



MEDIA STATEMENT

BY THE

**CHAIR, MS RHEA MOSS-CHRISTIAN & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MR FELETI P TEO
ON WCPFC14**

Friday 8 December 2017

The Chair and the Executive Director of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission today issued a joint statement on the outcomes of the 14th annual meeting of the Commission held in Manila, Philippines from 3-7 December 2017.

Key outcomes include a new Tropical Tunas Bridging Measure, a Conservation and Management Measure on Pacific Bluefin, bycatch mitigation strategies and conservation measures on marine pollution.

Chair, Rhea Moss-Christian and Executive Director, Feleti P Teo said they were pleased to advise that consensus had been reached by Commission Members on a range of substantive issues on this year's agenda. They also thanked the host country for the 2017 meeting.

"WCPFC14 has been a particularly successful meeting in terms of agreeing a range of measures and initiatives that will ensure ongoing environmental and commercial sustainability of tuna management in the western and central pacific fishery.

"We are grateful for the hospitality of our host, the Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and extend sincere thanks for access to such a high-quality venue at the International Convention Center in Manila."

Key outcomes of WCPFC14

1. Tropical Tunas Bridging Measure

A new bridging measure has been agreed by the Commission for the management of tropical tunas to replace the current Measure, which expires on 31 December 2017. Among key features:

- A three-year agreement, with some 12-month provisions that reflect the need to wait for further scientific stock assessments in 2018. The one-year provisions relate to FAD management in the purse seine fishery, high seas purse seine effort control and bigeye catch limits in the longline fishery.
- Measures designed to ensure stocks are maintained at recent average levels and capable of producing Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).
- Recognition for Small Island Developing States of disproportionate burden risks.

- Ms Moss-Christian said: “Negotiating a new measure such as this is an extremely complex process, so it has been gratifying to see Commission Members cooperating so well to produce a measure that will ensure responsible tropical tuna fishing management into 2018 and beyond. What we have achieved is a balanced Measure that aims to protect the national and commercial interests of all Members, from Small Island Developing States to large fishing nations, while also being sustainable.”

2. Rebuilding plan and revised Conservation Measure on Pacific Bluefin

The Commission adopted the Conservation and Management Measure developed by the Northern Committee to implement the Harvest Strategy for Pacific Bluefin Tuna Fisheries. It was agreed that CCMs take measures to ensure:

- Total fishing effort by CCM vessels fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna north of 20° N shall stay below 2002–2004 annual average levels.
- All catches of Pacific bluefin tuna less than 30 kg shall be reduced to 50% of the 2002–2004 annual average levels.
- All catches of Pacific Bluefin tuna 30kg or larger shall not be increased from the 2002–2004 annual average levels.

3. Updated Harvest Strategy Workplan

The Commission adopted a revised Harvest Strategy work plan that will reprioritise as needed the annual agenda of the Commission and Scientific Committee to allow sufficient additional time for consideration of harvest strategy issues.

4. Standards for e-reporting of observer data

Reporting standards for electronic reporting of observer data were adopted. The standards relate to data fields, summaries, activity logs, vessel and gear data, crew and trip-level data and also pollution reports. The standards will enable more effective monitoring and management by enhancing the work of observers in enabling the entry of near real-time observer data directly into the database systems of monitoring and scientific agencies.

5. Port State Measure to reduce illegal fishing

The Commission adopted a Port State Measure that will strengthen overall port controls to reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and support development opportunities for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) by reducing the impact of IUU fishing on stocks. The busiest ports in the WCPO fishery area are located in SIDS, imposing the most significant reporting requirements on SIDS. The Measure provides implementation flexibility in that Members will choose which designated ports they notify to WCPFC to come under the provisions of the Measure.

6. Bycatch mitigation initiatives

Sharks: WCPFC14 agreed to devote significant intersessional resources to resolve longstanding and contentious issues surrounding the conservation and management of sharks. For the first time there will be an Intersessional Working Group - Sharks - which will aim to unify the existing five management measures and build on them to develop a comprehensive management framework.

The IWG-Sharks will be led by Japan but is open to all members (and observer delegations). A list of issues prepared by the Scientific and Compliance committees has been adopted by the Commission, as part of a terms of reference for the IWG-Sharks.

Sea Turtles: WCPFC14 adopted two recommendations for the SC to undertake work that will inform the potential revision of the WCPFC sea turtle CMM. Under the first recommendation, the Scientific Committee (SC) will consider the technical details of a proposal to expand mitigation from shallow set longliners fishing for swordfish to all longliners. Key issues will be whether there are impacts on other bycatch or target species from the proposed expansion. The second adopted recommendation requires the SC to consider whether the WCPFC observer data standards should be modified to collect better data on sea turtle interactions.

Sea Birds: WCPFC14 adopted a new CMM for seabirds that involves minor amendments to the existing seabird CMM. The changes relate to (a) new requirements for tori (bird-scaring) lines to be used on small vessels fishing south of 30 degrees South and (b) to the formats CCMs use to report seabird interactions in annual reports to the Commission.

Conservation and Management Measure on Marine Pollution

This measure involves collective action to reduce the detrimental impact of marine pollution on ocean and coastal environments, wildlife, economies and ecosystems. Under the measure, CCMs will prohibit their fishing vessels operating in the WCPFC Convention Area from discharging any plastics (excluding fishing gear). CCMs will also be encouraged to prohibit their fishing vessels from discharging oil or fuel products, garbage, food waste, domestic waste, incinerator ashes, cooking oil or sewage.

7. Target Reference Point (TRP) for South Pacific Albacore

The Commission agreed to prioritise the development and adoption of a Target Reference Point for south Pacific albacore through the following actions:

- CCMs will review available scientific and economic information to decide appropriate goals for the fishery and corresponding candidate target reference points.
- Regardless of the results of the 2018 stock assessment and the management advice from SC14 to WCPFC15, SC14 will dedicate sufficient time in the Management Issues Theme to develop robust advice to WCPFC15 on candidate target reference points.
- CCMs will develop TRP proposals and WCPFC 15 will adopt a Target Reference Point for south Pacific albacore, using whatever decision-making means are necessary.

8. Amendment to the Record of Fishing Vessels (RFV) CMM – Samoa

CMM 2013-10 RFV was amended to support the continued operation of Samoa's domestic longline fleet that fishes exclusively in Samoa's EEZ. The amendment will allow this fleet to directly offload to American Samoa instead of landing and containerising fish in Samoa, and then shipping to American Samoa. The current practice is costly, impacting on the economic hardship experienced by Samoa in this fishery as a result of prolonged reductions in catch rates in the albacore fishery.

9. Location for next WCPFC annual meeting

The next annual meeting of the Commission – WCPFC15 – will be hosted by Federated States of Micronesia and held in Pohnpei from 3-7 December 2018.