings*

36. The Chair of the TCC, Ms. Alisha Falberg (USA), summarized the outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> TCC meeting (NPFC-2025-TCC08-Final Report) for discussion by the Commission.
37. The Commission discussed the Fisheries Overview paper presented during TCC, with some Members expressing concern about the process of making continual changes to a report document during the meeting without a clear understanding of the basis of such changes by Members and the need to maintain objectivity in reports prepared by the Secretariat.
38. The Compliance Manager explained the challenges in reconciling different counting methods used by the Secretariat and Members. The Compliance Manager noted the lack of clear guidelines on developing the Fisheries Overview.
39. Several Members expressed views on how to handle the Fisheries Overview and related matters, including suggestions to focus on other metrics that could be more effective for monitoring compliance, to base discussions on Members' ~~submitted~~-self-reported vessel numbers rather than vessel registry data, and to change the document type from Information Paper to Working Paper in the future to align with the NPFC Document Policy.
40. Several Members noted the linkage to the discussion of historical existing level and the importance of progressing work on defining historical existing level with unified criteria.

40bis. The EU noted that these discussions were mainly focused on reconciling the historical number of authorized vessels which did not seem to be an effective measure for restricting fishing effort, or monitoring compliance. Noting the repeated and inconclusive discussions at TCC, the EU suggested that the Commission consider in the future other more appropriate metrics, such as the number of active f/v or number of fishing days, for the purpose of effort control in NPFC fisheries.

41. The Commission agreed to task the SWG Ops to continue its work on review ~~how each Member determines its~~ historical existing level and to review the information provided by the Secretariat and Members, as well as to work towards establishing specific criteria for calculating historical existing level based on the recommendation by TCC08.

*6b. Adoption of IUU Vessel List for 2025*

42. The Commission reviewed the Provisional IUU Vessel List provided to COM09 by TCC08, which contained one vessel proposed by Canada.

43. China informed the Commission that it had completed its sanction procedure against the vessel on 20 March, with the vessel owner making full payment of the sanction.

44. Following discussions, Canada and China provided additional information about the vessel, including the violation report, a summary of the inspection report from China's provincial enforcement agency, and supporting evidence regarding packaging practices.

45. Several Members expressed concerns about the possible recurring nature of these incidents, their potential negative impacts on Pacific saury stock status, and the need to prevent similar issues in the future. Concerns were also raised about inconsistencies between China's domestic laws and NPFC regulations, and about the process for providing official information on sanctions for consideration of Members.

46. China acknowledges the significant violations of NPFC CMMs by one Chinese-flagged vessel related to catch of Pacific saury during a closed season/without a quota, misreporting of catch and misreporting in a transshipment declaration, and apparent effort to conceal and misrepresent catch in logbooks and transshipment documentation. China noted the significant sanctions imposed and its view that this constituted adequate flag state action with sanctions imposed of appropriate severity, and updated the Commission to confirm the vessel owner had paid the fines.

47. The Commission requested China to further investigate new information and consider increasing the penalty imposed on the vessel company due to the overlapping potential violations and aggravating information. China committed to update its national legislation or regulations to ensure conformity with NPFC CMMs to ensure all vessels accurately record and report Pacific saury catch and other bycatch in catch records and transshipment declarations, regardless of the target species, to ensure compliance with catch limits adopted by the Commission. China also committed to follow up with its vessels to ensure they do not fish for Pacific saury without quota. China indicated that if similar violations recur on its vessels, it will withdraw the vessel's authorization and high seas permit for a year while investigations occur.
48. China acknowledged that the issues uncovered during the high seas boarding and inspection should have been reported by the observer. Until the new transshipment ROP is implemented, the Commission requested China to take steps to improve implementation of its national observer program to identify violations. China also agreed to strengthen their landing inspections procedures, in cooperation with domestic customs officials. China committed to carefully examine boarding reports to confirm compliance with CMMs, regardless of whether a violation was identified by the authorized inspectors, as well as to conduct at-sea and strengthened port inspections on its vessels. To support effective HSBI, China will continue to conduct HSBI in 2025 and to provide transparent inspection details, to include types of violations by vessel type to the Commission. China Fisheries Authority committed to update their authorized inspectors with the outcomes of this meeting, any amendments to CMMs, and confirm implementation of bycatch provisions that will impact fishing vessels.
49. The Commission agreed to not list the vessel ~~from in~~ the ~~Provisional~~-IUU Vessel List and adopted the NPFC IUU Vessel List for 2025 (Annex X).

