



CCSBT-EC/2310/04

Report from the Secretariat

Overview

This report provides a summary of the main activities of the Secretariat since the Twenty Ninth Annual Meeting of the CCSBT in October 2022.

This report also contains two specific matters for consideration by the Extended Commission (EC), which is:

- The decision to extend Dr Kevin Stokes to a third and final term as Chair of the Extended Scientific Committee.
- The decision to extend Professor Sean Cox for a second term on the Independent Scientific Advisory Panel.

COVID-19

Thankfully the impacts of COVID-19 on the Secretariat are lessening over time as evidenced by the re-introduction of physical meetings in 2023. However, various Secretariat staff and family members have contracted COVID-19 during the year and been forced to take personal leave.

This year has also seen a return of staff to the Secretariat offices, while continuing to use remote working arrangements to minimise the risk of transmission in situations where a staff member may have been exposed to the virus.

Officials of the CCSBT

The following official positions in the CCSBT were nominated, appointed or held during 2023.

Officer	Name	Date nominated / appointed
Chair – Commission & Extended Commission	Dr Dae-Yeon Moon	13 April 2023
Vice Chair – Commission	Prof. Indra Jaya	18 July 2023
Vice Chair – Extended Commission	Mr. Ding-Rong Lin	18 July 2023
Chair – Finance & Administration Committee (FAC)	Mr Neil Hughes	10 August 2023 ^{*1}
Chair – Compliance Committee (CC)	Mr Frank Meere	16 October 2015 ^{*2}
Chair – SC/ESC	Dr Kevin Stokes	1 November 2017 ^{*3}
Chair – ERSWG	Dr Martin Cryer	8 February 2023 ^{*4}

^{*1} The FAC Chair is appointed one year at a time, either at or before the annual meeting of the Extended Commission. There are no limits to the number of reappointments to this position.

- *2 The CC Chair is appointed for a three-year term with the possibility of up to two reappointments. The CC Chair's third term expires at the end of CCSBT 31 during October 2024.
- *3 The SC/ESC Chair is appointed for a three-year term with the possibility of up to two reappointments. The SC/ESC Chair's second term expires on 1 November 2023.
- *4 The Chair of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG) is appointed for a term of at least two ERSWG meetings with the possibility of up to two reappointments.

ESC28 will be the final year of Dr Stokes' second term as Chair. Dr Stokes has confirmed his willingness to serve for a third and final term. Members are asked to make a determination on Dr Stokes' reappointment.

Consultants to the CCSBT

The Secretariat engaged six consultants to assist the CCSBT in selected scientific projects and/or meetings during 2023. These comprised:

- The CCSBT's independent Scientific Advisory Panel, consisting of Drs Ana Parma, Jim Ianelli and Sean Cox;
- A technical coding consultant (Dr D'Arcy Webber) in relation to the CCSBT's Operating Model and Management Procedure;
- A technical consultant (Dr Simon Hoyle) in relation to development of the CCSBT's CPUE series; and
- A research scientist (Mr Charles Edwards) to update the Commission's estimation of SBT unaccounted catch mortality (UAM).

The Secretariat also manages the contract for Dr Ross Wanless who serves as the Seabird Project Coordinator for the FAO funded Seabird Project.

Professor Sean Cox is the newest Member of the Advisory Panel having replaced Dr John Pope in 2019. At the time of Professor Cox's appointment, Members also agreed on revised terms for the Advisory Panel¹. Under the agreed terms, Professor Cox's appointment term is three years with up to two reappointments permitted. Professor Cox's first term concluded at the end of ESC 27 in 2022.

Unfortunately, the decision to renew Professor Cox's appointment for a second term was not put to Members at CCSBT 29 and is now overdue. Professor Cox did agree to fulfill his duties on the Advisory Panel at the recently concluded ESC 28, with the understanding that his reappointment would not be confirmed until CCSBT 30.

Secretariat Staff and Office Management

The Secretariat's staff comprised five full-time positions and three casual, part-time positions during 2023. These were:

- Executive Secretary;
- Deputy Executive Secretary;

¹ See Attachment 17 of the Report of CCSBT 25.

