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Panama Statement to WCPFC22 on Participatory Rights

WCPFC22-2025-OP24
30 November 2025

Submitted by Panama

Esteemed Members,

Panama wishes to provide clarity regarding its request under this agenda item, which seeks the approval of Members for the expansion of Panama's participatory rights within the Commission.

Panama is requesting approval for the inclusion of up to five purse-seine vessels under the Panamanian flag. These vessels are already included in the WCPFC Record and currently operate under the Ecuadorian flag within the EEZs of PNA members.

Panama wishes to highlight the following elements:

1. No increase in fishing capacity or fishing effort

The vessels concerned are already operating in the region under authorizations issued by coastal States. Panama is seeking only the acquisition of participation rights to allow their reflagging, without generating any additional fishing opportunities, effort, or fishing days.

2. Full respect for coastal State licensing systems

Should Members approve this request, the vessels will continue to operate solely under the conditions, allocations, and national regulations established by each coastal State, in full alignment with regional arrangements.

3. Engagement with Kiribati and PNA members

In preparing this proposal, Panama has undertaken constructive exchanges with Kiribati, as well as with several PNA members, to ensure that the transition aligns fully with their national licensing systems, allocation frameworks, and regional obligations. Panama values and respects the central role of coastal States in the management of fisheries in this region.

4. Clarification regarding fishing effort and Kiribati's allocations

The reflagging of these five purse-seine vessels from Ecuador to Panama does not result in any increase in fishing effort. The vessels will continue to operate strictly within the number of days allocated by Kiribati under its PAE, with no additional days created and no changes to the TAE. This ensures that all activity remains fully within the limits established both by the Commission and by the competent authorities of Kiribati.

Panama therefore reiterates that its request to expand its participation rights—allowing these purse-seine vessels to operate under the Panamanian flag—constitutes a change of flag only, while maintaining full compliance with conservation and management measures and with the licensing conditions issued by the coastal State.

This proposal represents a transparent, orderly, and fully compliant transition that supports the responsible management of highly migratory stocks without altering the balance of existing effort in the region.

Panama respectfully submits this proposal in a cooperative spirit and invites Members to consider favorably the approval of these participation rights, allowing these vessels to continue operating under a responsible and transparent flag State, without affecting allocations or the rights of coastal States.

Thank you.