



FFA

FORUM FISHERIES COMMITTEE ONE HUNDREDTH AND EIGHTEENTH MEETING

25-28 May 2021

Agenda Item:	23
Paper No:	FFC118-WP.17
Title:	Outcomes of the 20th Audit and Risk Committee

Summary:

The 20th Audit and Risk Committee met virtually on Tuesday, 18 May 2021. The meeting was chaired by Mr Teeta Erikate (Kiribati) and attended by members RMI (Vice Chair), Australia, Cook Is, FSM, Fiji, NZ, PNG, Samoa and Tonga.

Attached are the Record of Proceedings from the meeting.

Recommendations:

The Committee is invited to:

- i. **Consider** the decisions from the following items:
 - a. Audited Financial Report for FY2019-2020: **adopted** the Agency's financial statements as at 30th June 2020
 - b. FFA Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Update: **noted** that it has been two years since the adoption of the plan, and directed the Secretariat to prioritise and progress work with urgency in order for the plan to be effectively implemented to achieve its outcomes.
 - c. FFA 5-yr Business Plan: **directed** the Secretariat to undertake further consultation with Members on the draft Business Plan, and then organise a dedicated workshop, prior to their next AC committee meeting, for FFA members to consider the 5-Year Business Plan. The workshop shall consider an updated Business Plan and the revised Annual Work Program and Budget prior to ARC21 in October 2021
 - d. Annual Work Plan and Budget 2021/2022 (ref: FFC118-WP18): **recommended** that FFC approve an **interim budget** from the proposed Annual Work Programme and Budget of **\$26,485,165** for the Agency for the 2021/2022 Financial year, until such time as the revised budget is approved by the Special FFC in Oct/Nov 2021, and tasked the Secretariat to revise the AWPB for consideration at the next ARC meeting, noting the necessity for clear linkages between the AWPB, the Business Plan currently in development and the Strategic Plan.
 - e. Update on EU issues (ref: FFC118-INFO18): **Noted** efforts by FFA in reducing the ineligible for both DEVFISH II Project with the EU and ineligible with SPC; **Noted** that the Secretariat will, in recognition of generally accepted accounting standards, make the necessary provision in the FFA books for the full amount of DEVFISH II ineligible in the

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current financial year; **Considered** a repayment option to be offered to the EU; and **Agreed** to recommend to FFC that FFA responds to the Letter from the EU taking responsibility for the ineligible amount noting that a repayment plan is forthcoming pending further discussions with FFA Members and other affected CROP agencies and memberships.

- ii. **Note** the decisions on the following items from the Record:
 - f. Eight month Statement of Income and Expenditures for the period 1 July 2020 to 28 February 2021
 - g. Review of the draft outline of the Annual Report
 - h. Review of fees including Programme support costs and other internal charges
 - i. Internal Auditor's Report
 - j. Human Resources, Recruitment and Employment Matters



Final Record of Proceedings

Item 1 Opening

1. The Chair of the Committee, Mr Teeta Erikate (Kiribati) opened the meeting.
2. PNG offered an Opening Prayer.
3. The Chair welcomed the participants (listed on **Attachment A**).
4. The Director General, Dr Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen, in her opening remarks thanked the Chair (Kiribati), Deputy Chair (RMI) and ARC members. She referred to the agenda and noted the primary role of the ARC being to review the AWPB. This is the first year to report against the new SP and the Committee will consider a related 5 Year Business Plan. Another critical task was the review of management fees which will be considered.

Item 2 Adoption of Agenda

5. The Secretariat outlined the Agenda (INFO.01) which was adopted by the Committee (and appended as Attachment B).

SECTION II: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Item 3: Matters arising from previous AC meetings

6. The Secretariat presented WP.01 on three matters arising from ARC19 which are covered in subsequent agenda items:
 - Program Management Fees: Item 10 (WP8)
 - Strategic Plan Implementation: Item 7 (WP6)
 - EU Ineligibles: Item 11 (WP9)
7. In response to a question on the status of the ISMS implementation audit, that was raised at AC19, the Secretariat noted that the review of the ISMS policy is completed and had identified recommendations mainly on operational aspects of the ISMS which the Secretariat will continue to work through. However, an audit on the implementation of the policy had yet to be undertaken. The report from the Review will be considered by FFC next week and first ISMS operational annual report considered by FFC in 2022.
8. The Committee **noted** the status of outstanding outcomes from AC19, and urged the Secretariat to complete the ISMS implementation audit as tasked by AC19 as a matter of urgency.

