



**Record of Proceedings of the Multilateral
High-level Conference on South Pacific
Tuna Fisheries**

Honiara, Solomon Islands, 5-9 December 1994.

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SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY
**MULTILATERAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH PACIFIC
TUNA FISHERIES**

**FFA Conference Centre, Honiara, Solomon Islands
5 - 9 December 1994**

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

1. The Multilateral High Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries was held at the Forum Fisheries Agency Regional Conference Centre, Honiara, Solomon Islands from 5 - 9 December 1994. The Conference was attended by representatives of Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Japan, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, People's Republic of China, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. Observers from the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Forum Secretariat, Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), South Pacific Commission (SPC), and the Western Pacific Fisheries Consultative Committee (WPFCC) attended the Conference. The list of participants is appended as **Attachment A**.

Opening of Conference

2. The Conference was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Honourable Dennis Lulei, M.P. The Deputy Prime Minister's address is appended as **Attachment B**.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

3. H.E. Robin Yarrow, Ambassador of Fiji to Japan, was elected Chair of the Conference. On taking the Chair, Ambassador Yarrow delivered the statement which is appended as **Attachment C**.

4. The representative of the Republic of the Philippines, Mr. Jesus de la Torre, was elected Vice Chair.

5. A drafting committee was appointed comprising representatives of Australia, Cook Islands, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea and the United States of America. The drafting committee appointed Mr Brian S. Hallman (USA) as its Chair.

Apologies

6. The Chair noted that Minister Edouard Fritch of French Polynesia had conveyed his apologies to the Conference for his inability to attend due to other pressing business. The Chair also advised the meeting of apologies on behalf of the delegation of Palau.

7. The Chair advised the meeting that Chinese-Taipei had notified the Secretariat that it would not be able to participate in the Conference.

Adoption of Agenda

8. The Conference adopted the agenda appended as **Attachment D**.

Statements by Delegations

9. The Hon. Asterio Takesy, Secretary for Resources and Development, Federated States of Micronesia delivered the statement appended as **Attachment E**.

10. The Hon. Lomes McKay, Minister for Resources and Development, Marshall Islands, delivered the statement appended as **Attachment F**.

11. The representative of Australia delivered the statement appended as **Attachment G**. The statement was delivered partly in Australia's capacity as Chair of the South Pacific Forum.

12. The representative of Nauru and Chairman of the Tenth Special (Ministerial Level) Session of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, Mr Felix Kun, delivered a statement on behalf of the Parties to the Nauru

Agreement. The statement is appended as **Attachment H**.

13. The representative of Fiji delivered the statement appended as **Attachment I**.

14. The representative of Japan delivered the statement appended as **Attachment J**.

15. The representative of Kiribati delivered the statement appended as **Attachment K**.

16. The representative of Nauru delivered the statement appended as **Attachment L**.

17. The representative of New Zealand delivered the statement appended as **Attachment M**.

18. The representative of Niue congratulated Ambassador Yarrow on his election to the Chair and expressed appreciation to the Government of Solomon Islands and the Director of the Forum Fisheries Agency for hosting the Conference. He expressed apologies on behalf of his Minister, Hon. Terry Coe, who had been unable to attend the Conference. He noted that, although Niue is a very small island, fisheries are of vital importance to its people as a subsistence food.

19. H.E. Joseph Assaigo, High Commissioner of Papua New Guinea to Solomon Islands delivered the Papua New Guinea country statement on behalf of the Hon. Titus Philemon, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Papua New Guinea. The statement is appended as **Attachment N**.

20. The representative of the People's Republic of China delivered the statement appended as **Attachment O**.

21. The representative of the Republic of the Philippines delivered the statement appended as **Attachment P**.

22. The representative of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Ambassador Kyung-Yil Jung delivered the statement appended as **Attachment Q**.

23. The representative of Solomon Islands expressed appreciation on behalf of the Government of the Solomon Islands for the kind words that had been said by earlier speakers. He wished all delegates a warm welcome to Honiara and reiterated the statements made by the Deputy Prime Minister of Solomon Islands during the opening of the Conference. He noted that the Government of Solomon Islands places great importance on the development of a viable domestic tuna industry and views the licensing of foreign fishing vessels as a short term arrangement. In the view of Solomon Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement for Regional Fisheries Access represents a significant step forward in the development of the domestic tuna industry in the island countries. Nevertheless, Solomon Islands views this Conference as important in bringing together distant water fishing nations and coastal States and looks forward to reaching understanding on the individual agenda items.

24. As Chair of the Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC), the representative of Solomon Islands expressed appreciation to the Government of the United States of America for financial support towards the costs of attendance by Pacific Island countries at the Conference.

25. The representative of the Kingdom of Tonga expressed the appreciation of his Government to the Forum Fisheries Agency and the Government of Solomon Islands for hosting the Conference. In connection with the collection and exchange of catch data, he emphasised that mechanisms already exist for collection and analysis of data. The problem lies in ensuring the cooperation of all distant water fishing nations. With respect to the issue of multilateral arrangements raised by Australia, the representative of Tonga noted that Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) member countries' experience with the United States had shown that multilateral arrangements could be very effective in facilitating exchanges of data. The representative urged all participants to use the Conference to try to find a convergence of opinion on as many issues as possible through a pragmatic and free exchange of views.

26. The representative of Tuvalu thanked the Government of Solomon Islands for its hospitality and stated that he shared the sentiments of previous speakers. He noted that fisheries development is a priority area for the Government of Tuvalu. While Tuvalu needed to maximise the economic benefits from its tuna resources it lacked the technology and infrastructure to do this for itself. He noted that, in relation to bilateral and multilateral access agreements, improvements were needed in the area of compliance with catch and position reporting.

27. The representative of the United States of America, Ambassador David A. Colson, delivered the statement appended as **Attachment R**.

28. The representative of Vanuatu delivered the statement appended as **Attachment S**.

29. The representative of Western Samoa delivered the statement appended as **Attachment T**.
30. On behalf of CCAMLR, Mr John Mills of New Zealand expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the Conference and noted that CCAMLR was interested in establishing communication and exchanging information with organisations like the Forum Fisheries Agency and SPC. He noted that the main concern of CCAMLR in relation to South Pacific tuna fisheries was the issue of seabird mortality. Mr Mills also expressed his appreciation to the FFC for having granted observer status to CCAMLR.
31. The representative of FAO, Dr David Doullman, thanked the Director of Forum Fisheries Agency for inviting FAO to attend the Conference as an observer. Dr Doullman assured participants that FAO was vitally interested in the outcomes of the Conference.
32. The representative of IATTC, Dr James Joseph, thanked the Director of the Forum Fisheries Agency for inviting his organisation to the Conference. He noted that cooperation between organisations is vital because of the nature of tuna and the nature of the fleets that fish for tuna. In particular he noted the warm and cordial relationship that had developed between IATTC, SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency.

Status of Stocks

33. Dr John Hampton, Principal Fisheries Scientist, Oceanic Fisheries Programme, SPC introduced the working paper on the status of stocks (FFA/MHLC/WP.1) which he noted was a consensus paper. In making his presentation, Dr Hampton noted that the paper was based on the considerations of scientists at the 7th meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish held in Palau in August 1994.
34. In his presentation, Dr Hampton indicated that the four main market species of interest, skipjack, yellowfin, bigeye and albacore, are widely distributed throughout the Pacific Ocean. However, various data indicate that there is some separation of stocks of at least some of the species. Albacore are known to comprise separate stocks in the North and South Pacific. Skipjack and yellowfin are thought to comprise separate stocks in the eastern and western central Pacific. Extensive tagging data sets and analysis of genetic material support these contentions. Dr Hampton indicated that fisheries targeting these stocks have expanded rapidly over the past 15 years. The total catch in the SPC statistical area has exceeded 1 million tonnes since 1989 and peaked at 1.4 million tonnes in 1991. Purse seiners are the dominant gear type targeting skipjack and yellowfin (although large catches are also taken in the domestic fisheries of the Philippines and eastern Indonesia). By contrast, bigeye and albacore are taken mainly by long-liners. Analyses of skipjack tagging data by SPC indicate that the impact of the fisheries on the stock is low to moderate. Skipjack CPUE trends are either stable or increasing (probably due to the acquisition of new technology). Yellowfin tagging data suggest a similarly moderate impact of the fisheries on that stock, with relatively higher exploitation rates on smaller yellowfin. However, it was stressed that the analysis applies to the stock as a whole, and there may be some areas where local exploitation is high and where fisheries interaction may occur. Purse seine CPUE has been stable; however, yellowfin CPUE by Japanese long-liners has declined since 1978 in the equatorial area of the Western and Central Pacific. While this might be due in part to changes in setting practices for the purpose of targeting bigeye, an interaction effect due to the expansion of purse seining might also be present. Bigeye have been assessed primarily from production model analyses, which indicate maximum sustainable yields of 90,000 - 120,000 tonnes Pacific wide. Recent catches have exceeded this level and there is some concern that over-fishing may be occurring. Also, significant uncertainties in the assessment exist, primarily in the untested assumption of a Pacific-wide stock. Research focusing on this issue is therefore recommended. For South Pacific albacore the preliminary results of an age-structured model suggest that population biomass has declined recently, although the confidence intervals about the estimates are wide. The age-structured model also estimates two poor recruitments in 1985 and 1990. It was, however, stressed that these results are preliminary, and are subject to considerable uncertainty given the quality of the data available for the analysis.
35. Important research topics identified by SPC included, among others, bigeye stock structure and biology, the environmental effects on tuna stocks and fisheries and by-catch assessment.
36. The representative of Federated States of Micronesia stated that effective management and conservation of the tuna stocks in the region is clearly in the interests of both coastal States and distant water fishing nations. He noted that FFA member countries have always recognised that FFA member countries and the distant water fishing nations need to cooperate to achieve the desired goal of effective management. In this regard, he noted that South Pacific coastal States had already established coordinated administrative arrangements for managing fisheries and had given their full support to arrangements that provide the opportunity for consultation between fisheries scientists from all countries with an interest in the tuna stocks. These arrangements included the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish (SCTB), the Western Pacific Yellowfin Research Group (WPYRG), the South Pacific Albacore Research Group (SPAR), the Western

Pacific Fisheries Consultative Committee (WPFCC), the Trans-Pacific Fisheries Consultative Committee (TPFCC), the APEC Fisheries Working Group, and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC) Fisheries Task Force. In the view of Federated States of Micronesia, these arrangements were beneficial in promoting the timely provision and sharing of comprehensive fisheries data.

37. The representative of Federated States of Micronesia expressed his disappointment that some distant water fishing nations had not participated fully in such consultations. In particular he noted concerns over the supply of new and conflicting data as well as the inadequacy of data and failure to meet agreed standards for data supply. On the other hand, he expressed appreciation to the Japanese, American and Filipino scientists who had participated fully in the work of the SCTB and WPYRG and noted that a Japanese scientist had recently been elected to chair the WPYRG with the full support of FFA member countries. This appointment is a clear reflection of the extremely valuable contribution made by this Japanese scientist to the success of the working group. On behalf of all FFA member countries, he urged all distant water fishing nations to support the existing consultative arrangements.

38. The representative of Japan expressed the appreciation of his delegation to Dr Hampton, SPC and the SCTB. He stated that Japan recognised the contribution of SPC and that Japan's views on stock status were broadly in line with SPC's. With regard to the yellowfin stock, he stated that excessive concentration of fishing effort in the central western Pacific may have negative impacts on the stocks and needed careful monitoring. Therefore, cautious consideration should be given to the condition and trend of the stock in relation to any increase of fishing effort targeted at yellowfin. In relation to the bigeye stock, he asked the Conference to note Japan's major role in scientific studies of bigeye. According to the Japanese stock assessment, the present exploitation of bigeye was around the level of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and the level of effort should therefore be limited at around the current level. At the same time, cautious monitoring was required. In the case of albacore, Japan was paying great attention to the new developments in relation to stock assessment techniques and agreed that SPAR should continue and increase its research activities

39. In response to the statement by Federated States of Micronesia, Japan noted that it had contributed as much as possible through SPAR, SCTB and WPYRG. The problem, from Japan's point of view, is that the current structure of these bodies is not always effective because the strategies and priorities for research are decided by SPC members only, without prior consultations with other interested parties, and research programmes are subject to budgetary constraints. Japan stated its position that a framework for participation by distant water fishing nations on an equal basis from the stage of making decisions on matters such as funding and basic research strategies is essential for the purpose of comprehensive, accurate and timely collection of catch and effort data as well as effective use of such data for stock assessment. Japan stated that it would table a concrete proposal later in relation to the discussion on collection and exchange of catch data.

40. Japan also noted that, as shown in figure 10 of Dr Hampton's paper, the area of distribution of skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye included waters in close proximity to Japan. This indicated that Japan should also be considered a custodian of the resources, if FFA member countries considered themselves as custodians of the resources.

41. Papua New Guinea stated that it, along with other FFA member countries, understood the frustrations voiced by Japan. However, it emphasised the belief that the problems being experienced are due to the non-participation by some distant water fishing nations in the existing consultative mechanisms. The representative of Papua New Guinea noted with satisfaction that, for the first time, Korean scientists participated in the most recent meeting of the WPYRG.

42. The representative of the Republic of Korea noted that the common concern of all participants in the Conference was the effective conservation and management of the stocks. In this regard Korea supported research initiatives and expressed its willingness to participate in future stock assessment discussions. However, there was a need to involve distant water fishing nations in policy and strategy development. In Korea's view, any regional fisheries management organisation or arrangement which has the competence to establish conservation and management measures, including scientific research activities, should be open to participation by all States having an interest in the stocks.

43. The representative of Tuvalu noted that the uncertainty concerning the status of the bigeye stock arose from the lack of understanding of stock structure as well as poor knowledge of some key biological parameters and details of the potentially large catch by the surface fisheries. He advised the meeting of the intention of FFA member countries, working collaboratively with scientists from distant water fishing nations where possible, to undertake directed research into these questions. He noted that this work could be addressed through the work of the existing WPYRG.

44. The representative of the United States of America considered that the question at issue was how to get the best science. He supported the idea of utilising and building upon existing institutions but acknowledged that the question of participation by all those interested in the stocks needed to be addressed. He noted that it was understandable that States involved in the fisheries would have an interest in participating in decisions regarding research planning and budget priorities.

45. The representative of the IATTC stated that his organisation, in conjunction with scientific colleagues from Japan, has been monitoring the status of the bigeye stock in the eastern Pacific east of 150° west over the past 30 years. Their analyses show that the major portion of the bigeye catch comes from that region and is taken by long-liners. He stated that analyses showed the average size of fish taken in the long-line catch were near the optimum in terms of maximising the yield-per-recruit and that the bigeye stocks in the region of the fishery were healthy.

46. The representative of the People's Republic of China noted that China has only recently become involved in fishing in the region so had little opportunity to contribute to research. However, China considered that the regimes established in the South Pacific were important and effective and expressed keen interest to participate in future.

47. Korea expressed its intention to continue to collaborate in scientific research and in this connection informed the Conference that it had presented the results of a study on yellowfin sampled from the Korean long-line and purse seine fishery in the Pacific to the 4th WPYRG.

48. Solomon Islands noted that the question of interaction, in particular the impact of one gear, fleet or fishery on another, had become an important management question in the South Pacific region. In this respect, several countries in the region are actively participating in studies of interaction questions being coordinated by FAO, and supported by Japan.

Collection and Exchange of Catch Data

49. Dr A.D. Lewis, Coordinator of the Oceanic Fisheries Programme of SPC, presented a review of current arrangements in the region for the collection and exchange of data used for stock assessment as working paper FFA/MHLC/WP.2. The working paper had been coordinated through the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish.