#### *6c. Adoption of Final Compliance Monitoring Report*

50. The TCC Chair explained that ~~as part of the~~ this was the first implementation year of the CMS CMM 2024-13 adopted at COM08, ~~the TCC had~~ assessed compliance on seven areas of potential non-compliance identified by the Secretariat and six areas of potential non-compliance identified by members. All other areas were assumed compliant. The TCC developed a Provisional Compliance Report by consensus, which assessed each Member's compliance with all obligations in Annex 2 of CMM 2024-13, and attached an executive summary that summarized outstanding issues, general feedback on the process, and identified data gaps.

51. The Commission adopted the Compliance Monitoring Report as forwarded by TCC08 (Annex X).

*6d. Adoption of the TCC08 Report and Recommendations*

52. The Commission adopted the report and the recommendations of the TCC with the understanding that the draft CMMs discussed at the TCC08 would be discussed under Agenda Item 8.

*6e. Consideration of other TCC issues identified during TCC08 or by COM09 meeting*

53. The TCC Chair noted that the TCC Work Plan had not been fully updated and reviewed at TCC08, and sought Commission guidance on the Work Plan. At the request of a Member, the Secretariat and TCC Chair updated the document and posted a revised version for consideration.
54. Some Members suggested minor amendments, and the Commission agreed to the revised TCC Work Plan.
55. The Ocean Foundation, DSCC, WWF Japan, and Pew congratulated the Commission for adopting the NPFC Rules of Transparency for TCC, which they described as world-leading in including civil society organizations in discussions about implementation of agreed decisions.
56. The Commission reviewed the list of obligations to be assessed as part of the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMS) in Annex 2 of CMM 2024-13. The Commission agreed to add paragraph 16 of the Pacific Saury CMM, paragraph 31 of the HSBI CMM, paragraphs 5, 7, 9, and 11 of the Anadromous Species CMM, paragraph 3 of the Chub Mackerel CMM, and provisions related to bycatch reporting across CMMs, while noting that paragraph 2 of the Vessel Registry CMM did not have full agreement from Members.
57. The TCC Chair noted that some conforming changes would be required to update paragraph numbers and language in existing obligations to align with amended CMMs.
58. Regarding the new VMS entry and exit reporting requirement, the Commission agreed that this obligation would take effect from 1 April 2026 and would be added to the list of obligations to be assessed after that date.

Agenda Item 7. Report of the 7th Finance and Administration Committee meeting

*7a. Review of FAC Report*

59. The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC), Mr. Dan Hull (USA), was unable to attend the Commission meeting, so in his absence, Mr. Haruo Tominaga (Japan), who had served as the Interim FAC Chair for the final proceedings of the FAC meeting, summarized the outcomes of the 7<sup>th</sup> FAC meeting (NPFC-2025-FAC07-Final Report) for discussion by the Commission.
60. The European Union announced it would provide a voluntary contribution of 50,000 (EUR) to support specific work of the TCC and the SC. The Commission thanked the EU for its generous contribution.

*7b. Adoption of the proposed budget for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026*

61. One Member emphasized its goal of having a zero-growth policy for the budget, acknowledging the need for future discussion and review of the budget in the following year.
62. The Commission adopted the proposed budgets for 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 as submitted by the FAC07 (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP13) along with the associated assessed contributions, noting that the assessed contribution amounts for 2026/2027 would be updated based on GDP and catch history at that time. The Commission confirmed that the budget for 2026/2027 could be subject to review at the 2026 annual meeting.