Item 4: Audited Financial Report for FY2019-2020

9. The Secretariat presented WP.02 on the audited financial report for FY2019/2020 and highlighted the following:

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- An unqualified audit opinion
- Total revenue of \$19.63mil
- Total expenses of \$19.02mil
- Surplus for the year is \$610k
- Net assets/equity increase to \$2.16mil
- Reserves level: General Fund is above the minimum level of 2 months whereas Housing Fund and VMS are below the minimum levels.

10. The Committee noted the management issues including 1 high risk, 3 medium risks and 2 low risks. The high risk issue relates to the late receipt of statements for bank accounts held in other countries. FFA will be closing these bank accounts to mitigate the issue in future. The medium and low risk issues are currently being addressed.

11. One member noted their support for the integration of the payroll and travel systems into the Finance One system. In response to a query on the timeframe for the integration, the Secretariat advised that this was planned for the next Financial Year and funded with funding provided by NZ for the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

12. The Committee noted that the Secretariat is closely monitoring the levels of the Reserves to ensure both the Housing Fund and VMS Fund reach the minimum levels.

13. In response to a member's advice on the importance of having the recommendations from the Housing Fund Review being considered by the ARC, the Secretariat advised that the Property Management Services Report should be ready by June 2021 and will be brought to the next ARC meeting.

14. The Committee:

- Noted** the opinion of the Auditors, that proper books have been kept by the Secretariat and are in compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS);
- Noted** the action taken for items identified in the Management Letter received from the Auditors;
- Adopted** the Agency's financial statements as at 30th June 2020; and
- Supported** the Housing Fund Review currently underway noting the Property Management Review report will be considered at the next ARC meeting

Item 5: Eight month Statement of Income and Expenditures for the period 1 July 2020 to 28 February 2021

15. The Secretariat presented WP.03 on the 8-months statement of income and expenses for the period 1 July 2020 to 28 February 2021. Highlights include:

- Income received at \$25.76mil and forecasted income for the year to be \$31.09mil;
- Expenditures at end of February 2020 is \$14.12mil and forecasted expenses for the remaining months is about \$9.18mil resulting in total expenditures of \$23.31mil;
- Surplus for the period ended 28 February 2020 is \$11.63mil and forecasted surplus is \$7.78mil.
- Under the forecasted surplus of \$7.78mil, Trust Fund will carry over funds of \$8.40mil to the next financial year. General Fund, Housing Fund and VMS will increase the overall reserves by \$809k. UST Administration Fund deficit will come out of the USTA reserve.

16. In response to a question on how the Fisheries Operation Division was able to spend almost 100% of its budget noting COVID-19 related disruptions, the Secretariat advised that

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despite the travel restrictions, the Fisheries Operations Division has been able to progress key pieces of consultancy work and activities including observer training, and that travel restrictions had been factored into the budget.

17. The Committee noted the eight months statement of income and expenditure for the period 1 July 2020 to 28 February 2021.

Item 6: Review of Draft outline of the Annual Report *ARC20-WP04*

18. DG introduced WP.04 on the draft outline of the annual report noting the Annual Report is a key part of the FFA's accountability framework and this was the first Report since the new Strategic Plan came into effect. It will therefore report against the six Strategic Outcomes set out in the Plan.

19. The Secretariat advised that the key areas in the AR will be the:

1. Director General Forward: DG's message including acknowledgements
2. Overview and Highlights: operating environment
3. Report on the FFA Outcomes: background, MERLA framework, performance reports
4. Learning and Adaptation: capacity development processes
5. Accounts Information: financial reporting
6. Appendices: audited accounts, staff information, summary of divisional reports, outcomes and strategies.

20. The Secretariat noted a proposal for the FFA achievements to be incorporated into the highlights section. They also noted the need for alignment with Leaders and FFC directives and the need for outcomes 5 and 6 to have a clear focus on management and accountability. They recognised also the need to align with donor reporting requirements to streamline reporting processes.

21. DG noted the importance of donor confidence recognising that the Secretariat activities will continue to be member driven. The Donor Funding Strategy currently being progressed will assist in this area.

22. The Committee noted the proposed outline of the Director General's Annual Report FY 2020-21 and provided guidance on the report which will be finalised in time for the FFC Ministerial in July 2021. Feedback and guidance included:

- highlighting FFA achievements within the overview section;
- reference to FFC and ministerial guidance in the context of leader's priorities, the Strategic Plan and the Fisheries Roadmap;
- incorporating reports on management and accountability frameworks, such as corporate governance and risk management within the report on FFA outcomes; and
- aligning financial reporting to show how member contributions and donor funding each contribute to activities, achievements and outcomes.

Item 7: FFA Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Update

23. DG introduced WP.05 on the FFA Strategic Plan and acknowledged the generous funding received from NZ to support the implementation of the Plan.