50. Dr Lewis identified four types of data; nominal catch statistics, logbook catch and effort data, aggregated catch and effort data and size composition data as required, at high levels of coverage. He noted that, whilst coverage of all data categories has improved, particularly in recent years, deficiencies remain. Nominal catch statistics are generally available, but not always timely. Logbook data coverage, as required under access agreements particularly for high seas activity remains inadequate for some fleets, particularly long-line fleets and little reporting of by-catch and discards occur on available logsheets. Similarly, aggregated catch and effort data compiled from logbook data are not available or incomplete for some purse seine and long-line fleets. Procedures exist for the exchange of data, primarily involving the Standing Committee database, but need improvement. Areas where improvements to existing arrangements and coverage need to be achieved were identified, including more timely submissions of nominal catch statistics, availability of aggregated data and procedures for the release of data.

51. The Minister for Marine Resources of Cook Islands, Hon. Tepure Tapaitau, expressed his appreciation to Dr Lewis and SPC for the comprehensive presentation. The Minister urged the fishing industry to work collaboratively with FFA member countries to ensure the provision of accurate and complete data on all incidental species taken during tuna fishing and to cooperate with monitoring programmes, such as national and regional observer programmes, that can be used to demonstrate a responsible approach to fisheries exploitation in the region. He noted that there was growing international interest in by-catch issues as evidenced by the interest of CCAMLR in attending the Conference as well as recent initiatives through CITES.

52. Korea advised the Conference that collection and compilation of nominal catch statistics is carried out by the National Fisheries Research and Development Agency. However, the data from which the statistics are compiled depends for its accuracy on the accuracy of reports from the captains of distant water fishing vessels. Korea is placing scientists on board vessels to collect the data. With respect to the proposal for the submission of logbooks direct to SPC, Korea indicated that it could support such a proposal, provided it was compatible with reporting requirements under existing bilateral access agreements and provided the coastal States concerned agreed. Korea acknowledged that statistics on aggregated catch and effort data were not published on a regular basis and advised the Conference that efforts were being made to improve the system.

53. Japan expressed appreciation to SPC for its efforts in producing the Statistical Yearbook and

acknowledged the difficulties involved in collecting statistical data. The Conference was reminded that nominal catch statistics in Japan are derived from data on landings. On the other hand, SPC's nominal statistics are defined in terms of statistical areas and cannot, therefore, be compiled from landing data since the sales slip at landings does not contain details of the location of catch. The process of collection, verification, compilation, conversion to weight or number of fish, extrapolation and interpolation as and when necessary of logbook data as well as aggregation of catch (long-line, 5° x 5°, purse seine and pole-and-line 1° x 1°) in Japan is conducted at a national level and only through this process can the nominal catch statistics by area be calculated. If this system was to be altered it would distort the integrity of national catch statistics. Therefore, changing of area divisions, seasons and items for statistical purposes will require consideration of the whole statistical systems of those countries affected. Japan also stated that it could not require its fishermen to supply logbook data to an organisation of which Japan is not a member, such as SPC. Japan noted that different considerations apply to length frequency data because these are not derived from logbooks. There should be consultation among scientists to develop agreed sampling techniques.

54. In Japan's view, the defects in the current system, in terms of collection of data as well as use and dissemination of acquired data, are caused by the lack of any formal arrangements between SPC and the distant water fishing nations. In the long term, the only way to improve the situation would be to reach a formal arrangement regarding the provision of catch data in a unified format, the compilation and publication of data in a unified and agreed format, basic rules for data management and access, and equitable cost-sharing between the parties. In this regard, Japan proposed that a working group be established to study the organisational and financial aspects of establishing a framework for (1) the collection and dissemination of data from fishing operations and (2) stock assessment with the participation of scientists from all States with an interest in the stocks.

55. Kiribati expressed concerns about the status of current fisheries data and outlined some general principles that governed the provision of such data on common or shared fish stocks. The representative of Kiribati stated that it was a moral obligation of all parties concerned to provide the type of data required for stock assessment purposes and that the exchange of this information should be above political and economic considerations. He indicated that any action to the contrary by the distant water fishing nations would be viewed as irresponsible by the region. Whilst acknowledging recent improvements in data provision he reiterated the deficiencies outlined in Dr. Lewis's paper. He reaffirmed the region's commitment to the collection of timely and accurate data and concluded by calling on all distant water fishing nations to show an equal commitment to addressing this important issue.

56. The representative of the Philippines noted that his Government was committed to resource conservation and management, was an active participant in various research fora and wished to continue to cooperate with SPC. The value of inter-regional cooperation through such bodies as WPFCC was noted.

57. There was some discussion of the difficulties in providing timely data to SPC and it was noted by some delegations, including Papua New Guinea, that one reason for delay is that some licensed vessels do not provide timely and accurate logbook data. Australia expressed concern at the very considerable delays that had been reported by SPC and asked the distant water fishing nations to consider supplying provisional nominal catch statistics from industry sources within three months of the end of each year. Papua New Guinea indicated that it would be difficult for it to adopt the proposal of supplying logbook data direct to SPC since national legislation and bilateral agreements required that such data be supplied to national authorities. Korea agreed that requirements under bilateral arrangements must take precedence over the supply of data to SPC and noted that since June 1993, Korean vessels operating in the region had maintained very stringent reporting requirements.

58. The United States reminded the Conference that the objective is to get the best information. The United States was encouraged by the constructive proposals that had been made but noted that the problem was to obtain comprehensive, accurate and timely information. Collection of high seas data was particularly important in the South Pacific region and the United States was unable to endorse a situation where mechanisms exist for the collection of data inside EEZs but distant water fishing nations retain all data from the high seas. For the proper conservation and management of highly migratory fish stocks, data on fishing operations through the entire migratory range of such stocks is needed. It was noted that modern technology existed which made it easy to collect, store and use fisheries data in a timely manner. The United States endorsed the need for controls over the use of such data to ensure confidentiality and considered there was merit in the Japanese proposal for a working group to examine issues relating to data collection and exchange.

59. In discussing further the proposal by Japan, Kiribati considered that issues such as the level of participation in the working group, the funding arrangements and the time-frame for reporting needed to be clarified. Some delegations suggested that, where possible, existing bodies and organisations could be used to

facilitate such a study and Papua New Guinea suggested that the SCTB would be an appropriate body for this purpose. The Conference considered that further consultation and more detailed consideration of the proposal put forward by Japan was needed.

60. The Conference agreed that a technical consultation should be convened to consider options for improved provision of complete catch and effort data which take into account the needs of users and providers, compilation and exchange of these data, and formulation of criteria for data management and security. In addition the consultation would consider options under which scientists from all parties involved in the fishery can more fully participate in the stock assessment process and tuna research programmes. The technical consultation will consist of representative from FFA member countries, DWFNs, and South Pacific regional fisheries organisations. Generally no more than two to three representatives from each party should attend. The activities of the technical consultation will be coordinated by the SPC Oceanic Fisheries Programme. The consultation will meet for one week in August 1995 immediately preceding the 8th Meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish at a venue to be advised. The technical consultation should prepare a report for consideration by the parties attending the technical consultation.

Transshipment

61. Mr Bernard Thoulag, Executive Director of the Micronesian Maritime Authority, presented a working paper on transshipment. The paper outlined developments since June 1993 with regard to transshipment in ports in Federated States of Micronesia. Bringing transshipment into port had resulted in direct and indirect economic benefits as well as enhanced monitoring and sampling. Mr Thoulag stressed that one of the objectives of Federated States of Micronesia was to encourage greater economic benefits from transshipment and, in this regard, he called upon distant water fishing nations concerned to make a more concerted effort to cooperate with local authorities to help create new employment opportunities. The paper also outlined some concerns with respect to environmental pollution, safety of navigation and groundings.

62. Speaking on behalf of the FFA member countries, Australia expressed appreciation to all distant water fishing nations present for their high level of compliance with the regional prohibition on transshipment at sea. Australia encouraged all vessel operators that currently tranship outside the region to consider using the facilities of ports in the region.

63. The representative of Korea thanked Mr Thoulag for his presentation and noted that the report covered all the problems associated with transshipment. He noted that, since June 1993, Korean industry has complied fully with the new regional regulations on transshipment even though it had caused a 30% reduction in catching effort. He confirmed that it was the intention of the Government to continue to ensure full compliance with coastal State regulations. However, he invited the Conference to take into consideration some of the problems affecting vessel operators. These included: excessive disparities between the price of commodities such as fuel on the local and international markets, and excessive use of inspection and sampling powers by port State authorities. He also urged FFA member countries to designate additional ports for transshipment.

64. Solomon Islands informed the Conference that, since June 1993, it had been pleased to experience a substantial increase in transshipments in its ports. While this increase in activity was welcomed, Solomon Islands expressed some concern about increasing pollution and poor environmental practices, including dumping of discards and by-catch, discharging of bilges in lagoons, refuelling without proper spillage protection and dumping of refuse.

65. The representative of Kiribati also expressed concern about the dumping of discards and by-catch and noted the adverse impact that such practices had on local artisanal and subsistence fishermen. He urged vessel operators to consult and cooperate with the appropriate local authorities before landing any catch.

66. Japan confirmed that, under Japanese law, all Japanese fishing vessels operating in the region are prohibited from transshipping catch at sea, including on the high seas. Japan accepted the prohibition of transshipment in the zones of FFA member countries but wished to restate its position that the coastal State cannot regulate transshipment on the high seas. He thanked Mr Thoulag for his interesting and informative paper and noted that some Japanese long-line operators had expressed interest in transshipping in Federated States of Micronesia. The Government of Japan would convey to Japanese vessel operators the concerns of FFA member countries with regard to sound environmental practices and hygiene, but also shared the views expressed by Korea with regard to the local costs of essential commodities.

67. The representative of Korea confirmed that environmental issues are most important to his country and agreed to relay the important remarks made by Kiribati and Solomon Islands to Korean vessel operators.

68. The representative of the United States recalled the difficulties that had been experienced with regard

to this issue in negotiations on the multilateral tuna treaty. He expressed satisfaction at the resolve of FFA member countries to apply the regulation to all fleets and acknowledged that substantial economic benefits derived from transshipment by the coastal States. The United States confirmed that all U.S. vessels are transshipping in port and encouraged all other countries responsible for vessels operating in the region to adopt the practice of transshipment in port.

69. The People's Republic of China thanked Mr Thoulag for his report and noted that the Chinese long-line fleet in the region was transshipping in port. China indicated its support for the opportunities and benefits provided by the regulation of transshipment and indicated its willingness to work with other interested parties to find solutions to any practical problems that may have arisen.

70. The Republic of the Philippines appreciated the excellent overview that had been provided and advised the Conference that the concerns of FFA member countries would be relayed to Filipino vessel operators.

71. The representative of French Polynesia also expressed appreciation for the very useful overview and noted that he would be seeking additional assistance from FFA member countries in future.

72. Papua New Guinea considered that a good understanding had developed on this issue and thanked the representative of Korea in particular for his very positive and constructive remarks. He noted that, from the point of view of the Pacific island countries, transshipment in port provides the opportunity for broader cooperation and enhanced economic benefits from the fishery.

73. The Conference agreed that transshipment in port has provided increased economic benefits to FFA member countries as well as improved data coverage. It was agreed that compliance with coastal State regulations was generally good but there were problems on both sides. Noting the assurances that had been provided by distant water fishing nations with respect to the concerns expressed by FFA member countries, it was agreed that further consultation, on a bilateral basis, would be desirable to overcome remaining difficulties. All States represented in the Conference confirmed that vessels flying their flag are not transshipping at sea in the region. The Conference encouraged all other States and entities fishing in the region to follow the practice of not transshipping at sea and to comply fully with coastal State regulations when in port, especially with regard to sound environmental practices.

Transponder Technology

74. Mr Philip Marshall (Australia) presented working paper FFA/MHLC/WP.4 on vessel monitoring systems (VMS). It was noted that the paper was a collaborative effort between FFA member countries and the FFA secretariat. The paper provided an overview of the status of VMS within the FFA region and the likely future development of such systems. The successful use of VMS by both Australia and New Zealand was highlighted. While VMS had been operating for less than a year in these countries, improvements in compliance had already been achieved and there are plans to extend the coverage of the systems and to extend their capabilities.

75. The problems of surveillance of the FFA region and the potential contribution of VMS were also discussed. The FFA approach to the implementation of a regional VMS was outlined. A project, funded by the European Union, has commenced. Economic feasibility and legal framework studies are planned to proceed, as is a field trial of possible satellite systems. This will lead to completion of a functional specification and acquisition of appropriate technologies. While it is not expected that the regional VMS will be implemented overnight, it is anticipated that a valuable monitoring, control and surveillance tool will result from the project. Opportunities for cooperation from the distant water fishing nations would be offered.

76. French Polynesia informed the Conference of its experience with VMS. Under its bilateral fisheries access agreement with Korea, Korean long-line vessels had been required to carry transponders since October 1993. Currently, 60% of licensed vessels are obliged to use transponders. French Polynesia assured the Conference that it was fully in support of a harmonised VMS in the region.

77. The representative of Japan noted that the question of VMS needed to be addressed from a legal and a technical perspective. Japan has extensive experience with VMS and recognises the usefulness of the technology. However, the real value of VMS lies in its application to data gathering for the purposes of sound conservation and management, rather than enforcement. In Japan's experience, VMS is an effective enforcement tool only if fishermen cooperate and too much emphasis on enforcement is likely to make fishermen uncooperative. From a legal perspective, Japan does not oppose the use of VMS within the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic and fisheries zones of coastal States. However, vessels cannot be required to comply with VMS on the high seas except under a scheme involving the flag State. Data collected through VMS can only be exchanged through a formal agreement. If such data are for the purpose of conservation and

management, it follows that a proper framework for conservation and management must be established through a formal agreement.

78. With specific reference to the FFA region, Japan expressed willingness to cooperate with and support the smooth development of the most appropriate technology for VMS. It could not support the development or imposition of a VMS by a limited group of members of FFA without adequate consultation with distant water fishing nations. In this connection, Japan noted that the record of proceedings from the VMS Consultation held by FFA at Cairns in September 1993 specifically referred to the need for a high level of cooperation between coastal States, fishing States and fishermen. It was essential that any VMS was acceptable to fishermen and did not impose excessive costs or limitation on equipment. Japan considered that the manner of practical application of VMS as contemplated in the working paper did not seem appropriate. It was essential that technical experts from both FFA member countries and distant water fishing nations get together to design a VMS which is most appropriate to the region. In this connection, Japan extended an offer to host such a technical consultation in Japan in 1995.

79. The representative of Korea agreed with Japan in relation to the technical and legal aspects of VMS, especially with regard to the position on the high seas. In Korea's view, the ultimate purpose of VMS is conservation and management, not surveillance and enforcement. As a country that is fully committed to sound conservation and management, Korea is prepared to support the adoption of VMS. The bilateral agreement with French Polynesia on the use of ARGOS for the Korean long-line fleet is a good example of this.

80. The representative of the Cook Islands noted that Mr Marshall's presentation coincides with the official opening of FFA's Regional Fisheries Surveillance Centre. He noted that there is ample evidence that foreign fishermen have systematically contravened coastal State regulations for many years and that, because of the high cost of surveillance, it has been very easy for them to escape detection. In this connection, VMS offered a cost-effective means of supplementing conventional means of surveillance, and Cook Islands urged all distant water fishing nations to cooperate with the introduction of a harmonised regional VMS.

81. The United States advised that it was ready to participate in a regional VMS. Nevertheless, it agreed that cooperation and consultation would aid the implementation process. The United States considered that the two basic roles of VMS, compliance and data reporting, should be given equal importance. The four key characteristics of a VMS should be: that it is tamper-proof, that it provides real-time data, that it is cost-effective, and that it is capable of two-way communication.

82. Papua New Guinea endorsed the comments by the Cook Islands and registered its appreciation to Australia and New Zealand for the aerial surveillance provided by those countries as well as for assistance provided by the U.S. enforcement authorities. Papua New Guinea was concerned about instances of illegal fishing in its waters and advised that it would be introducing a VMS compatible with the regional VMS.

83. Federated States of Micronesia expressed concern about the poor level of compliance in the region and indicated that it would be giving consideration to the introduction of VMS as a condition of licensing. In this case, vessels would be required to carry and utilise VMS through the entire fishing trip. Federated States of Micronesia noted that this requirement would not only be applied to foreign fishing vessels but also to its own fleet. It looked for the cooperation of distant water fishing nations in this regard.

