SCTB13 Working Paper

NFR–12

Country Statement – Marshall Islands

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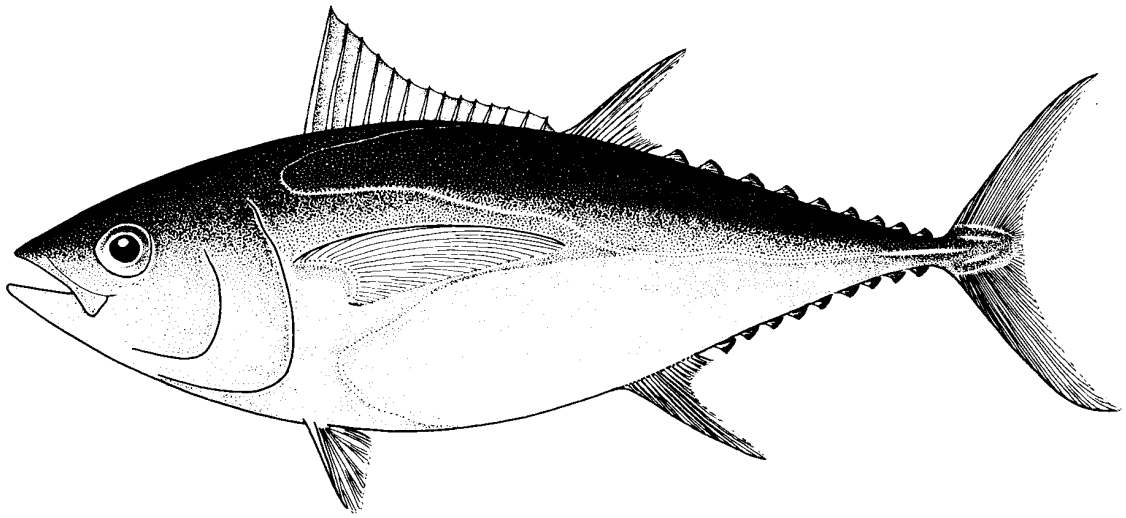

Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
Marshall Islands

July 2000

13th STANDING COMMITTEE ON TUNA AND BILLFISH
July 3 – 14, 2000

Noumea, New Caledonia

Country Statement – Republic of the Marshall Islands

Mr. Chairman, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, RMI share the same sentiments expressed by others, fellow participants in thanking the generous sponsors of this very important meeting. We would also like to thank the host country for this opportunity in convening at this very admirable island.

The RMI would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, SPC, in particular, the works and coordination of the Oceanic Fisheries Division, OFP. The Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority, MIMRA, rely on the OFP for carrying out relevant studies, data analysis, stock assessment, and overall scientific advisory role for our in-zone tuna management regime.

This report is based on catch and effort statistics as observed and collected in the RMI and analyzed by the SPC for the years 1998 and 1999 respectively. Interesting trend in the two years are the increase in purse seine fishery and the decrease in fresh chilled long-line fishing vessels operating in the RMI exclusive Economic Zone, EEZ.

PURSE SEINE:

The following table represents licensed purse seine vessels over the years.

Table 1: Fleet size over the years.

Fleet	1996	1997	1998	1999	Comment
U.S.A.	31	32	35	35	Multilateral
Japan	0	32	33	34	Bilateral
Taiwan	0	0	42	42	Association
Korea	0	0	26	26	Association
Others	0	0	10	12	Companies, etc.

The increasing number of licensed boats is attributed to the changing environmental phenomenon. Evidence in the catch made in the RMI Zone during 1998 and 1999. The RMI Zone has never been able to attract other operators besides the U.S and Japan to fish in the zone. With the existing fleet in the region, and the potential economic benefits, the RMI embarked on a policy reform to bolster relations with these fleet. Until late 1998, with El Nino, Korea and Taiwan began fishing in the RMI EEZ. Other favorable conditions, such as sectoral reforms and a more conducive commercial environment, in comparison with other ports, resulted in these boats frequent call to Majuro for transhipment. Peak periods for the transshipment activity were October – December 1998 and July September 1999.

KOREA:

A fisheries agreement was signed with five Korean companies, through the Korean Deep Sea Fishing Association in July 1998. The following table represents catch Statistics for Korean purse seine vessels in the RMI as analyzed by the SPC. The analysis is based on catch logs and transhipment data collected by observers and provided to SPC.

