



## **FIFTH REGULAR SESSION**

8-12 December 2008

Busan, Korea

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### **NEW CALEDONIA – OPENING STATEMENT**

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**WCPFC5-2008/DP15**

**8 December 2008**

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the New Caledonia government, I would like to thank the government and the people of Korea for welcoming us in Pusan and to express my gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the secretariat of the commission for all the efforts made during this year to prepare for a successful meeting.

This session must be a successful one. In Guam last year, the commission could not reach a consensus to adopt new conservation and management measures for bigeye and yellowfin tuna which are being overfished, at a threatening level in the case of bigeye.

As the RFMO has to manage the largest tuna stocks in the world which account for more than 50% of the world's catch, there is an urgent need for the WCPFC to achieve management measures capable of ensuring the sustainable use of these stocks. In saying that, New Caledonia is especially mindful of the major role of these resources in the Pacific islands countries and territories, whose tuna fleets entirely depend on the regional stocks.

As stated in our annual report to the commission New Caledonia has a fleet of about 25 longliners which catch 2,500 tonnes of tuna annually. Only a very small proportion of the catch is composed of bigeye and yellowfin, South Pacific albacore being the target species of these vessels. Like other neighbouring CCMs in the South Pacific, New Caledonia's concerns about the status of the stocks are not only driven by fishing views, but also by ecosystem approach since the depletion of the bigeye and yellowfin stocks may impact the pelagic ecosystem in general.

I would also like to point out that, despite the small quantities of bigeye and yellowfin caught, our small longline fishery draws a substantial benefit from these stocks because a significant proportion of these fish is sold on the sashimi market, with a much better added value than cannery fish.

In 2008 good work was achieved within the commission's subsidiary committees and working groups, in particular on issues related to the regional observer programme and the VMS. Now, in the plenary, we must agree to put in place tools like the ROP and the VMS so that the conservation and management measures are efficient.

Several times in the past New Caledonia expressed its concerns about the expansion of unregulated fishing in the south-west Pacific Ocean. Unfortunately, a foreign vessel was apprehended last year and fined for illegal fishing in the EEZ around New Caledonia and for not complying with the order to stop from the patrol boat.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express once again our commitment to combating against these activities, and ask all fishing countries to responsibly regulate the activity of their respective vessels in the convention area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.