

3RD SPC HEADS OF FISHERIES MEETING
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 18th – 23rd August 2003)

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Chairman of CRGA, distinguished representatives of CRGA, Director General, Observers, ladies and gentlemen.

Like most SPC meetings, the Chairship of the meeting is rotated in alphabetical order and it was Nauru's turn this year, and it gives me much pleasure as Chairman of the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting, to present this Statement on some of the pertinent outcomes of the Meeting which was held in Noumea from 18-23 August 2003.

The Heads of Fisheries Meeting thought that this presentation would give clear indication to CRGA observers and donors that member country input and insight runs through SPC's activities at all levels.

The main recommendations of the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting have been made available to you as an information paper in the Report of the Director of Marine Resources.

I wish to mention that the outputs of the Heads of Fisheries Meeting are not aimed specifically at CRGA and are not just for the benefit of the Secretariat, but also for the attention of any organisation with a role to play in the Pacific Islands fisheries.

The Heads of Fisheries Meeting is very much a meeting of the fisheries departments and agencies to discuss fisheries issues of common concern to the Pacific Islands themselves, and this basic purpose was fully endorsed by the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting.

The views of the member country fisheries representatives in the Heads of Fisheries meetings have a great influence on the direction of the SPC Oceanic and Coastal Fisheries Programmes, and they are useful also to other organisations with a stake in fisheries, both at the regional and global level.

The 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting tasked the Chair to draft a set of Terms of Reference for a more consistent framework for the conduct of future Heads of Fisheries meetings, and this will be done in consultation with member countries representatives and the Secretariat,

The Meeting also spent some considerable time on SPC fisheries programme management because of the increase in the new programme planning activity, in particular the reviews of the Oceanic Fisheries Programme and the Coastal Fisheries Programme and the new Strategic Plans for both programmes, as well as the first progress reports against the Strategic Plans.

The Meeting also discussed the progress of several more focused initiatives in aquaculture, live fish trade and fisheries training.

In general, the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting is of the view that both the Oceanic Fisheries Programme and the Coastal Fisheries Programme are very much on the right track and that the region can be justifiably proud of the work of both programmes.

The Meeting took into account the various programme reviews and made recommendations to ensure that the programmes are kept on track.

In dealing with the fisheries issues, three significant regional endorsements came out of the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting, and these were :-

- i. that of the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish, which recently met in Mooloolaba, Australia in July of this year, and the emphasis on the need for caution on the state of bigeye and yellowfin tuna stocks. I wish to add that the SCTB recommendations were also presented to the Forum Fisheries Committee and the 5th Preparatory Conference meetings held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, in September/October this year, which some of you attended;
- ii. that of a new strategic approach to Coastal Fisheries Management with notable increasing shift in focus from development to sustainable management and utilisation of the coastal fisheries resources; 1
- iii. that of a set of Regional Guiding Principles for the introduction and translocation of aquatic organisms for aquaculture and fisheries, and the emphasis on the need to establish sound marine farming principles from the outset.

These three major areas of decision highlight the Heads of Fisheries active involvement in the direction of both the regional fisheries sector and of the SPC fisheries programmes themselves.

There were various other fisheries issues discussed in the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting and these are included in Annex 2 of the report of the Director of the Marine Resources Division.

One other issue that may be of interest to the CRGA is the linkage between the SPC Fisheries Programmes and the ocean – related work that is taking place in other regional and international organisations, work such as preparation for the Pacific Islands Ocean Forum to be held in February 2004.

The 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting was pleased to note, yet again, the extremely constructive and mutually supportive working relationship that has developed between the Forum Fisheries Agency and the SPC Marine Resources Division.

The Meeting however drew attention to the need to develop a better understanding with the University of the South Pacific the Meeting recommended that an MOU be worked out between the SPC Marine Resources Division and the USP, covering not only the Coastal Fisheries Programme but all of the marine resources work of both organisations.

Finally, I would like to mention the firm intention of the Heads of Fisheries to meet again next year as the 4th Heads of Fisheries Meeting.

There is a lot that goes on at the region level in fisheries and the Heads of Fisheries Meeting would be the best opportunity for fisheries representatives of SPC members to meet and discuss coastal fisheries and aquaculture issues together.

We acknowledge that SPC core funds will not be budgeted in 2004 for this meeting, but we understand that by combining several fisheries sub-sectoral project workshops and some of our own resources, that we may be able to pool enough to convene a full meeting.

May I take this opportunity to thank the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting, for entrusting me to present it's Chairman's Statement to the CRGA through you Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.