



**FFA**  
PACIFIC ISLANDS  
FORUM FISHERIES  
AGENCY

# FFA REGIONAL MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE STRATEGY (RMCSS) 2024 – 2029

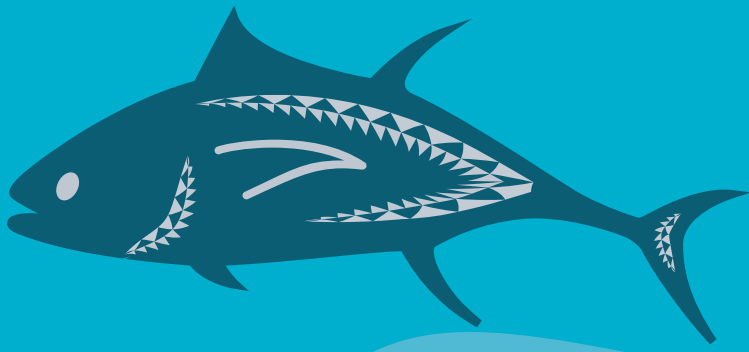
Endorsed by the Officials Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC133), 9 May 2024, Nauru  
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## Abbreviations

<b>AIS</b>	Automatic Identification System
<b>CMM</b>	Conservation Management Measure
<b>DDC</b>	Data Collection Committee
<b>e-CDS</b>	Electronic catch Documentation Scheme
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>EM</b>	Electronic Monitoring
<b>e-PSM</b>	Electronic Port State Measure
<b>ER</b>	Electronic Reporting
<b>FFA</b>	Refers to the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency established under Article I of the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency Convention and consisting of the Forum Fisheries Committee and the Secretariat.
<b>FFC</b>	Refers to the FFA Forum Fisheries Committee
<b>HMTCS</b>	Harmonized Minimum Terms and Conditions
<b>IMP</b>	Implementation and Monitoring Plan
<b>IMS</b>	Information Management System
<b>IUU</b>	Illegal Unreported and Unregulated
<b>MCS</b>	Monitoring Control Surveillance
<b>MCSWG</b>	The FFA Monitoring Control and Surveillance Working Group
<b>MDA</b>	Maritime Domain Awareness
<b>NTIS</b>	Niue Treaty Information System
<b>NTSA</b>	Niue Treat Subsidiary Agreement
<b>PI</b>	Performance Indicator
<b>PNAO</b>	Parties to the Nauru Agreement Office
<b>PSM</b>	Port State Measure
<b>QUAD</b>	FFA Quadrilateral partners that include America, Australia, France and New Zealand
<b>RAC</b>	FFA PSM Risk Assessment Criteria
<b>RF</b>	Radio Frequency
<b>RFSC</b>	Regional; Fisheries Surveillance Centre
<b>RIMF</b>	Regional Information Management Facility
<b>RMCSS</b>	FFA Regional Monitoring Control and Surveillance Strategy 2024- 2029
<b>SPC</b>	The Pacific Community
<b>TUFMAN2</b>	Tuna Fisheries Data Management System
<b>VIIRS</b>	Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite
<b>VMS</b>	Vessel Monitoring System
<b>WCPFC</b>	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT



Tuna fisheries are central to the way of life in the Pacific Islands region. Tuna have provided a valuable food source for Pacific peoples for millennia, and will continue to be important in supporting food security for future generations. At the same time, wealth generated from tuna fisheries accounts for the majority of government revenue for many Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Member Countries. To that end, conserving and protecting tuna stocks is central to the region's future, as recognised by Pacific Leaders in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) plays an essential role in the overall fisheries management system by protecting the integrity of management measures designed to achieve FFA Members' sustainable fisheries development objectives. Effective MCS ensures that only authorised vessels harvest tuna resources and that those authorised vessels comply with license conditions. MCS also plays an essential role in delivering the information needed to monitor and manage fisheries for the benefits of FFA Members.

The Pacific Islands region is characterized by very large exclusive economic zones (EEZs) that support globally significant fisheries for tuna, although with limited resources with which to undertake MCS. In that context, FFA Members have long recognised the benefits of acting cooperatively to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of MCS systems. While Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing remains an ever-present threat, previous studies have highlighted that the cooperative framework of MCS measures adopted by FFA Members and regional partners over recent decades has had a profound influence on the nature and scale of IUU fishing in the region.

This document sets out the FFA Members' Regional MCS Strategy (RMCSS) for the next five financial years (2024-2029). This is the third RMCSS and builds on the success of its predecessors (2009-2014; and 2018-2023). The institutional context for the RMCSS is set out in Annex 1.

