



Eleventh Steering Committee 19-21 May 2025

Extension SOFF First Implementation Period and Preparation of Expansion and Sustaining Period

Decision 11.3

Systematic Observations
Financing Facility

**Weather
and climate
data for
resilience**



Decision 11.3: Extension SOFF First Implementation Period and Preparation of the Expansion and Sustaining Period

The SOFF Steering Committee

Reiterates the unique operational and funding model on which SOFF has been created to support countries in achieving sustained Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) compliance.

Notes

- That SOFF has been operating at speed and scale in response to high country demand but that the targets set for the First Implementation Period have not yet been fully met.
- That more time is needed to mobilize the resources to deliver on the operational targets set for the First Implementation Period.
- That building a closely knit SOFF operations community of practice has been a notable initial success.

Welcomes that SOFF has been operating at low overhead costs.

Decides

- To extend the SOFF First Implementation Period by two years until June 2027.
- To adopt the work programme and budget for the extended First Implementation Period and to review it in June 2026.
- To prepare the Expansion and Sustaining Period including by capturing operational lessons learned; strengthening the role of World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Technical Authority; finalizing the SOFF Compliance Framework; advancing the SOFF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework; and undertaking an external evaluation.

Requests the SOFF Secretariat

- Inform SOFF countries, their operational partners and SOFF stakeholders about the extension of the First Implementation Period.
- To coordinate the preparation of the Expansion and Sustaining Period as outlined in this document.

Purpose of this Document

This document proposes a two-year extension of the SOFF First Implementation Period until June 2027 to allow more time to mobilize the resources required to meet the operational targets of providing Readiness support to 75 countries and Investment support to 50 countries, gain additional operational experience, and prepare for the Expansion and Sustaining Period, including capturing lessons learned, commissioning an external evaluation, and developing the SOFF Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Compliance Phase Frameworks.

Table of contents

1. Reflections from the first three years of SOFF operations	4
2. Extension of the First Implementation Period until June 2027	7
3. Key elements of the First Implementation Period extension.....	8
4. Preparing for the Expansion and Sustaining Period.....	11

Extension SOFF First Implementation Period and Preparation of Expansion and Sustaining Period

1. Reflections from the first three years of SOFF operations

1.1. A unique fund

SOFF was established at the request of the 193 countries and territories of the World Meteorological Congress in 2021 to address critical weather and climate data gaps, initially in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs)¹. Congress in 2023 requested SOFF to explore opportunities providing SOFF Investment and Compliance support also to Middle-Income Countries (MICs)².

SOFF was established as a UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNMPTF) for an initial period of 10 years with three Implementation periods: (i) Start-up Period January to June 2022; (ii) First Implementation Period July 2022 to June 2025; and (iii) Expansion and Sustaining Period July 2025 to December 2031.

SOFF is built on a unique funding and operational model for effective and sustainable support to developing countries to comply with the mandatory data sharing requirements of the Global Basic Observing Network (GBON). SOFF recognizes the global public good value of basic weather and climate data and provides long-term grant-only financial and peer-to-peer technical support. Financial and peer support is offered in three inter-linked phases: Readiness, Investment and Compliance.

SOFF delivers on the Paris Agreement call to strengthen systematic observation. During the 29th UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) conclusion noted with appreciation the support being provided by SOFF for addressing gaps in systematic observation in developing countries and invited SOFF to consider extending its support to more countries.

An independent external review concluded that SOFF is the best viable option for countries to upgrade, maintain and operate their observation systems in a sustainable fashion. It assessed SOFF as highly relevant, highly transparent, and highly effective and as foundational for additional investments of other partners ([Decision 7.2](#)).

¹ Extraordinary WMO Congress (Cg-Ext 2021) Resolution 3

² In May 2023, the 193 countries and territories of the World Meteorological Congress, [through resolution 21 \(Cg-19\)](#), requested the WMO Secretary-General “to request the SOFF Steering Committee to explore opportunities to provide SOFF investment and compliance support to Middle Income Countries in need while continue prioritizing Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.”

The Scaling International Community of Practice took SOFF as a case study and concluded that SOFF mainstreamed scaling fully into its design ([INF 8.4](#)).

