

**Fourteenth Steering Committee**  
**27-29 May 2026**

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# **Expanded role of the World Meteorological Organization as SOFF Technical Authority**

Decision 14.2

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Systematic Observations  
Financing Facility

**Weather  
and climate  
data for  
resilience**



## Decision 14.2: Expanded role of the World Meteorological Organization as SOFF Technical Authority

The SOFF Steering Committee

**Recalls** [Decision 9.3](#) *Update of the role of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in SOFF*, which welcomed the stepped-up role of WMO as SOFF Technical Authority, noted that according to the SOFF Operational Manual, WMO covers the costs associated with its Technical Authority role through its own resources, and stated that changes to this would require a Steering Committee decision and corresponding update of the SOFF Operational Manual,

### Recognizes

- that SOFF has reached a critical juncture, with a growing portfolio of countries moving from Readiness to Investment phase, where technical decisions on procurement, data systems, calibration approaches, and operational sustainability will determine the likelihood of long-term GBON compliance,
- that WMO's role as Technical Authority for SOFF has already evolved in practice beyond the role described in the SOFF Operational Manual,
- that the current SOFF Operational Manual foresees only a limited role for WMO in the Investment phase, while consultations with SOFF beneficiary countries and operational partners have identified a clear need for a more structured, timely, and consistent WMO Technical Authority support during this phase; reinforced by the expectation that the SOFF Secretariat (see Draft Decision 14.9) focuses on operations programme management, portfolio oversight, and operational coordination, in a complementary role to the expanded Technical Authority,
- that WMO will continue to provide its core Technical Authority functions for SOFF, including advice on GBON technical regulations and independent compliance verification, as part of its baseline contribution to SOFF funded from WMO resources,
- that additional, SOFF-specific support to Peer Advisors, Implementing Entities, countries and the SOFF Secretariat constitutes a direct service to SOFF implementation and requires dedicated resourcing,

### Decides

- (i) to expand the role of the World Meteorological Organization Secretariat as Technical Authority to SOFF, focused on the Investment phase, as described in this document, for an initial period from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027, aligned with the end of SOFF's First Implementation period,

- (ii) to approve the amount of USD 450,000 for the expanded role of WMO as described in this document,

## Requests

- (i) the UNMPTF Office to disburse the amount of USD 450,000 to WMO,
- (ii) the SOFF Secretariat to reflect the expanded role of the WMO as Technical Authority to SOFF in an updated SOFF Operational Manual, for consideration by the 15<sup>th</sup> SOFF Steering Committee meeting,
- (iii) the WMO Technical Authority to closely coordinate with WMO Secretariat supporting project activities related to SOFF, including those funded by CREWS, to ensure integrated and effective support to beneficiary countries,
- (iv) the WMO Technical Authority to report to the Steering Committee on the implementation of the expanded role, to inform decisions on the future Technical Authority role in the SOFF Expansion and Sustaining period,
- (v) the SOFF Independent External Evaluation to include examine the roles and responsibilities in the Readiness and Investment phases of the operational partners (Implementing Entities and Peer Advisors) including its coordination, in relation to the Technical Authority, SOFF Secretariat, and countries, and be tasked to provide recommendations on future arrangements, including the potential of identifying the Technical Authority function as a cost associated with each SOFF project rather than an ongoing separate operational cost.

### **Purpose of this Document**

This document proposes to formalize and resource an expanded, time-bound role of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretariat serving as Technical Authority to SOFF from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027, focused on the Investment phase. It responds to the evolution of the Technical Authority role in practice, the shift of SOFF implementation from Readiness to Investment, and clear requests from SOFF beneficiary countries and operational partners for more structured, timely and consistent technical support across countries. The proposal has evolved, benefiting from consultations including a survey of SOFF Peer Advisors, Implementing Entities and beneficiary countries and a consultation meeting in April 2026. It distinguishes WMO's baseline Technical Authority functions, which will continue to be provided and covered by WMO resources, from additional SOFF-specific services that directly support implementation, including technical review of Investment Funding Requests, technical backstopping, helpdesk support, knowledge management and coordination with WMO regional structures. The purpose is to reduce implementation risk, strengthen the technical quality, efficiency and sustainability of

SOFF investments, and better prepare countries for long-term GBON compliance and results-based financing.