- Database Manager;
- Compliance Manager;
- Office Administrator (1 full-time position, but shared by two people working part-time);
- Accountant (contracted as required);
- Data Entry Officer (casual, part-time); and
- Compliance Assistant (casual, part-time).

The Executive Secretary is recommending a review of the existing arrangements surrounding the provision of compliance assistance and data entry services.

With the introduction of an eCDS in the coming year, the administrative burden of the scheme is likely to increase in the short term as the Secretariat accommodates both an electronic system and a traditional paper-based one. The demands on the Secretariat are also increasing with additional requests for analysis and reporting particularly in relation to the Japanese market study. The reliance on casual contracted staff to deliver key CCSBT operational requirements also presents some risks to the organisation and limits institutional knowledge.

Having an additional permanent presence within the Secretariat would ensure that Member expectations are being met particularly in the administration of compliance services. The resource required to meet the immediate needs of the Secretariat would be a junior position. The Secretariat estimates that consolidating the existing casual data entry and compliance assistance roles into a part-time (3 days a week) position would cost approximately \$60,000 more than the current arrangement².

The Executive Secretary is also proposing amendments to the CCSBT Staff Regulations, which are further described in paper CCSBT-EC/2310/05.

Financial

The preparation of CCSBT's Financial Statements for 2022 was conducted according to schedule. The Financial Statements were reviewed by the CCSBT's auditor, RSM Australia Pty Ltd and distributed to Members in Circular #2023/21. The outcomes of RSM's review identified no items of concern.

A draft revised budget for 2023 and a draft budget for 2024, including indicative budgets for 2025 and 2026 will be provided for the EC's consideration in meeting documents CCSBT-EC/2310/05 and CCSBT-EC/2310/06.

The Secretariat has also updated its financial delegations policy to allow administrative staff to process low value transactions without seeking pre-approval from the Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary in order to improve efficiency.

Internal domestic changes within Australia's banking system have forced the Secretariat to change banking providers. The previous banking provider severely constrained the

² This is based on a similar payscale to existing support staff and assumes the role is not considered in the Secretariat "Professional Staff" category.

Secretariat’s ability to manage its funds and refused to provide basic services such as new term deposits. The Secretariat will be winding down its accounts with the Westpac Bank in the months ahead and asks that Members **please take particular notice of the new bank account details** that will be provided with the letters outlining individual Member contributions.

Organisation of CCSBT Meetings

The Secretariat has organised, or is in the process of organising, the following formal CCSBT meetings since CCSBT 29:

Thirteenth Operating Model and Management Technical Meeting (Seattle, USA)	26 – 30 June 2023
Sixth Strategy and Fisheries Management Working Group (Tokyo, Japan)	25 – 28 July 2023
Twenty Eighth Meeting of the Scientific Committee, incorporating the Extended Scientific Committee (Jeju Island, Korea)	28 August - 2 September 2023
Eighteenth Meeting of the Compliance Committee (Busan, Korea)	5 - 7 October 2023
Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the Commission, incorporating the Extended Commission (Busan, Korea)	9 - 12 October 2023

The Secretariat also organised and held a virtual meeting of the Electronic Monitoring Working Group between 17-18 May 2023. In addition, the Secretariat has organised a meeting of the Technical Compliance Working Group for 4 October 2023.

Translation of the 2022 meeting reports into Japanese has been completed and the translated reports have been placed onto the CCSBT website.

Organisation of meeting venues for 2024 is underway. Quotes have been obtained for three venues for the tentative meeting dates that were agreed intersessionally and notified to Members in Circular #2023/12.

Meeting	City	Tentative meeting date
SC/ESC 29	Taipei, Taiwan	Mon. 2 to Sat. 7 September 2024
CC 19	Taipei, Taiwan	Thu. 3 to Sat. 5 October 2024
CCSBT 31		Mon. 7 to Thu. 10 October 2024

Regular Engagement with Members

This year the Secretariat has instituted regular one-on-one meetings with individual delegations in order to maintain engagement outside of traditional meeting times.

The majority of Members have utilised these opportunities in the last year and these sessions have proved invaluable in terms of sharing information. The Executive Secretary plans to continue the practice in the coming year and encourages all Members to make use of these opportunities.