1.2. SOFF has been operating at speed and scale

SOFF take-off was possible thanks to the commitment and leadership of twelve initial funders. So far, SOFF has mobilized USD 107 million, a significant achievement for a new fund in a crowded climate finance space with more than 80 active climate funds and an increasingly challenging global fundraising environment.

SOFF responded to high country demand. So far, 101 countries have requested SOFF support, 66 countries have been programmed to receive SOFF support, Readiness funding has been approved for 61 countries, and Investment funding has been approved for 15 countries (see INF 11.2). The first country funding requests were approved in March 2023, and the average time it took for the first 60 countries from being programmed to have their Readiness funding request approved was 3.7 months.

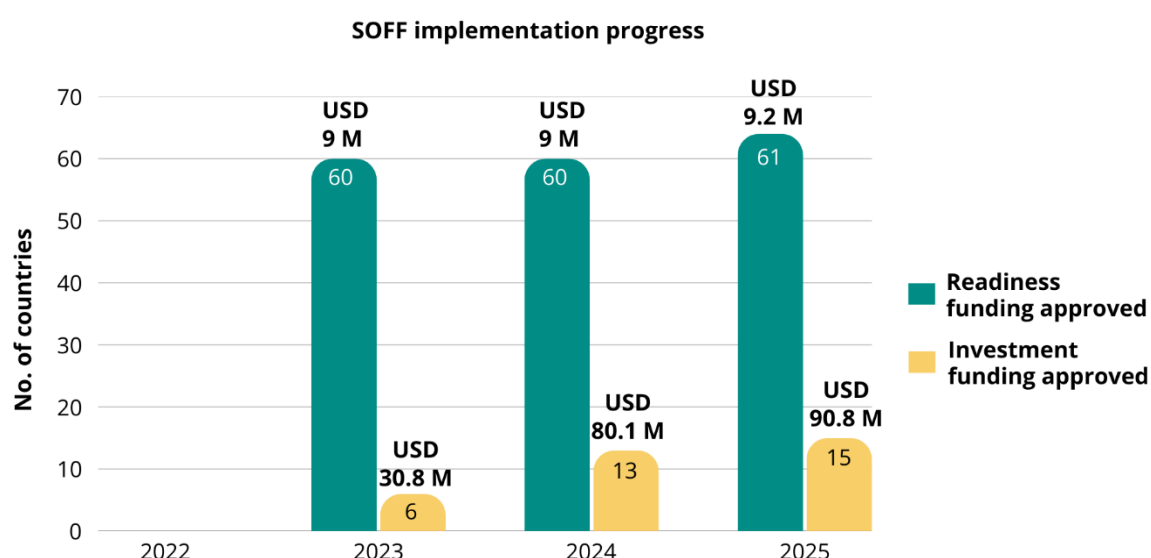


Figure 1. SOFF Implementation progress from July 2022 – April 2025. Amounts include Implementing Entity and WMO peer advisors fees.

Despite significant initial success in resource mobilization and the generous contributions from twelve funders, the external environment for international resource mobilization has dramatically worsened for all development and climate actors. These developments have significantly impacted SOFF and have limited its ability to raise the funding needed to respond to the demand for country support. More information is available in Decision 11.4 SOFF Resource Mobilization track record, requirements and actions until June 2027.

1.3. A community of practice is being built

Building a closely knit “SOFF operations community of practice” has been a notable initial success, valued by countries and operational partners. SOFF is creating systemic change to ensure long term sustainability of GBON investments, including through the systematized and long-term relationship between countries, peer advisors, Implementing Entities and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) that serves as SOFF Technical Authority. SOFF created the platform with the aim to bring together in an effective way UN organizations and Multilateral Development Banks, harvesting their country operations experience, and advanced National Meteorological and Hydrological Services serving as peer advisors that bring in the required deep technical expertise.

1.4. Review of the First Implementation Period targets

The targets set for the First Implementation Period have not yet been fully met, mainly due to the gap in achieving the initial resource mobilization target of USD 200 million and higher than estimated Investment phase costs.