24. The Secretariat presented the paper noting that since FFC116 a planning process for implementation of the Plan was underway. A Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, Learning & Adaptation (MERLA) Consultant was recruited to review the MERLA Framework and assist in

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the development of the 5 year Business Plan. Draft indicators for the strategic outcomes have been developed. High level outputs were also developed and mapped to the outcomes. The Programme Manager position recruitment process is underway.

25. Next steps include completion of the Business Plan, 5 year financial forecast for the Business Plan, Multi-year divisional plans and budgets (reviewable annually), Resourcing Strategy and Funding Guidelines, review of CSLA, resourcing of Planning & MERLA unit, review of Corporate Policies and inclusion external review by a Gender and Social Inclusion specialist.

26. A member acknowledged the progress and sought clarification on when the recruitment of the Manager Planning, Transformation & MERLA recruitment will be completed. The Secretariat advised that efforts are now being made for quick recruitment, noting the fact that this position requires some very specific skills and the need to have the right person so it could take more than three months.

27. In response to a question on the timing of the Business Plan and Resourcing Strategy, the Secretariat highlighted that the MERLA consultant raised the need for careful development of indicators to ensure indicators adopted provide for the availability of relevant data. The Secretariat acknowledged the need to include stakeholders in the process of development of the Resourcing Strategy.

28. DG recognised the need for the draft Business Plan to be brought back to members and noted that members needs to be considered in drafting of the Resourcing Strategy.

29. In response to a member's concern with the late timing of the Business Plan, DG noted that the MERLA consultant will assist the Secretariat in expediting this work.

30. The Committee

- i. **noted** the progress of the FFA Strategic Plan Implementation since the last meeting including the status of recruitment of the new Manager Planning, Transformation and MERLA position; and
- ii. **noted** that it has been two years since the adoption of the plan, and directed the Secretariat to prioritise and progress work with urgency in order for the plan to be effectively implemented to achieve its outcomes.

Item 8: FFA 5 Year Business Plan

31. The Secretariat presented WP.06 on the Business Plan and highlighted the main components of the Plan.

32. The next steps for the work includes completion of the plan, including a multi-year financial plan and divisional review of corporate risks and organizational structure.

33. The Committee supported having a dedicated workshop on the Business Plan before the next ARC and noted the need for clear linkage between the Business Plan and the AWPB.

34. The Secretariat advised that this workshop will likely be held at the end of October.

35. The Chair noted that members can also provide comments on the draft Business Plan before that workshop.

36. The Committee:

- i. **noted** the progress in the development of the 5-year Business Plan; and

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- ii. **directed** the Secretariat to undertake further consultation with Members on the draft Business Plan, and then organise a dedicated workshop, prior to their next AC committee meeting, for FFA members to consider the 5-Year Business Plan. The workshop shall consider an updated Business Plan and the revised Annual Work Program and Budget prior to ARC21 in October 2021

Item 9: Annual Work-Plan and Budget 2021/2022

37. The Secretariat presented WP.07 on the AWPB for FY2021/2022 with an anticipated budget of \$26,485,165.

38. Highlights include:

- increases in HLA and DFD budgets whilst there were decreases in other divisions. Despite the reductions, the execution rate remains high.
- Assumptions used include no travel for the first 6 months, utilisation of online or virtual platforms to conduct meetings and annual member country contributions will remain the same due to the impact of Covid-19.
- The funding sources for the AWPB are Trust Fund accounts for 58%, General Fund 13%, VMS accounts for 15%, Housing Fund is 6% and UST funds 8% of the AWPB.
- The composition of the Trust Fund are: New Zealand-43%, Australia-27%, EU-11%, ORF-6%, JPF-5%, WB-4%, GEF-1% and others-3%. Australia and NZ funding comprise 70% of the Trust Fund budget.
- There were In-kind contributions provided by Australia on the Regional Aerial Surveillance Program - a 30-year commitment to regional maritime security. New Zealand also provides aerial surveillance through the Royal New Zealand Air Force.
- Budgeted expenditure has fallen by 7.5% compared to last year. The composition of the expenditures is 37% for staff costs and 63% for activity costs.
- There is a project under the supplementary budget - OFMP3 of \$1.2mil. Also prospective new funding includes the extension of EEIBT by NZ and ER and EM support from Australia.

39. One member noted that there continues to be a disconnect between high level strategies and key priorities in the areas of high level advice, fisheries operations and fisheries management. This included the need for less focus on training and more focus on fisheries management priorities including to address current staffing gaps in the fisheries management division. They would also like to see more substance in the priorities rather than a rollover of previous priorities.