84. Korea reminded the Conference that under rules of the World Trade Organisation, free competition should be encouraged. It was unreasonable to arbitrarily impose any particular system on another State. Korea was willing to consider all systems but insisted that quality and cost considerations should be taken into account and fair competition should be permitted. Korea was ready to participate in the technical consultation proposed by Japan and thanked Japan for the offer to host the consultation.

85. Australia agreed that a choice of equipment should be offered providing that equipment met specified operational and monitoring requirements. It noted that the benefits of VMS also accrue to distant water fishing nations. The Australian experience of VMS had demonstrated a high level of acceptance by fishermen, despite initial opposition, through a combination of commercial, social and maritime safety benefits.

86. New Zealand noted with appreciation the offer by Japan to host a technical consultation on VMS. It considered that the emphasis on enforcement was justified because enforcement is an essential part of fisheries conservation and management. New Zealand considers therefore that VMS has a vital role to play in surveillance and enforcement.

87. China noted that VMS is useful and very effective in conservation and management. There are some difficult technical and economic issues to be resolved but China is ready and willing to participate in technical consultations aimed at resolving these issues. The proposal by Japan for a technical consultation was noted

with appreciation and China indicated its wish to participate.

88. Fiji referred to the recent Global Enforcement Workshop held in Washington D.C. and thanked the United States for its initiative in convening the workshop. The representative of Fiji commended the United States and its vessel operators for their assurances of cooperation with the regional VMS and welcomed the support expressed by French Polynesia. He went on to thank Japan and Korea for their assurances of cooperation as expressed to the Conference and noted with thanks the offer by Japan to host a technical consultation. Nevertheless, he noted that a greater commitment to full compliance with coastal State laws and regulations would reduce the emphasis on enforcement in the use of VMS.

89. The Cook Islands noted the offer by Japan to host a technical consultation on VMS in Japan in 1995, but indicated that FFA member countries have a strong preference for such a consultation to be held in one of the FFA member countries. The Cook Islands also considered that any such technical consultation should follow on from previous technical consultations on VMS convened by FFA.

90. The Conference agreed that the discussion on VMS had been positive. In principle, all States represented at the Conference supported the use of VMS technology as an effective tool for fisheries enforcement but it was recognised that the nature of the region posed great challenges. Conference participants agreed to continue to explore how such systems could be utilised in the most beneficial way for both coastal States and distant water fishing nations. It was recognised that FFA member countries had no intention of acting unilaterally in this regard and it was hoped that continuing dialogue, through the existing consultative mechanisms for research and development of VMS supported by FFA, would help to resolve the difficulties identified by Japan and other distant water fishing nations. The Conference noted with appreciation the offer by Japan to host a technical consultation on VMS in Japan in 1995 and agreed that this matter could be taken up at a later date between FFA member countries and Japan.

Enforcement

91. Mr Eugene Proulx (United States) presented a paper (FFA/MHLC/WP.5(Rev.1)) on fisheries enforcement. Mr Proulx explained that the paper was based on the practical experiences of United States fisheries enforcement officers over the past two years, with particular reference to dockside monitoring of fishing vessels in U.S. ports in the South Pacific region. The paper outlined the practical steps taken by enforcement officers and commented on the legal and jurisdictional considerations applicable in a multi-jurisdictional environment such as the South Pacific. Mr Proulx emphasised the benefits of close cooperation between fisheries enforcement officials from different jurisdictions and outlined some of the legal mechanisms available under U.S. law in South Pacific ports, including Guam, Tinian, Saipan and Pago Pago.

92. The representative of Japan asked for clarification on the regional enforcement scheme in the FFA region. In particular, he asked for clarification of the situation where a fisheries enforcement vessel or officer of one State in the region takes enforcement action against a foreign fishing vessel within the exclusive economic or fisheries zone of another State in the region. In response, it was indicated that the Niue Treaty on Cooperation in Fisheries Surveillance and Law Enforcement in the South Pacific Region provides a framework for cross-authorisation of officers, including provisions for marking of enforcement vessels and identification, but the precise mechanisms for implementation of this framework would be set out in detail in subsidiary bilateral or subregional arrangements. The United States commented that maritime enforcement issues are complex because of cross-jurisdictional issues. Australia suggested that the Conference should not engage in a lengthy debate on the legal aspects of these complexities.

93. Federated States of Micronesia thanked Mr Proulx for his interesting presentation and also extended appreciation to the fisheries enforcement agencies of the United States Government for the valuable assistance provided to Federated States of Micronesia in the past. The need for cooperation was endorsed given that most island countries in the region lacked independent enforcement capability.

94. The representative of Korea expressed reservations about the compatibility of the Niue Treaty with international law. He also expressed concern over the fact that most distant water fishing nations were unaware of the regional agreements relating to surveillance and enforcement.

95. The representative of Tonga also expressed thanks to Mr Proulx and indicated that his country would be taking up some of the suggestions made by Mr Proulx regarding training of fisheries enforcement officials. He went on to note that FFA member countries have agreed to require, as a condition of access to their exclusive economic zones, that all foreign fishing vessels comply with the minimum terms and conditions of access (MTCs). He noted that all participants in the Conference should be familiar with the MTCs which are authorised by article 62(4) of the 1982 United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea. Despite the fact that

many of the MTCs, such as the requirements for vessel markings, are based on international standards, including, for example the 1989 FAO Standard Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels, it was a matter of very deep concern to all FFA member countries that the level of compliance with the MTCs is imperfect. He urged the Conference to consider recommendations leading to significant improvements in the general level of compliance with international, regional and national requirements for responsible fishing practices.

96. The representative of Niue thanked Mr Proulx for his comprehensive presentation and noted the Niue Government's sincere appreciation to the National Marine Fisheries Service for the help over the current year. He expressed the support of his delegation for the sentiments expressed by Tonga and noted that the general level of compliance with simple requirements such as vessel markings and catch reporting was poor. He acknowledged the high level of compliance by United States vessels operating under the multilateral tuna treaty and the efforts by Japan to improve the level of compliance but noted the poor record of compliance by other fleets.

97. The representative of Philippines thanked Mr Proulx for his presentation and stated that he was well aware of the frustrations associated with fisheries enforcement procedures. He noted that the Global Fisheries Enforcement Workshop in Washington, D.C. had confirmed that the problem of enforcement is a global problem and in this connection he also referred to the recent UN General Assembly resolution on illegal fishing. He suggested that there is a need for a strong political commitment to better enforcement and adequate training for fisheries enforcement officials. He also took the opportunity to thank FFA for inviting the Republic of the Philippines to participate in the Conference.

98. The Minister for Marine Resources of Cook Islands confirmed that appropriate procedures for cross-authorisation of fisheries enforcement officers do exist in the South Pacific region and would be exercised responsibly. He noted that the level of non-compliance in the region indicates an indifferent concern by some distant water fishing nations to implementing their responsibilities as flag States. In this connection he noted that the United States had accepted a specific treaty obligation, in its agreement with FFA members, to exercise responsibility for all fishing vessels documented under the laws of the United States operating in the region. In addition, under the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement for Regional Fisheries Access, FFA member countries had demonstrated their willingness to undertake specific responsibilities as flag States. He stated that FFA member countries have no wish to usurp the jurisdiction of the flag State, providing it is exercised appropriately. But it is the non-exercise of that jurisdiction, and inadequate recognition by some flag States of their responsibilities, which has led to increasing calls for the exercise of other kinds of jurisdiction, including by port States. These questions are being addressed in the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and FFA members will use that Conference to pursue equitable outcomes in this area.

99. Japan stated that it had read Mr Proulx's paper with interest. However, it had expected the paper to focus on a discussion of ways to encourage cooperation between flag States and coastal States in enforcement matters and Japan was concerned that the paper seemed to encourage the use of very harsh enforcement measures. Japan expressed concern that some Japanese vessels had experienced the excessive use of enforcement powers and the hope was expressed that any boardings and inspections would be carried out reasonably and with minimum force.

100. Japan expressed concern that some of the MTCs, particularly those in relation to the high seas, mandated the coastal State to impose certain regulations which are contrary to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Japan also stated its position in relation to port State enforcement and noted that the subject of port State enforcement was still under discussion at the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. In Japan's view, the port State does not have enforcement authority, including boarding and inspection, over foreign fishing vessels in respect of incidents on the high seas, or in waters under the jurisdiction of third parties unless the port State has an agreement with the parties concerned, including the flag State. In Japan's view, it is problematic that United States enforcement officials at Guam have inspected Japanese vessels in respect of possible violations in areas under the jurisdiction of third parties. Japan requested the United States to refrain from this practice at least until the issue of port State enforcement had been agreed upon in the context of the UN Conference.

101. Japan requested that all pertinent information relating to enforcement by FFA member countries, including lists of geographical coordinates or charts describing the outer boundaries of their respective exclusive economic or fisheries zones, should be made available to fishing States for the purposes of better compliance with coastal State laws and regulations.

102. In response to the request by Japan, the Conference recognized the need for FFA members or the FFA

Secretariat, as the case may be, to provide copies of their domestic laws and regulations, including lists of geographical coordinates or charts describing the outer boundaries of their respective exclusive economic or fisheries zones, as well as copies of pertinent regional agreements and arrangements, to distant water fishing nations and vessel operators.

103. The representative of the United States stated that effective enforcement is essential to conservation and management. He noted that tensions may arise between fishermen and enforcement personnel, but these can be avoided if the regulations are followed. He noted further that, in relation to flag State responsibility, the United States has accepted a unique burden under the multilateral tuna treaty. He reminded the Conference that significant areas of the South Pacific are under United States jurisdiction and his Government was legitimately concerned that undetected illegal fishing activity may be taking place in these areas. In the view of the United States, cooperation in enforcement was essential and the agreement between the U.S. Government and FFA reached in March 1994 was a significant step forward in this regard.

104. As a general proposition, the United States considered that flag States needed to do a better job in regulating the activities of their vessels on the high seas. The international community will not tolerate unregulated fishing activity which affects conservation and management and the high seas should not be considered as a sanctuary for illegal activity. The United States holds a different view from that expressed by Japan in relation to port State enforcement and considers that this is a matter within the regulatory authority of the United States in accordance with the Lacey Act. In the view of the United States, the issues of port State enforcement and flag State responsibility are important areas in which the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks can make progress. The representative of the United States emphasised that the United States would continue to enforce its domestic laws in its ports.

105. The United States also noted that the issue of re-flagging to escape controls also remains a problem. While the United States recognised the legitimate concerns of some Pacific Island States with regard to the FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas, it considered that the agreement was a good foundation upon which to build. The United States urged all States to ratify the agreement in order to bring it into force as soon as possible.

106. The representative of Vanuatu noted the valuable assistance provided to FFA member countries by Australia and New Zealand in terms of aerial surveillance as well as through the Pacific Patrol Boat Programme.

107. The representative of the United States appreciated the positive comments that had been made with respect to the Global Enforcement Workshop held in October 1994 and informed the Conference that the proceedings of the workshop would be published in due course. The United States noted that it was holding discussions with FFA about the possibility of assisting with training in enforcement procedures.

108. Korea emphasised that the distinctions between the high seas and the exclusive economic zones must be recognised. On behalf of the representatives of Korean industry, the representative of Korea expressed concern about the way in which enforcement powers had been used arbitrarily and excessively. In addition, he called upon FFA member countries to provide copies of their laws and regulations, as well as regional agreements and arrangements relating to surveillance and enforcement. Korea made it known that it has taken various measures, including cancellation of distant water fishing licences, to ensure strict compliance by Korean fishing vessels with coastal State laws and regulations.

109. China indicated that it was willing to cooperate fully with enforcement but that general principles were very important. Any enforcement activity must be fully consistent with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and international law.

110. Papua New Guinea thanked the United States for the assistance provided by the National Marine Fisheries Service in taking action against vessels which have breached Papua New Guinea laws. It noted that Papua New Guinea has incorporated the MTCs into relevant legislation, including the 1994 Fisheries Act, as well as bilateral access agreements and will not hesitate to take legal action in respect of any violations. Papua New Guinea also confirmed that its relevant laws and regulations were available to any interested distant water fishing nation.

111. Australia noted that the implementation of the Lacey Act by the United States is a good example of cooperation and recorded its gratitude to the United States Government for the assistance provided to FFA member countries in this regard. Australia, speaking on behalf of FFA member countries, also noted with appreciation the offer by the United States to provide a fisheries enforcement officer to FFA. Australia urged the Conference to recognise the value of existing cooperative arrangements for enforcement in the region and support the development of further collaborative mechanisms in the future to ensure effective enforcement of

fisheries regulations.

112. It was recognised by all participants in the Conference that effective enforcement is essential for conservation and management. While FFA member countries are concerned at the poor level of compliance by some vessels, they also recognised the concerns expressed by some countries regarding the use of excessive enforcement measures. In this regard, the Conference agreed on the need for greater cooperation between coastal States and distant water fishing nations.

Other Matters Related to Fishing in the South Pacific Region

Gear Conflicts in Central Western Pacific

113. The representative of Japan, Mr Tatsuo Saito, introduced a short discussion paper on gear conflicts in the long-line fishery. The paper described the problems that had arisen from the dramatic increase in the number of long-line fishing vessels in some parts of the central western Pacific region. In order to avoid such problems and to minimise the loss which may be caused, Japan requested the authorities of the flag States of long-line vessels, as well as the authorities of the coastal States which issue permits to long-line vessels, to give strong guidance and instructions to the long-line vessels to (1) make their best efforts to set long-line gear with a spacing of at least two nautical miles from other long-line gear already set in the sea, and (2) in cases where long-line gear has to be cut, to make best efforts to re-tie it firmly at the points of such cut.

114. Federated States of Micronesia agreed with Japan that this kind of irresponsible fishing practice needed to be discouraged. Federated States of Micronesia expected all vessels licensed to fish in its zone to behave in a responsible manner. It assured the Conference that strong action would be taken in respect of any incidents brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

115. The representative of Marshall Islands stated that he shared the concerns expressed by Japan and would cooperate with Japan in finding ways to resolve the problem.

116. The Conference endorsed the proposal by Japan and all delegations agreed to instruct their fishermen to follow it as the appropriate guidance. The Conference also agreed to encourage all other States and fishing entities to act responsibly in a similar manner in setting long-line gear.

Sashimi and canned tuna markets

117. Mr Kimio Kawasaki, Vice President of the National Offshore Tuna Fisheries Association of Japan, introduced a brief supplementary paper on the Japanese sashimi market. The paper noted that an over-supply of fresh tuna had caused depressed prices on the Japanese market and urged other tuna producers to make the orderly supply to an already-saturated Japanese sashimi market for the interest of all concerned, including the island nations. In this connection, he stressed the need for further development of domestic tuna markets in long distance fishing nations.

118. Korea noted that its own market for fresh tuna had increased from 1,000 tonnes in 1991 to 20,000 tonnes in 1994. It expected to become the second largest market for fresh tuna, after Japan, in the near future. With regard to the canned tuna market, Korea noted that its domestic industry began in 1979 with one purse seine vessel. The per capita consumption of canned tuna has increased to 7 cans per person per year, second only to the United States. Korea expressed the hope that it could become a valuable market for Pacific Island nations in the future.

119. The United States noted that in 1985, 88 million cases of canned tuna had been sold on the world market. Approximately 50% of that had been sold on the U.S. market. While the U.S. market had remained generally static since 1985, global sales of canned tuna had reached 142 million cases in 1993: a 61% increase since 1985. This increase was mainly attributable to increased sales in the European Union and Central and South America. In the view of the United States industry, future growth in the market would continue at around 2.4% annually.

120. The Conference noted Mr Kawasaki's presentation with interest and expressed thanks to the delegation of Japan for introducing this important item.

FFA/ADB Domestic Tuna Industry Development Study

121. The Conference noted with interest and appreciation a brief report by FFA on the progress of a study of conditions for the development of the domestic tuna industry in Pacific Island States. The report highlighted the fact that the purpose of the study is to recommend means of improving the climate for investment in the tuna industries of Pacific Island nations. The value of the study would be considerably enhanced by the cooperation of the tuna industry in distant water fishing nations.

