



SIXTH REGULAR SESSION
Papeete, Tahiti, French Polynesia
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PAPUA NEW GUINEA – STATEMENT

WCPFC6-2009/DP40
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Thank you Mr. Chairman

1. Chair I also wish to join others in congratulating you in your election to the chair of the Commission. With your long and distinguished experience in fisheries, and most notably your involvement in the MHLIC process in setting up the WCPF Commission, we are confident that you will provide the insight and foresight into the many issues that affect us as members to this Commission. I wish to also acknowledge the tireless effort of the outgoing Chairman, Prof. Glenn Hurry. The rapid pace at which we have achieved Commission measures under his chairmanship is a testimony to his astute leadership.

2. I wish to also extend my delegation's gratitude to the government and people of French Polynesia for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us since our arrival.

3. Chairman, it is important to note that our RFMO, the WCPFC is quite unique compared to other RFMOs, in that we have exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of coastal states and high seas pocket onclaves that spreads through out the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), with these coastal states having sovereignty and sovereign rights over their respective EEZs and other waters that directly come under their national jurisdiction. This unique situation has served us well in regards conservation and management of the resources. I am sure the active participation of coastal states in the WCPFC Convention is an envy and example to other coastal states under other RFMOs.

4. It is in this regard Mr. Chairman, that I wish to call on all CCMs and those who wish to fish in our waters to respect the exercise of our sovereign rights and sovereignty in our EEZs on how we wish to manage and develop the common stocks that straddle the high seas and our in zones. To our extreme disappointment as you will recall, we continue to debate areas under national jurisdiction with regards to the application of the Convention and Commission measures to archipelagic waters. A classical example is paragraph 174 of WCPFC5 Record of Proceedings which we believe is being manipulated by some CCMs and WCPFC secretariat after the Bussan meeting. It is our understanding that the WCPFC5 record is not yet cleared, and we wonder when it would be cleared. We further note that the text of this particular paragraph as revised does not in our opinion reflect clarification provided by the Commission Legal Counsel and consensus reached in Bussan. We still maintain that areas under national jurisdiction within the context of WCPFC refers to the EEZs, and as stipulated under Art56 of UNCLOS does not apply to territorial or archipelagic waters. Having said this, we see that this debate will however continue as some CCMs have not ratified UNCLOS, UN Fish Stock Agreements and others have vested interest in trying to deprive our rights.

5. We therefore call on members to cooperate by way of accommodating the varying and competing interests of members, as we all have the “duty to cooperate”. In noting this, we however do not want to see development aspirations of Small Island Development States (SIDs) and territories is undermined through abuse of WCPFC measures. We do not accept, Mr. Chairman, the fact that certain CCMs can continue to enjoy exemptions at our expense to conserve resources for the development of their industries whilst exemptions afforded to SIDs come under continued scrutiny. I wish to remind members that exemptions to SIDs are an expression of our sovereignty and sovereign rights to participate in the development of tuna resources that straddle our waters. Members, especially the fishing states and development partners should know that we are now at the threshold of effecting drastic change to our relations with them, and that it would be in their interests to seriously consider cooperating with coastal states to assist with their development aspirations, if they have not done yet.

6. It is no denying Mr. Chairman that as coastal states we have taken the lead in our in zones in this Commission in coming up with conservation measures to addressing concerns on the depletion of the region’s tuna stock, particularly bigeye and yellow fin tuna. Though we understand that certain aspects of CMM 2008-01 would be re-looked at this meeting, we maintain that we have to allow sufficient time for this measure to be implemented so that we can thoroughly assess its impact. We therefore do not envisage additional measures, but should there be any; it should only serve the purpose of strengthening the measure further, including closing additional areas both closed and semi enclosed high seas. Maybe the Commission should seriously consider bringing in the long line vessels into the equation as well, instead of focusing its attention on the purse seine fishing operations only, especially when it is now common knowledge that long line vessels are also a significant contributor in the high seas.

7. We like to see that the high seas pocket closure is maintained, as we note that Commission measures for high sea is still a work in progress. In further noting that the high seas are the area of competence of the Commission, we would like to encourage the Commission to focus its efforts in addressing the high seas pockets and the high seas areas within the Convention area. We say this in acknowledgement of in zone measures we have in place, and the resources we have invested in ensuring that the tuna stocks are managed and harvested in a sustainable manner.

8. Chair, in this connection, we recognize the paramount importance of the ROP and VMS. We like to see that these are given high priority and that any outstanding issues be resolved as soon as practicable. Without this we can not see how Commission measures can be implemented and monitored effectively. Also, it is important that we look at ways in which we can improve reporting whereby we can reduce cost of data management amongst others.

9. Chair, we strongly discourage the formation of intersessional working groups, as we believe it just takes up what little time and resources we have, let alone the potential for issues not to be fully debated. There is a tendency that decision made in these small groups may have serious ramification for us, when we may not have the opportunity to fully participate in the process.

10. Chair, I shall stop here as time is of essence, but before I do so, on a personal note, my delegation wish to acknowledge the outgoing Executive Director of the Commission Mr. Andrew Wright. We would like to thank him for his exemplary leadership at the helm at the secretariat. We also acknowledge invaluable contributions to the Commission made by Mr. Andy Richards, outgoing Compliance manager.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

Hon. Ben Semri
Minister for Fisheries
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