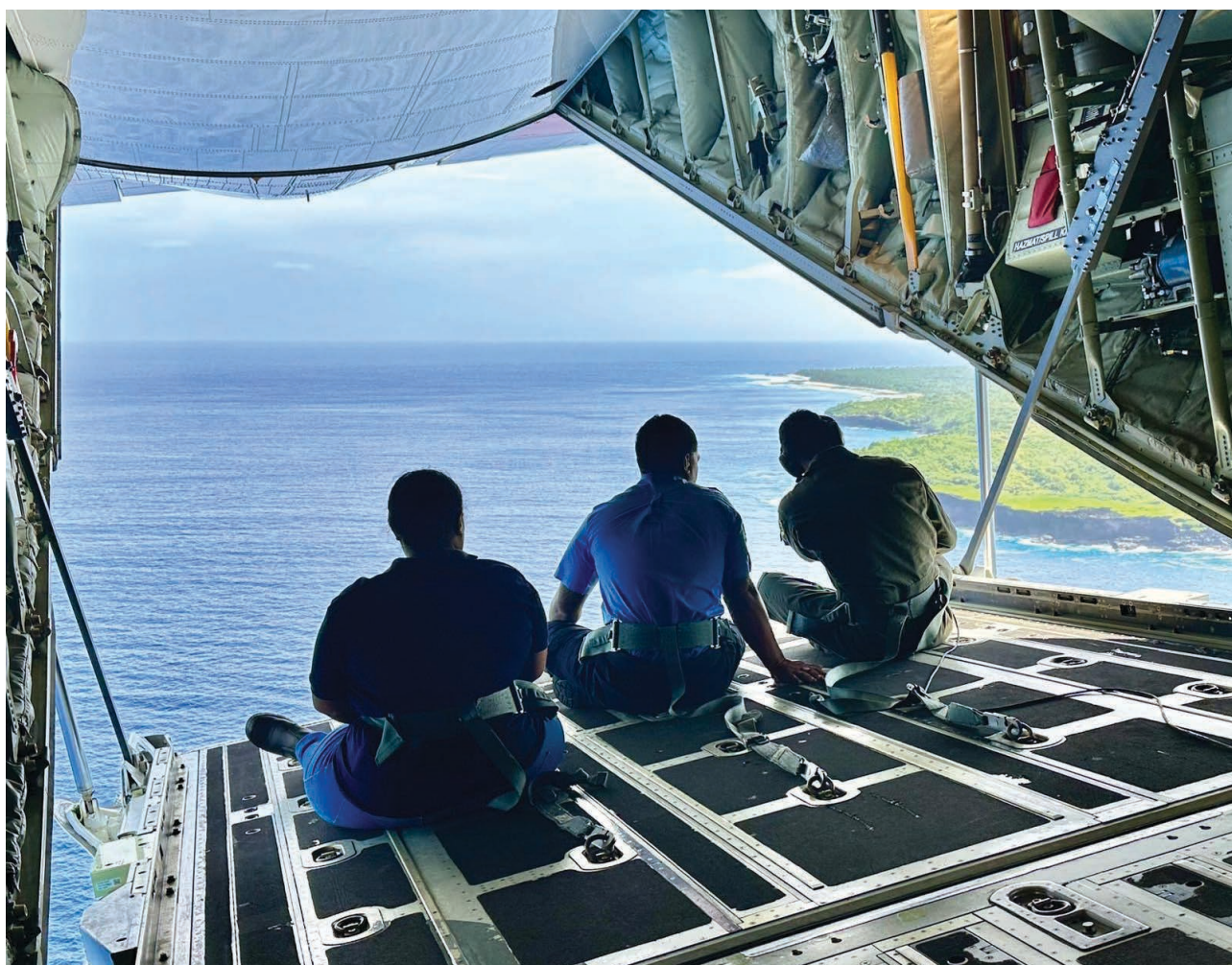
The goal of this new Strategy has been refined to recognise the importance of MCS in underpinning the integrity of fisheries management systems. To that end, it is complementary to, and harmonised with, the Vision presented in FFA's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025.

The objectives have been restructured to align with the key IUU fishing risks in the region and to continually build capacity of FFA Members to protect and manage our tuna resources. The objectives also recognise the importance of ensuring strong, compatible MCS on the high seas given the shared nature of tuna stocks in the region.

Each objective is supported by a number of activities that contribute to achieving the objective and, collectively, the overall goal. Key themes running across the activities in this Strategy include:

- Strengthening monitoring, control and surveillance of the longline fishery, particularly on the high seas;
- Continuing to strengthen the effectiveness of MCS measures through regional cooperation;
- Building national MCS expertise and capacity; and
- Continuing the trend towards risk and intelligence-based allocation of MCS resources.

The RMCSS will be supported by a more operational level Implementation and Monitoring Plan (IMP) which sets out Member priorities and timelines for the Pacific Islands region for the 2024-2029 period, as well as a framework of performance indicators to monitor progress in implementation and impact. This will allow the effectiveness of MCS measures to be reviewed and continually improved over time as fisheries management needs and the nature of compliance risks evolve.



# SCOPE



The primary focus of this Strategy is MCS arrangements for offshore fisheries for tuna and associated species in the Pacific Islands region. In this context, the 'Pacific Islands region' is considered to be FFA member EEZs and the high seas in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Convention Area.

While the focus is on commercial tuna fisheries, FFA Members recognise that strong MCS arrangements in that sector will also assist in managing other potential IUU fishing risks, including incursions by unlicensed vessels targeting demersal species.

FFA Members also recognise that having strong MCS arrangements in place for tuna fisheries is an integral part of our overall maritime domain awareness (MDA), security and management. To that end, while the focus of this Strategy is on offshore tuna fisheries, the FFA Secretariat will continue to work collaboratively with other regional agencies involved in broader MDA including the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), Pacific Immigration Directors Community (PIDC), Pacific Fusion Centre (PFC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). This collaboration is consistent with the Declaration of Partnership on Regional Cooperation in Law Enforcement, Border, Fisheries and Maritime Security and in the context of implementing the Boe Declaration and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

In addition, FFA Members recognise that the effective implementation of activities under the Regional MCS Strategy may assist in achieving related FFA policy objectives.

Members also recognise that while this document guides the MCS strategy of FFA Members and the Secretariat, the MCS framework in the Pacific Islands region includes essential contributions from partners including SPC, PNAO and Pacific Quadrilateral (QUADs) surveillance providers. To that end, an important focus of this Strategy includes optimising cooperation and information flow amongst partner organisations.