40. DG acknowledged that FFA is not a training institution, however the Secretariat is mindful of the requests from members for training and it is part of their critical support to members in alignment to Outcome 5. DG also acknowledged and noted comments in relation to the Fisheries Management Division.

41. Another member recognised the difficulties in recruitment and proposed that an option may be for the Secretariat to hire fisheries management experts as consultants when required.

42. The Committee:

- i. **noted** the proposed AWPB for the FY 2021/2022;
- ii. **noted** the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and agreed that the Secretariat maintain Member Country Contributions to the same level as the previous financial year;

- iii. **recommended** that FFC approve an **interim budget** from the proposed Annual Work Programme and Budget of **\$26,485,165** for the Agency for the 2021/2022 Financial year, until such time as the revised budget is approved by the Special FFC in Oct/Nov 2021, and tasked the Secretariat to revise the AWPB for consideration at the next ARC meeting, noting the necessity for clear linkages between the AWPB, the Business Plan currently in development and the Strategic Plan;
- iv. **noted** the supplementary budget of **\$1,286,799** which will be considered further in the Revised Budget to be presented to the Special FFC in Oct/Nov 2021.

Item 10 *Review of fees including Programme support costs and other internal charges*

43. The Secretariat presented WP.08 on the review of fees including the programme support costs which was covered in 2 phases: Phase 1 for programme support costs, cost recoveries and administration fees, and Phase 2 on vessel registration charges, vessel levy and observer fees. Ernest and Young Australia (EY) conducted Phase 1 of the Review which was complete and was subsequently appointed to conduct Phase 2.

44. EY presented their key findings from the Phase 1 and 2 reviews noting that the current fee and accounting structure is complex and inconsistent with internal policies and procedures. This complexity is a result of incremental changes that have been made over time to address immediate funding challenges and the changes may not have been aligned with the FFA's broader objectives. The complexity also makes it difficult for stakeholders to understand the link between fees, charges and services provided. Key reforms proposed include the need to update the Financial Procedures Manual to ensure that the approach used to collect fees and allocate costs is fit for purpose and reflective of the FFA's practices.

45. One member noted the need to consider resourcing needs to carry out the financial testing.

46. The Secretariat noted work will commence with the budgeted funds and noted that a consultant will be required.

47. DG acknowledged with appreciation the work of EY.

48. The Committee:
- i. Noted the Reports submitted by EY Australia for Phase 1 and Phase 2; and
 - ii. Agreed for the Secretariat to perform financial testing on each option and provide an update on the financial impact of the options in the next ARC meeting; and
 - iii. Agreed that implementation of the report recommendations be a regular agenda item for annual ARC meetings.

Item 11: *Update on EU Issues*

49. DG presented WP.09 noting this is a long standing issue and FFA, SPC and PIFS were awaiting a response to the PACP Chair's letter before any further actions are taken by the Organisations. The Secretariat was only informed last week the letter had not been sent to the EU Commission for consideration. Recently the Secretariat has received the final pre-information letter on the recovery relating to the DEVFISH II Project from the EU for action to be made towards repayment of the ineligible. A 30 day window has been provided by the EU for a response. The letter also provided alternative options for repayment and timing of these repayments.

50. DG noted the status of the ineligible between SPC and FFA. SPC is the lead organisation in those contracts and recoveries will be sent and discussed by SPC. FFA

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maintains its stand that it will not be liable for any ineligibles arising out of those contracts but the Secretariat has made every effort to help SPC in resolving its ineligibles.

51. A member acknowledged that the issue is sensitive and there seems to be different advice on how this issue was to have been dealt with. A member also raised the question whether SPC has admitted to the ineligibles. Additionally on the possibility of whether co-financing from other project activities could be reported in place of the recovery.

52. DG advised that SPC is looking at discussing options with the EU on possible repayment plans.

53. Another member noted the need for more time for members to consider the issue and the options around repayment and therefore proposed that the Secretariat request for more time to allow the members to consider all options before a decision on the repayment is made.

54. The Committee:

- i. **Noted** efforts by FFA in reducing the ineligibles for both DEVFISH II Project with the EU and ineligibles with SPC;
- ii. **Noted** that the Secretariat will, in recognition of generally accepted accounting standards, make the necessary provision in the FFA books for the full amount of DEVFISH II ineligibles in the current financial year;
- iii. **Considered** a repayment option to be offered to the EU; and
- iv. **Agreed** to recommend to FFC that FFA responds to the Letter from the EU taking responsibility for the ineligible amount noting that a repayment plan is forthcoming pending further discussions with FFA Members and other affected CROP agencies and memberships.

