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Greenpeace Position Statement for WCPFC12

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Greenpeace welcomes the opportunity to attend the 12th meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) as an observer. The outcome of the recent WCPFC Science Committee meeting, in particular the overfishing occurring on the bigeye, Pacific bluefin stocks and decline in southern albacore, is the predictable result of the failure of members of this Commission to uphold the mandate stipulated under Articles 5 and 6 of the Convention to apply the precautionary approach, including through acting upon the best available scientific advice, in adopting conservation and management measures (CMMs) for key tuna species.

The continued decline in these stocks is a result of continued expansion of fishing fleets, increasing fishing capacity and effort, through the use of FADs in particular, and increasing non-compliance. Two of the Pacific's vital tuna stocks are now at dangerously low levels: the Pacific bluefin tuna population is estimated to be at 4.3% and bigeye tuna at 16% of its original spawning biomass

The Commission must prioritise efforts towards rebuilding these stocks and putting in place all the necessary management frameworks and control mechanisms to safeguard them from further decline. The Commission must develop precautionary targets and harvest control rules to restore all the fisheries to full health and productivity.

Greenpeace therefore calls on the members of the WCPFC to urgently adopt the following measures:

1. **Agree a new recovery plan for bigeye tuna** that brings existing fishing capacity and effort into line with precautionary mortality limits to end overfishing and allow for the quickest possible recovery of the stock. Greenpeace believes that in order to achieve such objectives a full ban on the use of FADs, a reduction in longline effort, and the closure of the high seas pockets to all tuna fishing is required;
2. **Adopt a Conservation and Management Measure for South Pacific albacore that sets the basis for reducing capacity in the fishery and puts catches in line with precautionary mortality levels.** Greenpeace believes such measures must ensure that both fishing capacity and catches are brought down to biologically and economically sustainable levels. Greenpeace recommends that in agreeing the necessary reduction in total catches in the albacore fishery, priority should be given to reducing fishing opportunities available to CCMs that are not complying with data provision requirements.
3. **Adopt a full ban on at sea transshipment.** Transshipment at sea is a tool that facilitates IUU fishing activity as has been documented by Greenpeace in the Pacific tuna fishing grounds from 2006 - 2015¹ ship expeditions. At-sea transshipment is already banned for purse seine fleets, and Pacific Island countries have made progress to shut down this sketchy practice in longline fleets. Most recently, the government of Nauru announced a ban on transshipment in its waters in September 2015 after the Greenpeace bust of [Shuen De Ching No. 888](#)², a

¹ Expedition reports available upon request from Greenpeace

² <http://gmipc.org/Shuen-De-Ching-No-888-shark-evidence>

Taiwanese longliner engaged in illegal fishing, [shark finning](#)³ and transshipment on the high seas. Transshipment and the use of motherships to resupply fishing vessels at sea also facilitates forced labour and human rights abuse at sea, by allowing fishing vessels to stay at sea for months and even years, making escape impossible for fishing crews. It also exacerbates the extremely low level of observer coverage on longline vessels by making observer trips difficult to implement and allowing longline vessels to avoid port inspection from landing catches in port or transshipping in authorised transshipment ports where inspection is possible. The impacts of transshipment at sea are clear, and as a result tuna traders and consumers cannot be sure that their longline tuna is caught legally and without the use of forced labour. The commission must live up to its obligation to adopt compatible measures for the high seas, and follow Pacific Islands and Indonesia's lead in EEZ transshipment bans by adopting a ban on transshipment at sea across the full convention area.

4. **Adopt a moratorium on targeted fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna.** Given the dire state of the Pacific bluefin tuna population it is a matter of urgency that the Commission agrees to a moratorium on all targeted fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna until such time that a Pacific-wide management plan is agreed and implemented, and the stock has shown conclusive evidence of recovery to levels above an agreed biomass limit reference point.
5. **Adopt interim target reference points (TRPs) of 50% SB for skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin, and 45% for albacore** until final TRPs are agreed by the Commission by 2017.
6. **Strengthening the current shark finning measure (CMM 2014-05) to prohibit both methods of shark targeting (wire leaders and shark lines beneath buoys).** The use of shark lines is difficult to verify unless vessels are witnessed retrieving the lines from beneath buoys, so vessels may be violating this measure without detection.
7. **Strengthen CMM 2010-07 to require sharks be retained with their fins naturally attached.** This is international best practise as set out in the UN General Assembly resolution 62/177. Enforcing the 5% ratio when fins may be stored detached and even transhipped separately from carcasses is extremely difficult, as recently documented by Greenpeace on board the Shuen De Ching 888 vessel. This loophole compromises other CMMs including those for oceanic whitetip and silky sharks. In addition, transshipment of sharks and fins separately is currently allowed under CMM 2010-07, which compounds the difficulty in enforcing the relevant shark measures. This further reiterates the call by Greenpeace to **ban all transshipment at sea (of all species including sharks) to close this loophole and support strong fisheries management, good data reporting and science and enforcement of the rules.**
8. **Strengthen the Commission's response to non-compliance and IUU fishing** by ensuring that transparency is restored to this process and compliance documents are made available. Greenpeace recommends that the annual assessment of obligations is focused on priorities identified using a risk based approach. For the 2015 assessment of compliance, we suggest prioritising:
 - a. Failure to provide operational level data
 - b. Repeated non-compliance
 - c. Violation of the FAD closure period
 - d. Exceeding catch and effort limits
 - e. Transshipment

³ <http://gmprc.org/Shuen-De-Ching-No-888-shark-evidence>

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