Close of the Conference

122. The Conference approved the communiqué appended as **Attachment U**.
123. Following a report by the Chairman of the drafting committee, the Conference adopted this record of proceedings.
124. The representative of the Cook Islands, Hon. Tepure Tapaitau, Minister for Marine Resources, delivered the closing remarks appended as **Attachment V**.
125. Australia considered that the Conference had been productive and that the outcomes were positive. In its capacity as Chair of the South Pacific Forum, Australia noted that the outcomes of the Conference were also fully consistent with the outcomes of the 1994 Forum with regard to the sustainable management and development of fisheries. Australia acknowledged the contribution of distant water fishing nations to the success of the Conference.
126. The representative of French Polynesia expressed the appreciation of his Government for this opportunity to participate in the Conference. He looked forward to future close cooperation between the island States and territories in the South Pacific region.
127. The representative of Japan stated that all participants in the Conference have a vital interest in South Pacific tuna fisheries. He believed that increased cooperation is essential and that the great success of the Conference had been in developing increased trust and a spirit of cooperation. He noted that different views remained but, while these difference could not be resolved overnight, the Conference had established a basis for cooperation. Japan expressed appreciation to Ambassador Yarrow for his outstanding chairmanship, as well as to the Government of Solomon Islands for hosting the Conference.
128. Representative of other FFA member countries, including Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, also expressed their appreciation to Ambassador Yarrow, the Secretariat and the Government of Solomon Islands.
129. The People's Republic of China noted the cooperative spirit with which the Conference had taken place and stated that it was ready and willing to cooperate for the sustainable development and economic well-being of the Pacific Island nations.
130. Korea expressed its gratitude to the host Government, the Chair and the Secretariat. The representative of Korea noted that his delegation comprised Government, private sector and scientific representatives. As a result of the deliberation during the Conference, Korea had a renewed belief in the prospects for cooperation between coastal States and distant water fishing nations in the region.
131. The representative of the Kingdom of Tonga agreed with the sentiments expressed by the representative of Japan. He considered that the real value of the Conference was in the frank exchange of views that had taken place on sensitive issues.
132. The United States considered that the Conference had been useful and positive. The representative of the United States referred to the four key understanding set out in the communiqué and stated that it was now the duty of all participants to work together to give content to these understandings. This could be done through bilateral, regional and global contacts. The Conference had identified a plan of work, including a technical consultation on science and data exchange, further technical consultations on VMS and further work on cooperative enforcement. The United States expressed its profound appreciation to all participants, the Chair, the Government of Solomon Islands and the Secretariat.
133. The representative of Solomon Islands, Mr Albert Wata, as Chair of FFC, delivered a statement appended as **Attachment X**.
134. The observer from the Forum Secretariat noted that the issue of fisheries was a key issue at the 1994 Forum Heads of Government meeting and considered that the Conference had succeeded in giving substance to the initiatives of the Forum leaders. He commended the FFA for convening the Conference and considered that the participants had addressed key technical and policy issues in a most constructive manner.
135. The Director of FFA, Mr Victorio Uherbelau, delivered a statement appended as **Attachment Y**.
136. The representative of Tuvalu offered a closing prayer.
137. The Chair of the Conference made a closing statement. A copy of the statement is appended as **Attachment Z**.

138. The Chair then declared the Multilateral High Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries closed.

SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY
**MULTILATERAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH PACIFIC
TUNA FISHERIES**

**FFA Conference Centre, Honiara, Solomon Islands
5 - 9 December 1994**

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SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY
**MULTILATERAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH PACIFIC
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**WELCOME ADDRESS BY HON. DENIS LULEI, MP, DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER, SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, observers and colleagues.

I am honoured to have been approached to perform the important task of opening this historic conference and, on behalf of the Government of Solomon Islands, welcome you all to Honiara.

It is a privilege for me to accept the invitation to officiate at a conference that will discuss matters that are so significant to this region.

I cannot emphasise enough the value the people of Solomon Islands place on the tuna resource of the South Pacific. For the last 10 years, tuna has made a significant contribution to the Solomon Islands economy being among the top two export earners each year.

Solomon Islands, in common with all other members of the Forum Fisheries Agency, are determined to promote the prospects for tuna to continue to contribute to the economic development of the region in the long term. Solomon Islands will not stand idly by while others jeopardise this aspiration.

Solomon Islands has been directly involved in purse seining for tuna for many years. Now we are about to become one of the growing number of FFA member countries that supports a locally-based longline fishery.

The development of the locally-based fishing industry is being actively promoted by all FFA member countries and it is not inconceivable that at some time in the future, domestic fishing enterprises will be responsible for the majority of the tuna harvest of the region.

No doubt the FFA member country delegations present at this meeting will take the opportunity to explain their aspirations as far as the continued development of their domestic tuna industries are concerned. It is important that they share their ideas with you.

As you may have gathered, I am very interested in information concerning the tuna industry in this region. I am told that, for the fourth year in a row, the tuna harvest from the South Pacific will this year again be close to 1 million tonnes.

While we are all proud of the fact that the South Pacific island states share a resource that makes a significant contribution to the global supply of world tuna, we recognise that others also have an interest in that resource.

This conference is convened in recognition of that and, as such, provides a unique opportunity for an exchange of views on the various issues that are of concern to governments and industry with an interest in the South Pacific tuna resource.

I look forward to learning the results of your deliberations this week. I hope that this conference results in an improved understanding of the national, regional and international issues that impact on the tuna fishery in this region and that by developing that understanding, we can work together to address likely future issues for mutual benefit.

With that then Mr Chairman, it is a pleasure for me to declare the multilateral high level conference on South Pacific tuna fisheries - open.

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**ADDRESS BY H.E. MR ROBIN YARROW, AMBASSADOR OF REPUBLIC
OF FIJI TO JAPAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE**

On behalf of all participants, I would also like to offer thanks to the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for his warm welcome. I hope that we can meet your expectations, Deputy Prime Minister, and demonstrate that the coastal States in the South Pacific region and distant water fishing nations can work together to ensure the long-term sustainability of the valuable tuna resources of the region.

It was a great honour for me personally, as well as for Fiji, to be invited to Chair this historic Conference and one that I am privileged to accept on behalf of my Government. I express my appreciation to all participants for entrusting me with this onerous responsibility. I assure you that I shall do my utmost to discharge my responsibilities fairly and bring this Conference to a successful conclusion.

Although Fiji may not share the abundance of tuna resources of some of our fellow members of the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency especially to our north, we value what we have. As in other island nations in the South Pacific region, Fiji's economic development is increasingly supported by tuna. In a few years, we anticipate fish could be Fiji's number one export commodity. However, the tuna sector is of much greater relative importance for the smaller island countries which comprise the majority of the Pacific Islands. For most of these islands, the tuna resource is their only significant natural resource. It is from this perspective that the position of the island countries must be viewed.

I do not wish to delay our discussions on substantive issues any longer than necessary, but I hope you will permit me to share a few thoughts of my own regarding the subject-matter of this Conference and its importance to the South Pacific region as a whole.

The decision to convene this Conference is both timely and appropriate. International developments over the past few years have placed fisheries firmly at the forefront of the international agenda. The Conference is particularly timely because on 16 November, 12 years after it was opened for signature, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea finally entered into force. My own government was, as many of you will know, the first State to sign and ratify the Convention in 1982. Since then, many of the States represented here have signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention and many others are in the process of doing so. The Convention undoubtedly represents a landmark achievement in international relations and its near-universal acceptance makes it the basic reference point for all matters relating to the use of the oceans.

Over the past two years the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks has focused attention on the long-term sustainability of these two resources throughout the world. The South Pacific has participated fully in all sessions of the UN Conference and this is a clear reflection of the fact that, for many of the island nations in the South Pacific, fisheries are of fundamental and critical importance to their economies.

In tandem with the deliberations currently under way at the United Nations, the FAO is working towards the development of a Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing; an initiative prompted by the 1992 Declaration of Cancun. Again, this is an initiative which is of great importance to both coastal States and fishing States and one which is fully supported by the member States of the FFA.

The results of these deliberations will lead to new standards and responsibilities for all those who use the resources of the world's oceans. In order to ensure future generations have an opportunity to benefit from the riches that the seas have to offer, new levels of commitment and responsibility will be required of all of us.

The need to develop such standards and observe such responsibilities is clear. Fisheries throughout the world are in serious danger of over-exploitation. As coastal States, and as fishing States, we are under an obligation to find solutions to the problems affecting world fisheries identified by world leaders at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. These problems, already identified in the context of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks include the over-utilization of fish stocks, over-capitalization of fleets, excessive fleet size, vessel re-flagging to escape controls, insufficient selectivity of gear and lack of sufficient cooperation between States.

Against this background, the broad objective of this high level Conference on South Pacific tuna fisheries remains the same as it was two years ago when the possibility of such a meeting was first suggested. That objective, stated simply, is to promote the full implementation of responsible fishing operations for fishing vessels operating in the South Pacific region. As a result, the provisional agenda for the Conference has a very technical focus, including means to improve the collection of information concerning the status of the resources and means by which improved compliance can be achieved for all fleets operating in the region.

It is emphatically not a Conference to discuss broader issues relating to the management of highly migratory fish stocks throughout the region. Such issues are complex and politically sensitive. It may well be that, to the extent that the issues are left unresolved by the ongoing discussions in the United Nations, they will need to be addressed at some stage in the future.

Clearly, we would not be able to resolve such issues here this week and I do not feel that it would be helpful to engage in prolonged discussion of these matters. Nevertheless, I am well aware that the issue of future management arrangements for the region is one which is of great concern to many delegations and, in the interests of encouraging healthy debate, I would propose, with your consent, to allow an exchange of views on the issue under the agenda item dealing with other matters related to fishing in the South Pacific Region. Such an exchange of views would necessarily be brief, bearing in mind the need to make substantive progress on the other agenda items, but I hope that it would provide an opportunity for all delegations to make clear their position on the issue.

Finally, I would like to record the appreciation of the countries of the South Pacific region to the fishing nations and other countries and organisations outside the region for attending and participating in this Conference. I look forward to working with you over the coming week. At the same time, I must also place on record my deep disappointment that, at the last minute, Chinese-Taipei - which accounts for roughly 20% of the fishing in the region - was unable to attend this Conference.

Distinguished Delegates,

We should now proceed to elect a Vice Chair and consider the provisional agenda for the Conference. Before doing so, however, I should like to take this opportunity to outline the way in which I would see our programme of work proceeding over the next five days. I understand that a provisional work schedule has been circulated this morning as document FFA/MHLC/INFO.C (Rev.1).

I would propose that we meet in plenary for two sessions each day. The morning session will commence at 10.00 a.m. and continue to midday. Light refreshments will be available here at the Conference Centre from 9:30 a.m., and this may provide an opportunity for informal discussion. The afternoon session will commence at 2 p.m. and continue until 4:30 p.m. Today we may make a start on the status of stocks item depending on how we proceed, but I would like to aim to finish today's session by 4 p.m. to enable delegates to refresh themselves before this evening's function. I would like to try to dedicate one full session to each agenda item. We have a great deal of work to complete and we should, therefore, try to stick to the timetable as far as possible. Nevertheless, if an issue obviously remains unresolved, and it is in everyone's interest to continue discussion, I will be prepared to extend the session by up to 30 minutes. Obviously the last session on Friday will be devoted to clearing the report of the Conference. In this regard, I would like to complete discussion on substantive items on the agenda by Thursday evening. This will enable the draft report of the Conference to be finalised for clearance early on Friday afternoon.

As far as the report of the Conference is concerned, I would like to suggest that we elect a drafting committee to prepare a draft report for adoption by the plenary. If you are agreeable to this, I would propose to call for nominations to the drafting committee at the beginning of the afternoon session today.

The conference secretariat will, of course, provide a first draft of the report for the committee and will provide the necessary services for its work.

I would now like to seek your approval to this programme and method of work.

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AGENDA

- a. Opening of Conference
- b. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
- c. Apologies
- d. Adoption of Agenda
 - 1. Statements by Delegations**
 - 2. Status of Stocks**
 - 3. Collection and Exchange of Catch Data**
 - 4. Transshipment**
 - 5. Transponder Technology**
 - 6. Enforcement**
 - 7. Other Matters Related to Fishing in the South Pacific Region**
 - (a) Gear conflicts in Central Western Pacific**
 - (b) Sashimi and canned tuna markets**
 - (c) FFA/ADB Tuna Industry Development Study**
- e. Record of Proceedings
- f. Close of Conference

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**STATEMENT BY HON. ASTERIO TAKESY, SECRETARY FOR
RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT, FEDERATED STATES OF
MICRONESIA**

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation very much welcomes this rare opportunity for the distant water fishing nations and the coastal states to sit together and discuss issues of mutual interests. In this connection, I commend the United States for its foresight in coming up with the idea and all of you for availing yourselves to be here today. I thank the FFA for all the arrangements done on our behalf.

It is very important that dialogue be maintained between the coastal states and those that are harvesting our resources. It is very important indeed that issues relating to the only resource that most of us in the region are dependent on as developing coastal states for our economic survival be discussed and common understanding are reached. This is especially so, Mr Chairman, given that certain requirements are built in to the various access arrangements in the region to assure the sustainability of the resources.

I stress here the importance of dialogue and common understanding, Mr Chairman, because no international treaty or other framework on the sustainable utilization of the resources is going to work without cooperation on both sides.

The FSM is blessed with abundant marine resources. However, it is the only appreciable resource it has. With this blessing comes the obligation and responsibility to manage and conserve our fisheries resources. Our national policy is to maximize the total stream of benefits from our EEZ. To implement this policy, we have embarked on an integrated approach to fisheries development. We view the licensing of foreign vessels as an interim arrangement which would enable us eventually to do the harvesting of the resources ourselves.

In order to be effective in our conservation and management efforts, we must illicit greater cooperation from our partners in the fishery. We need more accurate and more timely submission of data, a greater recognition of the need to develop our domestic industries, either by direct investment or through legitimate business arrangements with substantial participation by local partners, and better compliance to the terms and conditions of these access arrangements.

However, the effective utilization of our resources does not stop with our fisheries access arrangements. Our rights and responsibilities as managers of the valuable fisheries resources are shared with the other Pacific island states in the region. Collectively we have established the framework and foundations to manage and conserve this resource. The Nauru Agreement and its implementing arrangements, the Palau Arrangement, the Niue Treaty and most recently the FSM Arrangement are all examples of collaborative efforts by the Pacific island nations to conserve this valuable resource not only for ourselves and future generations of our people, but for other nations in the global community which rely on the western and central Pacific water fisheries. However, as with

bilateral arrangements, cooperation and dialogue from the distant water fishing nations is essential for the success of these endeavors.

Some of the distant water fishing vessels have and continue to disregard minimum requirements necessary for the proper conservation and management of these valuable resources. On the other hand, Pacific island nations have recognized the need for uniform minimum terms and conditions of access for the effective and optimum utilization of our resources. Accurate and complete scientific data is crucial to successful management and conservation efforts.

My country is now placing high priority on the development of domestic fishing industry. We need the assistance and cooperation of the distant water fishing nations, financially and technically, in order to succeed in our development aspirations. As emphasis gradually shifts from collection of access fees to the development of the domestic industry, those nations that responsibly participate in our development and comply with the terms and conditions of access will be assured of continued access to our surplus harvest.

Global attention is focusing on the sustainable development, including the highly migratory species. We welcome this development. My country is fully committed to the regional arrangements in place to assure the survival and perpetuity of the resources. Having said that, Mr Chairman, we accept the harsh reality that the species we are addressing is a finite resource, and as such it is indeed depletable. We therefore urge our friends from the distant water fishing nations to seriously consider the various arrangements the Pacific region has in place to maximize benefit to the region. We are very much mindful that DWFNs have invested heavily in the harvesting of the pelagic resources in the region. We wish you to recoup your investment and make reasonable profit as well. No deal, as we all know, is enduring if only one party benefits.