# STRUCTURE



This Strategy has been structured on the following basis:

The goal of the Strategy is designed to support the achievement of FFA Members' overarching vision for their fisheries set out in the FFA Strategic Plan 2020-2025, namely *"Our people enjoying the greatest possible social and economic benefits from the sustainable use of offshore fisheries resources"*. This recognises that MCS is one of a number of components of a fisheries management and development system in the region that need to work together to achieve FFA Members' vision.

Underneath the goal sit six objectives. Collectively, these objectives, if met, will help FFA Members meet the overall goal of the Strategy. In broad terms, objectives are linked to key IUU fishing risks in the region, or other important needs (e.g. strengthening high seas MCS, ensuring FFA Members have the tools and skills necessary to implement effective MCS).

Underneath each objective is a series of broad activities that will be undertaken by Members and/or the Secretariat to meet the objective. Importantly, some MCS tools will contribute to meeting more than one objective (e.g. surveillance programs can help detect any activity by unauthorised vessels, as well checking authorised vessels' compliance with license conditions; observer programs can help independently validate logsheet reporting, as well as monitor compliance with other license conditions). For simplicity, MCS tools have been listed under one objective, but the contribution to meeting other objectives is acknowledged, as appropriate.

The Strategy will be supported by an IMP setting out in more detail the actions to be taken over the course of the Strategy, as well as framework of performance indicators tracking both the implementation and impact of the Strategy. Progress will be monitored by the FFA Secretariat, in consultation with Members, and reported annually to the MCSWG.



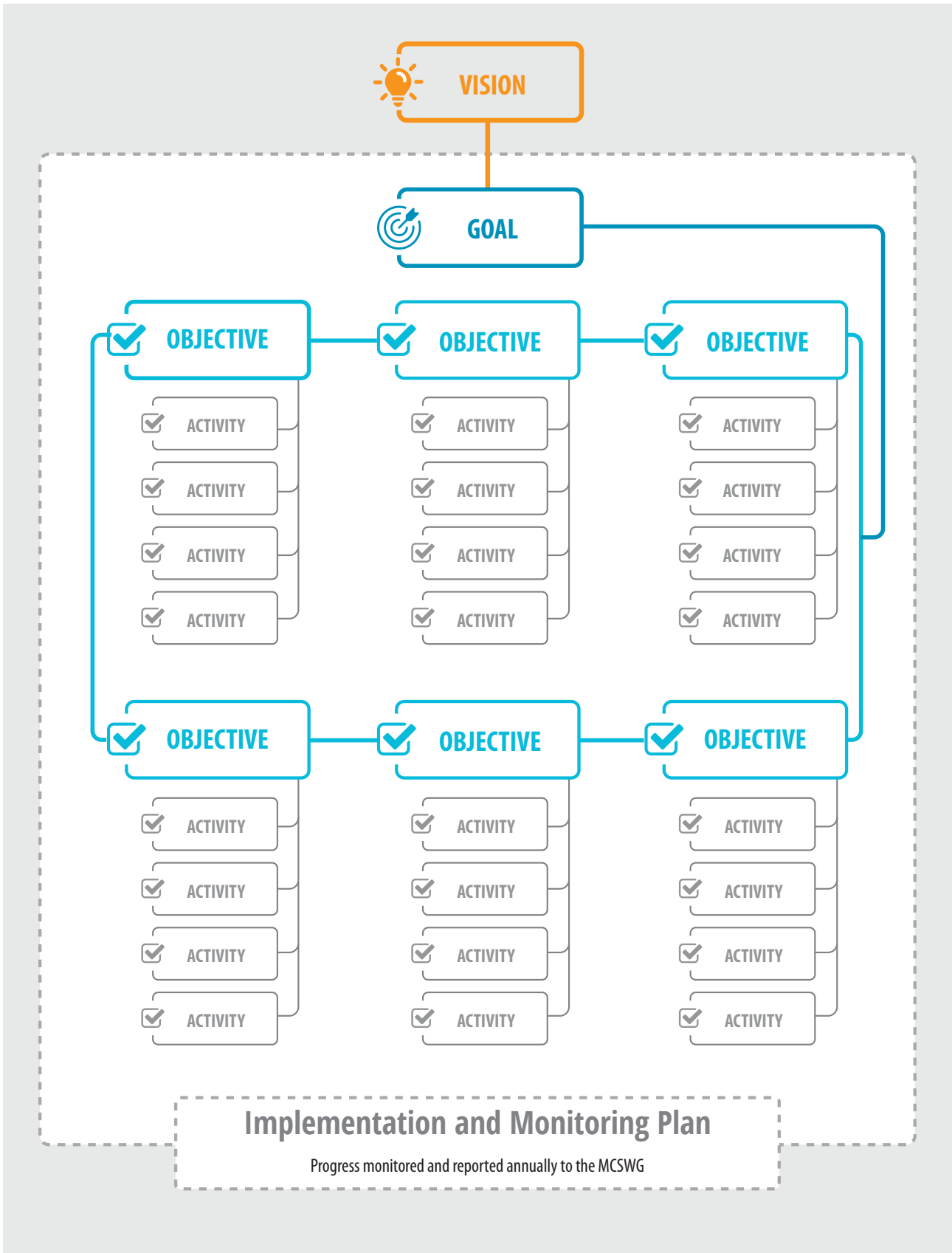


Figure 1: Basic structure of the FFA RMCSS 2024-2029.

# VISION & GOAL

## Vision

The vision of this Strategy is

**“Our people enjoying the greatest possible social and economic benefits from the sustainable use of offshore fisheries resources”.**

This is the vision for the region’s fisheries outlined in the FFA Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and recognises that MCS is one component of the overall fisheries management and development system in the region which need to work together to achieve FFA Members’ overarching vision.

