



SIXTH REGULAR SESSION

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Philippines – Opening Statement

WCPFC6-2009/DP35

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Submitted by the Philippines

GOOD MORNING!

The Philippine Government acknowledges with great appreciation the tremendous efforts being exerted by the French Polynesian Government in hosting the 6th Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission here in Papeete. We join everyone in thanking the Government and the people of French Polynesia for the kind reception and hospitality accorded to all of us.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight once again the Philippine government's position – as contained in the discussion paper and our letter to the Honourable Chairman containing additional information supporting and clarifying our position on the proposed amendments to paragraph 22 of the Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) 2008-01.

The Philippines is committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks consistent with its rights and obligations under the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and the WCPFC Convention. This commitment may be noted from the progressive implementation of the WCPFC Convention and conservation and management measures in the country, as well as the continuing cooperation of the Philippines with other CCMs.

However, the Philippines strongly maintains that high seas closure would be detrimental to the very existence of its fishing industry, particularly the small and medium-scale vessels. Aside from the significant importance of fisheries to the food security and economic sustainability of the Philippines, the substantial impact that a high seas closure will have on the Philippine fishing industry, as well as the peace and security issues in Mindanao, Southern Philippines, we would like to highlight a number of compelling factors that CCMs would need to take into account in the application of para. 22 of CMM 2008-01, which include:

The requirement to consider relevant environmental and economic factors in the implementation of compatible measures on BET and YFT for the high seas and the EEZ as provided in Article 5 of the WCPFC Convention;

The need to ensure that measures adopted by the Commission do not result in a disproportionate burden of conservation action onto developing States Parties, territories and possessions in accordance with Article 30 (2)(c) of the WCPFC Convention;

The Requirement for the Commission to encourage CCMs to ensure that the effectiveness of specific measures adopted in CMM 2008-01 is not undermined by a transfer of effort into archipelagic waters and territorial seas;

The need to consider scientific evidence in support of adopting conservation and management measures, such as studies by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) suggesting that high seas closure will have a negligible effect on reducing overfishing or moving the stock away from an overfished state; and

The potential application of measures such as the Vessel Days Scheme, and other measures, which could similarly achieve the objectives of CMM 2008-01 without adversely affecting the development of domestic fisheries, in keeping with Resolution 2008-01 on the Aspirations of Small Island Developing States and Territories.

In light of the above considerations, the Philippines would like to reiterate its position to review para. 22 of CMM 2008-01 on high seas closure. The Philippines proposes that high seas areas west of 140 degrees East remain open for purse seine fishing for vessels not exceeding 500GT, and that the Commission adopt a Vessel Days Scheme as an additional measure to control fishing effort on the said high seas area of the WCPO.

Lastly, the Philippines is currently putting in place measures that will ensure sustainable utilization and management of tuna stocks consistent with the conservation and management measures set out by the Commission.

Thank you and have a good day ahead!....