Table 1. SOFF First Implementation Period Work Programme targets and financial approvals

	TARGET		APPROVALS (as of April 2025)	
	Countries	Million USD	Countries	Million USD
Country support				
Readiness	75	10.4	61	8.6
Investment	50	170.0	15	84.9
Regional		0.2		0.2
Studies				
Impact Studies		0.3		0.3
External Review		0.1		-
Sub Total		181.0		94.0
Resources dedicated to country support and studies	90%		88%	
Administrative costs (overhead)				
SOFF Secretariat		5.1		5.1
IE Fees		10.0		5.4
WMO Fees Peer Advisors		2.1		1.1
Trustee Fees		2.0		1.1
Sub Total		19.2		12.7
Resources dedicated to cover overheads	10%		12%	
TOTAL		200.2		106.7

Readiness phase costs are aligned with projections, but Investment phase costs of the first 18 funding requests are higher than estimated. An analysis of the submitted Investment funding requests found that the financial requirements to close the GBON investments gaps are higher mainly due to two factors: costing differences between High and Upper Middle-Income Countries and LDCs and SIDS supported by SOFF as well as inflation. The initial funding estimates were based on a World Bank study which assessed total costs of ownership of observation infrastructure in selected High and Upper Middle-Income Countries. With SOFF's focus on SIDS and LDCs, including many Fragile and Conflict Affected States, capacity development needs and corresponding budget allocations in the 18 submitted Investment funding requests turned out to be higher than initially anticipated, with a large range between countries. In addition, there has been double-digit inflation since the time the cost estimates were undertaken in early 2022.

SOFF has been operating at low overhead costs. Given the lower than planned approvals, total SOFF overhead costs for the first three years correspond to 12% rather than the 10% projected. This includes all Implementing Entity fees, WMO fees, trustee fees, as well as SOFF Secretariat costs and costs absorbed through the SOFF Secretariat budget like the independent external review. An analysis shows that SOFF operates with lower overhead costs than comparable climate funds. In addition, technical assistance is provided through peer advisors that operate on a non-profit and cost recovery basis.

2. Extension of the First Implementation Period until June 2027

It is proposed to keep the ambition level of the SOFF First Implementation Period – 75 countries with approved Readiness funding and 50 countries with Investment funding – but to extend the time to deliver on the operational targets until June 2027.

More time is needed to mobilize the resources to deliver on the operational targets. Given the increasingly challenging global fundraising environment, SOFF needs more time to mobilize the required resources.

More time will allow SOFF to gain additional operational experience. The extension would allow SOFF to gain more Investment phase implementation experience and to capture the lessons learned.

More time will be available to prepare the SOFF Expansion and Sustaining Period. Based on the additional operational experience gained, the extension would allow for a well-planned and seamless transition to the Expansion and Sustaining Period that would start July 2027 when the first two countries are expected to complete their Investment phase.

3. Key elements of the First Implementation Period extension

3.1. Work programme and budget for extended SOFF First Implementation Period

The estimated budget required to deliver on the First Implementation Period targets of 75 countries Readiness funding and 50 countries Investment funding has been adjusted, based on the experience of the Investment funding requests submitted so far. The total estimated budget corresponds to approximately USD 295 million, a significant increase compared to the USD 200 million initial estimate. With current pledges amounting to USD 107 million, the residual resource mobilization requirement to fully deliver on these targets corresponds to USD 188 million. Table 2 below illustrates the updated budget.

Table 2. Work Programme and budget for the extended SOFF First Implementation Period until June 2027.

	TARGET		APPROVALS AS OF APRIL 2025		REMAINING APPROVALS TO ACHIEVE WORK PROGRAMME		TOTAL
	Countries	Million USD	Countries	Million USD	Countries	Million USD	Million USD
Country support							
Readiness	75	10.4	61	8.6	14	2.0	10.6
Investment	50	170.0	15	84.9	35	167.9	252.8
Regional		0.2		0.2		0.2	0.4
Studies							
Impact Studies		0.3		0.3		0.2	0.5
External Review		0.1		-		0.1	0.1
Sub Total		181.0		94.0		170.4	264.4
Percentage of the total		90%		88%		90%	90%
Administrative costs (overhead)							
SOFF Secretariat		5.1		5.1		4.4	9.5
IE Fees		10.0		5.4		10.6	16.0
WMO Fees Peer Advisors		2.1		1.1		1.1	2.2
Trustee Fees		2.0		1.1		1.9	3.0
Sub Total		19.2		12.7		18.0	30.7
Percentage of the total		10%		12%		10%	10%
TOTAL		200.2		106.7		188.4	295.1