## Goal

The goal of this Strategy is to **optimise compliance with fisheries management frameworks in the Pacific Islands region.**

This goal recognises that the primary function of MCS arrangements is to support the sustainable management of fisheries resources. In the context of offshore fisheries in the Pacific Islands region, this means delivering monitoring information and services necessary to allow FFA Members to take management actions consistent with their fisheries conservation and development objectives, as well as reducing the extent of any non-compliance with fisheries management frameworks.

The achievement of the goal will contribute to meeting a number of strategic outcomes in the FFA Business Plan 2021-2025, most notably Strategic Outcome 1 (Offshore fisheries are ecologically sustainable) and Strategic Outcome 3 (FFA Members’ offshore fisheries rights are secured and protected).



# OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES



This section sets out the objectives, and activities to be taken to achieve each objective, during the course of the Strategy. A summary of how each activity and objective contributes to achieving Members' overarching goal and vision is set out in Figure 2.

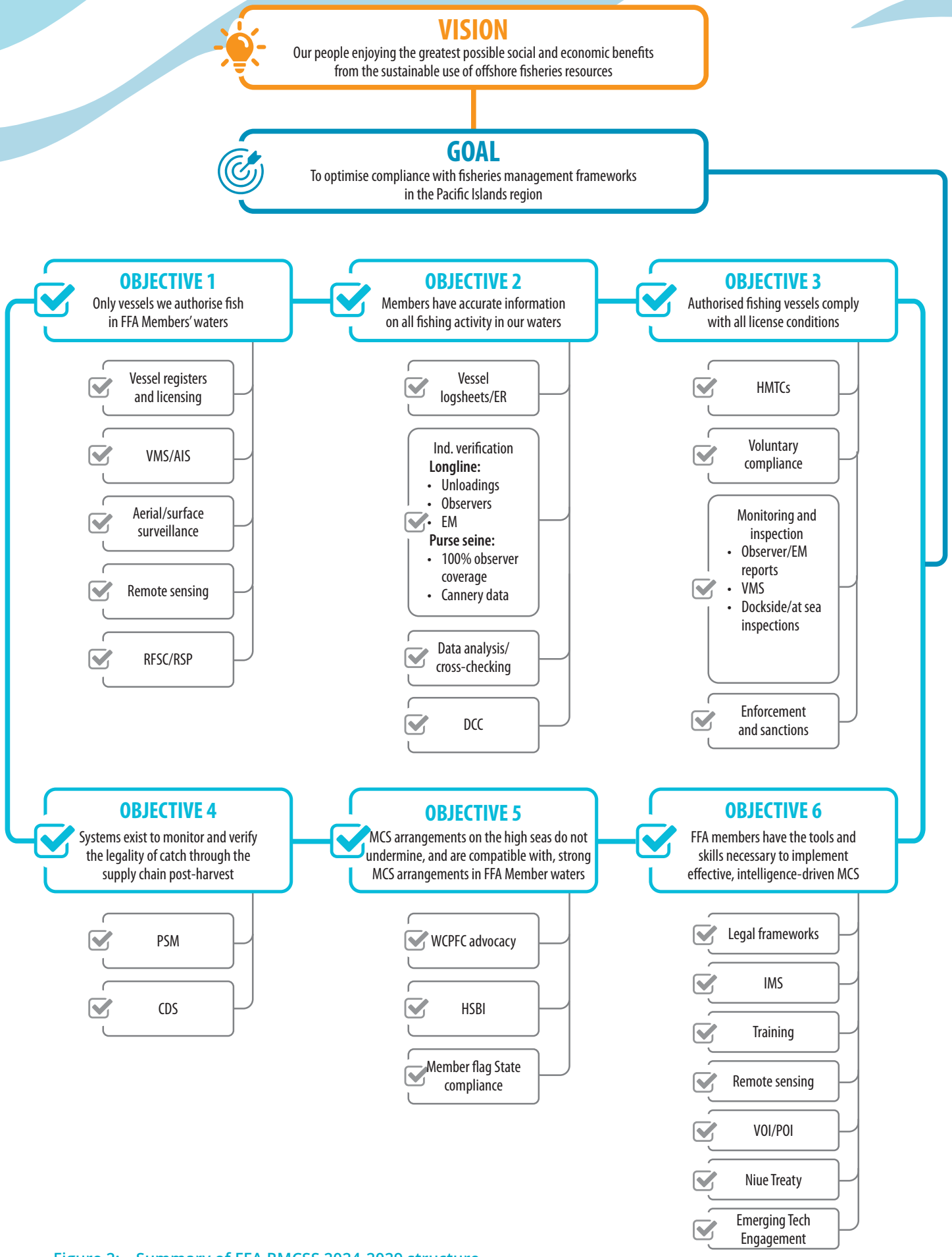


Figure 2: Summary of FFA RMCSS 2024-2029 structure.

## Objective 1: Only vessels we authorise fish in FFA Member waters

Ensuring only authorised vessels fish<sup>1</sup> in FFA Member waters is not only essential to maintain the integrity of fisheries management frameworks (and the generation of fisheries revenue), but also central to maintaining and defending FFA Members' national sovereignty.

This objective will be primarily achieved by maintaining and implementing:

- clear vessel register and licensing systems at national, sub-regional and regional levels,
- effective monitoring systems to track the position of authorised vessels; and
- targeted remote sensing and surveillance systems to detect and respond to any suspected unauthorised fishing.

