

## **First Quarter 2009**

The Summary Report of the **Fifth Regular Session of the Commission** at Busan, Korea, 8-12 December 2008, was posted on the Commission's website in late March.

The VMS Manager arrived in Pohnpei and commenced his work with the Commission on 9 January 2009. Recruitment was initiated for the support staff post of VMS Operations Officer. The successful candidate will take up this post on 1 April 2009.

In early February the Secretariat met with FFA Secretariat staff at Brisbane, Australia to discuss implementation of the Commission VMS under the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that was signed in early December 2008. A work programme was agreed between the two Secretariats towards the Commission VMS being activated on 1 April 2009. It is expected that approximately 300 fishing vessels will be reporting to the Commission VMS on the activation date.

The Executive Director attended the 28th FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting at FAO Headquarters in Rome, 2-6 March 2009. During his visit he participated in the 10th meeting of tuna RFMO Secretariats, a planning session for a second meeting of tuna RFMOs (scheduled for San Sebastian, Spain in late June) and the Second Meeting of Regional Fisheries Bodies Network (RSN). Main topics of discussion included implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the performance reviews of fisheries bodies, capacity issues including accommodating the legitimate fishery development aspirations of developing States within sustainable limits of fishery resources, developments in relation to integrated MCCA schemes, challenges with implementation of broader ecosystem considerations in management arrangements, data issues impacting the quality of scientific advice and the take up of scientific advice in management decisions.

In early March the Secretariat met with staff of the College of Micronesia (COM), Palikir, Pohnpei State to commence planning for the 5th Regular Session of the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC5), scheduled for 1-6 October 2009. The COM President has endorsed the use of COM facilities for the staging of TCC5.

The **Third Session of the Intersessional Working Group on Regional Observer Programme** (ROP-IWG3) was held at Guam, 17-20 March 2009. The meeting discussed the progress of the elements on the observer programme, however the ROP-IWG3 was not able to reach agreement on costs, vessel size limitations, source of observers and related definitions. The group agreed that there would be little benefit in holding further IWG –ROP meetings and agreed to recommend the establishment of a Technical Advisory Group to assist the Commission's Observer Programme Coordinator to continue development and implementation of the ROP. The recommendations of the IWG will be forwarded to other subsidiary bodies and the Commission for further consideration.

The ROP coordinator has been assisting CCMs to gain interim authorization for their national observer programmes, to enable them to participate as part of the ROP, especially for the FAD closure period 1st August to September 31st 2009. At the end of the quarter the following CCM programmes have qualified

to provide ROP observers: USA, RMI, PNG with Solomon Islands, FSM and Korea expected to qualify early in the second quarter.

The Finance and Administration Officer observed a session of the Council of Regional Organizations for the Pacific (CROP) meeting in Suva, Fiji and visited Vanuatu to review arrangements for the August meeting of the Scientific Committee.

The Secretariat accepted the final report from Taz-E on the 'ICT Strategic Plan 2009-2011' and the associated Work Plan for 2009. As part of the ICT Strategic Plan documentation, some key policies and procedures such as 'IT procurement policy' and 'IT acceptable use policy' were accepted for immediate application. Work has begun on the redevelopment of the WCPFC website following the selection of Eighty Options from a field of 123 bidders, enhancement to the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels and the Secretariat's enhanced corporate network environment based on Microsoft's Small Business Server 2008 infrastructure.

The Secretariat submitted a three-year West Pacific East Asia Oceanic Fisheries Management project proposal for funding consideration by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project aims to facilitate 1) monitoring, data enhancement and fishery assessment, and 2) policy, institutional strengthening and fishery management for the effective implementation of the WCPFC requirements in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam. The Scientific Committee's Research Sub-committee appraised proposals received as a result of a call for expressions of interest to undertake research identified as priorities as part of the Scientific Committee's Work Programme for 2009. Two proposals were accepted. One will further investigate representative nature of species composition data caught by purse-seine fisheries in the WCPO, and the other will investigate existing and explore alternative models to standardize fishing catch and effort for construction of stock assessment indices.