



STATEMENT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

Mr. Chairman and Commission members:

On behalf of the Inter-American Tropical Commission, I would like to congratulate the new members of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, on the occasion of your second meeting. I am pleased to be here in Pohnpei representing the IATTC .

It is well known to all of us at this meeting that several stocks of species which are the responsibility of both Commissions cross the boundaries of competence of both organizations, and that their management therefore requires cooperation between the two Commissions. No other two international fisheries commissions have a similar situation. We therefore have a unique responsibility to work closely together, and to do so in a truly meaningful way. This unique responsibility was foreseen by the drafters of your Convention, as well the drafters of the Antigua Convention, which will replace and strengthen the current IATTC Convention.

We now need to give effect to the required cooperation by deciding the best way to ensure a systematic dialogue on management issues, and cooperative work on scientific matters. There are several approaches that could be undertaken, and some work was done on the subject for the Preparatory Conference. So far, neither Commission has yet to consider whether and how to formalize the cooperative relationship between the two.

While we are waiting to see how cooperation evolves in institutional terms, a management dialogue of sorts, and important cooperative scientific work, is, in fact, ongoing. With regard to management, the IATTC has formally communicated with the WCPFC on two matters.

One is the issue of purse seine capacity. At its annual meeting in 2004, the IATTC expressed its concern over Pacific-wide increases in purse seine capacity, and, in a letter in August 2004, urged the WCPFC Preparatory Conference to do what it could to address this problem, and more specifically to take action to monitor and restrain the increase in fishing capacity occurring in the western and central Pacific.

The second management issue is the conservation of Northern Albacore tuna, a stock which crosses the Pacific. In August of this year, the IATTC Secretariat wrote to the

WCPFC Chairman regarding to a new IATTC Resolution on albacore tuna, which includes a request for the WCPFC to take measures similar to those adopted by the IATTC for the conservation of albacore, mainly the limitation of fishing effort to current levels.

On the science front, in addition to the ongoing need for close collaboration in stock assessments and for sharing relevant scientific information, there are three specific matters which I would like to bring to your attention. First is the matter of cooperation in the assessments of the stock status of key shark species, and the development of a research plan for a comprehensive assessment of these stocks. This issue was also the subject of a recent IATTC resolution and of the August 2005 letter to Chairman Hurry.

The second science issue I would note is the importance of continuing the Pacific-wide modeling of bigeye tuna. This species is one that is the subject of management measures in the eastern Pacific, and perhaps management measures for bigeye in the western Pacific will be considered at this meeting. It is not clear whether bigeye can be managed successfully without taking account of interactions across the Pacific, so cooperation in the management of this species is important to both Commissions.

Finally, there is great scientific value in close cooperation in Pacific wide tagging of tropical tunas. We understand that a tagging program is likely to take place in the western and central Pacific in the near future, and the IATTC nations are considering support for a new tagging program for tropical tunas in the eastern Pacific. The value of both tagging programs would be enhanced by coordinating efforts, particularly with regard to tagging tunas near the border of the two convention areas. Such tagging work would help scientists better understand the stock structure and migratory patterns of the stocks, especially for bigeye tuna.

Mr. Chairman, your meeting has a heavy agenda this week, including several matters which have an important bearing on the work of the IATTC. I look forward to the discussion of those, as well as other issues, and wish you every success in this important meeting.