*7c. Adoption of the FAC07 Report and Recommendations*

63. The Commission adopted the report and the recommendations of the FAC07.

*7d. Consideration of other FAC issues identified during FAC07 or by COM09 meeting*

64. The Commission discussed the financial implications of the proposed transshipment observer program. Several Members sought clarification on how the program would be funded and whether changes to the Financial Regulations would be necessary. The Interim FAC Chair noted that in other RFMOs, while costs are primarily paid by Members involved in transshipment, there are sometimes administrative costs incurred by the Secretariat.
65. China stated that the cost of the observer program should be borne by a special account funded by members participating in transshipment, noting that administrative costs for the Secretariat would be a relatively small amount that could be covered. China also indicated willingness to use its voluntary contributions to help cover the initial set-up costs of the program.
66. The Commission agreed that:

- (a) The cost of the observer program shall be borne by those involved in the at-sea transshipment observer program, on a prorated basis;
  - (b) Initial costs (e.g., development of an observer report database) would be covered by the China Voluntary Contribution Fund;
  - (c) The Secretariat's work in detailed analysis of the program (e.g., aligning reports from the Transshipment Observer Program service provider with VMS and transshipment reporting) would be considered part of its compliance monitoring work;
  - (d) The program would be operated using a special fund set up under the auspices of paragraph 27 of the NPFC Financial Regulations and kept separate from the General and Working Capital Funds.
  - (e) The cost sharing method among Members involved in at-sea transshipment will be discussed intersessionally, and for this purpose, the Secretariat will produce a draft cost sharing scheme, taking into account the practice of other RFMOs, and submit it to Members involved in at-sea transshipment. China will lead intersessional discussion.
67. The Commission also agreed on the following approach to implement the Transshipment Observer Program:
- (a) An ad-hoc SWG TOP (TSWG) will be established with leadership by China, with the support of the Secretariat, and participation open to all Members and CNCP. Participation from those active in transshipment is encouraged.
  - (b) The TSWG tasks will include:
    - (i) With support of the Secretariat, draft set of requirements for a contract (a statement of work) based on the Transshipment Observer Program CMM;
    - (ii) Based on the drafted contract requirements, report to the Commission on the contracting process;
    - (iii) With support of the Secretariat, develop pro-rated cost sharing formula;
    - (iv) With support of the Secretariat, develop a financial management approach to create a separate restricted account established under the NPFC Financial Regulation 27; and
    - (v) Any other issues that the TSWG deem appropriate.
  - (c) The Commission will ensure that Financial Regulation 29 is appropriately considered.

## Agenda Item 8. Conservation and Management Measures

### *8a. Review of the amendments to existing CMMs and any new CMMs*

#### *Review of CMM 2024-05 For Bottom Fisheries And Protection Of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems In The Northwestern Pacific Ocean*

68. The Commission reviewed the SC09 recommendation to revise CMM 2024-05 for Bottom Fisheries and Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the Northwestern Pacific Ocean (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP01). ~~One Member Canada~~ sought clarification on paragraph 4(b) regarding the prohibition of bottom fisheries expansion into the western part of the Convention Area where no such fishing is currently occurring. The SC Chair confirmed that any bottom contact fishing outside the existing fishing footprint would be subject to an assessment and ~~thean~~ exploratory fishing protocol. The Commission adopted the proposed amendments to CMM 2024-05 (Annex X).

~~68 bis. DSCC and Pew drew attention to a letter signed by 52 deep-sea scientists concerning the Northwest Hawaiian Ridge and Emperor Seamount Chain (NPFC-2025-COM09-OP6). The letter noted that VMEs occur or are likely to occur across most of the area, that significant adverse impacts have occurred and may continue, and that damaged coral ecosystems can recover if protected from bottom fishing. The scientists recommended a precautionary temporary closure of all fishing using gear that may contact the seafloor, to demonstrate NPFC's commitment to global biodiversity conservation objectives and good faith engagement with the BBNJ process~~

