



## **FOURTH REGULAR SESSION**

Tumon, Guam, USA

3-7 December 2007

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### **Statement of the United States of America**

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**WCPFC4-2007/DP21**

**3 December 2007**

This is the first session of the Commission at which the United States is participating as a full member. The United States is very pleased to join the other members at this table with the same responsibilities and rights as all other members have under the Convention, and the same level of commitment towards its success. We are also pleased to have been able to authorize the participation of Guam, CNMI, and American Samoa, for whom the health of our shared HMS fisheries resources is vital, to participate in the work of the Commission in accordance with Article 43 of the Convention.

We also appreciate very much the consideration we have been given by the other members while we completed our ratification processes.

Although our status in the Commission has changed, our objectives and priorities have not. We continue to believe that the top priority of the Commission right now should be the establishment of effective monitoring, control and surveillance mechanisms. Only then will the Commission have the tools it needs to formulate conservation and management measures that can be effectively and fairly implemented by all members in order to achieve the objective of the Convention – the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks and associated resources in the western and central Pacific Ocean.

We are pleased with the progress of the Commission on some MCS issues, particularly its adoption of the high seas boarding and inspection procedures last year in Apia, Samoa. But we are concerned about the slow pace of implementing the Regional Observer Programme and the vessel monitoring system. The basic provisions for both of these programs were established in the Convention nearly eight years ago. And while we have discussed their components and mechanisms for implementation for the past several years, these critically important tools have still not commenced. We understand that some still have concerns over these programs, and we also recognize that they may require some level of phased implementation. However, it is our strong view that we must take the first step and begin both the ROP and VMS programs in some capacity next year. We are prepared to work with all delegations this week in good faith to overcome the remaining concerns so that the Commission can make the decisions necessary to see both these programs implemented next year. .

We also hope to see improvements made this week to the IUU Vessel List Measure that was adopted last year. We would like to thank all those CCMs who worked intersessionally with the United States on this issue. We also look forward to progress on regulating transshipment, and we appreciate the work of other CCMs in crafting various proposals on that issue.

Although we believe this Commission meeting should be especially focused on MCS issues, of course there are pressing issues with tunas, sea turtles, and other resources that cannot be postponed. We are impressed with the level of effort that the members of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies have devoted to the complex issues of conserving and managing resources such as bigeye and yellowfin tuna, albacore, billfish and sharks, as well as reducing or mitigating the bycatch of sea turtles and seabirds. We hope that this week we can make further progress on these issues, particularly with respect to bigeye tuna and yellowfin tuna and adopting a conservation and management measure for sea turtles.

Finally, the United States strongly believes that the WCPFC Secretariat should be adequately funded to carry out all of the tasks assigned to it by the Commission. In particular, it is critical that the budget allow the Secretariat to operationalize important MCS tools, such as the ROP and VMS, as well as to develop and support the infrastructure necessary to operate effectively. We look forward to working with all delegations on these important issues.