Delivering on the target of approving Investment phase support to 50 countries implies that in the Expansion and Sustaining Period up to USD 31 million annually³ would be required for SOFF Compliance phase payments for all 50 countries. It is important to note that countries will move into the Compliance incrementally as projected in Figure 2 that considers the estimated Compliance phase payments for the 15 countries with approved Investment phase funding requests. The first Compliance phase payments are expected to be considered by 2028, amounting up to USD 4.4 million. Final budget requirements for Compliance phase payments depend on the Steering Committee decision on the SOFF Compliance Phase Framework, including potential financial contributions from countries. As outlined in the Investment Framework, this calculation will be informed by country-specific standard costs for operation and maintenance of GBON stations estimated by operational partners at the end of the Investment Phase.

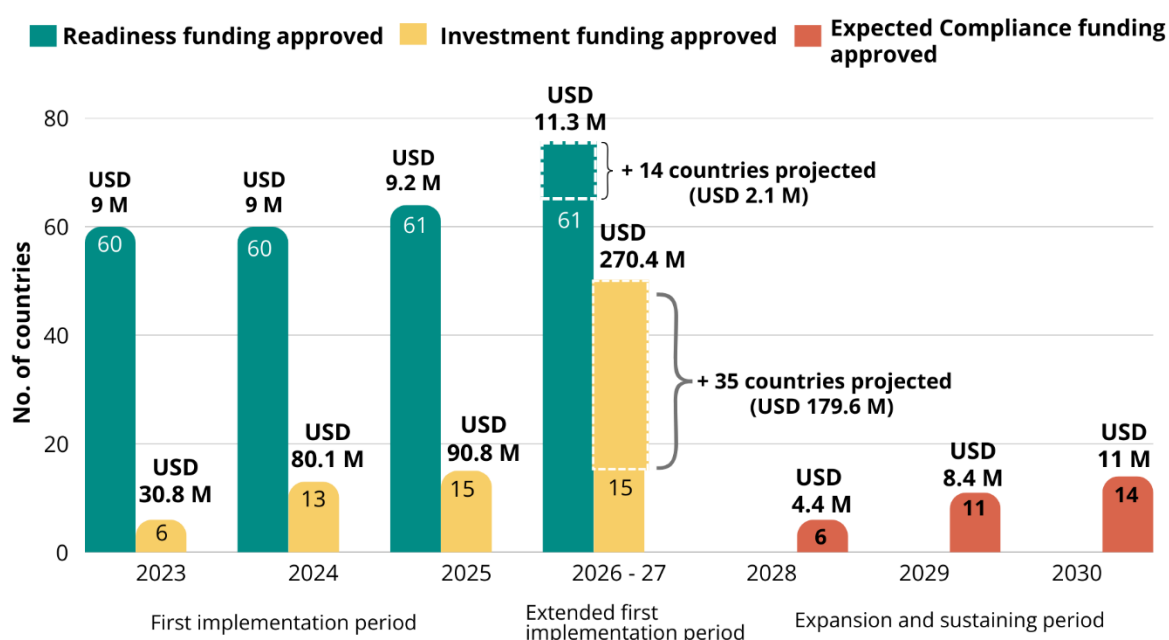


Figure 2. Evolution of the SOFF Readiness (green) and Investment (yellow) portfolio incl. expected Compliance phase payments for the 15 countries with approved Investment phase funding requests (red). Implementing Entity and WMO fees included. The first approvals of Compliance

³ Annual compliance costs were calculated based unit costs for operation and maintenance per station per year in the Investment funding requests (IFRs) of the approved 18 IFRs. The unit costs per surface station and upper air station were multiplied by the relevant number of stations, plus 10% of the total operation and maintenance costs to account for human and institutional capacity costs during the Compliance phase and an additional USD 12,000 per country per year for operation and maintenance of WIS2.0. The amount of Compliance phase payments will be further defined in the Compliance Phase Framework. Current estimates are conservative as they consider that SOFF would pay 100% of the Compliance phase costs (without financial contribution from the country). The current estimates may increase with future inflation.

phase payments are expected in 2028 during the Expansion and Sustaining Period as the first countries start completing their Investment Phase as of second half of 2027.

An adjusted results framework, aligned with Decision 11.3, will be presented alongside the SOFF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework for consideration for the 13SC. This framework will incorporate updated indicators to reflect the extended First Implementation Period. The current results framework ([Decision 6.7](#)) remains in effect until the adjusted framework is adopted.