~~68 ter. Canada and Some MembersKorea expressed support for the scientists' input and acknowledged the importance of advancing marine protections based on peer-reviewed science. They supported updating impact assessments for bottom fisheries and the area-based closure on Yuryaku Seamount as a first step. These Members noted the significance of the upcoming UN bottom fisheries review in 2026 and expressed a desire to continue working on marine ecosystem protection in coming years.~~

*Review of CMM 2024-06 For Bottom Fisheries And Protection Of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems In The ~~Northwestern-Northeastern~~ Pacific Ocean*

69. The Commission reviewed the SC09 recommendation to revise CMM 2024-06 for Bottom Fisheries and Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP02). The Commission adopted the proposed amendments to CMM 2024-06 (Annex X).

~~70. DSCC and Pew drew attention to a letter signed by 52 deep-sea scientists concerning the Northwest Hawaiian Ridge and Emperor Seamount Chain (NPFC-2025-COM09-OP6). The letter noted that VMEs occur or are likely to occur across most of the area, that significant adverse impacts have occurred and may continue, and that damaged coral ecosystems can recover if protected from bottom fishing. The scientists recommended a precautionary temporary closure of all fishing using gear that may contact the seafloor, to demonstrate~~

~~NPFC's commitment to global biodiversity conservation objectives and good faith engagement with the BBNJ process.~~

71. ~~Some Members expressed support for the scientists' input and acknowledged the importance of advancing marine protections based on peer reviewed science. They supported updating impact assessments for bottom fisheries and the area based closure on Yuryaku Seamount as a first step. These Members noted the significance of the upcoming UN bottom fisheries review in 2026 and expressed a desire to continue working on marine ecosystem protection in coming years.~~

*Review of CMM 2024-11 For Japanese Sardine, Neon Flying Squid, And Japanese Flying Squid*

72. Japan presented proposed amendments to CMM 2024-11 for Japanese Sardine, Neon Flying Squid, and Japanese Flying Squid (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP03). Japan explained that its proposal aims to split the current CMM into two separate measures and to establish a catch limit for Japanese sardine in the NPFC Convention Area. Japan noted that the stock shows concerning signs despite some recovery since 2021, with fishing mortality above  $F_{MSY}$  level and recent recruitment indices indicating a sharp decline. Japan highlighted that it has reduced its domestic TAC for 2025 by approximately 30% and emphasized the need for compatible measures in the Convention Area under the UN Fish Stocks Agreement.
73. Several Members raised concerns and questions including about the rationale for the 30% reduction and whether the catch limit would apply to vessels targeting Japanese sardine or include bycatch. Some Members raised concern about discussions on this matter not going through the SC first.
74. Extensive discussions were carried out informally throughout the meeting ~~on in a small working group formed to discuss~~ this proposal. The Commission was unable to reach a consensus, so Japan decided to defer consideration of the proposal and expressed its intent to submit a proposal to amend this CMM to COM10.
75. The Commission agreed to amend the CMM to clarify the bycatch reporting requirements, and the Secretariat was tasked with making this amendment to the CMM for clarity purposes.

*Review of CMM 2024-07 For Chub Mackerel*

76. Japan presented proposed amendments to CMM 2024-07 for Chub Mackerel (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP04). Japan explained that its proposal seeks to set a revised catch limit in the NPFC Convention Area based on the first stock assessment conducted by the Technical

Working Group on Chub Mackerel Stock Assessment (TWG-CMSA) and endorsed by the SC. Japan highlighted that the assessment indicates that spawning stock biomass (SSB) has been declining sharply since 2018, along with drastic decreases in maturity at age and weight at age. Japan noted that the stock assessment advised reducing current fishing mortality, as projections showed it would lead to further decline in SSB. Japan’s proposal suggests setting the TAC in the Convention Area well below 50,000 metric tons to ensure the annual catch level in the entire area stays below 150,000 metric tons. Japan mentioned that as a coastal state, it is planning to reduce its domestic TAC by approximately 70%.