Table 2: Korean Purse Seine Transhipment in Majuro Port

Year	Month	Boats	Unloadings	SKIPJACK	YELLOWFIN	OTHER	TOTAL
1998	9	1	1	110	230	0	340
1998	10	10	12	6,165	2,835	0	9,000
1998	11	14	21	9,617	6,003	360	15,980
1998	12	9	10	4,395	2,550	0	6,945
			44	**20,287**	**11,618**	**360**	**32,265**
1999	1	2	2	815	680	0	1,495
1999	6	6	6	3,532	1,078	0	4,610
1999	7	2	2	935	425	0	1,360
1999	8	7	7	4,250	290	0	4,540
1999	9	3	4	2,415	290	0	2,705
1999	10	5	5	2,040	1,260	0	3,300
1999	12	2	2	1,145	90	0	1,235
			28	**15,132**	**4,113**	**0**	**19,245**

Source: SPC

Table 3: Catch by Korean Purse Seine in the RMI EEZ

				BIGEYE		SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
Year	Mon	Boats	Days	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE
1998	7	2	4	0	0.0	10	2.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	2.5
1998	8	13	44	0	0.0	1,450	33.0	5	0.1	0	0.0	1,455	33.1
1998	9	6	8	0	0.0	175	21.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	175	21.9
1998	10	12	35	0	0.0	560	16.0	1,395	39.9	0	0.0	1,955	55.9
1998	11	14	99	0	0.0	2,317	23.4	1,193	12.1	0	0.0	3,510	35.5
1998	12	3	5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
			195	**0**	**0.0**	**4,512**	**23.1**	**2,593**	**13.3**	**0**	**0.0**	**7,105**	**36.4**
1999	1	2	2	0	0.0	80	40.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	80	40.0
1999	5	5	12	0	0.0	65	5.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	65	5.4
1999	6	14	111	0	0.0	1,402	12.6	838	7.6	0	0.0	2,240	20.2
1999	7	8	36	0	0.0	635	17.6	40	1.1	0	0.0	675	18.8
1999	8	21	72	0	0.0	1,875	26.0	25	0.3	0	0.0	1,900	26.4
1999	9	16	59	0	0.0	2,805	47.5	110	1.9	0	0.0	2,915	49.4
1999	10	11	19	0	0.0	220	11.6	30	1.6	0	0.0	250	13.2

Source: SPC

TAIWAN

A fisheries agreement was signed with the Taiwanese in October 1998. The agreement allows 43 Taiwanese purse seiners to enter the RMI zone. The Subsequent political recognition of Taiwan has added a new dimension to proposed developments, including fishery projects. There is now increasing interest for Taiwanese investors to establish activities in RMI that service the needs of the fishing industry. MIMRA has been approached on the possibility of establishing a net repair facility, participation in the management of a dry-dock repair, storage services for salt and other needs. Once any of these opportunities become a reality, Majuro will become an even more attractive port not only for the Taiwanese vessels but other fleet as well.

Table 4: Taiwan Purse Seine Transshipment in Majuro

Year	Month	Boats	Unloadings	SKIPJACK	YELLOWFIN	OTHER	TOTAL
1998	9	1	1	500	1,000	0	1,500
1998	10	5	5	2,645	2,005	0	4,650
1998	11	18	19	6,330	8,120	0	14,450
1998	12	23	24	11,895	6,279	0	18,174
			49	**21,370**	**17,404**	**0**	**38,774**
1999	1	2	2	970	90	0	1,060
1999	6	9	9	5,479	1,291	660	7,430
1999	7	11	11	5,261	2,300	0	7,561
1999	8	8	9	3,412	1,204	0	4,616
1999	9	15	16	9,722	2,271	0	11,993
1999	10	6	6	3,185	977	0	4,162
1999	11	6	6	2,505	874	0	3,379
1999	12	3	4	1,835	545	0	2,380
			63	**32,369**	**9,552**	**660**	**42,581**