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# Expanded role of the World Meteorological Organization as SOFF Technical Authority

## 1. Context

This document proposes to formalize and resource an expanded role of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) as Technical Authority to the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) through the end of SOFF's First Implementation period in June 2027. It responds to the practical experience of SOFF implementation, the transition of a growing number of countries into the Investment phase, and calls from SOFF beneficiary countries and operational partners for clearer, more timely and more structured WMO Technical Authority support.

WMO's core Technical Authority role, as described now in the SOFF Operational Manual, will continue to be delivered as WMO's baseline contribution to SOFF, funded by WMO. This includes custodianship of GBON technical regulations and independent verification of GBON compliance using WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WIGOS) tools. These functions are part of WMO's mandate to support the implementation of WMO technical regulations and standards for all 193 of its Member countries and territories.

However, experience since SOFF became operational in July 2022 has shown that successful SOFF delivery requires more than standards-setting and compliance verification from the Technical Authority. It requires practical technical support to translate WMO technical regulations and guidance into implementation choices that are realistic, efficient and sustainable in the specific context of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). These choices include network design (in the Readiness phase), observing technologies for surface and upper-air stations supported by procurement processes, calibration approaches, metadata, data transmission, WIS 2.0 data exchange implementation, approaches to station maintenance, and the pathway to long-term compliance.

This expanded role has already begun in practice in the Readiness phase. WMO's role has moved beyond a narrow readiness output screening function originally defined for it toward an iterative, solution-oriented engagement with Peer Advisors and countries. This evolution was recognized by the SOFF Steering Committee in [Decision 9.3 Update of the role of the World Meteorological Organization \(WMO\) in SOFF](#). Over the first three years of SOFF operations, the staff time required to perform this evolving role has been funded by a combination of, in descending order:

- WMO regular budget from assessed Member contributions,
- WMO extrabudgetary support, notably 2.5 years of a Junior Professional Officer provided by Germany, additional Member voluntary contributions for WIGOS, and

- WMO fees for indirect costs charged to the SOFF peer advisor pass-through mechanism at a rate of 7% of which 70% is internally earmarked for the Technical Authority role. Based on existing approvals from the SOFF Steering Committee in the last three years, 880k USD have been allocated to the Technical Authority – of which 560k USD have been disbursed and 320k USD will be disbursed in future tranches over the lifetime of Investment Phase projects.

WMO is not in a position to fund the new expanded role in the Investment Phase outlined in this document with its own resources.

The challenge now is that the bulk of SOFF activity has shifted into the Investment Phase, where the current Operational Manual foresees only a limited WMO role, even though technical decisions taken in this phase will determine whether SOFF investments lead to sustainable compliance. Countries, Peer Advisors and Implementing Entities are collectively making technical decisions that will shape the infrastructure for the Compliance Phase.

Without a properly resourced and active Technical Authority function, there is a risk that these decisions will be made inconsistently across countries and with insufficient overall technical guidance, potentially jeopardizing long-term sustainability.

The proposal is time-bound from July 2026 to June 2027 and is intended to support SOFF delivery during the remainder of the First Implementation period, generating lessons for future arrangements.

## **2. Rationale, additionality, and risks**

The Steering Committee has emphasized the importance of maintaining SOFF's reputation for timely delivery, technical credibility, and results-based financing, which requires sustainable investments at the national level.

### **2.1 The demand of operational partners**

Experience to date indicates that these objectives require a strong and consistently available Technical Authority providing timely input and advice. The [SOFF Peer Advisor and Implementing Entity Workshop](#) (6-8 October 2025, Casablanca, Morocco) called for “clear definition of the role of WMO in Investment and Compliance phases of SOFF and increased support from WMO Technical Authority, including targeted step wise guidance for technical elements.” SOFF operational partners have also raised this issue during SOFF Regional workshops and engagements with countries.