77. WWF expressed support for Japan’s proposals for Japanese sardine and chub mackerel, noting the importance of strengthening management in accordance with the best available science, and calling on NPFC to reduce catch for chub mackerel and to set catch limits for Japanese sardine while the stock is still relatively abundant, suggesting this would be better for the future of both the species and the fishing industry and communities.
78. The Ocean Foundation and Pew welcomed Japan’s chub mackerel proposal, noting the concerning state of the stock. They encouraged the inclusion of a paragraph calling for the development of a management strategy evaluation (MSE) and adoption of a management procedure by 2028.
79. Japan provided an additional information paper (NPFC-2025-COM09-IP11) with projection scenarios for chub mackerel for consideration by Members. Extensive discussions were carried out throughout the meeting in a small working group formed to discuss this proposal.
80. Japan explained the revisions made during the small working group, and following further input from Members, the Commission adopted the proposed amendments (Annex X).

80bis. The Commission noted that, for 2025, “fishing activities for chub mackerel” in the amended CMM has the same meaning as “fishing activities targeting chub mackerel.”

80ter. Several Members expressed concern about incidental catch not being counted towards catch limits, and thus creating a potential conservation risk, as well an unclear definition of “targeting” or “directed fishing” within NPFC. The Commission agreed to continue discussion on this issue for all NPFC species at future meetings.

81. The Commission agreed to task the TWG-CMSA as outlined in Annex X.

The Commission noted that, for 2025, “fishing activities for chub mackerel” in the amended CMM has the same meaning as “fishing activities targeting chub mackerel.”

Several Members expressed concern about incidental catch not being counted towards catch limits, and thus creating a potential conservation risk, as well an unclear definition of “targeting” or “directed fishing” within NPFC. The Commission agreed to continue discussion on this issue for all NPFC species at future meetings.

#### *Review of CMM 2024-08 For Pacific Saury*

82. Japan presented proposed amendments to CMM 2024-08 for Pacific Saury (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP05). Japan explained that the proposal implements the interim harvest control rule (HCR) adopted last year, which calls for a 10% reduction in TAC. The proposed amendments include: setting the annual catch limit at 202,500 metric tons (paragraph 7); maintaining the current proportion for the Convention Area at 60% (paragraph 8); requiring Members to reduce their catch by a yet-to-be-determined percentage from their 2018 reported catch (paragraph 9); and requiring the Secretariat to inform all members when a member reaches its catch limit or decides to close its fishery (paragraph 12).
83. Members generally supported the 10% TAC reduction based on the interim HCR, but required further discussion on other issues concerning Japan’s proposal.
84. Chinese Taipei presented proposed amendments to CMM 2024-08 for Pacific Saury (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP06). Chinese Taipei proposed reducing the TAC in the entire area to 202,500 metric tons and the TAC in the Convention Area to 121,500 metric tons, in accordance with the SC recommendation. Chinese Taipei further proposed reducing the catch limit of each member by 24%, which accounts for the 10% reduction that was not implemented last year, plus the 10% reduction recommended for this year, plus 4% to address the historical discrepancy between the sum of individual Members’ catch limits and the overall TAC.
85. Vanuatu submitted a proposal to amend CMM 2024-08 for Pacific Saury (NPFC-2025-COM09-WP07) after the deadline for document submission. The Commission discussed the procedural matter of considering late submissions and agreed that while Vanuatu would not present its proposal formally, the substantive points could be raised during the course of discussions on Pacific Saury. Vanuatu noted that its position regarding special consideration for Small Island Developing States has not been taken into account in previous CMMs.

86. Interested Members discussed bilaterally and in a small working group established to discuss the Pacific saury CMM proposals. Japan explained the revisions made during the small working group, and following further input from Members, the Commission adopted the proposed amendments (Annex X).
87. ~~The Commission noted that, for 2025, “fishing activities for chub mackerel” in the amended CMM has the same meaning as “fishing activities targeting chub mackerel.”~~
88. ~~Several Members expressed concern about incidental catch not being counted towards catch limits, and thus creating a potential conservation risk, as well as an unclear definition of “targeting” or “directed fishing” within NPFC. The Commission agreed to continue discussion on this issue for all NPFC species at future meetings.~~

*Review of CMM 2024-12 On The Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)*

89. The Commission reviewed the TCC08-endorsed amendments to CMM 2024-12 on the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) (NPFC-2025-TCC08-WP12 Rev.4). The Commission adopted the proposed amendments.