I would like to close with a plea to all. Let us heed the lesson of history and endeavor cooperatively to guard against irresponsible exploitation of the valuable sea resources. If we do not, just as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow so too will the sun set on the fisheries of the region as it has in other regions of this world of ours.

Thank you.

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**STATEMENT BY HON. LOMES MCKAY, MINISTER FOR RESOURCES
AND DEVELOPMENT, MARSHALL ISLANDS**

Thank you Mr. Chairman

Honorable Minister, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

I take this opportunity, Mr Chairman, firstly to associate Marshall Islands' delegation in expressing our acknowledgment and appreciation to the organizers of this very important conference, and the support it has received, as witnessed here today, by the presence of the parties of both FFA member countries and the distant water fishing nations. We also recognize and acknowledge the presence of other organizations.

Mr. Chairman, the agenda prepared for this conference contains issues of vital importance for the region and as well as our distant water fishing partners. These will be discussed in detail later during the conference so at this stage I do not intend to talk on the detail but would like to urge the distant water fishing partners of their recognition of the significance of these issues and the very purpose for which they are brought to be discussed at this conference, thus Mr Chairman their commitment to support and cooperate with the FFA member countries. After all, Mr Chairman, this conference is aimed at the closer relations between the FFA member countries and our distant water fishing partners.

Thank you.

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - AUSTRALIA

Mr Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, FFA colleagues, distinguished delegates of the United States, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Peoples Republic of China and the Republic of the Philippines, FFA Director, ladies and gentlemen, Australia is very pleased to be here for this important conference. Like the Chairman, we regret that one distant water fishing nation (DWFN) delegation has found itself unable to attend for reasons which have nothing to do with the issues which this conference is to address.

I would like to thank the Solomon Islands for its hospitality in hosting the many delegates to the series of important fisheries meetings in Honiara. The efforts of the Forum Fisheries Agency are also to be commended and we are grateful to the new Director and his team.

The South Pacific tuna fishery remains an important policy priority for Australia, and has attracted high level political interest in Australia. It is for this reason that we attach importance to this high level conference, the first of its kind in this region and we hope that it will be a success. Part of our concern for the South Pacific fishery and interest in this conference arises out of our role as chair of the South Pacific Forum earlier this year. That Forum meeting was an important one. Taking as their theme the issue of 'managing our resources', Forum leaders made a range of decisions designed to enhance the sustainable use of the region's scarce natural and financial resources across a range of areas. Fisheries was one of the most important, if not the most important, of these areas.

It is as the representative of the Forum chair that I speak now on behalf of all 15 Forum members and in terms which also have the support of the FFA's 16th member, Palau.

My statement has two purposes. First it serves to remind the delegations of countries which fish in the South Pacific region, of the commitments made by our heads of government at the South Pacific Forum in August and of action taken so far to implement those decisions. Second, it serves to reinforce Australia's commitment, as forum chair, to work with other FFA member countries to pursue full implementation of the forum leaders' decisions relating to our shared Pacific tuna resource.

Leaders of the Forum member countries jointly made a number of specific decisions at the Brisbane Forum in relation to the regional tuna fisheries. Those decisions were aimed at :

- Obtaining fair prices for the resource
- Developing opportunities for value-added production
- Ensuring the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks within the region

- Increased co-operation to enhance surveillance and enforcement of the terms and conditions of licensing
- Strengthening the ffa to enable it to continue to meet the region's needs
- Developing a multilateral approach to negotiating access to fisheries resources in the region's EEZs
- Pursuing multilateral access agreements with DWFNs, including at this conference

As Forum Chair, Australia attaches importance to the implementation of those decisions and we have sought to co-operate closely with other Forum members in this process. In particular:

- As Chairman of the post Forum dialogue, we presented the Forum outcomes to dialogue partners immediately following the Forum
- Discussions have been held with the FFA Secretariat, and within meetings of the Forum Fisheries Committee and the parties to the Nauru agreement, on ways of advancing Forum outcomes
- Opportunities have been made to raise with distant water fishing nation representatives, the region's concern over the generally low level of access fees currently paid and poor compliance by most fleets with the regionally agreed minimum terms and conditions of access and the inadequate provision of catch and effort data
- Financial support to the FFA has been significantly increased to better enable them to pursue Forum outcomes
- We have continued to provide strong support to the South Pacific Commission's Oceanic Fisheries Program to enhance its ability to provide crucial tuna stock assessments
- The number of hours of aerial fisheries surveillance conducted by Australia has been substantially increased and other action has been taken to improve the effectiveness of fisheries surveillance conducted in the region
- Australia has continued to provide Pacific patrol boats and support for those vessels to the Pacific island countries, at a cost to date of over \$100 million, to ensure that the region has a genuine ability to enforce its fisheries laws.

The region is strongly committed to full implementation of the Forum leaders' decisions. All Forum members share the goals of improved economic returns and management of the regional tuna resource. In this context, you will hear shortly from the Chairman of last week's meeting of the parties to the Nauru agreement, which concluded 'the Federated States of Micronesia arrangement for regional fisheries access' which seeks to develop the region's domestic fishing industries.

Reverting to my position as leader of Australia's delegation, I want to say that Australia is heartened by the successful conclusion of the FSM arrangement, and we view the arrangement as fully consistent with the region's simultaneous push for multilateral access arrangements with distant water fleets active in the region. They are complementary rather than conflicting. Until domestic fishing capacity expands to displace wholly foreign vessels, we think that multilateral access agreements, as interim measures, provide the best opportunity for the region to maximise its economic returns from those foreign vessels. Such an approach we think should ensure greatly improved compliance with the regionally agreed minimum terms and conditions of access, just as a multilateral approach achieved excellent results with respect to the us fleet's performance.

This conference presents an excellent opportunity for the resource owners and the resource harvesters to develop better mutual understanding and better cooperation across a range of important issues associated with fishing the region's tuna resources. It should be viewed as a confidence building exercise, and as a forum to discuss and resolve technical issues related to the full implementation and harmonisation of the mtcs.

There is currently no regional commitment to further meetings of this type and the region has determined that no decisions regarding future meetings will be made until the outcomes of this conference, and their value to the region, are assessed.

For its part the Australian delegation will work strenuously and constructively with like-minded countries to make the deliberations of this conference as productive as possible. We hope that when it concludes there will be heightened agreement among participants both on what needs to be done and what can be done to sustain, develop and exploit this major resource, fish, which is critical to the livelihood and well-being of the peoples of this region.

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**STATEMENT BY MR FELIX KUN, CHAIRMAN OF PARTIES TO THE
NAURU AGREEMENT TENTH SPECIAL (MINISTERIAL LEVEL) SESSION**

Thank you, Mr Chairman, for this opportunity, on behalf of the sub-regional group of eight FFA member countries known as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, to report on some recent significant developments of interest to all in this Conference.

Last week, the Parties met at ministerial level, here in this Conference Centre, to consider issues relating to the development of domestic tuna fishing enterprises. I, and my colleagues from PNA, believe that the agreement reached during that meeting is of such significance that it is appropriate that we report on our deliberations to you at the commencement of this Conference. I appreciate your understanding in this respect.

Represented at the meeting were ministers and officials of Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru (represented by the President of Nauru), Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. Four other FFA member countries, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu observed the meeting. Although the meeting was the 10th Special Session of the Parties it was only the second time that the Parties, in the 12 years since the formation of the group, have met at ministerial level. This underscores the significance of the agreement reached at last week's meeting.

Although a number of other issues were discussed, the focus of discussions was the further development of the region's domestic and locally based tuna industry. The Parties agreed that the island countries of the region need to take a more proactive approach to supporting fishing operations that will generate long term economic benefits to their host country.

In support of this, the Parties strongly reaffirmed their commitment to the agreement, reached at the 13th Annual meeting of the Parties in May this year, to progressively phase out the licensing of foreign purse seine fishing vessels currently operating in the region. Mr Chairman, distant water fishing nations operating under bilateral access arrangements in the region have already been advised of the forthcoming implementation of a 10% regional reduction in the number of purse seine fishing licences available to foreign vessels in the region.

This reduction will occur in three year's time. Between now and then, the Parties have agreed to make the same number of licenses available to genuine domestic purse seine fishing vessels. As a result, there is ample time for foreign fishing vessel operators to restructure their operations to domestic enterprises. We encourage distant water fishing vessel operators to start this process immediately.

To encourage the growth of the domestic tuna industry, last week the ministerial-level meeting of the PNA agreed to a cooperative arrangement to allow genuine locally based purse seine vessels to purchase a single licence permitting access to the zones of PNA member countries.

The arrangement, known as the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement for Regional Fisheries Access, is designed to support the operations of existing domestic purse seine vessels, promote employment opportunities for nationals in the region and encourage foreign purse seine owners, currently operating under bilateral access arrangements, to restructure their enterprises to become locally based in the region. The Parties agreed to a set of criteria which will be used to assess the eligibility of vessels for licenses under the Arrangement.

The Arrangement also lists detailed requirements relating to the reporting of catch and effort data, the enforcement of minimum terms and conditions, and the carriage of observers to enable the collection of scientific, compliance, and monitoring data necessary to ensure the sustainable management and utilisation of the region's tuna stocks. Thus, the Parties have instituted terms and conditions for the operations of their own vessels that most distant water fishing nation vessel operators have been reluctant to comply with during the history of their operations in the region.

The Parties are of the view that the Arrangement represents a major development in terms of island countries assuming greater responsibility for the harvesting, management and conservation of their tuna resources. There is no doubt that the Arrangement is a practical step forward in the implementation of the directives agreed to by Heads of Governments at the August 1994 South Pacific Forum.

I appreciate this chance to present this brief report Mr Chairman.

Thank you.

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**MULTILATERAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH PACIFIC
TUNA FISHERIES**

**FFA Conference Centre, Honiara, Solomon Islands
5 - 9 December 1994**

COUNTRY STATEMENT - FIJI

Mr Chairman, Honourable Ministers, your Excellencies, distinguished delegations from distant water fishing nations, observers, guests and fellow colleagues from the South Pacific region. I bring greetings from my Government and its best wishes for successful conclusions to this conference. I also express apologies for the absence of Ministerial representation and also that of my Permanent Secretary, who because of their involvement in the budget debate back home, are not able to be here in my delegation.

Mr Chairman, Fiji is particularly honoured to be part of this important conference, a conference we believe will set the scene for a more harmonised arrangement for better cooperation and understanding between resource owners and resource harvesters on a wide spectrum of issues associated with fishing the region's tuna resources.

This conference is important also because we are meeting barely a fortnight after the entry into force of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea - an event of prime importance, as it will move the international community to a new, enhanced level of collective commitment to establish order in the oceans.

A central element in this new order is the protection and preservation of the world's oceans and the sustainable use of marine resources.

The Convention is a powerful creative force, and the time has come, Mr Chairman, for the international community to give full effect to the letter and spirit of the new order embodied in it.

It may be prudent at this point, that we should remind ourselves that our leaders at the Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro had admitted to the failure of the international community to properly manage the global fish resources. In agenda 21, (they identified the problems as) and if you bear with me I shall be repeating for emphasis sake some of the problems the Chairman has already gone over in his opening address. The problems as identified in Rio De Janeiro Earth Summit include the following:

- inadequate management of fisheries
- over utilisation of some stocks
- unregulated fishing
- over capitalisation
- excessive fleet size
- vessel reflagging to escape controls
- insufficient selection of gear
- unreliable data bases, and what we believe to be the most important of all causes

- lack of sufficient co-operation between states.

Mr Chairman, the world is facing a global fishing crisis of unprecedented proportions. According to the United Nation's, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) most of the world's major marine fishing regions are fully fished, depleted or in severe decline. In a third of these regions, the catch has declined by 20% or more from peak years and the overall global marine catch has fallen by 4 million tons from its peak in 1989. In April this year, FAO warned, and I quote,....

“ Unless industrial fishing fleets are controlled through national and international regulation disastrous social and economic consequences await the entire industry including food shortages in the coastal communities of developing countries where Sea Food provides the major source of dietary protein and minerals as well as jobs.”¹

In recognition of the impending plight of South Pacific countries, in light of the above revelations, our Heads of Governments at the Brisbane meeting of the South Pacific Forum in August this year, made several decisions on various strategies that need to be pursued to safeguard the fishing interests of the FFA member countries

Mr Chairman, the distinguished representative of Australia has already outlined to this conference these decisions by the Forum on the future direction we would be taking on issues pertaining to fisheries in this region. My delegation is duty bound by the decisions of that august body.

For Fiji, our fisheries resources have in the past provided a substantial contribution to our national economy. Currently it is ranked third in total export earnings for the country. The sector, Mr Chairman is gearing itself to assuming the top export position in the next few years. It is with this expectation that we are attending this conference. We believe this conference would provide, for us, the opportunity to join our neighbours in our desire for multilateral access arrangements with Distant Water Fleets active in the region.

The agenda before us sets out some important areas that are vital to the development of our own local tuna industry. They also will set the scene for the logical and systematic development of the region's attempt to rationalise the sustainable harvest of its tuna resources.

Mr Chairman, while we reserve our positions on the various items of the agenda until their appropriate discussion time at this conference we would like to register our stand on two of the issues here, as we believe they are fundamental to our long term relationship with our Distant Water Fishing partners.

The issue of data has been a long outstanding element in FFA member countries / Distant Water Fishing Nations arrangements. Conference participants are all aware of the importance of accurate and timely data to the effectiveness of any resource assessment programme. In fact the future of any fishing industry would depend on the validity of the analysis of such data. Mr Chairman, we all have varying interests in the region's tuna resources. My delegation believes that our long term goals are the

¹ FAO, 1994. News Release dated April 13, 1994.

sustainability of these resources and the industries dependent on these. We would like to make a plea to all our distant water fishing partners for your firm commitment and resolve to the stipulations on data provision within your access arrangements. We believe we should be operating in an atmosphere of open trust with each other and you should not be chased up on your obligations in exchange for our resources..

In the same vein Mr Chairman, our distant water fishing partners' non-compliance with the enforcement provisions of their access arrangements has created feelings of ill will and distrust. My delegation is of the firm belief that compliance with such provisions as set out in the minimum terms and conditions of access is indicative of the respect and goodwill that our distant water fishing partners have for the sovereignty of our nations as deeply enshrined in the Law of the Sea Convention.

Mr Chairman, we believe we have an opportunity at this conference to prove wrong what our leaders identified in Rio De Janeiro ... and I quote..

“ lack of sufficient co-operation between states.”

My delegation is proud to be here today at this conference and to be party to a process that we believe will prove them wrong. This region has in the past, provided the guiding light for the international community in several initiatives. We believe, we could be seeing the making of another first for the world at this conference.

We would like to urge all Conference participants to hold hands, and let us together forge ahead at this conference to make this a reality.

I thank you Mr Chairman.

SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY
**MULTILATERAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH PACIFIC
TUNA FISHERIES**

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - JAPAN

Opening Statement by Mr. Tatsuo Saito Head of the Delegation of Japan at the Multilateral High-Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries, December 5, 1994

On behalf of the Japanese Delegation, I would like to thank the Secretariat of Forum Fisheries Agency for organizing the first High-Level Conference here in Honiara with participation of almost all the parties, both distant water fishing nations and Pacific Island nations, which have interest in central western Pacific tuna. As one of the fishing nations which has traditionally and substantially depended on the tuna resources in this region, Japan hopes that, through this conference, the relationship between distant water fishing nations and Pacific Island nations will be strengthened and that this will contribute to the promotion of the conservation and management of highly migratory species (HMS) in the region.

