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THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS POSITION STATEMENT TO TCC10

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The Pew Charitable Trusts
Position Statement to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
10th Regular Session of the Technical and Compliance Committee
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia
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The Pew Charitable Trusts thanks the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) for the opportunity to participate in the 10th Regular Session of the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC10) as an observer. Pew looks forward to working with all parties to improve the sustainability of the fisheries within the WCPFC Convention Area and urges TCC10 to make progress on key areas of work by agreeing:

- To recommend a robust rebuilding target for Pacific bluefin tuna;
- To recommend mechanisms to end bigeye overfishing;
- To advance the development of target reference points and harvest control rules;
- To recommend measures to improve the conservation of sharks;
- To recommend measures to end illegal fishing.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

The 2014 stock assessment update for Pacific bluefin tuna, conducted by the International Scientific Committee (ISC), found that the population continues to be severely depleted, at just 4 percent of its historic size. As part of the assessment, the ISC also analyzed the future effects of seven different catch scenarios. Only one scenario predicted significant growth of the population under current recruitment conditions. At its 2014 meeting, the Northern Committee recommended a measure that will implement needed short-term catch cuts in line with the ISC analysis, but could only agree on a 10-year rebuilding target of 8 percent of historic biomass, meaning that at best the population will remain severely depleted for at least another decade. **TCC10 should recommend that 1) the Northern Committee revisit and strengthen this rebuilding target at its 2016 meeting, and 2) the Commission should work with the IATTC to agree on Pacific-wide management measures that will return the population to at least 25 percent of historic biomass within 10 years.**

Ending Bigeye Overfishing

Bigeye tuna is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Fishing mortality has increased to 1.57 times the fishing mortality that will support the maximum sustained yield. The spawning biomass of bigeye tuna has breached the limit reference point of 0.20 SB₀ agreed to by the WCPFC for assessing stock status. The 10th Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC10) has recommended a 36 percent reduction in fishing mortality from the average levels of 2008-2011. Such a reduction in the FAD fishery would limit the number of FAD sets to 10,220. **TCC10 should recommend that 1) reductions in mortality should come from all fisheries, and include scientifically-based FAD set limits, and 2) request the science provider develop for WCPFC11 projected conditions to remove 100 percent of bigeye overfishing from a**

range of FAD set limits and longline fishing mortality reductions, similar to the projections for the 2013 Working Group on Tropical Tunas.

FAD Monitoring and Tracking

SC10 supported a proposal from the WCPFC Executive Director to establish a Working Group on FAD Management to consider FAD marking, identification and use of electronic signatures; FAD tracking and control; and management options that include FAD limits. **TCC10 should support the proposal and provide commentary on the constituency of the FAD management working group.**

Reducing Purse Seine Overcapacity

Purse seine capacity continues to increase. A record 297 vessels fished in the WCPO in 2013. Even more – 305 vessels – are estimated to fish in 2014. As specified by CMM 2013-01, parties other than small island states shall submit to WCPFC11 a scheme to reduce capacity to the level of 31 December, 2012. The WCPO requires a truly comprehensive capacity management system that accounts for the increasing number of vessels and effectiveness of FAD fishing. **TCC10 should recommend a timeline and process to achieve a capacity reduction to the level of 31 December 2012, as specified in paragraph 54 of CMM 2013-01.**

Reference Points and Harvest Strategies

Precautionary, science-based reference points and harvest control rules are needed to ensure the future sustainability of the fisheries in the WCPO. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) are considering adoption of a target reference point of 0.50 SB_0 for skipjack tuna across their waters, based on scientific advice provided by the SPC. Australia has proposed a framework with steps to agree on target reference points and harvest control rules for all species (Conservation and Management Measure on Establishing a Harvest Strategy for Key Tuna Species in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, WCPFC-TCC10-2014-DP03). While Pew broadly supports the Australian proposal, it does not specify timelines for species other than south Pacific albacore. **TCC10 should recommend that WCPFC11 1) adopt an interim skipjack target reference point of 0.50 SB_0 , and 2) adopt a CMM that specifies firm timelines for development of reference points and harvest control rules for all species, reflecting an appropriate level of urgency.**

Strengthening Conservation and Management for Sharks

This year's and last year's Scientific Committee highlighted continuing concerns over the effectiveness of, and compliance with, existing shark CMMs. The reports of the meetings highlighted the impacts of the continued use of wire leaders and shark lines to target sharks in longline fisheries, lack of observer coverage in those fisheries and the limited effectiveness of CMM 2010-07 in eliminating shark finning. In 2013, SC9 noted that "Given the current growing public concern over global shark over-exploitation, most CCMs consider that there is a need for the WCPFC to adopt more robust and enforceable measures for sharks to reduce mortality in both the longline and purse-seine fisheries." Despite a strong proposal tabled by the FFA no measure was adopted at WCPFC10. **TCC10 should recommend that WCPFC11 take steps to greatly improve management of sharks in the WCPO, including through the development of a new or updated CMM that would prohibit the use of wire leaders and shark lines, while ensuring that bycatch is minimized, and that all retained shark catch is sustainable.**