Source: SPC

Table 5: Taiwan Purse Seine Catch in the RMI

				BIGEYE		SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
Year	Mon	Boats	Days	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE
1998	9	4	14	0	0.0	430	30.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	430	30.7
1998	10	13	108	0	0.0	1,970	18.2	2,230	20.6	0	0.0	4,200	38.9
1998	11	24	151	0	0.0	1,060	7.0	3,040	20.1	0	0.0	4,100	27.2
1998	12	17	30	0	0.0	13	0.4	17	0.6	0	0.0	30	1.0
			303	**0**	**0.0**	**3,473**	**11.5**	**5,287**	**17.4**	**0**	**0.0**	**8,760**	**28.9**
1999	1	8	12	0	0.0	290	24.2	10	0.8	0	0.0	300	25.0
1999	2	1	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	5	3	6	0	0.0	65	10.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	65	10.8
1999	6	18	85	0	0.0	927	10.9	77	0.9	0	0.0	1,004	11.8
1999	7	11	42	0	0.0	262	6.2	90	2.1	0	0.0	352	8.4
1999	8	17	64	0	0.0	1,097	17.1	85	1.3	0	0.0	1,182	18.5
1999	9	12	20	0	0.0	10	0.5	182	9.1	0	0.0	192	9.6
1999	10	3	9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	11	5	6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	12	4	7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
			252	**0**	**0.0**	**2,651**	**10.5**	**444**	**1.8**	**0**	**0.0**	**3,095**	**12.3**

Source: SPC

JAPAN

The bilateral arrangement with Japan saw the return of the purse seine fleet into RMI in 1997, however, under an experiment fishing arrangement. In 1998, the fleet formalized and incorporated to reflect the ongoing, overall bilateral arrangement. The argument presented were inadequacy of relevant and historical data to conclude a viable operation from the Japanese side. However, the influx of other operators, Distant Water Fishing Nations into the RMI during the same year may have prompted Japan to reconsider its position.

Table 6: Japan Purse Seine Catch in the RMI

				BIGEYE		SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
Year	Mon	Boats	Days	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE
1998	3	2	3	0	0.0	140	46.7	10	3.3	0	0.0	150	50.0
1998	4	1	2	0	0.0	38	19.0	2	1.0	0	0.0	40	20.0
1998	5	2	5	0	0.0	22	4.4	3	0.6	0	0.0	25	5.0
1998	6	8	21	16	0.8	751	35.8	48	2.3	0	0.0	815	38.8
1998	7	23	166	55	0.3	5,929	35.7	547	3.3	9	0.1	6,540	39.4
1998	8	22	191	14	0.1	5,765	30.2	328	1.7	3	0.0	6,110	32.0
1998	9	21	164	29	0.2	4,116	25.1	600	3.7	0	0.0	4,745	28.9
1998	10	27	255	6	0.0	4,326	17.0	3,785	14.8	1	0.0	8,118	31.8
1998	11	15	69	5	0.1	538	7.8	492	7.1	0	0.0	1,035	15.0
1998	12	2	4	0	0.0	44	11.0	6	1.5	0	0.0	50	12.5
			880	125	0.1	21,669	24.6	5,821	6.6	13	0.0	27,628	31.4
1999	1	7	13	0	0.0	33	2.5	7	0.5	0	0.0	40	3.1
1999	2	1	2	0	0.0	15	7.5	5	2.5	0	0.0	20	10.0
1999	3	5	23	0	0.0	527	22.9	110	4.8	8	0.3	645	28.0
1999	4	10	38	0	0.0	343	9.0	73	1.9	4	0.1	420	11.1
1999	5	23	143	0	0.0	2,153	15.1	1,095	7.7	177	1.2	3,425	24.0
1999	6	21	141	0	0.0	1,257	8.9	533	3.8	40	0.3	1,830	13.0
1999	7	17	97	0	0.0	1,498	15.4	240	2.5	14	0.1	1,752	18.1
1999	8	10	38	0	0.0	388	10.2	58	1.5	4	0.1	450	11.8
1999	9	5	19	0	0.0	382	20.1	87	4.6	6	0.3	475	25.0
1999	10	1	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
			515	0	0.0	6,596	12.8	2,208	4.3	253	0.5	9,057	17.6

Source: SPC

The fleet also experience good catches for the two years, unloading exclusively in Japan.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The RMI is a party to the FFA administered multilateral treaty arrangement between certain pacific island countries and the United States of America. The RMI is an equal benefit from the arrangement. While the catch in the RMI remain stagnant and with relatively low effort for 1999, the presence of some vessels in Majuro for transshipment had an impact on the perception of the Industry.