Attendance of meetings with other organisations since CCSBT 29

The Compliance Manager has attended the following meetings since CCSBT 29:

- The Tuna Fishery Data Collection Committee (DCC) hosted by the Pacific Community (Noumea, New Caledonia) between 12 – 13 December 2022 (virtual);
- Parts of the Sixth meeting of the Global Record Informal Open-Ended Technical and Advisory Working Group (GRWG6), and the Third meeting of the PSMA Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE3) convened by the FAO in December 2022 (virtual);
- IOTC’s Working Group on the Development of Electronic Monitoring Standards (WGEMS) held on 15-16 March, 2023 (virtual);
- One virtual session of the Tuna Compliance Network (TCN) and an in-person TCN in Tokyo, Japan between 26 and 30 June 2023;
- Various virtual sessions of the Pan-Pacific Fisheries Compliance Network (PPFCN);
- The 7th virtual Global Fisheries Enforcement Training Workshop (GFETW7) hosted by the International, Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Network (IMCSN) in Halifax, Canada between 30 July and 4 August 2023; and
- The (IMCSN) Business Meeting held on 2 August 2023 in Halifax, Canada.

The Executive Secretary and/or Deputy Executive Secretary attended the following meetings since CCSBT 29:

- Various virtual meetings of the FAO Common Oceans Project throughout the year;
- The First Project Steering Committee for the Common Oceans Tuna Project (FAO funded); and
- The Intersessional Workshop of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organisations and Regional Fisheries Bodies (virtual).

Proposed Attendance at meetings with other organisations between CCSBT 30 and CCSBT 31

It is proposed that the Compliance Manager attend the next in-person meeting of the Tuna Compliance Network (TCN) which is planned to be held in the Seychelles and hosted by the IOTC³ in either the first quarter of 2024 or June 2024. Periodic in-person TCN meetings provide a unique opportunity for tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (tRFMO) colleagues to discuss and exchange information on tRFMO monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), including on updates and insights regarding the operation of existing measures especially where these overlap and/or are very similar between tRFMOs, as well as on shared challenges and potential solutions. To date, all five tRFMOs have been represented at each in-person TCN meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) is scheduled to take place from 8-12 July at the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy. This group meets every two years and is a rare opportunity to engage with other RFMO Secretariats, Member delegates, FAO officials, and stakeholders from non-governmental organisations. This meeting will be combined with a meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats’ Network (RSN) and the Project Steering Committee for the Common Oceans Tuna Project in order to maximise the time and resources required for participants to attend. The Secretariat has budgeted the full cost of

³ Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

attendance in its 2024 budget but anticipates that some of the costs may be recovered from the FAO given the combined travel.

Projects Managed by Secretariat

The Secretariat managed the contracts for the following projects in 2023:

- Long-term gene tagging;
- Close-kin sampling, DNA extraction and sequencing;
- Close-kin identification and exchange;
- Sampling and ageing of Indonesian SBT Otoliths;
- Development of the CPUE series;
- Update to UAM estimate;
- CCSBT Management tag and Market survey in Toyosu Market; and
- FAO Common Oceans Seabird Project.

CCSBT Circulars

Circulars are used to issue requests and to distribute information to Members. A summary list of circulars is maintained on the private area of the CCSBT website for easy reference by Members. The summary list contains the Circular number, date, subject(s), whether a response is required, the due date for a response and the outcome (or a reference to the location of the outcome). The list of circulars gives an indication of the add-hoc and “once-off” intersessional activities of the Secretariat and the EC. Forty-nine Circulars were issued between CCSBT 29 and 2 September 2023.

CCSBT Website

The website continues to be an actively updated and actively used information tool for both CCSBT members and the general public. The public side of the CCSBT website was updated immediately after CCSBT 29 to incorporate the results and decisions from the 2023 meetings of the CCSBT. The website underwent a significant upgrade and was redeveloped during 2022. The new website went live on 24 November 2022.

Cyber Security Upgrade

The Secretariat has previously used a basic version of Microsoft 365, which made it more vulnerable to cyberthreats. The Secretariat has upgraded to a higher performing version of Microsoft 365 in order to provide additional security against cyberthreats such as viruses, spam, phishing attacks, ransomware etc. In addition, the agreement with the Secretariat’s IT support provider was also upgraded to add additional security monitoring of potential cyberthreats.