Key activities to be taken under the Objective 1 include the following:

- Maintaining clear vessel registration and licensing systems at the national, sub-regional and regional levels to identify vessels authorised to fish in FFA Member waters;
- Monitoring the position of authorised vessels through compulsory vessel monitoring systems (and other relevant technology – e.g. AIS);
- Operating targeted aerial and surface surveillance programs at relevant levels (nationally, sub-regionally and in cooperation with external surveillance partners) to detect and respond to any unauthorised fishing activity;
- Increasing the use of targeted remote sensing (e.g. RF, VIIRS) to complement aerial and surface surveillance programs in the identification of unauthorised fishing activity; and
- Continuing to coordinate regional surveillance and analysis operations through the Regional Fisheries Surveillance Centre (RFSC), including maintaining and enhancing regional information sharing and the regional Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) picture



<sup>1</sup> The terms 'fish' and 'fishing' should be seen in their broadest context throughout the Strategy and include all types of offshore fishing and support vessels (e.g. pole and line, carrier vessels, bunker vessels) and fishing activities (e.g. deploying fish aggregation devices).

## Objective 2: FFA Members have accurate information on all catch, effort and other fishing activity in our waters

Having accurate information on catch, effort and other fishing activity is a fundamental cornerstone of effective fisheries management. Both the 2016 and 2021 IUU Quantification studies identified misreporting as the primary IUU fishing risk in the Pacific Islands region, with a particular emphasis on the need to strengthen monitoring and compliance arrangements in the longline sector in both EEZs and the high seas.

The objective of having accurate information on catch, effort and related fishing activity will primarily be achieved by having strong, harmonised vessel reporting requirements (e.g. logsheets) in place for all vessels fishing in FFA Members' waters, supported by effective mechanisms to independently verify vessel reported catch and activity.

These systems will be supported by analytical tools to facilitate cross-checking of independent data sources and increased focus from Members on investigating discrepancies.

Key activities to be undertaken under this Objective 2 include the following:

- Maintaining the obligation on all licensed vessels to submit timely, complete and accurate records of all fishing activity in FFA Member waters, including transitioning to 100% electronic reporting (ER);
- Ensuring processes, procedures and tools are in place to independently verify the completeness and accuracy of fisher reporting, tailored to the operational characteristics and management arrangements of each sector.
  - In the longline sector this will include:
    - Promoting the implementation of electronic monitoring (EM) on longline vessels consistent with the FFA Longline Fisheries EM Policy;
    - Achieving regionally-agreed minimum independent monitoring (human observer or EM) coverage targets; and
    - Maintaining high rates of unloading monitoring coverage of longline vessels landing fish in FFA Member ports
  - In the purse seine sector, this will include:
    - Maintaining 100% observer coverage for purse seine vessels, with a target of achieving 100% observer e-reporting;
    - Continuing to work with processing companies to explore the use of processing (e.g., cannery) company receipt data as a means of independently validating fisher reporting and to verify species composition.
- Promoting the regular use by Member Compliance Officers of electronic platforms (e.g. TUFMAN2, e-CDS, e-PSM) which facilitate the automatic cross-checking of vessel logsheet data against independent data sources; and
- Maintaining the SPC/FFA/PNAO Tuna Fishery Data Collection Committee (DCC) as the primary forum to harmonise data systems, standards, specifications and procedures in the Pacific Islands region, consistent with the DCC Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.

### Objective 3: Authorised fishing vessels comply with all license conditions

Access to FFA Member waters by tuna fishing vessels is conditional on meeting licensing and regulatory obligations designed to meet Members' national, sub-regional and regional fisheries conservation, management and development objectives. Failure to comply with licence conditions undermines the integrity of fisheries management frameworks and compromises FFA member interests.

The most cost effective MCS systems are those where everyone complies voluntarily. To that end, optimising the level of compliance with licensing conditions will be achieved by having a mix of measures in place to encourage voluntary compliance as well as an effective framework of measures to detect and deter non-compliance.

In practice, many of the MCS tools used to achieve Objectives 1, 2 and 4 will also be used to achieve objective 3 (e.g. VMS, aerial/surface surveillance, observer reporting, port State measures).

Additional activities that will be undertaken under this Objective 3 include the following:

- Maintaining, and periodically updating, the Harmonised Minimum Terms and Conditions (HMTCs) as a means of harmonising minimum standards for foreign fishing vessel access to FFA Members' waters;
- Periodically reviewing and updating license conditions to ensure consistency with the HMTCs and WCPFC CMMs, as required;
- Encouraging voluntary compliance through measures including education and outreach, stakeholder participation and providing financial or operational incentives;
- Maintaining a regime of risk- and intelligence-based in port and at sea inspections of both domestic and foreign vessels to monitor compliance with relevant license conditions and other management measures (e.g. CMMs);
- Reviewing independent observer and EM program reporting to monitor compliance by licensed vessels with relevant license conditions and other management measures;
- Implementing effective processes to ensure timely investigation and enforcement action for all potential incidents of non-compliance identified; and
- Applying effective sanctions to deter and punish non-compliance where appropriate, consistent with the nature and severity of the offence.



## Objective 4: Systems are in place to monitor and verify the legality of catch through the supply chain

An important objective for the development aspirations of many FFA Members is to ensure that processes, procedures and tools are in place to be able to demonstrate that catch taken by their vessels and/or landed/transhipped in their ports has been legally caught, and there is no opportunity for IUU-derived catch to enter supply chains.

This will be achieved by having measures in place to verify the legality of catch as it enters port, or is transhipped inside an FFA Member EEZ, and having instruments in place to verify the provenance and legality of catch as it moves through the supply chain.

Members recognise that having systems in place to demonstrate the legality of catch can be important for export market access and can add value to domestic industries.

