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TOKELAU OPENING STATEMENT TO WCPC8

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27 March 2012**

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Thank you Mister Chair.

Honourable Ministers, Heads of Delegations, Senior Fisheries Officials, Ladies and Genetlemen.

Greetings from Tokelau.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the passing away and burial for the late King of Tonga today. Our thoughts are with the Royal Family, the Nobles and the people and the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga. We also wish the new King and His Government all the best for the future.

Secondly, I would like to also acknowledge the support and the hospitality of the Government and people of Guam for hosting this Commission Meeting.

Finally, I would also like to acknowledge the commissions Executive Secretary and this team

Mr Chair

Tokelau values its status as a participating territory in this Commission.

We take our responsibilities under the Convention seriously. As a small island developing territory that is overwhelmingly dependent on our EEZ fisheries for sustainable economic development, Tokelau is committed to ensuring that our fisheries are used sustainably and provide the greatest overall benefit to our people.

In partnership with New Zealand, Tokelau is in the process of implementing a new and more effective management regime for our EEZ fisheries.

In 2011 Tokelau adopted a new Fisheries Policy that provides us with a framework to better manage our fisheries. A new management plan for our EEZ fisheries will be completed by June 2012. The management plan will take into account and implement relevant Commission Conservation and Management Measures.

In developing and implementing a new management regime for our EEZ, Tokelau has taken into account the best available information, our Commission obligations, current bilateral and multilateral arrangements, and our situation as a small, vulnerable Pacific Island territory that, other than fisheries, has very few economic development opportunities.

We are also keenly aware of the need to manage emerging pressures on our EEZ fisheries. Fishing pressure in our waters is increasing due to overcapacity of fishing fleets and also as a consequence of fishing effort being displaced from parts of the Convention area with limits on catch or effort.

Management measures for purse seine fisheries

Tokelau is in the process of implementing the relevant provisions of CMM 2008-01. As part of this process, we have decided to impose an EEZ limit for purse seine fisheries. The EEZ limit has initially been set at 1000 vessel days. This limit may be subject to minor changes as a result of the Commission's decisions on the replacement of CMM 2008/01 and the renegotiation of the US Tuna Treaty. It is our intention that Tokelau's purse seine fisheries be managed under a regime that is fully compatible with the PNA's Vessel Day Scheme. I can advise the Commission that Tokelau has recently gained PNA observer status.

The purse seine management regime will be phased-in over 2012, and should be fully operational as of 1 January 2013. During 2012 the EEZ limit of 1000 vessel days will be applied indirectly by limiting bilateral purse seine licenses to 20.

At significant cost Tokelau has implemented a 3-month FAD closure throughout our EEZ from July through September, starting in July 2011. In addition, we intend to put in place a management regime for purse seiners operating in our EEZ that requires retention of all catch, real-time reporting, and 100% observer coverage, and prohibits transshipment at sea.

Management measures for longline fisheries

Over the next 12 to 24 months Tokelau will be establishing limits for the albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna longline fisheries in our EEZ. In doing so, we will be working with other FFA members with an interest in these fisheries.

Consistent with the principles of responsible fisheries management Tokelau has imposed voluntary constraints in the form of license limits on its longline fisheries for 2012.

Impacts of Management Measures

Tokelau is fully prepared to contribute its fair share to the conservation and management of the purse seine and longline fisheries. Mr Chairman, Tokelau has observed measures that have had a disproportional impact on Small Island Developing States. In this regard we would like to work with the commission members and the secretariat to ensure the rights of Small Island developing states are recognised and protected.

I would like to point out that implementation of Commission measures imposes a huge burden on our very small island territory. However I can assure you that we are trying our very best and, with the support of the FFA and the Commission, I am sure we can remain in compliance with our obligations. We were heartened by the recent Technical and Compliance Committee's positive assessment of Tokelau's efforts under the Commission's new compliance monitoring scheme.

Reporting and participation

In keeping with our obligations under the Convention, Tokelau will continue to provide catch and effort data and MCS information to the Commission's technical committees, as well as our annual reports.

We will keep the Commission advised of developments such as our EEZ management plan, EEZ limits set for longline fisheries, and other information that is material to the function of the Commission.

Tokelau looks forward to contributing to the work of the Commission as an active and responsible participating territory. We will be working constructively with other members of the Commission to enhance and implement new management measures, including the critically important replacement for CMM 2008 / 01.

Mister Chair I wish you and all members all the very best for a productive and successful meeting.

Fakatahi !