*New CMM 2025-17 On The Transshipment Observer Program*

90. The Commission considered a draft CMM on the Transshipment Observer Program (NPFC-2025-TCC08-WP13 Rev.2). Several bracketed provisions remained unresolved from TCC08. The Commission convened an informal working group led by the TCC Chair to finalize the text. The TCC Chair reported that all substantive issues had been resolved. The Commission adopted the new CMM on the Transshipment Observer Program (Annex X).
91. Several Members, while not blocking consensus on adoption of the CMM, expressed their view that the definition of “Observer Service Provider” should not necessarily include the term “non-governmental” to exclude potential governmental candidates.

*Review of CMM 2024-03 On Transshipments*

92. The Commission reviewed the amendments to CMM 2024-03 on Transshipments (NPFC-2025-TCC08-WP19 Rev.1). Following deliberations in the informal working group led by the TCC Chair and adoption of the Transshipment Observer Program CMM, the Commission adopted the amendments to CMM 2024-03 on Transshipments (Annex X)

*New CMM On Port State Measures*

93. The Commission was informed that a joint proposal by Canada, EU, and Korea on Port State Measures was still under discussion. The proponents indicated they had received comments from most ~~M~~members that were integrated into the draft~~and were working to integrate them~~, but more time was needed for consultations. One Member was not yet ready to join consensus on this proposal, so the Commission agreed to continue working intersessionally on this proposal through the SWG PD, with the aim of advancing it for consideration at the next Commission meeting.

*New CMM On Standardization For Data Collection*

94. Regarding the EU proposal on standardization for data collection (NPFC-2025-TCC08-WP15), the Commission noted TCC08's recommendation to task the TCC and SC to continue working intersessionally on this proposal. The EU suggested that the new Small Working Group on Data established by the SC could take up this task. The Commission agreed to this approach.

Agenda Item 9. Report of the 6th Meeting of the joint SC-TCC-COM Small Working Group on Management Strategy Evaluation for Pacific Saury (SWG MSE PS)

95. The Science Co-Chair of the joint SC-TCC-COM Small Working Group on Management Strategy Evaluation for Pacific Saury (SWG MSE PS), Dr. Toshihide Kitakado (Japan), summarized the outcomes of the 6<sup>th</sup> SWG MSE PS meeting (NPFC-2025-MSE PS06 Final Report).
96. Several Members expressed concern about the current stock levels and emphasized the importance of implementing the interim HCR as scheduled. Some Members noted the importance of considering climate change impacts in future work.
97. Some Members raised questions about discrepancies between the latest two assessments showing lower biomass despite conservation measures being in place, and about the apparent contradiction between scientific assessment showing poor resources and industry observations of good resources in the 2024 season. Dr. Kitakado explained that the assessment has a high level of uncertainty and that the 2024 fishery-dependent data had not yet been incorporated.
98. The Commission noted the TAC calculated for 2025, agreed that invited experts would continue to be invited to the next SWG MSE PS, endorsed holding the 7th SWG MSE PS between SC10 and COM10 in a virtual or hybrid format, and agreed on the importance of participation by scientists, managers, and stakeholders in future meetings.

## Agenda Item 10. Cooperation with Other Organizations

### *10a. PICES*

99. Dr. Sonia Batten (PICES) presented on the renewal of the NPFC-PICES collaborative framework for 2025-2029, which maintains priority areas of stock assessment support, vulnerable marine ecosystems, and ecosystem approaches to fisheries, while incorporating climate change impacts across all areas. Dr. Kathryn Berry (PICES) outlined the Basin-scale Events and Coastal Impacts (BECI) project, which aims to create a North Pacific Ocean Knowledge Network connecting diverse sources of information across jurisdictions, with a potential use case for integrating Pacific saury data across Member countries. (NPFC-2025-COM09-OP01)
100. Canada expressed strong support for the BECI project, noting that Canada had provided approximately 1 million (CAD) to support it, and encouraged other Members to consider further support for this important work.