In practice, many of the MCS tools used to achieve Objectives 1, 2, and 3 will also be used to achieve Objective 4 (e.g. VMS, aerial/surface surveillance, observer reporting, vessel reporting).

Key activities to be taken under this Objective 4 include the following:

- Ongoing implementation of the FFA PSM Framework and the application of the Regional Risk Assessment Criteria (RAC), including dockside/port inspections in national port State processes;
- Developing and implementing a Regional e-PSM system to improve port entry efficiency, facilitate effective port State exchange of information and interagency cooperation and coordination;
- Providing Secretariat support to Members in the implementation of international port State obligations to which they are a party; and
- Agreeing a preferred path forwards on a Regional e-CDS system consistent with Member objectives (market access, fisheries management).







## **Objective 5: MCS arrangements in the high seas do not undermine, and are compatible with, strong MCS arrangements in FFA Member waters**

Tuna fisheries in the FFA region are based on stocks that straddle both in-zone and high seas areas. Activities that occur on the adjacent high seas can have a significant influence on the achievement of FFA Member conservation and development objectives. In that context, it is essential that strong in zone MCS arrangements are complemented by compatible measures of equivalent or stronger effectiveness on the high seas.

Primary responsibility for the control of fishing vessels on the high seas rests with the flag State. In that context, arrangements are required to ensure flag States maintain effective monitoring and control over the high seas fishing activities of their fleets and compliance is capable of being independently verified.

Key activities to be taken under this Objective 5 include the following:

- Continuing to advocate through the WCPFC for the strengthening of MCS arrangements applying to fishing activity in the high seas to ensure compatibility with strong in zone MCS measures. Priorities in the period of the Strategy include strengthening monitoring of catch and fishing activity in high seas longline fisheries as well as agreeing a revised measure covering transshipments on the high seas;
- Together with partners, continuing to be active participants in the WCPFC High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) Scheme, particularly through existing bilateral or multilateral arrangements such as the NTSA and shiprider agreements; and
- Continuing to provide FFA Secretariat support to ensure FFA Members who authorise their flag vessels to fish on the high seas can implement and demonstrate compliance with all relevant WCPFC (and other relevant RFMO) requirements.

## Objective 6: FFA Members have the tools and skills necessary to implement effective, intelligence-driven MCS

The achievement of the overarching goal of this strategy, together with the other objectives, relies on FFA Members having the tools and skills necessary to implement efficient, effective and targeted MCS systems. 'Tools and skills' in this context should be seen in its broadest sense and include the information, processes, training and resources to achieve MCS objectives.

Key activities to be taken under this Objective 6 include the following:

### *Legal frameworks*

- Providing ongoing Secretariat support to Members to ensure that their national legal frameworks support all relevant MCS tools, including emerging technologies, as well as allowing Members to discharge national, regional and international obligations;

### *Information Management Systems*

- Continuing to maintain and develop an effective RIMF as a means to provide data analysis, information sharing and intelligence support to national, sub-regional and regional MCS operations;
- Promoting integration and inter-operability between relevant IMSs including RIMF, FIMS, TUFMAN2 and national IMSs where it improves efficiency and usefulness to Members;
- Strengthening sharing of MCS data amongst Members and relevant external partners for the purpose of improved risk-assessment and targeting of MCS resources;

### *MCS Data analysis*

- Strengthening the FFA Secretariat's resourcing commitment to MCS data analysis to support IUU fishing risk assessment and planning, as well as building capacity for MCS data analysis at the national level;

### *Training/capacity building*

- The FFA Secretariat continuing to work with Members to identify key national level MCS training and capacity building needs, and opportunities to address those needs, including through ongoing practical and theoretical MCS training.

### *Resourcing*

- FFA Members continuing to promote the importance of adequate funding for MCS activities in national budgeting processes, including through the application of cost recovery for the delivery of MCS services, consistent with national financial frameworks.
- The FFA Secretariat and Members continuing to engage with external funding partners to support initiatives to strengthen national and regional MCS capacity and systems consistent with this RMCSS and national MCS priorities.

### *POI/VOI*

- Members recognising the importance of POI and VOI information sharing to support risk-based MCS activities.

### *NTSA*

- Promoting and supporting cooperative surveillance activities and information sharing using the Niue Treaty Subsidiary Agreement (NTSA) between Parties, as well as maintaining the Niue Treaty Information System (NTIS) as a platform to receive request for support notifications and share fisheries data.

### *Emerging Technology*

- The FFA Secretariat and Members engaging with potential emerging technology partners, consistent with the FFA Emerging Technology Engagement Policy approved by the 126th FFC (May 23), on FFA member MCS priorities.

# NATIONAL MCS PLANS AND IMPLEMENTATION



The RMCSS is a key regional strategic document that focuses on regional MCS issues and objectives that are broadly common across the FFA Membership. As a genuine collaborative partnership between FFA Members and the FFA Secretariat, national engagement is critical to the successful implementation of the Strategy. To support this, the Strategy can be used by Members as a guide for developing, refining and implementing national level MCS plans or strategies.

Acknowledging that each FFA Member has unique MCS priorities and needs, to the extent practicable, consistency between national MCS policy documents and this Strategy will be crucial in optimising harmonisation across FFA Members. Reporting on the implementation and impacts of national strategies that are aligned with the Regional Strategy will streamline the preparation of regionally consolidated reports that will be presented to the annual meeting of the MCS WG for review. This is a fundamental contribution to efforts to maintain a comprehensive picture of the status and trends in MCS across the FFA region and remain responsive to emerging MCS issues.