All parties present here, I am sure, share the common view that proper conservation and sustainable utilization of tuna resources in central western Pacific are an ultimate goal. However, at the same time, we have to admit that distant water fishing nations and Pacific Island nations do not necessarily share the same views on how to secure the conservation and management of HMS in the central western Pacific. The same applies to some other issues of principles on conservation and management of HMS which are under the discussions at the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

One should not of course expect these issues to be solved over night here. I believe that the most practical approach to solve the various problems is to seek agreement in each specific area and try to expand such areas of agreements on a step by step basis rather than to stress different positions of both sides. With this practical approach, I believe we can reach an unprecedented level of cooperation and coordination in the task of stock management and conservation while we are here in Honiara. Japan is ready to spare no effort in cooperation with the fellow participating parties to take such an approach to overcome or at least narrow the differences in views between the distant water fishing nations and the coastal states.

Although I defer stating in detail Japan's position on each of the substantive issues before the conference to a later stage, at this juncture, I would like to touch on the basic term of our position on some salient subjects. Under agenda item 2 (Status of Stocks) and agenda item 3 (Collection and Exchange of Catch Data), Japan would like to point out weakness and incompleteness of the existing data collection scheme and stock assessment scheme in the region and propose some ideas on how to improve these existing schemes with full respect for tuna scientists currently working in SPC. Under agenda item 7 (Other Matters), we would like to raise two serious problems being caused by the recent drastic increase in the number of long-liners in the region, that is, the oversaturated Japanese Sashimi market and gear conflicts at seas. Japan sincerely hopes that it is possible and practical to try to solve these problems here at this conference since all the participants will be surely benefitted from the solutions to these problems.

However, to my personal dismay to some degree, I have already heard some discouraging remarks from my view point today in regard of the outcome of this long awaited conference. I am afraid such remarks are not in line with the good will of cooperation and coordination as I wished for this conference earlier. My dismay also relates to some extent to some of the working papers. As far as I read them, I feel as if this conference became a place where coastal states would announce their intention unilaterally and ask fishing nations for their compliance, rather than a forum for cooperation between the two sides.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to reiterate Japan's position on conservation and management of HMS on the one hand and on access to a coastal state's EEZ on the other since the need for multilateral access agreement was stressed by my previous speakers. Major tuna species caught in our fishery in the central western Pacific are skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye, which are all typical highly migratory species. They are not confined in the political limits of SPF countries, and they migrate all the way to the northern part of Japan. In this sense, Japan is one of the main riparian nations for these tunas. That their conservation and management require coherent and compatible approach throughout their migratory range is not simply legally required by international law, but it is also a scientific and even a practical "must", if one considers that they are constantly moving or migrating in and out of the area in ever changing pattern. Namely, no one can quantify how many fish will stay in a given area or how long. Any unilateral action taken by any one state or group states, therefore, will make the overall sound conservation and management impossible to the detriment of the interest of all, whether they be coastal states or distant water fishing states. This concept has been supported by FFA, too. "FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY CONVENTION" itself declares in Article III 2., that "... the parties recognize that effective cooperation for conservation and optimum utilization of the highly migratory species of the region will require the establishment of additional international machinery to provide to provide for cooperation between all coastal states in the region and all the states involved in the harvesting of such resources."

Apart from the management questions, as regards fishing access arrangements, it is Japan's view that the current bilateral system will work more rationally than multilateral arrangement. I am aware that some nations have been insisting on the advantage of a multilateral access treaty, or I should say a collective bilateral access treaty under which a certain nation undertook to pay a big amount of money for access to "treaty area" consisting of 16 economic zones plus high sea part of substantial size. This treaty has sometimes been cited as an excellent example of cooperation between coastal states and distant water fishing states in the management of HMS. However, logically speaking, this treaty cannot make any meaningful substitute for a fair and equitable management system, since it only represents a prototype of multiplication of a bilateral access arrangement. Such multiplication of access arrangement would leave the question of conservation and management of HMS not addressed adequately. Further more, Japan does not have a legal framework under which the government is justifiably able to subsidize access fee which would otherwise be borne by fishermen. Japan is not persuaded by the arguments for the merits of multilateral access arrangement either to Japan itself or to its partners in the region and affirm its view that the current bilateral system will work in terms of access arrangements more efficiently and favorably to the merits to the parties concerned.

In closing, may I reiterate my sincere hope that each delegation will participate in the conference with spirit of cooperation and practicality, and that we will have obtained fruitful results at the end of this conference.

SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY
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TUNA FISHERIES**

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - KIRIBATI

Mr Chairman, Honourable Ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. Let me begin by conveying my congratulations to His Excellency, Ambassador Robin Yarrow who has been appointed to chair this Multilateral High-Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries. I also extend my congratulations to the new government and the people of the Solomon Islands and thank them for their kind hospitality during our stay in this lovely country. May I also thank the Forum Fisheries Agency for their efficient servicing of this meeting. This conference will be addressing a number of very important issues concerning our fisheries resources which is of paramount importance to all of us in the South Pacific region. We look forward to a successful conclusion of the meeting.

Like most other Pacific Island countries, the fisheries resource is the only viable resource available to us to base our economic development efforts and this is more so for the tuna resource. I cannot therefore adequately stress the importance of tuna conservation and management for the long term sustainability of our economy.

Kiribati has bilateral arrangements with a number of distant water fishing nations (DWFNs) and had progressed, together with other Pacific Island States, to develop appropriate arrangements with some of these DWFNs. Our longer term expectation however remains to develop our local capabilities for harvesting and processing of the tuna resource.

Mr Chairman, we fully recognise the extent and the capability of the present programmes of the South Pacific Commission as an adequate research institute for the scientific research of the tuna resource in the region. However such institutions can not successfully work without the full cooperation of all the parties involved including DWFNs. We know that accurate and full coverage of the fishing effort in the region is needed for complete understanding of the tuna stock. Unfortunately even after more than a decade of coastal jurisdiction we are seriously concerned that some DWFNs operating in Kiribati still do not accurately and timely report their fishing activities.

Kiribati has over time, developed its own system for managing its tuna resource. Such regime takes into consideration recent changes in the tuna fisheries and related problems in Kiribati. These precautionary measures are, in actual fact parallel with regional initiatives as in existing arrangements with Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), the Palau Arrangement and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). One major undertaking was the limitation on the number of purse seiners licensed at one time. The measure eventuated from the interaction problem between purse seine fishery and the domestic artisanal fishery. In line with the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement for Regional Fisheries Access, Kiribati will give priority to those fishing nations that would assist in the development of our domestic tuna industries.

Kiribati would continue to closely monitor the level of tuna exploitation in its waters and that such levels do not exceed sustainable yields. Accurate and timely reporting of catch and activities are

important components of the tuna resource conservation and management and Kiribati would continue to support and strengthen the monitoring, surveillance and control capabilities.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, we look forward to fully participate in the discussion on the various issues over the next few days.

Thank you.

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - NAURU

Mr. Chairman,

Honourable Ministers, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the sentiments expressed by others at this Conference, of our appreciation to the Government of the Solomon Islands for its hospitality and hosting of the Conference.

My delegation commends the FFA Secretariat on its organisation of the conference and hard work of its staff in meeting the needs of our delegation.

As a member state of the Forum Fisheries Agency, Nauru supports the region's initiatives.

We view the fisheries arrangements put in place by the member states as necessary and sufficient towards the achieving of the region's goals of managing the tuna resource on a sustainable basis and of getting a better economic return from the resource.

Mr. Chairman, Nauru has two fishing agreements - one with the United States of America under the Multilateral US Fisheries Treaty and the other on a bilateral basis with Japan.

The very high level of cooperation by the fishing vessels of both countries in respect to the requirements of the respective fishing agreements, highlights the value of a clear understanding by the participants on what it takes to make an arrangement work.

We see the conference as a positive move to establish a clear understanding among the participants on the achieving of shared benefits from a sustainable resource.

But it will require cooperation from all the participants to make things work.

In closing Mr. Chairman, I wish to congratulate you on your appointment as Chairman of the meeting and to wish you every success in the conducting of the meeting during the week.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - NEW ZEALAND

Mr Chairman

On behalf of the New Zealand delegation I would like to congratulate you on your election. I can assure you of our goodwill and support.

I would also like to welcome the delegates of the distant water fishing nations (DWFN) to this important, and indeed historic, meeting. New Zealand believes that there is room for cooperation between coastal states and fishing states, to mutual benefit. We are glad that you are here, and we look forward to the coming week's discussions.

Our meeting this week takes place against the background of growing acceptance of the need for more responsible fishing practices. It also reflects the realisation that the world's resources are not inexhaustible. The South Pacific Forum held in Brisbane in August 1994 emphasised the need for more careful management of the region's resources, and for a fairer return to the owners of those resources. The approach that Forum member countries take at this meeting will be largely governed by these objectives, as they relate to fisheries matters.

New Zealand participated in the Brisbane Forum, is bound by its decisions, and is committed to cooperating with other Forum countries in carrying them out. We see the Forum Fisheries Agency as the region's principal agency for advancing these issues through consultation and discussion, both amongst South Pacific countries and more generally in cooperation with non-regional countries that have legitimate interests in cooperatively harvesting the region's fisheries resources.

The Forum reaffirmed the view that a multilateral approach to the conclusion of access agreements with the DWFN is the best means of maximising returns from the region's fisheries. New Zealand has consistently supported the multilateral approach. It has done so in the belief that such an approach offers advantages not only to the countries of the region - the coastal states - but also to the DWFN. In our view this is illustrated by the good relations now prevailing between the United States fishing industry and the FFA member countries as a result of a mutually advantageous treaty. This is not intended to suggest that the US treaty is a model that must be rigidly followed in agreements with other DWFN. New Zealand is well aware that if multilateral agreements are to be negotiated with other nations they will need to take account of differing interests and arrive at an appropriate balance of mutual advantage.

We do not see an emphasis on multilateral licensing of foreign fishing vessels as inconsistent with the desire of many FFA members to phase out foreign fishing and exploit their resources on their own account. New Zealand fully understands and supports this desire, having itself pursued the same approach during the past quarter century. We believe however that the phasing out of foreign fishing must necessarily be a gradual process, and that while it takes place there will be a continuing need for measures to govern access by foreign vessels. We also believe that the DWFN possess skills, experience and financial and other resources that could be useful to the FFA members, and that the negotiation of multilateral agreements may offer opportunities for discussion of ways in which these

might be made available. Even during the phasing out period we should not neglect the scope for possible cooperation.

Mr Chairman, I hope this will make it clear that New Zealand's, and the Forum's, support for the multilateral approach does not merely reflect a desire to press for higher access fees. We expect of course that due notice will be taken, in future fee negotiations, of the Forum's view that a higher rate of return from those who harvest the region's resources would be justified. But even at existing fee levels New Zealand believes that much can be done to improve the returns received by the countries of our region.

Quite frankly, Mr Chairman, South Pacific countries are being denied revenue that is due to them, and which they can ill afford to lose. Their laws are being flouted, particularly through the failure of vessels to meet clearly stated and agreed requirements to report, and to report fully and accurately, on the quantity, type, time and location of catches. This information is vital not only for the correct calculation of access fees but also in the longer-term for the conservation and management of the resource on which we all depend. Concern has been expressed in some quarters about the status of certain fish stocks in the region. We and our FFA partners are always willing to investigate and explore such concerns, and to work to find reasonable solutions. But we would emphasise again that these solutions depend fundamentally on the provision of complete and accurate data from all tuna fisheries in the region, including high seas areas.

We have just made some rather blunt comments about the poor reporting of catch data. We recognise of course that these comments do not apply equally to the vessels of all fishing nations, or of all companies and associations. We acknowledge and appreciate that compliance has generally been improving, and in many cases is now excellent. But in New Zealand's view compliance and the enforcement of coastal state laws and regulations are the most urgent issues confronting our region at this time. We will look for significant progress in these areas during our talks this week, and we will continue to support our fellow FFA members. The Brisbane Forum called for the strengthening of the FFA's capabilities in surveillance and enforcement, and we are ready to discuss with the Agency practical steps that New Zealand might take to assist in this. One question to which we will be paying particular attention is that of satellite-based vessel monitoring systems, which are already beginning to be recognised in many areas as an indispensable tool for the effective control and management of fishing fleets. We believe the FFA should develop this capability as quickly as possible.

Mr Chairman, during the coming week we will be discussing a number of broad and potentially far-reaching questions, including those relating to conservation and management of the tuna resource. The Multilateral High-Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries will be one of three highly significant and inter-related processes dealing with such matters, together with the UN Conference on Straddling Stocks and Highly Migratory Species and the FAO negotiations on a code of conduct. New Zealand is prepared to play a full part in this conference as it has in the other two processes, and to support proposals that will promote fair dealing and cooperation between the owners and the users of the region's fisheries in the long-term interests of both.

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Mr Chairman, Hon. Ministers, Excellencies, Director of FFA, Heads of Delegations, and Delegations.

Firstly we congratulate you on your appointment to chair this important Multilateral High-Level Conference. We are confident that you are eminently qualified to chair this meeting and with your leadership and guidance, this conference will reach its successful conclusion. We also congratulate your Vice Chairman, Mr Jesus G. de la Torre, who I am sure will eminently carry out the task eminently when the need arises. As you have already stated, Mr Chairman, I hope this need will not arise.

In commending the initiatives to stage this Multilateral High-Level Conference we welcome the opportunity for pacific island countries and fishing nations to exchange views and develop dialogue on issues that are important to both sides.

Mr Chairman, we acknowledge the efforts made by all delegations in recognising the importance of this meeting by their presence.

This meeting is timely in view of the international developments like the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stock, the negotiations at the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing and the coming into force of the UN Law of the Sea Convention.

The meeting is also timely in view of the international concerns on the collapse of most of the world fisheries as a result of bad fishing practices. The Central and Western Pacific Ocean remains one of the few areas where environmentally friendly fishing are central to the development of the fisheries resources. We should bear in mind that the livelihood of the people of Pacific Island Nations, including Papua New Guinea, depend entirely on their marine resources.

The Rio Earth Summit, and in particular the UN Global Conference on Sustainable Development for Small Island Developing States, at Barbados, have called for the sustainable development of the fisheries resources of island countries, who depend heavily on these resources for their survival. Papua New Guinea, therefore, calls on the distant water fishing nations to cooperates with a PICs in the sustainable development of their tuna resources.

The UN decision on Driftnet Fishing was a milestone in the struggle to conserve and manage the tuna fisheries for the interests of the present and future generations. The Pacific Island Countries maintained a united stand against driftnet fishing. The recent UN Convention on

Reflagging of fishing vessels is also a welcome decision to ensure that fishing vessels do not fly flags of convenience to avoid fisheries management and environment regulations.

Papua New Guinea endorses rights of the coastal states enshrined in the UN Law of the Sea of Convention relating to sovereign rights of coastal states to enforce their jurisdictions over their Exclusive Economic Zones.

Mr Chairman, tuna and other fisheries management arrangements in the world have either failed or are not effective in achieving their objectives to conserve stocks. It is generally difficult for resource owner countries and consumer countries to come to agreement on these management of the resources. A lot of the trust and commitment is required to make these organisations become effective.

In view of the importance of fisheries resources to the Pacific Island Countries, they have agreed to work together to better manage and exploit their tuna resources.

Other technical/scientific fora have also been established under the auspices of regional organisations like SPC to collaborate on stock assessment and stock status issues.

Mr Chairman, we wish to reiterate to this conference Papua New Guinea support for the Regional Arrangements including the FFA, the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, the Palau Arrangement and the MTCs. These have served the interests of Pacific island countries extremely well and we believe are models for developing countries to adopt in their efforts to develop and manage their tuna resources, in order to obtain maximum benefits for their people.

Papua New Guinea believes that these Regional Arrangements have achieved their objectives in:

- assisting PICs to develop sound policies and laws on the management of their tuna resources;
- encouraging PICs to work together to conserve, manage and develop their tuna resources;
- setting limits on vessels and gear;
- improving the economies of tuna fishing; and,
- helping them develop domestic tuna industries.

We are of the view that this conference must address issues that have been of concern to the resource countries. These include accuracy and timeliness of catch reports, compliance with agreed licensing conditions and respect for the jurisdictions of small island states over their tuna resources.

PNG recently introduced the Fisheries Policy and passed the Fisheries Act and Regulations. Central to these new national initiatives is our drive to sustainably develop our tuna resources.

