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**PROPOSED RESOLUTION ON SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE AND SWORDFISH**

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**WCPFC2-2005/DP.09**  
**15<sup>th</sup> November 2005**

**Proposal submitted by New Zealand**

***Rationale***

There are likely to be a number of proposals put forward in the Commission relating to longline fishing effort including: a proposal from the Northern Committee to restrict longline fishing effort north of 20N in order to ensure the sustainable management and conservation of North Pacific albacore; and proposals to restrict longline fishing effort in equatorial waters within the Convention Area, in order to ensure the sustainable management and conservation of bigeye tuna.

Should proposals of this nature be adopted by the Commission there would very likely be a shift of longline effort into the area south of 20S. Furthermore, any additional longline fishing capacity being introduced into the Convention Area would have nowhere to go except south of 20S. The impacts on South Pacific albacore and swordfish fisheries south of 20S are likely to be severe. Already several coastal states in the region are experiencing low catch rates of South Pacific albacore within their EEZs due to the age structure of this fishery and variable oceanographic conditions, putting the economic viability of those fisheries at risk.

While the South Pacific albacore assessment carried out by the Scientific Committee found that current levels of catch and effort are sustainable, estimates of MSY are highly uncertain because of the extrapolation of catch and effort well beyond any historical levels. Furthermore, the Scientific Committee noted that there are critical biological uncertainties for South Pacific albacore that should be addressed in order to inform the next full stock assessment. The Scientific Committee reported that, given the age-specific mortality of the longline fleets, any significant increase in effort would further reduce CPUE to even lower levels with only moderate increases in yields.

CPUE reductions may be more severe in areas of locally concentrated fishing effort (for example within the national waters of coastal states). Projections demonstrated that longline exploitable biomass, and hence CPUE, would fall sharply if catch and effort were increased to MSY levels. Therefore, the economic consequences of any such increases should be carefully assessed beforehand. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that swordfish are also vulnerable to localised depletion in the southwest Pacific.

The proposed resolution on South Pacific albacore and swordfish recognises the fishing interests and aspirations of coastal States, particularly small island developing States, and

territories and possessions, in whose areas of national jurisdiction the stocks of South Pacific albacore and swordfish also occur.

It also recognises the need for all Commission Members, Cooperating Non-Members, and participating Territories (CCMs) that fish for these two species to work together to ensure their long term sustainability, including meeting their responsibilities in respect of data collection and reporting, and cooperation on effective management.

***Proposed Resolution on Southern Albacore and Swordfish***

1. Commission Members, Cooperating Non-Members, and participating Territories (CCMs) shall not increase the number of their fishing vessels catching South Pacific albacore or swordfish in the Convention Area south of 20S above the average of the annual number of their vessels active the Convention Area south of 20S between 2001-2004 as determined by the Executive Director.
2. CCMs shall not increase their catches of South Pacific albacore or swordfish in the Convention Area south of 20S above the average of their annual catches in the Convention Area south of 20S between 2001-2004 as determined by the Executive Director.
3. The provisions of paragraphs 1 and 2 shall not prejudice the rights and obligations under international law of those coastal state CCMs in the Convention Area for whom South Pacific albacore is an important component of the domestic tuna fishery in waters under their national jurisdiction, and who may wish to pursue a responsible level of development of their own fisheries for South Pacific albacore and swordfish in the Convention Area south of 20S in the future.
4. CCMs for whom South Pacific albacore is an important component of the domestic tuna fishery in waters under their national jurisdiction, and those CCMs that fish for South Pacific albacore and/or swordfish in the Convention Area south of 20S shall work together to protect the long-term sustainability and economic viability of the fisheries for South Pacific albacore and swordfish, including cooperation on research to reduce uncertainty with regard to the status of these two stocks.