Table 7: U.S. Fleet catch in the RMI

				BIGEYE		SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
Year	Mon	Boats	Days	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE
1998	2	3	17	0	0.0	141	8.3	79	4.6	0	0.0	220	12.9
1998	3	1	3	0	0.0	0	0.0	32	10.6	0	0.0	32	10.6
1998	9	2	10	0	0.0	180	18.0	14	1.4	0	0.0	193	19.3
1998	10	3	13	0	0.0	32	2.4	362	27.8	0	0.0	394	30.3
1998	11	4	22	0	0.0	166	7.6	256	11.6	0	0.0	422	19.2
			65	**0**	**0.0**	**519**	**8.0**	**742**	**11.4**	**0**	**0.0**	**1,260**	**19.4**
1999	1	2	3	0	0.0	18	6.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	18	6.0
1999	2	1	2	0	0.0	27	13.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	27	13.5
1999	8	1	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	10	1	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
			7	**0**	**0.0**	**45**	**6.4**	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**	**45**	**6.4**

Source: SPC

Table 8: U.S. Purse Seine transshipment in Majuro.

Year	Month	Boats	Unloadings	SKIPJACK	YELLOWFIN	OTHER	TOTAL
1998	11	1	1	1,628	1,233	0	2,861
1999	9	1	1	537	542	45	1,124
1999	11	1	1	637	259	0	896
1999	12	2	2	891	251	0	1,142
			4	2,065	1,052	45	3,162

Source: SPC

Recent interest from the U.S industry in the RMI is the establishment of the loining plant. Just under a year of operation, the plant received about 6,000 tons of mixed species, with about 38% processed into loins. It should be noted, however, that not only U.S vessels off load its catch to the plant. Others, including carrier vessels have supplied fish to the plant.

OTHERS

There were other purse seine operators in the EEZ as well, licensed and fishing in the RMI during 1998,1999. These were considered domestic vessels, under the Palau Arrangement and the FSM arrangement. Following tables represents countries and their catch and effort, as well as transshipment in Majuro during the years 1998, 1999.

Table 9: FSM PS transshipment in Majuro

Year	Month	Boats	Unloadings	SKIPJACK	YELLOWFIN	OTHER	TOTAL
1998	10	1	2	315	5	0	320
1998	11	1	1	685	40	0	725
1998	12	1	1	311	39	0	350
1998	12	1	1	311	39	0	350
1999	6	1	1	160	195	0	355
1999	7	1	1	730	145	0	875
1999	10	1	1	50	270	0	320
			3	**940**	**610**	**0**	**1,550**

Source: SPC

Table 10: FSM PS catch in the RMI

				BIGEYE		SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
Year	Mon	Boats	Days	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE
1998	10	1	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1998	11	2	6	0	0.0	123	20.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	123	20.5
1998	12	1	2	0	0.0	17	8.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	17	8.5
			9	**0**	**0.0**	**140**	**15.6**	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**	**140**	**15.6**
1999	10	1	1	0	0.0	20	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	20	20.0

Source: SPC

Table 9: Vanuatu Flagged Purse Seine transshipment in Majuro

Year	Month	Boats	Unloadings	SKIPJACK	YELLOWFIN	OTHER	TOTAL
1998	10	1	2	835	330	0	1,165
1998	11	3	5	1,845	1,640	10	3,495
1998	12	3	4	3,550	740	270	4,560
			11	**6,230**	**2,710**	**280**	**9,220**
1999	1	3	4	2,271	1,144	500	3,915
1999	2	1	1	100	0	0	100
1999	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
1999	6	4	4	2,390	1,120	0	3,510
1999	7	4	5	4,820	1,520	20	6,360
1999	8	5	5	5,215	465	0	5,680
1999	9	3	5	5,575	615	0	6,190
1999	10	1	1	260	40	0	300
1999	11	1	1	530	210	0	740
1999	12	4	4	2,065	485	0	2,550
			31	**23,226**	**5,599**	**520**	**29,345**

