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WCPFC17 POSITION STATEMENT

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7 December 2020**

Submitted by International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF)



**17th Regular Session of the
Western and Central Pacific
Fisheries Commission
08-15 December 2020, online**

IPNLF POSITION STATEMENT

The International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF) is a global charity that promotes the effective management of tuna stocks, safeguarding the livelihoods they support. IPNLF promotes sustainable development through responsible use of the marine environment and the empowerment of local coastal communities to conserve biodiversity, safeguard food security, support their livelihoods, build climate resilience and eradicate poverty. IPNLF's mission is to empower responsible fisheries, which give back to the seas and the people that depend on them. We work across science, policy and the seafood supply chain to achieve this.

The Western and Central Pacific Ocean region is home to the world's largest tuna fishery, two of the world's largest pole-and-line fisheries, and many troll and handline fisheries supporting coastal communities throughout the region. IPNLF would like to see management measures adopted that safeguard tuna stocks and ecosystems so that one-by-one tuna fisheries, and the communities that depend on them, can flourish.

Despite the unusual circumstances of this year's meeting, IPNLF encourages members, cooperating non-members and participating territories (CCMs collectively) to adopt a number of conservation and management measures (CMMs) that, together, will strengthen the framework for sustainable tuna fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Specifically, we urge progress in the following areas:



Develop CMMs that safeguard ALL workers at sea, explicitly including onboard observers and fishing crews.

It's come to our attention that forced labor, abuse, crew abandonment, and unpaid wages over extended periods of time (often years) are still prevalent among vessels operating within the Commission's area of competence, especially among distant water fishing vessels that employ migrant workers. Instances such as the more than 90 Indonesian crew on Chinese longline vessels that were abandoned without pay in Samoa are unacceptable. This year alone saw several cases of video footage surfacing on social media showing Indonesian fishermen reported dead, buried at sea, gone missing, and working in forced labor conditions, again on Chinese flagged vessels (particularly Long Xin 629 and Tian Yu 8) operating in the Commission area.

Ongoing Fisheries Observer safety issues in WCPFC fisheries have also received a lot of attention in recent times. Observers are vulnerable at sea because the data they collect impacts directly on stock assessments and are applied in various verification and/or certification processes, leaving them vulnerable to intimidation, threats and abuse. IPNLF recommends that a proposed draft CMM (WCPFC17-2020-OP06), that is focused on the issue of Fisheries Observers' safety, security and wellbeing, be discussed and considered by Members.

IPNLF further recommends that a binding CMM or CMMs be adopted on labor standards and crew welfare for all those working on fishing vessels, including onboard observers, as soon as possible.

Ensure a smooth transition of the Tropical Tuna Measure (CMM 2018-01),

for which we understand the challenges faced when conducting a meaningful review online, but note that the absence of a measure in 2021 could be devastating to the sustainability of the three tropical tuna stocks.

We therefore recommend a process to be clarified as soon as possible to ensure that the management of these tuna stocks continue uninterrupted through 2021 and beyond.

Continue to develop compatible Measures for “Other Commercial Fisheries”,

which duly consider the socio-economic importance of harvests by reliant indigenous peoples and coastal communities, especially in archipelagic states such as Indonesia and the Philippines. We encourage like-minded states to work with the Science Provider (SPC) to develop compatible measures that take into account the context of these coastal fisheries while also fulfilling the objectives of the measure.

Continue progress and commit to a timeline to establish Harvest Strategies (HS) and Harvest Control Rules (HCR), based on Target and Limit Reference Points (TRP/LRP) for all major tuna stocks

to ensure sustainability while also recognizing the social and economic dependence of coastal communities on fisheries harvesting shared tuna stocks. IPNLF notes the timelines to complete these tasks have consistently fallen-behind schedule over the years, which notably include agreeing on TRPs and HCRs for skipjack, TRPs for South Pacific albacore, TRPs for yellowfin and bigeye tuna. The work plans to complete these tasks should be expedited and IPNLF further suggests the establishment of a managerial Working Group that ensures the development of HS, HCR, and TRPs/LRPs are on task and on time, for all tuna stocks.

Strengthen the management of tropical tunas, in line with advice from the Scientific Provider (SPC), to avoid overfishing and secure continued opportunities for one-by-one fisheries (e.g. pole and line, handline and troll), coastal fisheries and communities in accordance with the UN Fish Stock Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Strengthen management, monitoring and control of drifting fish aggregating devices (dFADs).

Excessive use of dFADs continues to facilitate the capture of high volumes of juvenile tuna, places tuna stocks at greater risk of overfishing and causes higher volumes of bycatch, including endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species. dFADs also contribute to marine plastic pollution and they damage coastal habitats when they wash ashore. Deliberate abandonment of dFADs likely constitutes infringements of MARPOL Annex V, the London Convention, London Protocol and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), so it should be explicitly prohibited. The excessive “loss” of satellite tracked dFADs should also be prohibited while a “polluter pays” mechanism should be developed and implemented in 2021 to address all FAD losses and abandonments. To enable monitoring and enforcement of this mechanism, all dFAD components should be marked according to the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear, while independent verification of FAD designs and construction materials should also be required prior to each deployment.

To further mitigate dFAD pollution, IPNLF also recommends requiring all dFADs to be made entirely of materials that are biodegradable under naturally occurring marine conditions from June 2021. Also, the Commission should ensure FAD owners recover drifting FADs while at sea, prior to beaching events, and use available information to inform mitigation initiatives. The use of dFADs also causes extensive ghost fishing impacts, the mitigation of which should include no netting materials being permitted in dFAD designs deployed after June 2021. Supply vessels should not be permitted to deploy FADs, while FAD ownership must be unambiguously assigned at the time of deployment and should not be allowed to change hands until the FAD is recovered and returned to port for responsible disposal. Similarly, all deployed FADs should be constantly tracked and effectively contribute to each vessel's FAD limit by only allowing the deactivation or reactivation of dFAD operational buoys in port.

Improve Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance of longline fishing activities to reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing through the introduction of 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic). IPNLF also suggests prohibiting at-sea transshipments and limiting permissible fishing voyage lengths, ensuring that vessels visit ports regularly enough to enable inspections and the effective enforcement of all Measures.

Proactively address effort creep by imposing strict monitoring and control on the use of any aerial means to search for tropical tunas, including aircraft, drones, helicopters or any other types of manned or unmanned aerial vehicles.





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ABOUT IPNLF

The International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF) works to develop, support and promote socially and environmentally responsible pole-and-line, troll and handline tuna fisheries around the world. IPNLF's ambition is to achieve a world of thriving fisheries that work in balance with nature by catching one fish at a time, therefore supporting coastal fisheries, including the people, communities, businesses and seas connected with them for generations to come. As a hub for sustainability focussed organisations, we use the influence of the market to forge change through practical fishery projects and stakeholder cooperation. IPNLF membership is open to organisations involved in the one-by-one tuna supply chain. Allied with our members, IPNLF demonstrates the value of one-by-one caught tuna to consumers, policymakers and throughout the supply chain. We work across science, policy and the seafood sector, using an evidence-based, solutions-focused approach with guidance from our Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees.

IPNLF was officially registered in the United Kingdom in 2012 (Charity 1145586), with branch offices in the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, The Maldives, Indonesia, and South Africa.

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Keep informed about the latest developments in one-by-one tuna fisheries through our [website](#) and by connecting with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