The FFA Secretariat will support linkages between the RMCSS and national plans or strategies. This includes, but is not limited to, support to develop national level plans and strategies, capacity building to strengthen efforts associated with the implementation of those plans and strategies and technical support for national operations. It includes developing platforms and systems to analyse MCS data and reporting on national level actions to inform the Strategy as provided for in Objective 6. The Country Partnership Agreements provide an opportunity for formal commitment to specific actions in this regard.

# MONITORING

Monitoring of this Strategy will be undertaken for both *implementation and impact*, in the context of the FFA MCS continuous improvement cycle (Annex 2).

## Implementation

Progress on implementation of the activities in this Strategy will be monitored according to a framework to be set out in the Implementation and Monitoring Plan.

Reports on implementation of RMCSS activities will be prepared by the FFA Secretariat, in consultation with Members, in advance of each MCSWG meeting. Where an activity appears to be behind schedule, or is unable to be delivered, the MCSWG may recommend corrective actions to FFC.

## Impact

The impact of the Strategy will be monitored in two ways. These are described below:

### *Annual monitoring*

On an annual basis, the FFA Secretariat will populate a framework of performance indicators (PIs) to be set out in the IMP. PIs will be designed to quantitatively track trends in the achievement of agreed objectives.

In the context of tracking the effectiveness of compliance measures, two types of PI are expected to be included: (i) 'coverage' PIs which provide an indication of the comprehensiveness of an activity (or, in broad terms, how likely are we to detect non-compliance?) and (ii) 'outcome' PIs which tell us what was found during our MCS activity (i.e. are we detecting more suspicious activity or less?). The two types of PI are designed to be interpreted in the context of one another. To the extent possible, PIs will be designed to be SMART<sup>2</sup> and based on pre-existing information to minimise member reporting burden.

### *Periodic quantification*

Prior to the end of the Strategy an update of the FFA IUU Quantification will be undertaken to quantify any changes in the nature and scale of IUU activity in the Pacific Islands region. The outcomes of the updated quantification study will be incorporated into the preparation of future RMCSSs.

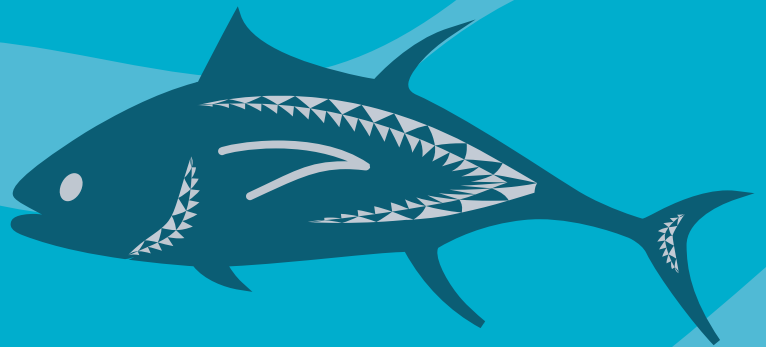
## 'End of cycle' review

In 2028, an 'end of cycle' review of the Strategy will be undertaken. The objective of the review will be to examine the effectiveness of the Strategy in achieving its goal and objectives, as well as informing the development of the next iteration of the Strategy. The review will take into account the outcomes of both implementation and impact monitoring, as well as other relevant information including the IUU Quantification, and input from FFA Members, FFA Secretariat and external partners.

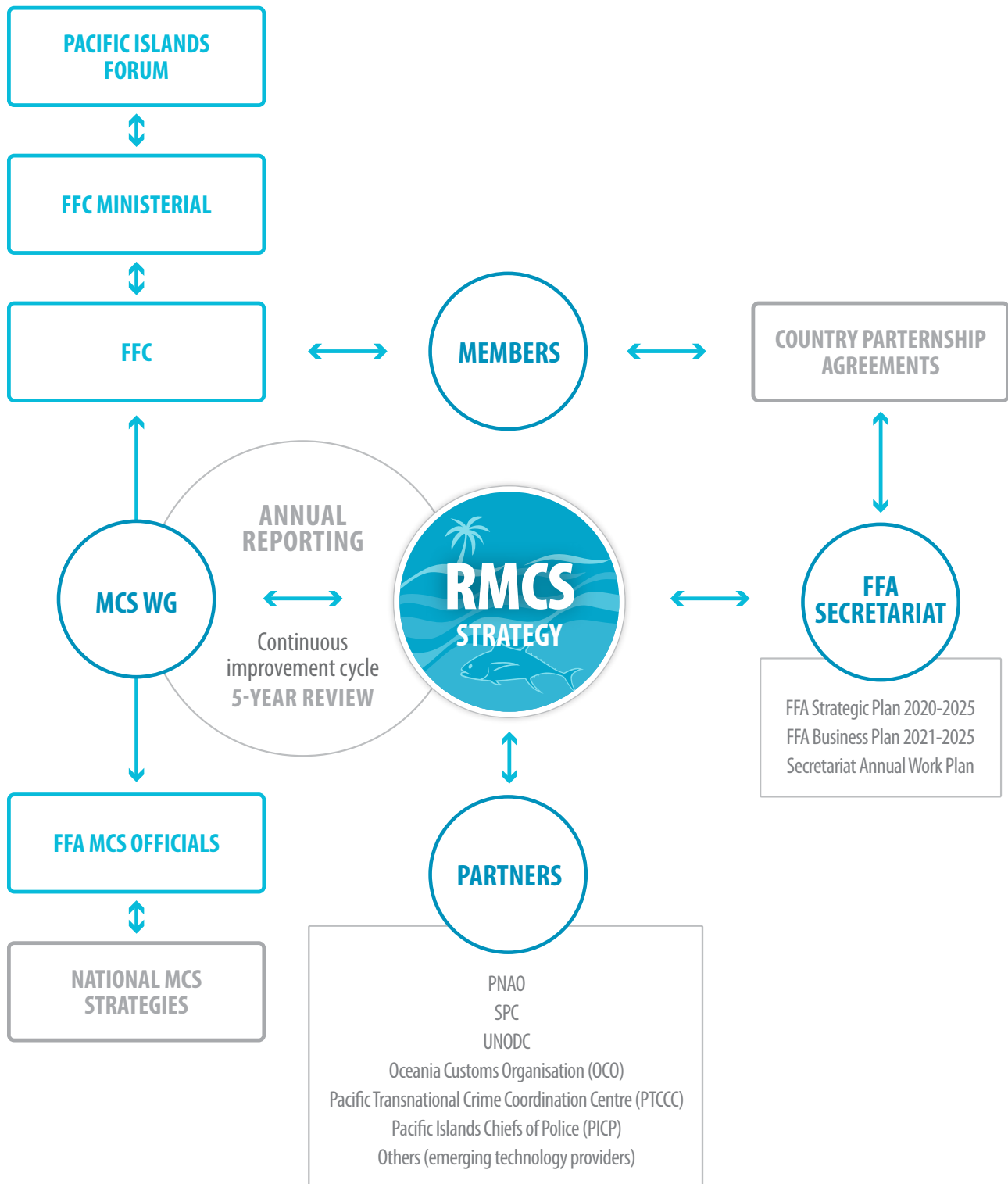
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2 Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound

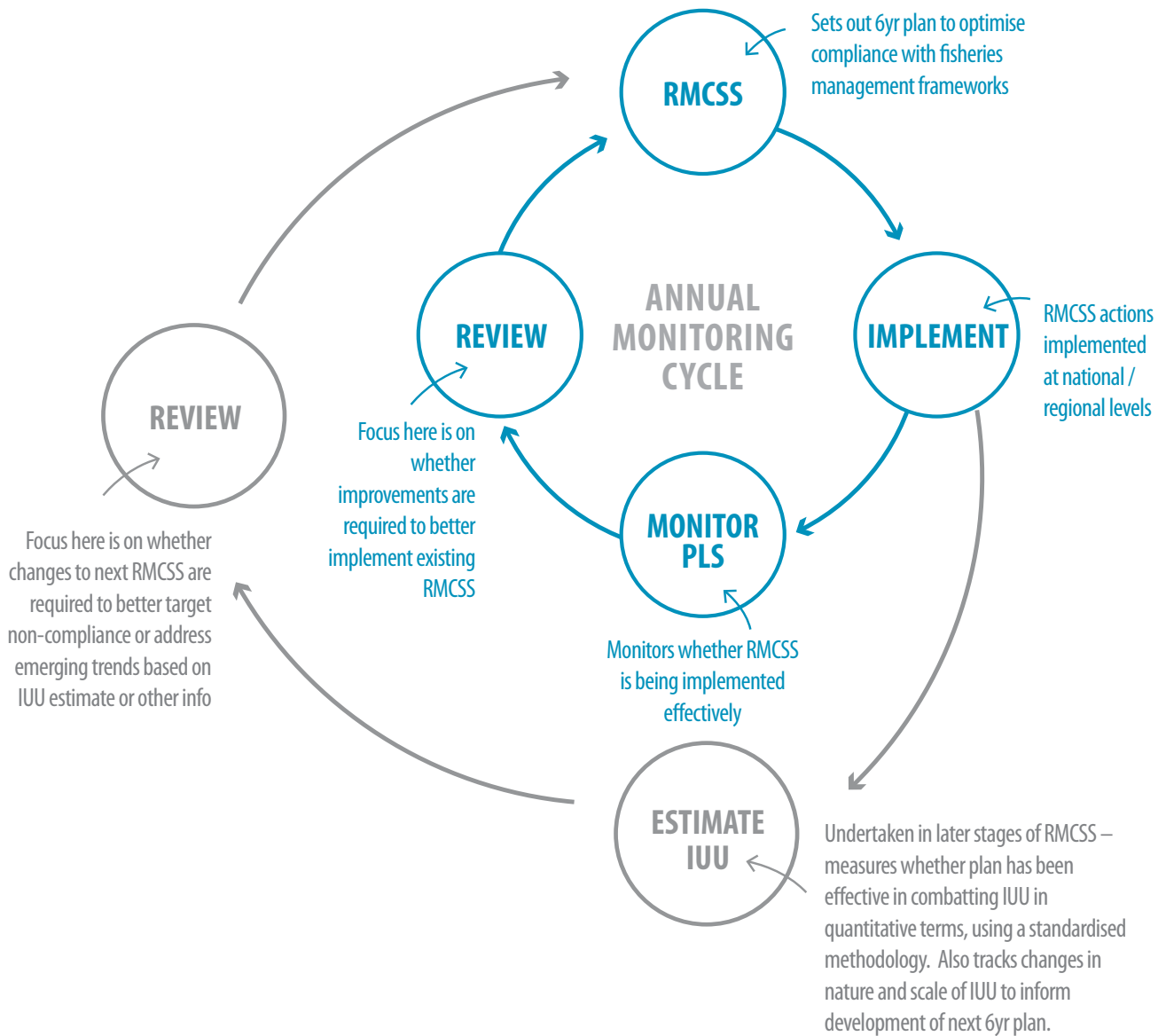
# ANNEXES



## Annex 1: Institutional context for the RMCSS



## Annex 2: FFA MCS continuous improvement cycle





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