### *10b. NPAFC*

101. Mr. Kondo, Executive Director of NPAFC, thanked the NPFC for its adoption of CMM 2024-16 on anadromous fish at COM08, noting its alignment with the NPAFC Convention. He congratulated NPFC on its 10th anniversary and reported on cooperation between the organizations under their 2019 Memorandum of Cooperation and five-year work plan endorsed in 2023. He noted that several items in the work plan have been completed or are ongoing, including the International Year of the Salmon expedition completed with NPFC's contributions.
102. Mr. Kondo reported that the NPAFC Secretariat had prepared draft terms of reference for a secure SharePoint platform for information exchange. He explained that while NPAFC had previously proposed a joint workshop on transshipment management and Pacific salmon bycatch, after internal discussions, NPAFC would like to suspend joint workshop discussions and instead focus on organizing its own workshop in 2026 on interactions with anadromous species, with NPFC input welcomed. (NPFC-2025-COM09-OP11)
103. Japan expressed appreciation for the continued cooperation between the organizations, noting the value of their shared convention area. Japan welcomed the NPAFC workshop and indicated it would contribute to those discussions as a member of both NPFC and NPAFC.

### *10c. FAO: Deep Sea Fisheries project and FIRMS*

104. Ms. Eszter Hidas (FAO) presented on the Common Oceans Deep Sea Fisheries Project, highlighting key achievements including an e-learning course on deep-sea fisheries management, a review of FAO Deep Sea Fisheries Guidelines implementation, workshops on precautionary approaches, and support for NPFC's work on climate change and deep water shark species. She noted upcoming activities on deep water sharks, data-limited stock assessment methodologies, and cross-sectoral interactions with deep sea fisheries, as well as FAO's involvement in two BBNJ-related projects. (NPFC-2025-COM09-OP07 & NPFC-2025-COM09-OP08)

105. The EU and Korea expressed support for continuing cooperation between NPFC and FAO, in particular in terms of identifying additional resources to support the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

*10d. WCPFC*

106. The Chair noted that NPFC and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) signed an MoU in the past year.

*10e. SPRFMO*

107. The Chair noted that NPFC and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) signed an MoU in 2023.

*10f. ISC*

108. The Chair noted that NPFC and the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) signed an MoU in the past year.

*10g. IMCS Network*

109. The Commission noted that NPFC has been a Member of IMCS since 2023, and this has provided the Secretariat with various resources and opportunities to exchange information and receive guidance on compliance approaches and technology.

*10h. UN BBNJ*

110. Korea announced that, on March 19, 2025 (New York time), it deposited the instrument of ratification of the BBNJ Agreement with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, becoming the 21st country to ratify the Agreement and the first in the East Asian region. Korea urged other countries to join the growing list of ratifying nations to help ensure the timely implementation of the Agreement. Additionally, Korea took the opportunity to announce the hosting of the 10th Our Ocean Conference, which will be held from April 28 to 30, 2025, in

Busan. The conference, themed “Our Ocean, Our Action,” will feature a wide range of discussions and events aimed at fostering global cooperation to promote sustainable oceans and fisheries. Korea looks forward to welcoming delegates to the Our Ocean Conference.

111. Russia stated that the BBNJ issue is complicated and noted the need to better understand the benefits of the agreement. Russia emphasized that communication with BBNJ in the future should be based on priorities to use NPFC's own regulations as an RFMO.
112. The EU reported that it had completed its ratification process and expected to deposit, together with more EU member states, ~~to deposit their~~ ratification instruments before the UN Ocean Conference in June 2025. The EU called on other NPFC Members to ratify the agreement so it could enter into force. The EU also noted that it had recently adopted an EU Global Ocean Programme for 40 million (EUR) over six years to help developing states implement the agreement.
113. Pew welcomed the progress in advancing the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity and encouraged RFMOs to begin considering how they might prepare to interact with the BBNJ agreement as it enters into force.

