



TWELFTH REGULAR SESSION
Bali, Indonesia
3-8 December 2015

Liberia Opening Statement WCPFC12

WCPFC12-2015-OP17
03 December 1200



Office of
Deputy Commissioner
of Maritime Affairs

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Opening Statement by Liberia 12th Regular Session of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Bali, Indonesia (December 3-8, 2015)

Introduction

Thank you Mr. Chairperson, and good day to all.

We bring you greetings from the Government and people of the Republic of Liberia. We are indeed gratified that we are afforded this opportunity to address this honorable body.

Our goal in renewing our Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) status is because we have in our Registry a number of reefer vessels that are participating and plan to participate in transshipment activities in the WCPFC Convention Area.

Liberia as Flag State and Current following Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) Memberships

Liberia is the second largest maritime administration in the world, with over 12% of ships in international trade. Inasmuch, we have developed a high quality shipping register with white list status on all major port state control regimes. We have attained this status by having strictly followed procedures and rules—all of which are ISO 9001 certified by the British Standards Institution (BSI).

Our transshipment program is no different: we leverage our 400 worldwide inspectors and auditors for required annual inspections and to assist national authorities and represent flag state on issues related to monitoring, control and surveillance, have a required Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) program, and require that transshipment records be kept and sent to us for RFMO reporting.

In addition to our WCPFC membership, Liberia currently has membership with the following RFMOs:

- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)—Contracting Party
- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) —CNM status
- North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)—CNCP status
- South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO)—CNCP status
- Inter America Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)—CNM status

Combatting Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

In battling IUU fishing, an unknown origin of reefer vessel cargo is a great risk, and as a flag state with reefers in the trade of transshipping fish, this is a concern of ours. We are strongly committed to the responsible management of fishing activities and will continue to be proactive in the responsible management of our international fleet of vessels that are involved in fisheries.

Liberian vessels are prohibited from engaging in transshipment activities in any convention area without first

obtaining proper licensing from the Liberian Administration authorizing them to do so. Before licensing a vessel, we check that the vessel has no history of IUU activities.

Vessel Monitoring System

We have an established VMS requirement for all ships that engage in transshipment through our transshipment licensing program. When a ship applies for a transshipment license, the ship is sent an ALC and a tablet which acts as an electronic transshipment logbook and is used to send us transshipment reports. These reports are stored on our server and reported directly to the respective regional organization. On our tablets, each regional organization has different forms for the ship to use, which are customized based on the region's requirements.

Competent Authority/Contact Points

The Liberian Registry has 17 offices around the world and nearly 400 flag state inspectors at all major shipping ports. The head office of the Registry is in Virginia, USA, which is where we operate our Flag State Fisheries Monitoring Centre for transshipment ships. However, we also have full-service offices in Singapore, Hong Kong, Seoul, Shanghai, Tokyo and Dubai. Last, we have a 24/7 duty officer on call to handle all flag state issues, including fisheries issues.

Inspection Issues and Sanctions

If one of our vessels is inspected and an infringement is found, the Liberian Registry, as Flag State, has the authority to send a vessel to port under the Liberian Maritime Regulations known as RLM-108. Regulations are made by the Commissioner of Liberia Maritime Authority under the powers conferred upon him by section 11 of Chapter 1 of Title 21 of the Laws of The Republic of Liberia (the Maritime Law).

We also impose sanctions that are adequate in severity to be effective in ensuring compliance and discouraging violations.

ISO 9001 Certification

We also want to reiterate that the Liberian Registry has a Quality Management System (QMS) that is ISO 9001 certified through the British Standards Institution (BSI). This ensures that we maintain a quality transshipment program with strict procedures that are followed by our office and our ships, all of which are independently and externally audited each year.

Request to Renew CNM Status

Thank you for this chance to highlight our transshipment program, and provide you with the procedures and policies we have in place to ensure our ships remain in compliance with WCPFC's conservation and management measures. We ask that you favorably renew Liberia's CNM status.

We look forward to discussing our transshipment program with you and are available to answer any questions during the course of this week.

Thank you.