PNG maintains that the FFA/US Treaty is the right approach to management of tuna resources in the region. However, the treaty has not worked as far as domestication of the tuna industry is concerned. We are hopeful that the proposed Zuanich Group tuna cannery to built in Madang, will give substance to the broader cooperation articles of the treaty.

Mr Chairman, PNG signed bilateral agreements with South Korea and an umbrella arrangement is planned for Taiwan. These agreements are necessary to establish commitments between countries and which reflect agreed international and regional arrangements for fisheries management.

PNG has signed access agreements incorporating regionally agreed MTCs and our internal legal requirements. We strongly maintain that 6 percent fee level is the minimum all FFA countries should receive for access to their tuna resource. Distant water licences should not continue forever. Instead, PNG is of the opinion that it is time DWFNs participate in our endeavours to develop our domestic tuna industry.

Mr Chairman, PNG endorse the statement by Australia as chairman of the 25th South Pacific Forum. The heads of governments of the South Pacific island countries made commitments to ensure sustainable development of our resources and fair return from nations that fish these resources..

We also like to endorse the statement by the Nauru delegation. In particular, the reference to the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangements adopted last week by the Parties of the Nauru Agreement. We believe that the FSM Arrangement is a clear signal that the PNA and FFA members are determined to develop their domestic tuna industries.

PNG has insisted in our access negotiations with DWFNs for port calls, transhipments, and shore based development, including joint ventures because we want to be involved in the development of our tuna resources and thereby increase the benefits to our people.

Recently the Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources of PNG Hon. Titus Philemon, announced a moratorium on distant water tuna licenses. We are aware that this decision did have impact on the operations of DWF vessels, however, the Government of PNG was determined to give notice that PNG is serious about domestication of its tuna industry.

PNG has declared certain part of our waters as closed areas including the archipelagic waters, the Morgado Square and the territorial waters to assist the process of domestication of our tuna industry.

Mr Chairman, in conclusion, I thank you for this opportunity to present Papua New Guinea's views, and hope that in the course of the coming deliberations, this conference will reach consensus on some of the issues that are indicated by our Agenda and set the basis for increase dialogue and cooperation between the FFA member countries and distant water fishing nations.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, I'd like to thank the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) for inviting the delegation of China to participate in this Multilateral High-Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries. I and my colleagues are very pleased to come to the beautiful Solomon Islands, we sincerely appreciate the careful arrangements that the Government of Solomon Islands and FFA have made to facilitate the smooth opening of this conference.

Concerning the issue of south Pacific tuna fisheries, China has consistently insisted that in order to develop fisheries, cooperation with countries in the south Pacific on the basis of equality, mutual-benefit is needed to ensure this development. In recent years, some Chinese Government agencies and fishery enterprises have made contact with their counterparts in some south Pacific countries, and developed a number of fruitful cooperative ventures that have contributed to fishery development. These cooperative ventures could be extended. In the future we also hope to cooperate with countries that we do not currently have fishery contacts and also with the FFA. We look forward to supporting efforts relating to tuna resource conservation and management, as well as sustainable development of the fishery in the south Pacific region.

As one of the main fishing nations in the world, China always pays great attention to the conservation, management and rational utilisation of fishery resources. We have resources conservation and enhancement as a basic policy and, see aquaculture as a priority for fishery development.

In 1993, the total fishery production of China amounted to 18.26 million tons, of which 9.57 million tons was produced from aquaculture, that is 52% of the total. Production from distant water fishing only accounted for some 2.5% of the total which, obviously, is still only a small percentage of our production. Only a small portion of this production is from south Pacific region. Even so, China still sees sustainable fishing techniques as the basic principle of fishery development and actively support the conservation, management and rational utilisation of fishery resources, including the tuna resources in the south Pacific.

Now, I would like to give an overview in terms of the issues mentioned in the agenda of the conference.

Status of stocks

The tuna fishery operation of China in the south Pacific, has only been in operation for a short time and most of the fishing vessels are small scale longliners. Due this short period of operation, the extent of our fishing has been limited and we have little data and information concerning the status of tuna stocks in the region.

However, we think that research and investigation on the status of tuna stocks in south Pacific is very important and, is a necessary tools for the conservation, management and rational

utilisation of this resources. All parties concerned with the utilisation and development of this fishery should make every effort to cooperate on this matter.

The conservation, management and rational utilisation of tuna resources in south Pacific should be conducted on the basis of scientific research and evaluation of the stocks, so as to ensure sustainable utilisation. China would like to collaborate with all concerned parties to explore the possibility of cooperation in this field.

Collection and Exchange of Catch Data

China considers that the timely collection, analysis and evaluation of fishing data is fundamental for effective fishery conservation and management. The collection and analysis of fishing data is closely linked with resources management and, is a very important element of fisheries development.

Fishing vessels have a responsibility to provide necessary fishing data. However, the format of this data should be kept simple and easy for Captains of fishing vessels to enter on the logsheets. This will reduce difficulties for the Captains and help ensure timely delivery of the data. This data could be collected and analysed by an appropriate centre, such as FFA, and the results are shared by concerned parties.

Transshipment

Transshipment in designated ports facilitates the implementation of fishery monitoring and management, but at same time, it can also bring difficulties and inconvenience to the fishing fleets. These difficulties include such things as increasing the time and cost of transportation and transshipment of the catch, decreasing the fish freshness and quality, reducing the economic benefit to the fishery enterprises. In this case, the enthusiasm of fishery enterprises to go into tuna fisheries in this area will be affected, and in turn the fishery development will be affected.

Can we propose that as FFA is responsible for the coordination the tuna fisheries in south Pacific, that FFA can coordinate its members and distant water fishing states to finalise a united management procedure to be adopted, to allow the fishing vessels to transship at nearby ports or at ports which they think is appropriate. Relevant data and information could then be collected by the port country and sent to FFA for processing.

On the other hand, it is also very important that FFA members cooperate with the fishing states to establish, develop and upgrade land infrastructures of storage, transshipment, processing and transportation.

Transponder Technology

The setting up of Vessel monitoring system (VMS) and the extensive participation will have a positive effect on the upgrading of regional fisheries management. However, this process should be implemented in an orderly way and phased way. This is because most of our small tuna fishing vessels do not have the necessary equipment, as they usually operated in near cost area and are easy to managing and monitoring. On this issue we need guidance and recommendations from our experts.

Enforcement

China would like to effectively manage its vessels according to the requirements of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and we will request the vessels to observe the laws of the coastal states while within their jurisdiction.

We think that all actions of enforcement should be consistent with UNCLOS and the principles of international law. Issues of regional fishery management should be solved by all concerned parties through the process of negotiation. The mechanism and actions of enforcement should also be established and implemented under such principles.

In general, tuna fisheries in south Pacific is a regional question and should be coordinated and resolved by a regional organisation comprised of both coastal and fishing states. Such an organisation should be guided by the articles of UNCLOS, UN Conference on Straddling Stock and Highly Migratory Species as well as the principle of customary international law.

In regard to the issues listed in the agenda of this conference, we hope that through full discussion we can discover a scheme that is accepted by all parties. We believe, by efforts of all concerned parties, the tuna fisheries in south Pacific will certainly reach the goal of sustainable development.

Thank you.

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - PHILIPPINES

On behalf of my government, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the kind invitation extended by the organizing committee of the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency to attend this historic Multilateral High-Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries; where a number of coastal states from the south Pacific region and from distant water fishing nations are gathered in attendance to ensure the long-term sustainability of the tuna resources of the region.

I view this conference as timely and appropriate, especially after taking into consideration the entry into force of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) only last November 16, 1994 when coastal states' national jurisdictions were tremendously expanded together with corresponding rights and obligations to conserve, develop and protect the natural resources therein. I hope that the conference will offer, or provide, opportunities to gain insights and access to information from the experiences of other countries. Especially those with successful MCS operations and activities, which cover and impact on the sustainable development and enhancement of our fishing resources.

My government has not yet entered into bi-lateral arrangements with any Pacific island countries but there are a number of private Filipino fishing companies operating in this region through their own private initiatives and without my government's intervention. However, we are concerned that their business venture be viable and including the safety of their crew and the fishing vessels. Also, to extend all the assistance needed for their welfare and interests.

Thank you.

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - KOREA

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I also wish to join my previous speakers in extending congratulations, upon your election as chairman. I may take this occasion to thank the South Pacific Forum for inviting the Korean delegation to this gathering.

Mr Chairman,

Today's meeting is both timely and meaningful. It is timely in the context of a regional effort to match international initiatives to conserve and manage living marine resources. At the same time, it is very meaningful because high-level authorities from both south Pacific and distant water fishing nations have come together for the first time to identify and assess existing problems related to conservation and management of fish stocks, and to consider means of improving fisheries cooperation.

Needless to say that sustainable development and availability of fishing resources are now more pressing than ever. Ways and means to tackle these issues have been heatedly discussed on various dimensions. Recently, UN conference on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory species was held in New York. Participants at the conference stressed with one voice the importance of cooperation between coastal and distant water fishing states. Korea was also there. Korea therefore places importance on today's meeting because we see it as a positive step in bringing about such cooperation.

Mr Chairman,

I am confident that under your guidance this meeting will conclude with a successful result. Such an outcome would be the agreement of coastal and distant water fishing states, on the basis of the best scientific evidence available, to ensure that conservation and management measures are to be directed at maintaining the stocks under discussion, at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield. In this regard, the Korean delegation deems it necessary to have appropriate machinery, such as this multilateral conference, in order to constantly and jointly evaluate, with others, the status of stocks and the compatibility of conservation and management measures.

Mr Chairman,

May I touch upon issue of collection and exchange of catch data. At present the South Pacific Commission (SPC) is conducting the collection, compilation and publication of information on catch data. The Korean delegation wishes to take this occasion to express our thanks to SPC. However Korea has the view that developing a more comprehensive arrangement for the collection and dissemination of statistical data would be commendable, so as to enhance the quality and utility of these statistics.

Enforcement is another issue this delegation wishes to address. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, enforcement on the high seas with respect to fishing vessels may be undertaken only by the flag state, I repeat only by flag state. Therefore, detention, arrest or any other type of punishment by the non-flag states is undoubtedly a clear violation of international law. Nevertheless, it is often the case that a port state tried to detain and inspect by force those vessels which were suspected to violate fishing regulations of third countries within their exclusive economic zone. Whatever pretext the port state may invoke, it is a quite unique practice.

Mr Chairman,

I believe I can come back to the agenda at a later stage for a more detailed discussion. Therefore I conclude my brief statement reaffirming my delegation's strong commitment to the successful outcome of this meeting.

Thank you

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STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR DAVID A. COLSON

Ministers, Mr Director, Mr Chairman, Colleagues.

On behalf of the United States delegation and my government, I would like to express our great pleasure in being here in Honiara for this important conference. I would like to thank the Forum Fisheries Agency for hosting and organizing the meeting and the Government of the Solomon Islands for making it possible for this distinguished group of delegates to meet here in Honiara. I must say that I am quite impressed with the new Forum Fisheries Agency Conference Center. I am sure that many productive meetings will be held in this building in the years ahead.

This gathering is truly an historic occasion. It is the first time that the coastal states of the South Pacific and the distant water states and fishing enterprises in the region have sat together in a multilateral forum to discuss broad tuna fisheries issues of mutual interest. I do though also express disappointment that Chinese-Taipai is not here. The fisheries relationships which the many states seated around this table have with each other are varied and complicated. For our part, the United States has a very close fisheries relationship with the Forum Fisheries Agency countries, one which we value very highly. It is fundamental to the United States that this important relationship continue and grow. At the same time, we recognize the value of a multilateral dialogue which includes other countries fishing in the region, and we value our bilateral relations with the fishing countries represented here. We share the objective of this conference which the Chairman expressed this morning to promote the full implementation of responsible fishing in the region.

It is clear to the United States that there is a need for a meaningful multilateral dialogue to occur to bring that about. We congratulate the Pacific Island nations for their willingness to hold this conference.

All around the world there is increasing attention being paid to international fisheries matters. In some cases, this is because the fisheries resources of a particular region have been overfished. In other cases, it is because there is a need to enhance international cooperation to ensure that overfishing does not occur. These were the motivations that led the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to call for the United Nations Conference on Straddling Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The outcome of the U. N. Conference remains to be seen. But it is clear that there is more international attention than ever before on international fisheries issues. Those of us involved must demonstrate a commitment to deal fairly, to fish responsibly, to conserve the resource to enable it to be managed and utilized sustainably into the future, to comply with the rules, and to respect the rights and exercise the responsibilities in the Law of the Sea.

We believe this meeting in Honiara is very timely. A multilateral dialogue is an excellent way to address such questions as: how can the best fisheries science be generated; how can the best catch and effort information be obtained; how can the most effective enforcement be achieved; and, how can we ensure that the operational rules which must be followed in this region and these include the

minimum terms and conditions of access are followed by all fishing fleets? We hope we all share these objectives and look forward to a discussion of these and other issues this week.

We hope that the dialogue this week will help prevent overfishing. We know that most of the fisheries which occur in this region take place inside the zones of the Pacific Island states. We respect the right of these States to manage and utilize the fish in their zones. There are, as well, high seas areas in the South Pacific region. Further, some tuna stocks do migrate very widely, beyond the South Pacific region, some to the North and others to the Eastern Pacific Region. Also, although we do not play this role in the Forum Fisheries Agency, we are a coastal state of the central and western Pacific having a state, territories and commonwealth, where we have responsibility for the fish stocks in our 200 mile zones around those areas. Thus, for us the picture is complex. And we know that ultimately the only way to conserve a highly migratory resource is through cooperation among all involved. Each of us here, no doubt, brings a slightly different perspective to this table. But I hope we all share the interest in ensuring that the fishery resources of the region remain in a healthy condition. A multilateral dialogue can only help the fish stocks.

Finally, we note the desire by the FFA countries to develop their own fisheries and infrastructures for the benefit of their people. This is only natural and is no more than developed countries have done. As has been indicated, practically, this will take time. As noted by the recently held Barbados Conference, this is best accomplished through partnerships among developed and developing countries involving the private sectors with governments playing appropriate roles. We look forward to cooperating with the region in this regard.

My delegation believes it is important that this be a successful conference. It is not an exaggeration to say that a lot of people will be watching to see what we do here. Let us demonstrate that is possible to do something positive and constructive, even in one short week, in spite of the diversity of nations involved and the complexity of the issues. The United States looks forward to working closely with all of the delegations here as we proceed this week.

Thank you

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - VANUATU

Honourable Ministers, Distinguish Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great honour to be able to present a short statement on behalf of my delegation and the Government of Vanuatu at this Multilateral High Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries. Please allow me Mr Chairman to congratulate you on your appointment as the Chairman of this conference.

I would first of all like to acknowledge the willingness and acceptance of the countries who for some ten to fifteen years have been involved in the development and utilisation of tuna resources in the Pacific region to be at this meeting. I should also like to acknowledge the FFA Secretariat and staff for the technical support and preparations of this important conference, as a response to the concerns of its member countries.

Vanuatu, like all other states within the Pacific region, places great importance in ensuring the sustainable exploitation of tuna resources so as to maximise the economic benefits from this resource within its 200 nautical mile EEZ to its country and people.

Mr Chairman, since 1988 Vanuatu concluded a bilateral fisheries agreement with the Kaushung Fishermen's Association of Taiwan on longlining with the number of fishing vessel currently at 34. As well as this arrangement, Vanuatu is part of the Multilateral Fisheries Arrangement with United States of America on purse seining. While Vanuatu has benefited from the access fees derived from these arrangements, we believe a lot more benefits could be accrued from these arrangements if areas of common interests could be identified.

Regarding the operations of these fishing vessels in Vanuatu's EEZ, a number of concerns have arisen which have led to the questioning of terms and conditions of our fishing access arrangements especially with the Taiwanese Longliners. For Vanuatu, we see a need for improvement in the area of accurate data reporting as we believe the data logsheets supplied to us are sometimes misleading and or are guesses of the total quantity of fish caught. We also believe that greater improvements can be made in complying with the minimum terms and conditions of fisheries arrangements. Since 1989 to date, a total of six (6) Taiwanese longliners have been arrested for contravening the terms and conditions of fishing access licence.