Source: SPC

Table 11: Vanuatu Flagged PS Catch in the RMI

				BIGEYE		SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
[illegible]				[illegible]		[illegible]		[illegible]		[illegible]		[illegible]	
1998	8	1	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1998	10	1	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1998	11	1	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	200	100.0	0	0.0	200	100.0
1998	12	1	6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
			12	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**	**200**	**16.7**	**0**	**0.0**	**200**	**16.7**
1999	1	1	3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	5	1	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	6	2	11	0	0.0	205	18.6	20	1.8	0	0.0	225	20.5
[illegible]													
1999	8	2	3	0	0.0	15	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	5.0
1999	9	1	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	10	1	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	11	1	1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1999	12	2	4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
			44	**0**	**0.0**	**420**	**9.5**	**20**	**0.5**	**0**	**0.0**	**440**	**10.0**

Source: SPC

Table 12: Solomon Island PS transshipment in Majuro

				BIGEYE		SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
Year	Mon	Boats	Days	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE
1998	10	1	10	4	0.4	11	1.1	410	41.0	0	0.0	425	42.5

Source: SPC

Table 13: PNG PS transshipment in Majuro

Year	Month	Boats	Unloadings	SKIPJACK	YELLOWFIN	OTHER	TOTAL
1998	11	1	1	510	5	0	515
1998	12	1	2	1,195	335	0	1,530
			3	**1,705**	**340**	**0**	**2,045**
1999	2	1	1	100	0	0	100

Source: SPC

A summary of the transshipment activities during these years, are shown in table 14. As compared to the previous year, there was no activity. According to data provided to SPC by MIMRA, the total amount of tuna unloaded from purse seine vessels in Majuro during the 1998 and 1999 was 86,560 tons and 96,639 tons respectively. Majuro transshipments are estimated to have exceeded one

quarter (25%) of the regions total transshipment for these years (excluding Pago Pago).

Table 14: Total transshipment in Majuro

Year	Unloadings	SKIPJACK	YELLOWFIN	OTHER	TOTAL
1998	112	52,531	33,389	640	86,560
1999	131	74,176	21,187	1,330	96,693

Source: SPC

Catch rate for all purse seine fleet were better in 1998 and 1999 throughout the region. Around 30% of the purse seine catch landed in Majuro was taken in Marshall Islands waters, according to data provided to SPC. These data have been included in the regional database at the SPC, for use in the current stock assessment work conducted by the OFP. Some of the findings from this work will be presented by SPC during the 13th SCTB meeting.

The RMI has recently become a party to the FSM arrangement. In this regard, it has allowed for party domestic purse seine fishing in the RMI. At the same time, it allows for domestication of purse seine vessels through criteria's set out in the arrangement.

LONG LINE

Japan dominates the sector in the RMI with Frozen Long liners, offloading exclusively in Japan. Although on occasions, they transship in Majuro, in order to cope with engine problems, crew change, provisioning, or making a quick turn around to the fishing ground.

Table 15: Japanese Long liners catch in the RMI

				BIGEYE		YELLOWFIN		BLUE MARLIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
Year	Mon	Boats	100s of hooks	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE
1998	1	7	2,795	134	1.335	10	0.126	1	0.006	0	0.003	145	1.469
1998	2	4	469	24	1.757	3	0.256	0	0.004	0	0.006	28	2.023
1998	3	8	2,897	143	1.376	12	0.132	1	0.011	1	0.012	157	1.531
1998	4	6	1,238	46	1.189	9	0.259	1	0.011	0	0.013	56	1.472
1998	6	1	720	16	0.754	23	1.231	0	0.001	0	0.013	39	1.999
1998	7	1	600	14	0.753	18	1.180	0	0.008	0	0.007	32	1.948
1998	9	1	450	11	0.653	13	1.076	0	0.000	0	0.000	24	1.729
1998	10	4	1,260	36	0.790	22	0.622	1	0.012	0	0.002	59	1.427
1998	11	26	9,387	288	0.855	212	0.794	14	0.034	16	0.064	530	1.747
1998	12	28	12,016	306	0.655	181	0.491	17	0.031	28	0.090	532	1.267
			31,832	1,018		502		35		47		1,602	
1999	1	23	9,091	236	0.653	154	0.543	19	0.046	14	0.059	423	1.302
1999	2	20	8,425	279	0.862	123	0.464	15	0.036	8	0.034	424	1.397
1999	3	23	10,318	346	0.866	106	0.358	19	0.040	14	0.055	485	1.318
1999	4	22	6,682	244	1.042	41	0.244	19	0.059	17	0.089	322	1.435
1999	5	25	11,620	391	0.884	94	0.334	33	0.064	58	0.195	577	1.477
1999	6	23	6,026	155	0.669	61	0.394	16	0.060	11	0.057	243	1.181
1999	7	15	3,213	95	0.734	60	0.619	9	0.059	5	0.042	169	1.454
1999	8	7	2,881	70	0.673	65	1.161	7	0.052	2	0.019	144	1.905
1999	9	2	541	12	0.574	11	0.970	2	0.066	0	0.026	25	1.636
1999	10	1	100	2	0.560	1	0.530	0	0.050	0	0.020	3	1.160
			58,899	1,830		717		139		129		2,815	

