



**COMMISSION
THIRTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**
Denarau Island, Fiji
5 – 9 December, 2016

COMMENTS ON THE WCPFC STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

**WCPFC13-2016-DP18
4 November 2016**

From FFA Member CCMs



4 November 2016

Feleti P. Teo OBE
Executive Director
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
PO Box 2356, Kolonia
Federated States of Micronesia

Dear Feleti,

Comments on the WCPFC Strategic Planning Process

I write on behalf of the 17 members of the Forum Fisheries Agency in my capacity as the Chair of the Forum Fisheries Committee.

While we appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat and consultant to engage all CCMs and other stakeholders in a serious and considered process to develop a meaningful strategic plan for the Commission, we are disappointed that the process is unlikely to achieve its objective.

We had hoped for engagement opportunities to start much earlier in the year, and to capitalise on the opportunity to consult initially with FFA CCMs jointly and individually during the FFC sessions in Vanuatu in May or July. This would have provided additional opportunities for identification of key elements and the consolidation of views throughout the year, in time for consideration of a draft at WCPFC13.

The actual mechanism of engagement has not been appropriate to facilitate this interaction. The online questionnaire to canvass initial views at relatively short notice was not well taken up by FFA members. Unfortunately the workshop attached to the Technical and Compliance Committee also placed us at some disadvantage because most Small Island Developing States do not have the resources to send both policymakers and technical managers to the same meeting.

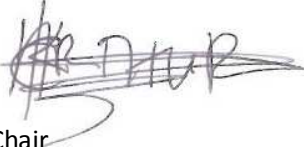
The Workshop before TCC was useful in one way, in that it clearly identified the differences between the major groups in the Commission, but it also made clear that these differences will take time to reconcile into a form that can be addressed in a cohesive fashion through an agreed Strategic Plan. For FFA members the objective of coordinating the effective management of tuna fisheries on the tropical WCPO high seas – including through discussion of overall limits and measures for stocks and compatibility between high seas and EEZs – is a priority. The fact that the workshop disputed the importance of this facet, and it is now absent from the draft points to a fundamental policy divide. These fundamental differences will take time to work through, if indeed they can be worked through. And if they can't, then they must be given separate weight.

We strongly suggest that the Commission take the work that has been done thus far and concentrate on the development of a Corporate Plan that will guide the annual work program and budget, and facilitates the decision making of the Finance and Administration Committee, while taking time during the course of 2017 to discuss the major policy differences that the process has identified. FFA members certainly hope that such a process will lead to a mutually agreeable Strategic Plan, but in our view this could be a long process, and it is one worth taking the time to get right.

Lastly, FFA members wish to reiterate our concerns about the growing workload of the Commission, both in terms of meetings and the complexity of national implementation. You will note similar sentiments in our letters about the Compliance Monitoring Scheme and Tropical Tuna. I am raising it in this context because it is one of the factors that led FFA members to call for a WCPFC Strategic Plan as early as 2012. While FFA members do not have a specific proposal to address this issue at this moment, we do request that the Secretariat and other CCMs take this under consideration, including noting that the Commission's established practice of at least four separate meeting sessions per year is inconsistent with the intention of the "two session rule" in the Rules of Procedure, which was negotiated precisely to avoid burgeoning meeting loads.

We look forward to further dialogue at WCPFC13.

Yours Sincerely



Chair
Forum Fisheries Committee