Mr Chairman. Vanuatu fully supports the Forum leaders decision on the need to establish multilateral fishing arrangements so as to establish and improve the tuna fisheries development and management strategies for the South Pacific region.

Vanuatu recognises the importance of the United Nations Conference on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and endorses the requirement of cooperation between the coastal states and fishing states in the management and conservation of these stocks.

Finally, Mr Chairman, let me now convey my delegation's gratitude to the Government and the peoples of Solomon Islands for their warm welcome and hospitality extended to us since our arrival here.

My delegation looks forward to a fruitful deliberation and successful conclusion of this conference.

Thank you..

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - WESTERN SAMOA

Mr. Chairman, Hon. Ministers, Distinguish delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed a great honour for me to represent my country in this very important conference. Let me begin by conveying my Minister's apology for not been able to attend this important meeting due to some unavoidable circumstances that precluded his coming over which has been planed for sometimes. He is however looking forward to the out come of this meeting and assure the support and cooperation of the Western Samoan Government in matters that will be reached by this forum in an attempt to properly manage the tuna, the only resource of the ocean which is extremely important to Pacific island countries (PICs).

Mr. Chairman, issues which will be addressed in this conference concerning the tuna resource are indeed important.

- They are important because fishing nations and PICs share common interests in the resource.
- They are important because, fishing nations and PICs understand the consequences that will be faced by them should the resource is not properly managed.
- They are important because fishing nations and PICs understand the parties that would be severely affected should the resource not be properly managed.
- They are important because fishing nations and PICs understand the capabilities of PICs in terms of surveillance, enforcement and exploitation of the resource.
- They are important because fishing nations and PICs understand the magnitude of the divisions and sharing of economic benefits that come out of the resource.
- Finally they are important because fishing nations and PICs understand there is a need for terms and conditions to be applied equally to foreign fishing fleets if the resource is to be properly managed.

These are, Mr. Chairman, some of the many things which make this meeting an important one.

Western Samoa has the smallest exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of all the PICs. The level of its fishery resources within its EEZ therefore is similarly and exceptionally small compared to the rest of the PICs. Accordingly, the management of our limited fishery resources is of significant importance to ensure their long term sustainable exploitation by not only the fishing nations but our local fishermen as well.

However, management strategies are always difficult to formulate, as we lack necessary information. Attempts under bilateral fishing agreements with the distant water fishing nations to report on catch data for our management purposes, have been unsuccessful. It is

therefore very important for this conference to seriously address agenda item on collection and exchange of catch data as well as other related items which will lead us to a better management approach for the tuna resource, thus securing its continued availability for our future generations.

Mr. Chairman, it is the hope of my delegation that at the conclusion of this meeting, we have reached solutions that are in the best interest of both fishing nations and PICs.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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COMMUNIQUÉ

1. A Multilateral High Level Conference on South Pacific tuna fisheries took place at the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency Regional Conference Centre at Honiara, Solomon Islands from 5-9 December 1994. Ministers, senior officials and representatives of the tuna fishing industry from twenty-two States and territories, including the sixteen FFA member countries and other coastal States and territories in the South Pacific region, and five distant water fishing nations whose vessels operate in the region participated in the Conference. Six regional and international organisations also participated as observers in the Conference.

2. The Chairman of the Conference, His Excellency Robin Yarrow, Ambassador of Fiji to Japan, the Peoples Republic of China and Korea, observed that the broad objective of the conference was to promote responsible and sustainable fishing in the South Pacific region. The issues discussed included the status of the tuna stocks in the region, the collection and exchange of catch data, transshipment, transponder technology and enforcement matters.

3. The Conference was recognised as an historic meeting because, for the first time in recent years, it provided an opportunity at high level for coastal States and territories of the region and distant water fishing nations to discuss fisheries matters of mutual interest. The Conference was held in a co-operative spirit and participants reached a common understanding on:

- (a) the need for sustainable development of the tuna resources of the region;
- (b) the importance of fishing responsibly in the region;
- (c) the importance of effective enforcement in the conservation and management of tuna stocks;
and
- (d) the need for co-operation between coastal States and territories and distant water fishing nations.

4. In order to further these common understandings, FFA member countries and distant water fishing nations will consult on the development of a regional vessel monitoring system and will consider ways to improve the collection and exchange of fishery data and enhance stock assessment.

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**CLOSING REMARKS - HON. TEPURE TAPAITAU, MINISTER FOR
MARINE RESOURCES, COOK ISLANDS**

Mr Chairman, Colleagues,

Kia Orana! - "May you live on !"

The Cook Islands is a small island country vitally concerned with the development of our fisheries resources. We have joined with other Pacific Island States so that we may all benefit to the maximum from the harvesting of our tuna resources. Our concern is to also ensure that future generations of Pacific peoples may continue to benefit from the ocean's riches.

Distant water fishing nations (DWFNs) must never forget that for many of us, tuna is the only resource available for exploitation. We have made it clear that we intend to enhance our involvement in the harvesting and processing of tuna and have sought the cooperation of DWFNs in this endeavour.

Over the past few days we have arrived at some common understandings on management issues. The Cook Islands looks forward to the fruits of these understandings. Rest assured however, that we will continue to develop our monitoring control and surveillance capability, to ensure that distant water fishing vessels operating in our zone maintain responsible fishing practices in line with the laws of the Cook Islands.

Although we consider the conference to have been a success, the non-participation of Chinese-Taipei, a country responsible for one fifth of the tuna taken from the region, is viewed with serious concern. We intend to raise this concern with Taiwan fishing interests when we next meet in January to discuss the possibility of continued access to our zone.

May I now Mr Chairman, commend you for your expert guidance through the week., I should also extend my appreciation to the Director and staff of FFA for providing secretarial services to the meeting and to the Solomon Islands Government for the hospitality extended during my stay in Honiara.

I hope that in the near future I will be given the opportunity to extend to at least some participants gathered here at this conference, a taste of Cook Islands hospitality.

While I have enjoyed my time here Mr Chairman I am looking forward to getting home and seeing my family again. I'm sure we all are. May I wish everyone a safe journey home.

Thank you.

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CLOSING REMARKS - FIJI

Mr Chairman, Honourable Ministers, distinguished delegates.

I have the honour to take the floor again at this time to offer my delegation's sincere appreciation for having participated at such a conference, indeed a congregation of some of the best minds in the world - (if we are to go by the distinguished representative of Korea's contention on the impact of DHA.)

My delegation would like to express our profound gratitude to all delegations for your confidence in our ability to provide the chairmanship of this conference. We hope we have fulfilled this role and your trust, to your satisfaction.

Mr Chairman, in our opening statement we had alluded to this region being a source for many initiatives that were later adopted by the international community. We had expressed hope for the outcome of this conference to provide the direction in the same vein.

We believe, we have made substantial progress at this conference.

- The proposed dialogue on data issues is indeed a major step in the pursuit of meaningful stock assessment programmes.
- Mr Chairman, the appreciation by distant water fishing nations of our concerns for transshipment and its implications is most welcome.
- Sir, the support for a consultative process in the development of a vessel monitoring system is indeed vital. We deeply appreciate the offer of financial support from the Japanese delegation in this regard. In particular Mr Chairman, we recognise the efforts of the distant water fishing partners to strengthen regional arrangements in this area.
- Indeed the conference has also provided us the opportunity to discuss freely our positions on enforcement issues. This would greatly assist our deliberations at the UN Conference on Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and Straddling Fish Stocks.
- The free exchange of views on matters related to fishing in the South Pacific has indeed removed whatever cloud of distrust and ill will that might have been there at the beginning of the conference, and testifies to the spirit of genuineness, goodwill and commitment with which participants at this Conference have addressed the concerns before them.

Mr Chairman, my delegation believes, we have at this conference, in part proved what our leaders identified in Rio De Janeiro, as lack of cooperation between the parties, wrong.

We have in our deliberations at this conference also adhered to the directives of this region's premier decision making body, the South Pacific Forum.

Mr Chairman, I would like to thank the delegation of US for this initiative, which by all accounts has fostered a greater understanding between all parties.

Our sincere appreciation to all our distinguished distant water fishing partners - for making the effort to attend and participate as peers at this conference. To the Solomon Island Government, for being a wonderful host in the course of the week. A big vinaka vakalevu.

Last but not least, Mr Chairman, to the hard working Secretariat of the FFA for their untiring support and super efficient services, our deep appreciation for your efforts.

May God's blessing be with you all as you depart for your lovely shores.

Merry Xmas and a happy New Year to you all.

I thank you Mr Chairman.

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**CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FORUM FISHERIES
COMMITTEE**

Chairman of the Conference, Honorable Ministers and distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the member countries of the Forum Fisheries Agency, I take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the collaborative and constructive spirit that everyone involved in our discussions this week has adopted.

I think it fair to say that most of the representatives from FFA member countries entered this Conference a little apprehensively at the start of this week. We were entering the unknown;

- what were we getting ourselves into?
- what were the expectations of others in the Conference?
- what could we hope to achieve for mutual benefit?
- could we respond to the challenges that would no doubt be laid down to us?

Mr Chairman, I believe I speak for others from the FFA membership when I say that I recognise that distant water fishing nations entered this Conference with similar questions in their minds. I am not sure what conclusions they have managed to come to over the last five days but, from my perspective, we have achieved a great deal.

Although the absence of Chinese-Taipei is perhaps the one disappointment for the week, I believe that in all other respects, we have made significant advances in our fisheries relations. Our discussions have covered a broad range of issues of particular relevance to improving our capacity to responsibly use the valuable tuna resources of this region. We hope that this provides a good foundation for future cooperation so that it may benefit future generations as it benefits all those represented by the people in this room now.

Mr Chairman, there was a statement during the week that this is a Conference of global significance; that many people would be watching for the outcomes of our deliberations. I think Mr Chairman, we can confidently report that, for the issues that we have discussed, we can confidently report we have had a very successful Conference.

I would like to thank those responsible for its organisation for their efforts. In addition, special thanks go to the FFA support staff working behind the scenes to support our work. I hope that the Director of FFA will relay our appreciation to the people concerned.

Mr Chairman, on behalf of the 16 member countries of the Forum Fisheries Agency, lastly, and most significantly, I would like to thank you for the professional and competent manner you have guided our deliberations this week.

You have had a difficult task. Never before have FFA member countries and distant water fishing nations met in such a high level meeting to focus on issues of mutual interest concerning the western, central and south Pacific tuna fisheries.

I doubt there would be any among us who would contend my view that you have done an admirable job in the face of challenging, and, at times, unknown issues. I would like to thank you for your personal commitment to the task at hand. I would also like to thank the Government of Fiji for making you available to chair this Conference.

Mr Chairman, I will close by stating that it has been a pleasure for Solomon Islands to receive all visitors for this Conference this week. I hope that you remember your visit fondly and that we have a chance to meet again in the not too distant future to again discuss issues of mutual interest.

I wish you all a pleasant journey for the return to your homes. All best wishes for the festive season and a productive and rewarding New Year.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

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CLOSING REMARKS BY THE DIRECTOR OF FFA

Chairman of the Conference, Honorable Ministers and distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr Chairman, this Conference definitely has been a baptism by fire for me coming as it has in only the second week of my term as Director of FFA.

However, I have been involved in regional fisheries affairs for many years. The majority of this has been through my association with FFA as Palau's representative to regional and international fisheries meetings. As a result, I have a long background of involvement with our fishing partners around this table.

I, like many others in the FFA community, were a little apprehensive in entering this discussion this week. As you are all aware, the island States of the South Pacific and the distant water fishing nations have had a long relationship. We have not always agreed on all issues that we have had to discuss. I imagine that in future we will continue to experience difficulties in our fisheries relations as we attempt to find common ground that can provide mutual benefits.

However, Mr Chairman, on the basis of my experience in regional fisheries issues, I would like to say that I believe that this week has been a significant move forward in enhancing the relations between those representing the interests of distant water fishing nations and ourselves.

I would like to thank all delegations for their co-operative and constructive approach to our discussions during this Conference, the agenda for which was studded with many potentially highly contentious issues. I also welcome the participation of French Polynesia at this Conference, and undertake to involve them wherever possible in FFA affairs.

I believe that we have seized this as an opportunity to establish firmer relations, to build confidence and provide a foundation for us to move forward. We have dealt with anything potentially contentious in a professional and constructive manner and I applaud you all for your constructive approach to our work. I look forward to progressing this further during my next three years as Director of FFA.

Mr Chairman, I thank you for the way in which you have handled our discussions this week. In my humble view, you have done a superb job. I am sure we are all grateful for the obvious hard work you have put in to preparing for, and subsequently chairing, this important Conference.

Mr Chairman, I wish everyone a speedy return to your home.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to convey the best wishes of all FFA staff and their families for an enjoyable festive season to you all and a prosperous 1995.

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CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Mr Director and Staff, Friends and Colleagues,

Over the past few days we have had a full and frank exchange of views on a number of matters of great concern to us all. Although we came to this Conference with very different and divergent viewpoints as well as different expectations, I believe we have made good progress on some very important issues.

We have affirmed our strong mutual interest in the long-term sustainability of the tuna resources of the South Pacific region.

We have reached a common understanding on the importance of responsible fishing practices.

We understand and appreciate the importance of effective enforcement for the conservation and management of the tuna stocks.

We agree on the need for continued cooperation and commitment between coastal States and distant water fishing nations.

On some specific issues, there is a more detailed consensus. With respect to vessel monitoring systems, we have agreed on the need to continue to consult closely on the development and implementation of a vessel monitoring system in the region. We have agreed, in principle, to hold a further technical consultation on this issue in the near future.

With regard to transshipment, all participants have confirmed that their vessels do not tranship at sea in the region and we have held a free exchange of views on the benefits of transshipment in port. As a result, I believe that we have significantly enhanced our mutual understanding of one another's problems and aspirations.

Most significantly, perhaps, we have agreed to cooperate by holding a technical consultation to consider options for improved provision of complete catch and effort data and options under which scientists from all parties involved in the fishery can more fully participate in the stock assessment process and tuna research programmes.

I believe that these are very significant outcomes given the extent of our initial differences. It shows the value of taking a cautious, step by step, approach to resolving our differences and deepening our mutual understanding. In the long term, I believe the Multilateral High Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries, will be regarded as a milestone in the relations between coastal States and territories and distant water fishing nations in the South Pacific. The only cause for regret is that one significant fishing entity, for reasons disassociated with the subject-matter of this Conference, chose not to participate in our proceedings.

The fact that we have been able to reach this level of consensus is, in my view, due to the very constructive and cooperative spirit with which all delegations have approached this Conference. I

commend all participants for this. It has certainly made my job as Chairman much easier than it would otherwise have been. For this, I thank each and every one of you most sincerely. I particularly thank our colleagues and partners from the distant water fishing nations. Without your cooperation, understanding and spirit of goodwill, we could not have made any progress at all.

This Conference would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of a number of people. In particular, I would like to thank the members of the Secretariat who have laboured long and hard to prepare for this Conference and to take care of the needs of delegates this week. Many people have been involved in this work, but I would particularly like to mention Mr Bruce Campigli, Conference Administrator, and Ms Wendy Ho. Between them, they have ensured the smooth running of the Conference this week. May I also recognise the hard and very professional work of our drafting committee under the able leadership of Mr Brian Hallman of the United States.

I would also like to thank the incoming Director of FFA, Mr Victorio Uherbelau, and to pay tribute to his predecessor, Sir Peter Kenilorea, under whose leadership the concept of this Conference was first developed.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the writers and presenters of the working papers. The high quality of the papers and the presentations helped in no small part to ensure a positive outcome on each of the items under discussion.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

It only remains for me to thank you once again for the great honour you have bestowed on me, and on my Government, by appointing me to serve as Chair of this historic meeting. Such an opportunity does not come often. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you again in the future and, wherever your destination, I wish you bon voyage and god speed.

The Multilateral High Level Conference on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries is closed.