CMM 2013-08 and 2011-04 prohibit the retention of oceanic whitetip and silky sharks. These overfished species require the drastic mortality reductions these measures offer if they are to recover. The measures mandate that all Commission Members, Cooperating Non-Members and Participating Territories (CCMs) release any oceanic whitetip and silky shark caught in the Convention Area as soon as possible after the shark is brought alongside the vessel, and to do so in a manner that results in as little harm to the shark as possible. Pew strongly supports the recent actions of the Marshall Islands in effectively enforcing CMM 2013-08 by prosecuting a vessel that retained silky sharks, and encourages all WCPFC CCMs to do the same. **TCC10 should monitor the implementation of CMM 2013-08 and 2011-04, which must be enforced effectively for both purse seine and longline fleets.**

With respect to blue sharks, SC10 noted that there is “significant/substantial uncertainty associated with the level of current fishing mortality from the target fishery for blue shark and the ongoing sustainability of the stock.” **TCC10 should ensure that work continues on developing precautionary, science-based management measures in line with this year’s stock assessment of blue sharks for adoption at WCPFC11.**

Across all of the work on assessing shark stock status in the WCPO, it is noted that data recording and reporting on the catch of sharks species is still at a low level across the WCPO, hampering the provision of comprehensive scientific advice. WCPFC requires a ‘no data, no fish’ measure that should, at a minimum, prevent any WCPFC Member from retaining or landing any of the 14 key shark species identified by WCPFC, if they had not submitted landing data on that species from the previous year. **TCC10 should recommend the adoption of a ‘no data, no fish’ measure for sharks at WCPFC11.**

Adopt Minimum Standards for Port Inspections

Port State measures, or PSMs, are cost-effective tools to monitor compliance with management arrangements and prevent illegal fish from entering the market. WCPFC has repeatedly considered the adoption of such measures, and the Performance Review has also recommended progress in this matter. At WCPFC10, the FFA submitted a proposal for a Conservation and Management Measure on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (WCPFC10-2013-DP11 rev3 1445 -06/12/2013), which provided a good basis for progress towards a regional scheme of PSMs. FFA has submitted an updated version of this proposal for consideration at TCC10 (WCPFC-TCC10-2014-DP01). **TCC10 should recommend that WCPFC11 adopt the proposal of the FFA on a CMM on Port State Measures.**

Harmonize WCPFC Vessel Records and Improve Transparency

The WCPFC substantially enhanced the identification of fishing vessels by agreeing last year to mandate IMO numbers for vessels at least 100 GT or 100 GRT, and the WCPFC Secretariat has continued to improve its Record of Fishing Vessels, making it more informative and user-friendly. To ensure greater transparency of fishing operations, additional vessel information should be included in the Record. The Commission should require that as of 1 January, 2016 members provide to the Secretariat information on any enforcement action taken on vessels operating in the convention area as soon as the information becomes available, and that this

information be published as part of the Record. Such pioneering transparency will showcase the efforts of WCPFC members and the Secretariat to foster compliance in the convention area. **TCC10 should recommend the Commission amend CMM 2013-10 on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels and Authorization to Fish in order to require that each member of the Commission submits to the Executive Director information on any enforcement action taken by a state with respect to each vessel entered in its record within 15 days of such action being completed.**

Enhance the Effectiveness of the IUU Vessel List

Placing a vessel on WCPFC's IUU vessel list is a necessary step to highlight and hence deter unacceptable practices in the convention area. However, the effectiveness of this list is diminished due to the fact that IUU vessels can only be included on the list once a year. As a result, IUU vessels are able to operate unhindered until the Commission meets and agrees to place them on the list. WCPFC has established a procedure that permits the removal of vessels from its IUU vessel list inter-sessionally. In the same spirit, CPCs should establish a similar procedure that permits the listing of IUU vessels inter-sessionally. **TCC10 should recommend that the Commission establish a procedure that permits the listing of IUU vessels inter-sessionally.**

Ban Transshipment at Sea

Transshipment at sea continues to provide an opportunity to avoid proper catch reporting and to launder IUU catch. The WCPFC should introduce a ban on all forms of transshipment at sea until it can be assured that transshipment operations cannot assist IUU fishing. This would require having a robust monitoring system in place that ensures full transparency, requiring observers and/or fisheries officers on board the offloading and receiving vessels, and complete oversight by the Commission of all transshipment operations in the convention area. **TCC10 should recommend that the Commission take steps to ban transshipment at sea until it can be assured, through proper and effective monitoring, that transshipment operations cannot assist IUU fishing.**