The SOFF Secretariat in March 2026 conducted a survey of SOFF beneficiary countries, Implementing Entities, and Peer Advisors on their views on collaboration amongst operational partners and the WMO as Technical Authority to SOFF role. A follow-up consultation was held virtually with Peer Advisors and Implementing Entities on 15 April 2026 in two sessions, focused on the Technical Authority role. The survey and the

consultation meetings generated significant interest with a 65% survey response rate and 50+ stakeholders joining the meetings. The consultation showed a strong degree of consensus that the WMO as Technical Authority to SOFF should be strengthened, that its role should be clarified for the Investment Phase, and the Technical Authority should provide more timely guidance and support. Participants emphasized the need for more standardized guidance, clearer communication channels to the Technical Authority, strong backup for and knowledge sharing amongst Peer Advisors, and additional attention to regional approaches. Challenges where technical advice played a role stretched across a broad range of issues, with particular focus on procurement of upper air stations, implementation of calibration approaches, regional mechanisms of support, and international data exchange. Operational partners emphasized an expanded WMO role as Technical Authority around four areas: accessible technical guidance material, a technical helpdesk aimed first at Peer Advisors and secondarily at Implementing Entities and countries, knowledge management and building of technical best practice amongst Peer Advisors, and advice on regional support. Participants emphasized keeping Peer Advisors as the front-line technical advisor to countries and Implementing Entities, with the WMO as Technical Authority providing direct support to them and collecting technical best practice out of collective knowledge and making these knowledge products available.

The SOFF Secretariat has additionally envisaged a role for the WMO Technical Authority in the technical review of Investment Funding Requests.

## 2.2 Additionality: the core role and additional engagement

The proposed expanded role will leverage an enduring base of normative work and collective infrastructure that is also part of the Technical Authority function to SOFF. This is provided by WMO through its governing Congress and Infrastructure Commission and its body of regulations and guidance material, as well as the Secretariat support of these, including compliance monitoring mechanisms that cover all WMO Members. This base will continue to be covered by WMO regular budget resources and will continue to provide SOFF a technical framework and verification of results on which it builds.

The expanded role of the Technical Authority in the Investment Phase will ensure SOFF beneficiary countries and operational partners, in particular Peer Advisors, benefit from more timely support, and that Investment Funding Requests are screened from both an operational and technical perspective. This expanded role goes beyond what WMO can deliver from its own resources and the WMO fee on the peer advisor pass-through mechanism.

## 2.3 Value proposition for SOFF stakeholders and risks of non-action

The expansion aims to ensure that SOFF investments across countries are technically sound, efficient, sustainable, aligned with GBON requirements from design through commissioning, and include appropriate maintenance arrangements. It seeks to reduce

implementation risks and delays that could undermine results-based payments and donor confidence.

For Peer Advisors, the expanded Technical Authority role offers structured technical backstopping, shared technical learning across countries, and clearer interpretation of WMO regulations in constrained environments, enabling them to focus more effectively on country engagement and frontline technical advice to countries and Implementing Entities.

For Implementing Entities and countries, it provides backup access to authoritative guidance on complex technical issues and early technical clarity, helping to avoid costly redesigns or unsustainable choices.

For the SOFF Steering Committee, the expanded role strengthens assurance that investments are technically sound, efficiently designed, and sustainable over the long term. By explicitly acknowledging the enabling conditions in countries, and supporting data quality, and operational readiness, it will protect the results-based SOFF model and contribute to better value for money at scale. While it represents an additional early operational cost, it will help to ensure those investments provide the foundation for sustainable results.