3.2. Stepping up and innovating resource mobilization

Mobilizing the required USD 188 million by June 2027 requires substantial and innovative efforts. Decision 11.4 presents the proposed resource mobilization actions and Decision 11.5 outlines the envisioned SOFF Impact Bond.

3.3. Approach to managing country funding requests

Given current resource constraints SOFF requires a transparent approach to managing country funding requests. The Steering Committee already conditionally approved three Investment funding requests (Samoa, Nauru, Malawi), and additional Readiness and Investment funding requests are for consideration of the 11th Steering Committee meeting. Taking into consideration this “backlog” of country funding requests and the fact that mobilizing the required USD 188 million will take time, SOFF requires a further advanced and transparent approach to managing country funding requests. Decision 11.6 proposes such an approach.

3.4. Risks of missing the First Implementation Period targets

There are substantial risks associated with missing the First Implementation Period operational and adjusted resource mobilization targets. The SOFF Risk Management Framework ([Decision 4.2](#)) already highlighted the risk of SOFF not being able to mobilize sufficient resources to reach the funding targets necessary to meet its operational goals. This was identified as a high-level risk with a possible likelihood. The proposed mitigation measures for this risk included a list of actions that have largely been outlined in the short-term resource mobilization actions until June 2025 ([Decision 8.2](#)) and in Decision 11.4 Resource Mobilization track record, requirements and actions until 2027. The Risk Management Framework also identified the residual risk after mitigation measures, as the possibility of delayed implementation and SOFF's inability to meet programmatic targets.

Additionally, Decision 8.2 Updated Resource Mobilization and Outreach Strategy and Action Programme until June 2025 outlined the implications of not achieving the funding targets, summarized below:

For beneficiary countries: SOFF would fail to meet demand, disappointing country expectations, delaying benefits enabled by SOFF, and undermining long-term credibility and commitment to GBON.

For all countries: Since global weather and climate observations underpin forecasts, all countries would be affected.

For investments in the hydromet value chain: Shortfalls in sustained SOFF support for basic observations as first part of the value chain would reduce the effectiveness, benefits, and sustainability of downstream investments from other partners, including multilateral climate funds, Multilateral Development Banks, and bilateral official funders, when they depend on the accuracy of weather and climate observations and predictions.

For WMO and its Members: SOFF's resource gap would undermine GBON's credibility as a WMO flagship initiative and jeopardize future potential GBON expansion into other Earth observation domains.

For SOFF and funders: The funding gap would erode SOFF's credibility, slow momentum, discourage key partners, and risk a return to fragmented, unsustainable investments in basic observation infrastructure.

For the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process: SOFF's failure might weaken support for systematic observation and the recognition of basic weather and climate observation as an essential global public good.

4. Preparing for the Expansion and Sustaining Period

The extension of the First Implementation Period will allow more time to prepare the SOFF Expansion and Sustaining Period. This provides a critical opportunity to (i) capture lessons learned; (ii) strengthen the role of WMO Technical Authority; (iii) finalize the SOFF Compliance Framework; (iv) advance the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework; and (v) undertake an external evaluation.

4.1. Capturing operational lessons learned

SOFF has been accumulating many lessons learned through existing mechanisms, including webinars organized by the SOFF Secretariat in collaboration with the WMO Technical Authority, engagement with Implementing Entities and peer advisors, collaboration with the private sector (Association of the Hydro-Meteorological Industry, HMEI), and workshops such as those hosted by Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI) that brought together SOFF peer advisors, Implementing Entities, WMO Technical Authority and SOFF Secretariat. These activities will be continued, and lessons learned will be systematically captured and documented.

4.2. Strengthening the role of WMO Technical Authority

Decision 9.3 outlines WMO's evolving role in the implementation of SOFF and based on SOFF early implementation experience proposes an enhanced role of WMO serving as SOFF Technical Authority. The document in particular notes the importance of WMO Technical Authority in the SOFF Investment phase and identifies elements of the enhanced role. WMO's Technical Authority role will be further specified, including

potential resource implications, for consideration at the 13th Steering Committee meeting.