Item 12: Internal Auditor's Report

55. The Secretariat presented on WP10 on the Internal Auditor's Report noting the 14 Risks impacting the service delivery of the Agency and the associated Controls which continue to be implemented and improved to mitigate these Risks. Emphasis was on Managers and Directors having the first level of responsibility to continue to implement and improve these Controls and Internal Audit to provide independent assurance to the Executive and the Audit Committee.

56. The Secretariat advised that the Controls are audited cyclically and results reported to ARC through the Executive. In response to a question on whether all Controls for the 14 Risks will be audited in any one year, the Secretariat advised that this will depend on available Internal Audit resources. With the recent recruitment of an Internal Audit Assistant, it may be possible to do so on a cyclical basis.

57. DG noted that the Internal Auditor, Ms Keva Robarobalevu will be leaving the FFA to take up a new position in Tuvalu. On behalf of members, DG acknowledged with appreciation the good work of Ms Robarobalevu and wished her well with her new position.

58. In response to a query on recruitment of the Internal Auditor, the Secretariat advised that it is in progress, and the Secretariat has received the short list from the Employment Office. It is anticipated that a shortlist and interviews will be conducted within the coming weeks.

59. The Committee

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- i. **Noted** progress of the internal audit work carried out to date; and
- ii. **Noted** the Controls that will continue to be implemented, monitored and improved to continuously mitigate the impact of Risks on the achievement of FFA goals and objectives. A schedule of internal audits against the 14 key enterprise risks will be provided to the ARC.

Item 13: **Human Resources, Recruitment and Employment Matters**

60. The Secretariat presented WP.11 providing an update of HR, Recruitment and Employment Matters for the period ending 12 April 2021. Areas covered were appointments made at that time at both PAL and PAI levels, staff establishment and vacancies by classification.

61. The Secretariat advised that the report resulted from a recommendation from AC19 to provide this level of reporting for the Members information.

62. Members were also briefed on Learning and Development activities, systems, policies and process review, covid-19 initiatives to support RWA and an employee engagement survey currently in progress. The results of this survey will be presented to the committee in its next meeting.

63. In response to a Member query on the current vacancies in the Fisheries Management and Fisheries Development Divisions, the Secretariat advised that it has been challenging recruiting in these areas due to the specialised nature of the roles and the required expertise. The Secretariat also advised that it will explore options (such as consultancies) for supporting these Divisions.

64. Members offered their assistance with recruitment and selection processes if required by the Secretariat.

65. The Committee:
- i. **noted** the report on the Secretariat's Human Resources and Employment matters and encouraged the Secretariat to look at a range of options for addressing current capacity gaps in the Secretariat, including use of consultancies;
 - ii. **highlighted** the high fisheries management workload this year and **recommended** that the secretariat urgently address staffing vacancies in FMD and consider options such as consultants to provide analytical support during peak times; and
 - iii. **supported** the FFA secretariat to consider the feasibility and benefits of including a member representative on recruitment panels.

Item 14: Any other Business

66. No matters were raised in this Item.

Item 15: Next Meeting

67. The Chair noted the next formal session of the Audit Committee in the Pre-MOC meeting period.

Item 16: Record of Proceedings

68. The Decisions were cleared out of session. The Records will be cleared out of session.

Item 17: Closing

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69. The Chair thanked the AC members for their support in ensuring a successful meeting. He thanked the Secretariat for the meeting arrangements.
70. DG commended the Chair for his leadership and to the Vice Chair in ensuring a successful meeting and joined the Chair in thanking members. She thanked the DDG, DCS and corporate services team for their hard work in preparing for this meeting.
71. Fiji offered a closing prayer.

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ATTACHMENT A: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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FORUM FISHERIES COMMITTEE EYES ONLY

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ATTACHMENT B AGENDA

A. Introduction

1. Opening
2. Adoption of agenda

B. Items for Discussion

3. Matters arising from previous A Meetings
4. Audited financial Report as at 31 June 2020
5. Financial Report at as 28 Feb 2021
6. Review of draft outline Annual Report 2020/2021
7. FFA Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025 Update
8. 5 Year Business Plan
9. Annual Work Programme and Budget 2021/2022
10. Review of fees including Programme Management Fees and internal charges
11. Update on EU Issues
12. Internal Auditor's Report
13. HR, Recruitment and Employment Matters

C. Other Matters

14. Any other Business
15. Next Meeting
16. Record of Proceedings
17. Close of Meeting

PAPERS TO BE TAKEN BY EXCEPTION

1. Outcomes of the 14th Joint Committee on the Japan Promo Fund
2. Outstanding Member Contributions
3. FFA Risk Register update