



**FOURTH REGULAR SESSION
Tumon, Guam, USA
3-7 December 2007**

**STATEMENT DATED 21ST NOVEMBER 2007 IN SUPPORT OF BELIZE'S APPLICATION
DATED 23RD AUGUST 2007 FOR COOPERATING NON-MEMBER STATUS OF WCPFC AS
WELL AS THE REQUEST SUBMITTED TO EACH MEMBER FOR AN INVITATION FOR
BELIZE TO BECOME A PARTY TO THE WCPFC CONVENTION**

**WCPFC4-2007-OP03
24 November 2007**

Submitted by Belize

You will have observed from our abovementioned Application that:

- **Belize is a small developing nation.** It is a member of the FAO, CRFM, OSPESCA, COPACO and IAC. It is also a Contracting Party of ICCAT and IOTC. It is a Cooperating non-Contracting Party of IATTC and will become a Contracting Party thereof latest by when the "Antigua Convention" to which it acceded on 12th June 2007 comes into force which is expected in 2009. It is also a Cooperating non-Contracting Party of NEAFC.
- You will also have observed that we have made detailed submissions in accordance with Article 32 of WCPFC's Convention and have responded to your Commission's letter dated 6th March 2007. Our Submissions and our actions are evidence of our expressed commitment to cooperate fully in the implementation of conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission and to ensure that our fishing vessels which operate in the Convention area comply with the provisions of the Convention and the conservation and management measures adopted under it.
- Belize has no fishing vessels on any RFMO IUU Lists.
- Belize has ratified/accepted the FAO Compliance Agreement, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement as well as the IPOA IUU. Its Ship Registry was awarded the U.S. Coast Guard's Quality Shipping in the 21st Century designation for the second year in succession. Also, its procedures, both for ship registration and surveying as well as for monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing vessels have been certified as meeting the Quality System standards of ISO 9001-2000 accreditation and are externally audited annually.

It is important to note that Belize has had and continues to have a real interest in the WCPFC Convention area and the presence of its fishing vessels in the WCPFC pre-dates the formation of this Commission. It is therefore not a new entrant. On the related topic of capacity, in

2001, Belize had 54 longline fishing vessels operating in the WCPO, in 2002 41 vessels, in 2003 38 vessels, in 2004 42 vessels, in 2005 30 vessels, in 2006 9 vessels which continues to be the case today. The reason for the very large reduction in 2006 was the discriminatory action taken by two members of your Commission in not renewing the licenses of fishing vessels which had previously been licensed/were operating in their EEZ's/WCPO as the result of your Commission's decision in 2005 at WCPFC 2 **after we had applied for membership of this Commission.** Consequently, the Owners of 18 longliners were forced to register them under the flag of the Federated States of Micronesia. We have expressed our views and have reserved our position in writing on this action both to the States concerned as well as to the Executive Director. We shall not dwell on this particular issue except to state that as a consequence of the abovementioned discrimination, the Federated States of Micronesia has increased its fishing capacity from 12 to about 30 longliners since 2006.

At the same time, we would like to draw your particular attention to the fact that such discriminatory practices are not prevalent in other tuna RFMOs. For example, in ICCAT (Atlantic) the Distant Water Fishing Fleets of certain of your Members: Japan, China, Chinese Taipei, Korea, Philippines, Vanuatu are accommodated in all species and benefit from substantial quotas/catch limits as a proportion of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) especially for certain species e.g. Bigeye Tuna. We continue to hope that WCPFC will change its current discriminatory policy during WCPFC4 which would be in the best interests of its Members.

We have submitted our Catch and Effort data for all our fishing vessels for 2004, 2005 and 2006 together with a Summary of our historical fisheries in the WCPO since 2001. **Therefore, the acceptance of Belize as a Cooperating non-Member will not result in any increase in the existing scientific projections/ calculations in respect of catch/effort or capacity.** Furthermore, out of the nine fishing vessels which are licensed by us to fish in the WCPO, only 4 operate exclusively in the Convention area. The remaining 5 fishing vessels are also licensed to fish in the IOTC and/or IATTC Convention areas where Belize is already a Contracting Party/Cooperating non-Contracting Party. It is therefore also a practical necessity that WCPFC grants Belize Cooperating non-Member Status because its Convention area is between those of IOTC and IATTC and even overlaps with the latter. **In addition, we wish to participate with our refrigerated carrier vessels in effecting transshipments at sea in conformity with Article 29 of your Convention and any procedures developed thereunder. Our refrigerated carrier vessels are currently receiving such transshipments in the NEAFC Convention area in full compliance with their regulations.**

With respect to our Application, we would like to refer to Part III Article 8 Section 3 of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement which places an obligation on States "to cooperate by becoming a member of such an organization" (meaning RFMO) and goes on to state that "the terms of participation of such organization or arrangements shall not preclude such States from membership or participation, nor shall they be applied in a manner which discriminates against any State or group of States". We are also encouraged to note that:

- the "Suggested Criteria for Reviewing the Performance of RFMOs" developed as the result of the joint meeting of RFMOs includes the topic of attainment of membership of

RFMOs under the "Area" of the "International Cooperation". WCPFC's performance in this regard will also be assessed.

- the recent Report by Chatham House on the "Recommended Best Practices for Regional Fisheries Management Organizations" underscores the importance of conformity with UNCLOS and UNFSA in relation to the admission of parties with a real interest in a fishery in the Convention area of an RFMO. Failure to do so, amongst other adverse consequences, has the effect of promoting IUU fishing.

Finally, although consensus could not be reached at WCPFC 3 on inviting us to become Cooperating non-Members, nevertheless, there was a clear majority of States who spoke in favour of us joining. We therefore look forward to a favourable outcome at WCPFC 4 which, in our view, would also be in the best interests of your Members as well as the preservation of your Commission's credibility internationally as a responsible RFMO which is compliant with both the spirit and the letter of all UN and FAO Conventions/Agreements/Guidelines relating to fishing.