



TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

Sixth Regular Session

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Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

STATEMENT ON PROHIBITION OF SETTING ON WHALE SHARKS – REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS ON BEHALF OF THE PARTIES TO THE NAURU AGREEMENT

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Paper prepared by Republic of the Marshall Islands on behalf of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement



STATEMENT BY PNA CHAIR GLEN JOSEPH TO THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE WCPFC TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE ON THE CONSERVATION MEASURE TO PROHIBIT SETTING ON WHALE SHARKS

1. Chair, I wish to inform TCC of additional conservation and management measures PNA have adopted with regards to setting on whale sharks by purse seine vessels
2. At the 30th Special Meeting, PNA adopted additional conservation measures to prohibit the setting on whale sharks. Specifically, the measure which is to be applied through amendment to the PNA 3rd Implementing Arrangement prohibits sets associated with whale sharks. The measure stipulates that “No purse seine vessel shall engage in fishing or related activity in order to catch tuna associated with whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*).” This measure is to take effect from 1 January 2011.
3. Whale sharks are large slow swimming species of plankton feeding shark, which act as a natural FAD to tuna species. This species is already protected in the waters of a number of countries throughout the world, and is also CITES listed. Such protection has been extended to this species because of its typical shark characteristics of slow growth and small number of offspring, as well as concern over its stocks and the vulnerability that comes with the significant size of this animal.
4. While observer reports in past years have not been extensive, these reports recorded a total of 42 whale shark encounters observed on FSM arrangement vessels during 2007 and 2008, of which 38 whale sharks were released alive and 4 listed as dead. Also a total of 18 whale sharks were encountered on US purse-seine vessels during 2007 and 2008, of which 17 were released alive and 1 dead. This represents a mortality level of about 12%. Taking into account, the low level of observer coverage during this period, the overall level of mortality would be considerably higher and unlikely to be sustainable.
5. This is an issue of increasing concern to environmental groups and our policies and measures on this as part of a sustainably well managed fishery including impacts on other incidental species is to prohibit the targeted setting of purse seine nets on whale sharks in the waters of the PNA does not exist.

6. We intend to implement this arrangement as of 1 January 2011 using a rule similar to the FAD closure. We will also introduce rules for actions to be taken in the event of accidental encirclement.

7. With the implementation of 100% observer coverage, there is capacity to apply effective monitoring and compliance.

8. Chair, we intend to table a proposal at WCPFC7 so that the Commission can introduce compatible measures.