



**COMMISSION
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SPG MEMBERS' PRIORITIES FOR WCPFC TROPICAL TUNA CMM

**WCPFC18-2021-TTM-DP08
25 October 2021**

Niue, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga

25 October 2022

Jung-Re Riley Kim
CHAIR
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
PO Box 2356, Kolonia
Federated States of Micronesia

Dear Riley,

SPG Members' priorities for WCPFC Tropical Tuna CMM

I write on behalf of the South Pacific Group: Niue, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. We are Small Island Developing States who share strong interests in the sustainable development of the southern longline fisheries for southern albacore, swordfish, bigeye and yellowfin. These southern fisheries interact with the tropical longline fisheries, and are impacted by changes in tropical longline management, activities and catches.

We would like to express our gratitude to you for your commitment and skill in chairing the WCPFC, and the negotiations for a tropical tuna CMM. We appreciate your recent Chair's draft and will provide detailed comments on it through the FFA. In addition to the FFA comments, we would like to note our priorities for this CMM.

First, we note that SPG members have previously highlighted the need to ensure that the longline provisions of the tropical tuna CMM recognise the sovereign rights of coastal States to manage fishing activity within their EEZs, in accordance with the provisions of the WCPFC and UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOSC). We are implementing zone-based management for our fisheries, as prescribed in the LOSC, and request that the Chair's draft reflect this. Any vessel fishing in our waters should be managed under our management framework, including any applicable limits, in the same manner that any catch taken in our waters is attributed to the coastal State.

We have experienced problems with flag-based limits that have detrimentally impacted our access and management of fishery resources inside our EEZs, and realizing fishery development opportunities. This is inconsistent with our sovereign rights which grant the coastal State the authority to access these resources and to support our national development interests as SIDS. In this context, we prioritise the development by the WCPFC of zone-based management for all longline fisheries, and look forward to working with other members in developing sustainable and equitable limits that respect rights for the high seas and coastal State sovereign rights for EEZs. We strongly support the retention of Article 44 of the current CMM, including the amendments proposed by FFA, and advocate that WCPFC 19 (2022) must determine hard high seas limits for bigeye in 2022, and apply those limits to Members and Participating Territories in a manner that is consistent with our sovereign rights,

and Articles 8, 10 (3) and 30 of the Convention.

Second, SPG members advocate that the WCPFC must ensure that the stock biomass of South Pacific albacore is restored to the Target Reference Point (TRP) level, so as to promote the future profitability of vessels operating in the southern longline fishery and support the fishery development aspirations and opportunities of SIDs. In order to do this, we believe that it is critical to avoid any increase in longline fishing effort, or increase in BET limits. Any such increase, particularly south of the equator, will result in additional catches of albacore, and further complicate the rebuilding of our southern longline fishery, resulting in a disproportionate burden on SPG members. Such increases may also result in fleet behavioural changes that could negatively impact on our southern longline fisheries.

As a result, we advocate that the CMM does not allow for any overall increase in longline fishing effort, or any overall increase in BET limits. We will also be seeking further study on the interactions and impacts of longline fishing effort on our southern longline fisheries.

SPG Members look forward to engaging on these important issues during the upcoming WCPFC18 virtual meeting, under your direction and leadership. We are all highly dependent on our fisheries for food security, livelihoods and economic development. The future sustainable development of these fisheries is crucial to our economic recovery from the heavy impacts of COVID. We seek your understanding and support so as to ensure that our small island developing States do not bear a disproportionate burden from any future CMM.

Yours sincerely,



SPG Chair

Dr Josie Tamate