4.3. Finalizing Compliance Phase Framework

The Compliance Phase Framework and consultations, as outlined in [INF 8.5 Compliance Phase Framework Design and Consultation Process](#), will be finalized during the extended First Implementation Period. The finalized Compliance Phase Framework will be based upon the consultations and the lessons learned from early SOFF investments. Based on the WMO GBON compliance tool a tailored SOFF Compliance Tool will be developed. It will capture the status of GBON compliance of stations that are supported by SOFF and be publicly available on the SOFF website. The SOFF Compliance tool is expected to be operational by the end of 2025.

The SOFF Compliance Phase Framework will outline in detail the approach related to managing and setting aside resources for future Compliance phase payments of countries with approved Investment funding requests. It is expected, as stated in Decision 11.6, that in the SOFF Expansion and Sustaining Period, Compliance payments will be prioritized over approval of new Readiness or Investment funding request. The draft SOFF Compliance Phase Framework is expected to be presented to the 12SC meeting in October 2025 for feedback and consideration at the 13th Steering Committee meeting in February 2026.

4.4. Advancing Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

The SOFF Secretariat will prepare the SOFF Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework, guided by the Steering Committee and drawing on the Advisory Board's expertise, in consultations with SOFF countries, Implementing Entities, SOFF peer advisors and WMO Technical Authority. It will be aligned with the Gender Action Plan and SOFF Risk Framework. The draft framework is expected to be presented to the 12SC for review and further inputs. The refined MEL framework is expected to be submitted to the 13th Steering Committee for consideration and endorsement.

4.5. Undertaking SOFF Independent External Evaluation

As initially foreseen, SOFF will conduct an Independent External Evaluation. The following timeline is envisioned: (i) February 2026 (13SC): Steering Committee considers and approves the scope, approach, Terms of Reference, and budget; (ii) October 2026 (15SC): Steering Committee reviews preliminary findings; (iii) February 2027 (16SC): Final evaluation results are presented for consideration.

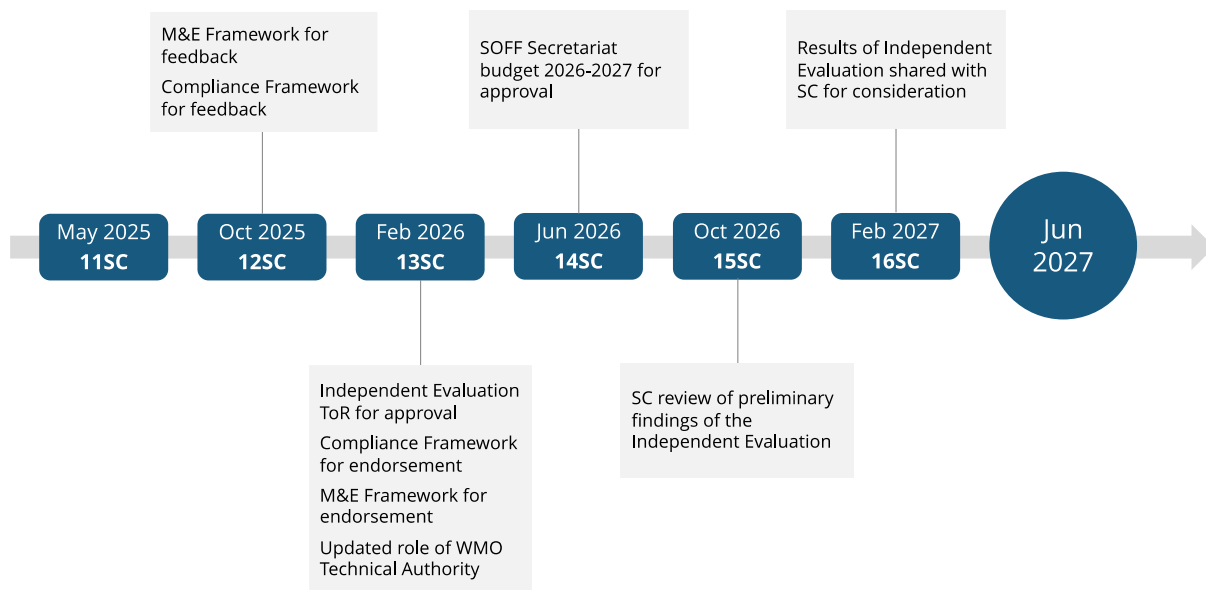


Figure 3. Timeline for preparing the SOFF Expansion and Sustaining Period.