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OPENING STATEMENT – NEW CALEDONIA

WCPFC4-2007/DP27
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Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the New Caledonian government, I would like to thank the authorities and the people of Guam for their warm welcome here in Tumon and to express my gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Secretariat of the Commission for having provided to us the necessary background information for a successful meeting.

Among all the outstanding issues still before us is the allocation of fishing rights. This issue is due to be addressed in the forthcoming years and we look forward to exchanging views with the other participants on this matter. In this regard I have read with great interest the comments provided by some delegations and share the concern expressed that we should not wait for bad stock status before agreeing on the rules on allocation.

Our approach on this issue is to give adequate weight to the historical fishing activity (both effort and catch) of each participant to the commission without ignoring the need to take account of its commitment to a better assessment of the stocks (data provision, scientific programmes, ...). This should not result, however, to an unfair situation for island States and territories which have limited resources, in particular to undertake research activity.

The importance to reach a consensus soonest on allocation strengthens the need to progress adequately on the issues of the regional observer programme and the regional VMS. During this year's meetings of the WCPFC subsidiary bodies we faced some difficulties to move forward with these issues. It is unlikely that our recently created commission will be regarded with more indulgence than the other tuna RFMOs with regard to performance since the WCPFC is in charge of managing the largest tuna resources in the world.

Mr. Chairman, this is our responsibility as participants to the WCPFC, to cooperate to put in place the necessary measures and tools to achieve adequate management and conservation of our highly migratory fish stocks. In particular, each CCM has to work transparently so that all relevant information is provided to the commission in a timely manner. This is especially important for some fisheries where the fishing activity is changing very rapidly (increasing effort, new technologies and strategies which impact on fishing efficiency).

Before finishing I would like to confirm that New Caledonia is about to make a voluntary contribution of about 12,500 US\$ to the WCPFC budget for the current year.

Thank you.