#### *10i. Other Organizations*

114. Pew drew Members’ attention to their observer paper (NPFC-2025-COM09-OP04) on the role RFMOs have regarding the World Trade Organization’s agreement on fishery subsidies.
115. The Commission endorsed the TCC08 recommendation to consider signing an MoU with IATTC and to task the Secretariat with drafting such an MoU and circulating the draft among Members for input prior to its submission to the IATTC annual meeting in August 2025.

#### Agenda Item 11. Other Matters

##### *11a. Selection of the Commission Chair and Vice Chair*

116. Mr. Shingo Ota (Japan) and Ms. Jung-re Riley Kim (Korea) were nominated to serve another term as Commission Chair and Commission Vice Chair, respectively.
117. The Commission selected Mr. Shingo Ota (Japan) to serve as Chair and Ms. Jung-re Riley Kim (Korea) to serve as Vice Chair for second two-year term.

##### *11b. Selection of Chairs and Co-Chairs of Subsidiary Bodies*

118. The Commission endorsed the recommendation of the TCC to select Ms. Alisha Falberg (USA) to serve as TCC Chair and Ms. Amber Lindstedt (Canada) to serve as TCC Vice Chair for a second two-year term.
119. The Commission endorsed the recommendation of the FAC to select Mr. Haruo Tominaga (Japan) to serve as FAC Chair and Mr. Bernard Blazkiewicz (EU) to serve as FAC Vice Chair for a two-year term.
120. The list of Chair and Vice Chair positions of bodies created under the auspices of the subsidiary bodies was also reviewed and the USA withdrew its Vice-Chair for the SSC-BF-ME, noting that the SSC-BF-ME had two Vice-Chairs at time of presentation.

*11c. Secondment and Intern for 2025*

121. The Commission endorsed the FAC's recommendation and agreed to accept the secondment application for renewal from Mr. Jumpei Hinata (Japan) for a 12-month period commencing in June 2025.
122. The Commission noted that there were no candidates for internship positions this year.

*11d. Other business*

123. No other business was discussed.

*11e. Press Release*

124. The Commission endorsed the Press Release for publication on the NPFC website.

Agenda Item 12. Date and Place of next meeting of the Commission and its Committees

125. The Executive Secretary presented a document with information on hosting by the Secretariat if no Member accepts hosting COM10, TCC09 and FAC08, including timing and hosting costs if borne by the Secretariat (NPFC-2025-COM09-IP02). The proposed timing takes into account the Lunar New Year and fisheries operations.
126. The Commission confirmed that Secretariat would host the COM10, TCC09, and FAC08 meetings.
127. The Commission agreed to tentatively hold the next meetings of the TCC, the FAC, and the Commission in Japan, in a location besides Tokyo, on the following dates:
  - (a) TCC09: 8-11 April 2026

- (b) FAC08: 13 April 2026
- (c) COM10: 14-17 April 2026 (with the Heads of Delegation meeting to be held on the morning of 14 April)

128. The Commission agreed to tentatively hold the 2027 meetings of the TCC, the FAC, and the Commission on the following dates:

- (a) TCC10: 6-9 April 2027
- (b) FAC09: 10 April 2027
- (c) COM11: 12-15 April 2027 (with the Heads of Delegation meeting to be held on the morning of 12 April 2027)

Agenda Item 13. Adoption of the report

129. The report was adopted by consensus.

Agenda Item 14. Close of the Meeting

130. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for organizing and running the meeting and the participants for their cooperation and engagement. The Chair congratulated the Commission on a successful and productive meeting, and requested Members to continue their hard work in the intersessional period to ensure the success of COM10.

131. The Commission meeting closed at ~~18xx:20xx~~ on 27 March 2025, Osaka time.