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Letter to the WCPFC on behalf of the three United States Participating Territories

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December 2, 2015

Honorable Mrs. Rhea Moss-Christian
Chair
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
PO Box 2356
Kolonia, Federated States of Micronesia

Dear Madam Chair,

This letter is submitted on behalf of the three United States Participating Territories to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). The purpose of this letter is offer our recognition and support for the regulatory mechanism established under United States law that allows the US Participating Territories to transfer a portion of its annual longline bigeye catch limit to qualifying US vessels.

As Participating Territories, we are afforded similar rights, obligations, and opportunities provided to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) members of the WCPFC. The domestic framework that allows Hawaii-based longline vessels to fish as part of a particular US Territory fishery is subject to strict limits to ensure consistency with the conservation needs of the stock and WCPFC objectives. Under the framework, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council annually specifies bigeye tuna catch limits for the US Territories through a transparent domestic rulemaking process, which takes into account Commission decisions, stock status, US Territory fisheries development needs, and other applicable laws and statutes. The sustainable utilization of bigeye limits are integral part of the responsible development of US Territory fisheries. In addition, the impact of the proposed specification undergoes a thorough environmental analysis required under United States law. A proposed allocation specification that is inconsistent with WCPFC objectives or otherwise delays or impedes stock recovery is subject to disapproval by the United States government.

These arrangements are essential sources of funds that the US Territories otherwise would not have available to pursue our fishery development aspirations. Funding derived from these domestic arrangements have resulted in fisheries development projects in the US Participating Territories, including, but not limited to:

- Fisheries infrastructure development including, boat ramps, vessel docks, shore-side support and processing facilities

- Local fish market development, construction and support
- Fishermen training including training for market quality and seafood safety
- Vessel design and loan programs

Like the SIDS, the US Territories face substantial challenges and require fisheries development support along with institutional strengthening, and human-resource capacity building. We believe that the US Participating Territory arrangements are consistent with Commission decisions that facilitate SIDS development aspirations, and are aligned with the considerations provided to other SIDS and Territories under the Convention and existing CMMs. We continue to seek your support in this regard.

Sincerely,



Richard Seman
Commonwealth of
Northern Mariana Islands



Ruth Matagi-Tofiga
American Samoa



Joseph Cameron
Guam