For the SOFF Secretariat, the expanded role comes in the context of proposed clearer segregation of roles and responsibilities in line with its mandate and a corresponding realignment of the Secretariat operations team on operations programme management, portfolio oversight, and operational coordination (see Draft Decision 14.9), with WMO as Technical Authority to provide the technical backbone in collaboration with SOFF. While segregation of roles is envisioned, the two teams – WMO as Technical Authority and SOFF Secretariat operations team – will be working hand in hand.

Across all stakeholders, the proposal recognizes efficiency and sustainability in investment as a shared responsibility, requiring coordinated technical advice rather than case-by-case problem solving.

### **3. Proposed role and delivery model**

Against this background, WMO proposes to formalize and resource its expanded role as SOFF Technical Authority, initially through June 2027 (aligned with the end of SOFF's extended First Implementation period) in a manner that is transparent and clearly additional to WMO's existing responsibilities.

#### **3.1 Focus on the Investment phase**

The focus of the expanded WMO Technical Authority role until June 2027 will be on the Investment Phase and be delivered in close coordination with the SOFF Secretariat, Peer Advisors, and the appropriate WMO regional offices and designated centres.

The Investment Phase represents the most significant gap between the original Technical Authority role described in the SOFF Operational Manual and the needs identified. Under the current SOFF Operational Manual, WMO has a minimal role during this phase. WMO proposes to play a clearly defined technical role, fully complementary to the SOFF Secretariat.

Specifically, WMO would provide detailed technical review of Investment Funding Requests, focusing on the appropriateness and sustainability of proposed technical solutions in light of the approved National Contribution Plans, Country Hydromet Diagnostics, and known capacity constraints. This role would not duplicate the work of Peer Advisors or Implementing Entities, but would support them and the beneficiary countries by providing a coherent, independent technical perspective grounded in WMO regulations, guidance, and accumulated experience across regions and countries.

During Investment phase implementation, WMO would act as a technical backstop first for peer advisors, and secondarily for Implementing Entities and countries, providing advice on procurement specifications, measurement approaches, integration with national data systems, data exchange, and early operational challenges.

Through this close engagement, WMO in collaboration with the SOFF Secretariat will consolidate emerging technical best practices and lessons learnt.

Due to this expanded role and the experience gained directly in support of SOFF operations, the WMO as Technical Authority will provide a short update at each SOFF Steering Committee meeting. This will ensure that insights gained through this close engagement from a technical perspective are brought to the Steering Committee for its consideration.

The proposed Terms of Reference for this expanded role are provided in [Annex I](#).

### 3.2 Reporting

The WMO as SOFF Technical Authority will report through the Director of WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WIGOS) Division to the SOFF Steering Committee on delivery of the additional functions described above.

The WMO Technical Authority will report regularly to the Steering Committee on activities undertaken, emerging technical risks, lessons learned, and progress against agreed deliverables, as well as provide input into the SOFF independent external evaluation, in order to support oversight and inform decisions on the future evolution of the Technical Authority role.

### 3.3 Delivery arrangements and resourcing

To deliver this expanded role effectively and transparently, WMO proposes to establish a small, dedicated Technical Authority 'one-stop shop' team consisting of one P3 position, an intern, and cost recovery against the time of WMO staff and a consultant that are

technical experts in instrumentation, data exchange, and upper air stations. A small additional cost recovery for the time of infrastructure coordinators in three regional WMO offices will ensure regional knowledge is incorporated into the reviews of Investment Funding Requests and the engagement with Peer Advisors. The staff cost is estimated at 410,500 USD (of which two-thirds for dedicated resource including one professional staff member, an intern, and a 10%-time consultant, and one-third for cost recovery against existing WMO staff), to which 10,061 USD in travel funding is proposed for participation in SOFF workshops, for a total of 450,000 USD including Programme Support Costs. Details are provided in Annex II. Cost estimation for the expanded Technical Authority Function for SOFF July 2026 - June 2027.