RMI also experienced a decline in Fresh Chilled long line fishing vessels from Taiwan and Mainland China. This is as a result of a lacking shore based management regime. The same fleet operates in the nearby FSM have indicated their interest in fishing in the RMI, however until a proper and adequate shore management is available.

16: Mainland China long line catch in the RMI

				BIGEYE		YELLOWFIN		BLUE MARLIN		OTHERS		TOTAL	
Year	Mon	Boats	100s of hooks	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE
1998	1	22	2,253	88	1.030	14	0.195	0	0.007	2	0.068	103	1.300
1998	2	17	1,409	19	0.334	20	0.466	2	0.032	4	0.142	44	0.974
1998	3	19	1,474	16	0.265	11	0.259	1	0.016	2	0.128	30	0.668
1998	4	19	1,719	21	0.302	12	0.218	1	0.023	6	0.213	39	0.756
1998	5	19	1,308	22	0.441	6	0.151	1	0.017	4	0.206	32	0.814
1998	6	9	176	1	0.188	2	0.473	0	0.011	1	0.234	5	0.906
1998	7	15	1,513	15	0.253	17	0.360	0	0.002	3	0.057	36	0.671
1998	8	18	1,022	11	0.253	22	0.676	0	0.000	0	0.000	33	0.930
1998	9	18	1,071	22	0.516	26	0.740	0	0.007	1	0.032	50	1.295
			11,942	213		131		5		23		372	

Source: SPC

GENERAL OBSERVATION

Majuro is still experiencing a heavy traffic of fishing vessels for transshipment. As of June 2000, 30 vessels so far have transshipped in Majuro. While the catch rate and the effort may drastically reduce, It is anticipated that with the given shore based attractions, the transshipping trend would not be altogether, disintegrated. With competitive provisions and a conducive commercial environment, operators and owners alike indicate their favor to Majuro over other ports.

Catch Logs:

The standard log-sheets produced by the SPC have been issued to Distant Water Fishing Nations and operators alike, through minimum terms and conditions of access during negotiations. The MIMRA does not have any problem with these log sheets, however, would like to point out the fact that some vessels have dual licenses in the region, and therefore may have problem reporting to the appropriate authority with the prescribed logs-sheets. It is known that in most cases, logs are filled out at headquarters and returned to MIMRA. MIMRA is particularly concerned of the quality of data, as original is passed through second and third hand parties. We welcome any suggestions on improving this method, and minimizing the flow of data.

Observer Program:

The SPC and the FFA assisted with the first national Fishery Observer training course in early 1998. Over the period, MIMRA now employed about 25 observers, currently covering the transshipment work in Majuro.

Considering the fishing activity in the RMI zone, placement of observers on the licensed fleet has been difficult. For example, for a dual licensed fishing vessel in the region, an RMI observer may work 5% of the trip, where 95% of trip is

done in other zones. At the same time, the RMI is working with neighboring countries in developing joint monitoring, control and surveillance regimes where relevant information, including observer program is shared.

The Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority will continue to assist and provide data where possible, to the SPC for the continued research and assessment of the tuna and tuna-like stock in the RMI and the region. MIMRA can assist through observers, and port sampling protocols, to collect relevant information as required by the SPC and other agencies for research and management purpose. Note that data is available at the SPC can be accessed via a request. Further analytical of the above catch and effort, unloading data is available as well at the SPC, and will be presented by the OFP during the course of the SCTB 13 meeting. These are considered essential in overall development of a fisheries management regime, as well as during consultations with various operators and Distant Water Fishing Nations.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, what one can interpret as a natural catastrophic can be a blessing in disguise by others. This is evident in the recent effects of the El Nino in the region. By far, it has increased the productivity of the tuna fishery in the RMI as well as the region, interpreted through positive economical developments.