Participation in the Fisheries Resource Monitoring System (FIRMS)

The CCSBT is a partner in FAO's FIRMS system. During 2022/23, the Secretariat met the CCSBT's obligations to FIRMS by:

- Updating the CCSBT fact sheet for southern bluefin tuna by incorporating the ESC's latest stock status report together with relevant decisions from CCSBT 29; and
- Supplying agreed data to FIRMS.

Integrated MCS Measures

Managing and implementing the CCSBT MCS measures continues to be a significant component of the Secretariat's work. Since CCSBT 29, this has included:-

- For the CDS:
 - Running CDS data reconciliations, and following up on errors and missing information and forms;
 - Producing 6 monthly and annual CDS reports;
 - Coordinating the purchase of centralised tags for use with the CDS;
 - Maintenance of the CDS database and continuing development and testing of a trial electronic CDS (eCDS); and
 - Processing CDS validation details.
- For the eSBT:
 - Checking and maintaining validator and seal information entered by Members;
 - Completing an interface allowing Members to enter and update their own authorised vessel information directly on-line, and
 - Ongoing bug fixes.
- Managing the CCSBT records of Authorised Fishing Vessels, Carrier Vessels and Farms.
- Managing the operation of the CCSBT Transshipment Resolution.
- Managing the operation of the Resolution for Minimum Standards for Inspection in Port.
- Managing initial quota allocations and final catch by vessel/company data and associated access permissions.
- Checking for any submissions in relation to the CCSBT IUU Vessel List Resolution⁴ and implementing the cross-listing provisions of the Resolution.
- Progressing intersessional discussion on the eCDS, including a draft revision of the CDS Resolution to allow for an eCDS and development of a manual for the eCDS.
- Producing papers and reports for the Compliance Committee.
- Maintaining compliance relationships with relevant bodies and organisations.

CCSBT Catch Reporting (excluding scientific data exchange)

Monthly Catch Reports

Members are successfully entering and updating their monthly catch reports through the online eSBT system. This system also provides Members with the opportunity to view the

⁴ Resolution on Establishing a List of Vessels Presumed to have Carried Out Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Activities For Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT).

reports of other Members. The Secretariat continues to remind Members to provide this information.

Reporting of Initial Quota Allocations and Final Catches by Vessel/Company

The Secretariat has provided reminders to each Member to submit this information and following receipt it is loaded to a special section of the private area of the CCSBT website. This information is only available to those who have agreed to share it and have applied for and been granted access to this information in accordance with the Rules and Procedures for the Protection, Access to, and Dissemination of Data compiled by the CCSBT.

Database Developments and Data Exchange

The CCSBT Data CD content and associated documentation was updated and made available to Members for downloading on 1 February 2023. An initial interim update of the Data CD containing information from the 2023 Data Exchange was placed on the private area of the CCSBT website on 15 June 2023.

The Secretariat managed the 2023 scientific data exchange, which involved active exchange of data between Members and the Secretariat mainly between April and late-June. The Secretariat conducted substantial post-processing of the data to produce derived datasets that were required as part of the data exchange.

The annual ERSWG Data Exchange occurred during 2023. Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, and Taiwan submitted ERS data required for this data exchange, although Japan provided no Table 2 data for 2022 since it had no observers deployed on SBT vessels. South Africa did not submit any data for 2022 and has still not provided 2020 or 2021 data. The European Union had no SBT catch and therefore had no relevant data to submit for the ERSWG Data Exchange which is defined as being for “shots/sets where SBT was either targeted or caught”.

At the time of finalising this report, the database was up to date for all data received.

The online database system, eSBT, continues to be used by Members and the Secretariat for the management of CDS validator information and monthly catch report data. eSBT has undergone minor maintenance during the year and at this stage no new features are planned for 2024. The eSBT project is considered to be finalised and will not be reported on in the future unless new features have been added.

Development of a trial eCDS for the CCSBT continued in 2022 and 2023 and has undergone testing by 5 Members. A report on progress with development of the eCDS will be provided to the October 2023 meeting of the Compliance Committee.

Prepared by the Secretariat