Within the WMO Secretariat, the Technical Authority staff would work in close integration with existing departmental and regional staff across observing systems, measurements and instrumentation, and data systems, ensuring that SOFF-related technical work is embedded in, and benefits from, WMO's core technical functions. Rather than duplicating expertise, the dedicated staff would act as the focal point, drawing systematically on corporate knowledge as required, coordinating inputs, and ensuring consistency of advice across SOFF countries and partners – and delivering a responsive one-stop-shop with WMO technical knowledge.

The SOFF Secretariat and WMO Technical Authority propose that the independent external evaluation of SOFF, which will make recommendations in early 2027, be tasked with examining the roles and responsibilities of the operational partners in the Readiness and Investment phases, with particular focus on the relationship between the Technical Authority and Peer Advisors, Implementing Entities, countries, and the SOFF Secretariat. This evaluation would inform decisions on post-2027 arrangements, including whether elements of the expanded role should be adjusted or integrated into broader approaches to technical authority support for systematic observations financing, or identified as operational costs associated with each SOFF funding request.

## Annex I. Proposed Terms of Reference of the expanded Technical Authority Function for SOFF

### 1. Purpose

These Terms of Reference define the expanded role, scope, deliverables and accountability arrangements for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretariat as Technical Authority to the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF), in addition to those already described in the current version of the SOFF Operational Manual. The expanded role is intended to provide timely, authoritative and consistent technical support to SOFF implementation, while preserving the responsibilities of the SOFF Secretariat, Peer Advisors, Implementing Entities and countries.

### 2. Duration

These expanded Terms of Reference apply through 30 June 2027, aligned with the end of SOFF's First Implementation period. Future arrangements should be reviewed before that date, including through the SOFF independent external evaluation.

### 3. Principles

WMO's role as Technical Authority will be guided by the following principles:

- *Technical authority with clear boundaries:* WMO provides technical standards and specialized backstopping. It does not replace the operational, fiduciary or procurement responsibilities of Implementing Entities, nor the frontline advisory role of peer advisors.
- *Additionality and cost recovery:* WMO baseline functions remain WMO's contribution. Direct SOFF-specific support should be resourced as part of SOFF implementation.
- *Peer-Advisor-first engagement:* As a default, WMO support will be channelled through peer advisors. Direct engagement with Implementing Entities or countries may occur where needed and requested and will be coordinated with the SOFF Secretariat and Peer Advisor.
- *Consistency and learning:* WMO will promote consistent technical advice and convert recurring technical issues into guidance and lessons learned.
- *Regional relevance:* WMO will draw on Regional Offices and WMO-designated regional centres where appropriate and possible to support regional and country-level implementation.

## 4. Scope of functions

### 4.1 Baseline Technical Authority functions

WMO will continue to provide the functions described in the current version of the SOFF Operational Manual as part of its baseline contribution.

### 4.2 Expanded support for the Investment Phase

WMO will provide:

1. technical review of Investment Funding Requests, including participation in SOFF Secretariat-led meetings with Implementing Entities, Peer Advisors, and countries
2. a technical helpdesk as the main entry point to WMO Technical Authority thematic focal points, including triage where expert opinion is needed. It will provide technical backstopping during Investment Phase implementation, focused on Peer Advisors as the frontline technical resource, but open as needed to Implementing Entities and countries with Peer Advisor involvement,
3. collective technical knowledge management, and peer learning, built on proactive engagement with the peer advisor community, in collaboration with the SOFF Secretariat
4. accessible technical guidance, drawing from (3) and existing WMO technical regulations and guidance material, on:
  - a. procurement, including for surface and upper-air systems and related infrastructure,
  - b. calibration, traceability and measurement quality approaches,
  - c. WIS 2.0, data systems and first-mile data exchange,
  - d. station metadata and WIGOS tools, and
  - e. other issues raised in peer advisor consultations
5. coordination with WMO Regional Offices and designated centres to promote regional alignment with existing projects and ensure well-coordinated support to countries on GBON and related infrastructure.

The scope of the delivery arrangements below has been informed by two scenarios of SOFF investment over the coming year and therefore the volume of work dedicated to technical review of individual funding requests. The emphasis of work amongst the items above will be adjusted to the screening workload (item 1 above) – if lower, more support on further items will be possible.

## 5. Delivery arrangements

### 5.1 Helpdesk and focal points

WMO will establish a single one-stop-shop entry point for SOFF-related technical questions, as well as for the SOFF Secretariat-led review process. The helpdesk will receive, triage, assign, track and close requests, and identify recurring issues for guidance development.

WMO will identify thematic focal points for technical areas, including upper-air and surface observing systems, calibration and traceability, procurement-related specifications, metadata and WIGOS tools, WIS 2.0 and data systems, and regional coordination. Indicative response times will be subject to a service level agreement to be agreed between the SOFF Secretariat and WMO Technical Authority.

### *5.2 Knowledge management*

WMO will develop and maintain practical technical knowledge products supporting the SOFF operational community, building on Peer Advisor knowledge and practice as well as on WMO regulatory and guidance material. Priority topics include procurement, upper-air systems, calibration, metadata, WIS 2.0, data quality, and lifecycle costing. These will be integrated into the SOFF Secretariat digital platform, with other possible outputs explored, including short documents or FAQs, making them more widely understandable and available.

## 6. Roles and responsibilities specific to the expanded role of the Technical Authority

### *6.1 WMO as Technical Authority will:*

- provide authoritative technical advice on GBON, WIGOS, WIS, calibration and related standards,
- review Investment Funding Requests from a technical perspective,
- operate the helpdesk and focal point system,
- develop easily-understandable and practical guidance and knowledge products, and
- Regularly inform the SOFF Steering Committee, reporting on progress and potential issues.

### *6.2 SOFF Secretariat*

The SOFF Secretariat will ensure WMO Technical Authority inputs are integrated into SOFF workflows, providing adequate advance information to the Technical Authority on expected workloads.

### *6.3 Peer Advisors*

Peer advisors are expected to: remain the frontline technical advisors to countries; serve as the default channel for country technical questions to WMO; escalate issues requiring WMO interpretation or specialized support; and contribute lessons learned and examples of good practice.

### *6.4 Implementing Entities*

Implementing Entities are expected to: engage WMO Technical Authority through agreed channels, including the Peer Advisors, when technical clarification is required.

### *6.5 Countries*

Countries are expected to: engage WMO Technical Authority through agreed channels, including the Peer Advisor.

## 7. Reporting

WMO will report to the SOFF Steering Committee on delivery of the SOFF-funded expanded role.

WMO will report regularly on activities delivered, Investment Funding Requests reviewed, helpdesk requests received and resolved, response performance, recurring technical issues and emerging risks, knowledge products developed, and regional coordination activities.

## Annex II. Cost estimation for the expanded Technical Authority Function for SOFF July 2026 - June 2027

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| <b>New staff/consultant positions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P3 Technical Authority scientific officer and coordinator</li> <li>• intern</li> <li>• Technical specialist consultants, including for upper air stations</li> </ul>   | \$265,200        |
| <b>Cost recovery on existing WMO staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15% P4 instrumentation/calibration</li> <li>• 15% P3 data exchange</li> <li>• 5% D1 TA leader (for managing expanded role, not recovering time for general engagement with SOFF which remains WMO contribution)</li> <li>• 5% P4 infrastructure coordinators in three regional WMO offices (Africa, Americas, Asia/Pacific)</li> <li>• 2% of P5 chiefs in network design, instrumentation/calibration, data exchange to validate inputs and for escalation</li> </ul> | \$145,300        |
| <b>Travel to SOFF workshops</b>   | \$10,061         |
| <b>WMO Programme Support Costs (7%)</b>   | \$29,439         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$450,000</b> |

The budget above is indicative and is based on WMO Standard Costs for staff expressed in CHF and converted to USD using the April 2026 UN exchange rate. Small realignments within and across budget categories may be made, including for interim arrangements during recruitment processes and to respond to operational needs expressed from SOFF operational partners and SOFF Secretariat. These adjustments will be reported.